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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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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.
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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.
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FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
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HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
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MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
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MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
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REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
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WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 14, 2011

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.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 17—The Cooperatives Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 17, The Cooperatives Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les coopératives, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill seeks to expand beyond 367 the number and the types of co-ops in Manitoba by allowing groups that normally form separate co-ops, such as consumers or workers or producers or investors, to combine resources and create a co-op together; also, by allowing worker co-ops to include volunteers and contracting parties. It also seeks to modernize business processes and strengthens the eviction appeal process for residents of housing co-ops.

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

PETITIONS

RCMP Rural Service

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitobans deserve to live in a safe environment and feel secure in their homes and their communities. Some regions of rural Manitoba have been hard hit by crime, including residential break and enters, property theft, vandalism and other offences that threaten people's security.

In some areas, RCMP detachments are not staffed on a 24-hour basis. Criminal elements capitalize on this, engaging in crimes at times when officers may not be readily available to respond to calls for service.

Some believe the current RCMP detachment boundaries need to be redrawn so that service delivery could be faster and more effective.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider working with the RCMP, the federal government and the communities to develop strategies to address service challenges in rural Manitoba, such as the possibility of having response units that could be dispatched to regions affected by crime waves.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider working with stakeholders to determine if the current RCMP detachment boundaries are designed to ensure the swiftest and most effective service delivery.

This petition is signed by D. Councillor, G. Asham, H. Roulette and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On December 11th of 2009, in Winnipeg, Zdzislaw Andrzejczak was killed when the car that he was driving collided with a stolen vehicle.

The death of Mr. Andrzejczak, a husband and a father, along with too many other deaths and injuries involving stolen vehicles, was a preventable tragedy.

Many of those accused in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

Chronic car thieves pose a risk to the safety of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all court orders for car thieves are vigorously monitored and enforced.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by K. Phillips, K. Grenkow, E. Dow and many, many other Manitobans.

Convicted Auto Thieves—Denial of MPI Benefits

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

In Manitoba, a car thief convicted of stealing a vehicle involved in a car accident is eligible to receive compensation and assistance for personal injury from Manitoba Public Insurance.

Too many Manitoba families have had their lives tragically altered by motor vehicle accidents involving car thieves and stolen vehicles.

It is an injustice to victims, their families and law-abiding Manitobans that MPI premiums are used to benefit car thieves involved in these accidents.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Justice deny all MPI benefits to a person for injuries received in an

accident if he or she is convicted of stealing a motor vehicle involved in an accident.

And this petition is signed by J. Wood, W. Kissick, C. Bruce and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Bipole III—Cost to Manitoba Families

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been directed by the provincial government to construct its next high voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba.

This will cost each family of four in Manitoba \$11,748 more than an east-side route, which is also shorter and more reliable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to build the Bipole III transmission line on the shorter and more reliable east side of Lake Winnipeg in order to save each Manitoba family of four \$11,748.

This petition is signed by E. O'Dowd, L. Kluga, J. Braun and many, many other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Manitoba Adult Literacy Strategy and Adult Learning Centres in Manitoba, 2009-2010 Annual Reports.

* (13:40)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): I have a statement, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to track towards a 2009-level flood which, Mr. Speaker, was the second largest flood in the province since 1852. While we do not want to create undue anxiety in the public, it is important to understand that a significant flood risk remains despite a slight decrease in the projected maximum crest in Winnipeg yesterday.

Many areas of the province are experiencing unprecedented overland flooding. Soil saturation levels going into the melt are extremely high across most of the southern part of the province. Overland flooding is unpredictable and is affecting many provincial roads, hundreds of municipal roads and some homes and farmland, particularly in the Interlake areas and areas such as Arborg, St. Laurent, Riverton, Bifrost and Fisher Branch, and in areas such as La Broquerie, Headingley and St. François Xavier.

As of this morning, there have been 669 people evacuated, largely as precautions due to the lost access to homes. Evacuations are primarily in First Nations communities, including over 500 people from Peguis, 90 from Dauphin River, 24 from Sandy Bay and smaller groups from Fairford and Roseau River First Nations.

We've also seen small precautionary evacuations in the RM of Cornwallis due to ice jams along the Assiniboine River, which have also caused some flooding in Spruce Woods Provincial Park. Small evacuations have taken place in the RMs of Montcalm, St. Laurent and Elton, as well as the health facilities in Gladstone and Wawanesa.

I can also inform the House that a precautionary evacuation of the St. Adolphe Personal Care Home will begin in the next coming days.

The Province continues to closely monitor the situation in Peguis and other flood-affected areas and is providing assistance as needed. Officials also continue to assess the situation at Morris on Highway 75.

I can also inform the House, that as of yesterday, the STARS, S-T-A-R-S, air ambulance, that has flown 17 missions and conducted nine patient transports after 12 days in operation in Manitoba. I am advised, Mr. Speaker, that some of these transports were the difference between life and death for the patients.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I thank the minister for his flood update. I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record in response to the minister's latest update.

I'd like to start by thanking the minister and his staff of the department and several others for providing my colleagues and I with an update this

morning on the flood situation and how it is unfolding in various regions of the province.

The government's latest update is projecting a lower crest on the Red River, but I know that communities along the Red continue to prepare and must remain vigilant.

Precautionary evacuations have taken—have been taken in a number of communities and it's possible more will be required in the next few days. These operations seem to be providing—proceeding very smoothly thanks to the advance planning by the government officials at all levels.

There's been a lot of overland flooding associated with this year's flood event. It's taking a heavy toll on provincial and municipal roads across a wide swath of the province and is certainly proving disruptive. The spring melting and breakup accelerates in western Manitoba and moving northward. We can undoubtedly expect to see more of this type of road damage.

My colleague the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) and I had the opportunity last night to survey the situation in the Portage la Prairie, Macdonald, Westbourne, Woodside and Gladstone area. We have seen some retreating of the flood waters in that area, although the Woodside area has still vast areas underwater.

Again, I thank the minister for this latest flood update. 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? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for the flood briefing this morning and continuing information and his statement just now.

We're all aware that the level of the flood this year is one of the highest on record, probably similar to 2009 on the Red River and fairly close to '76 on the Assiniboine River and, certainly, we need to be ready. We need to be particularly aware of the overland flooding that is starting to occur increasingly in southwestern Manitoba and I'm sure will be a major factor in western Manitoba.

Once again, it's pretty clear that the calls over many years for permanent flood prevention in Peguis are well warranted and should be heeded, and I hope

that the minister and the government will push for such a permanent long-run solution.

Thank you, again, for the update, and I look forward to more in the future.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today recipients of this year's Celebration of Excellence in Teaching—Minister's Awards. They are Katherine Penner of J.R. Walkof Elementary School, Ralph Backé of Sargent Park School, Gregory Shedden of Sisler High School and Pamela Doerksen of Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary School and Harold Enns, Susan George and Maria Nickel from Woodlands School, and Jerry Sodomlak of Donwood School. And these are the guests of the honourable Minister of Education (Ms. Allan).

Also in the gallery we have with us, we have Al Kristofferson and Bill Barlow, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson).

And also in the gallery we have with us today some active members in the community through their work with the St. James Assiniboine Anglican Church, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski).

And also in the public gallery we have from Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary School Agassiz 14 grade 3 and 4 students under the direction of Mr. Wes Krahn. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross).

And also in the public gallery, we have from Kildonan-East Collegiate, we have 36 grade 9 students under the direction of Leigh Denysiuk, Erin Lower and Kyle Warnica. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III Costs

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to thank the minister for the update today in the House on the flooding situation which is impacting people and communities

throughout the province and also thank him for the briefing that he provided this morning for members of the opposition caucus.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to forward planning on capital matters, by far the largest capital project under way today in Manitoba is the next major transmission line for Manitoba Hydro. This is a project that is more than six times the budget of the floodway expansion that will have an impact on generations to come in terms of our quality of life here in Manitoba. Manitobans are growing concerned about the conflicting and changing information that comes out of this government with respect to what people can expect to pay.

Mr. Speaker, I know they're sensitive about the issue, as they should be, but they failed to mention it in the budget. Exactly two weeks ago today, Hydro put out yet another estimate of some \$3.2 billion for this project, 14 days ago. Yesterday in the House the Premier said it's \$1.1 billion, shaving over \$2 billion off the cost in two weeks.

Can the Premier please explain the discrepancy between what he said in the House yesterday and what the CEO of Hydro said two weeks ago?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the cost of the bipole, \$1.26 billion, has been confirmed by independent consultants hired by Manitoba Hydro to clarify the numbers. That's been made extremely clear to everybody, including the member opposite.

He continues to want to cancel the converter stations widely acknowledged to be necessary no matter which side of the lake—or anywhere in Manitoba for that matter—additional transmission is built. The member opposite's desire to cancel the converters would leave Manitobans in far worse shape. We would not be able to build Keeyask. We would not be able to build Conawapa. Export revenues would suffer, and rates would go up.

That's his vision for the future of Manitoba Hydro: Mothball it like they did in the '90s, run the utility down and prepare for privatization.

*(13:50)

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, that's now the seventh—the seventh different number, as of today, that this Premier has put out on this project. That's double the number of different costs he put out on the stadium deal, and they haven't even started construction. Seven different numbers—and, in fact, he said in the House just now that the number put out

two weeks ago was just over \$1.2 billion. In fact, the number put out two weeks ago was \$3.28 billion, announced by the president and CEO of Hydro and reported throughout the media.

I want to ask the Premier: Now that they're on their seventh number—it started at \$2.2 billion and then went up by 1.7 to \$3.9 billion and then went up to \$4.1 billion with the documents that were released. Two weeks ago they said \$3.3 billion, brought in by the president of Hydro. Today and yesterday, he's saying \$1.2 billion. He's knocked \$2.2 billion off in two weeks, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to ask the Premier: Is the number he's putting out to Manitobans today a real number or is he just using his old Crocus calculator yet again?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, only the leader—it's only the Leader of the Official Opposition that wants to cancel the converter stations in Manitoba. That decision on his part—nobody's given him advice to do that. That decision on his part would threaten the future development of the Manitoba economy.

The Manitoba economy is a \$54-billion economy. That's a billion dollars a week that we generate in goods and services in this province, and the member opposite wants to cancel the \$1.2-billion bipole which would bring reliability and affordability and protection to the Manitoba economy. He wants to cancel the converters, which would make it impossible to build Keeyask and Conawapa. He wants to move the Manitoba economy back to the dark days of the '90s when nothing was done and the Manitoba economy languished.

We want to move Manitoba forward. We want to do it in a way that gives reliable, affordable and good-reputation power to our customers and keeps Manitoba rates the lowest in North America. The only way you can do that is to build Manitoba Hydro, not mothball it.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the NDP government is currently in front of the Public Utilities Board asking them to raise rates on Manitoba families. The reason for that is because of the escalating costs on his west-side—long west-side directive.

Mr. Speaker, how does anybody—you know, this is just—it's like the—it's like Crocus; it's like the stadium all over again. This is a Premier who has now put out seven different numbers on the bipole project. He started at \$2.2 billion; it went to \$3.9 billion; it went to \$4.1 billion; two weeks ago,

they dropped it to \$3.3 billion. Over two—over the last two weeks, somehow he's found a way to knock it down to \$1.1 billion. Now, how are we supposed to believe this Premier and his numbers?

Can he just confirm that he's got out his old stadium slide rule and his Crocus calculator and he's just trying to create a smokescreen for Manitoba ratepayers who are going to get stuck paying the bill for his mismanagement of this project.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well that converter stations are needed in this province if we're going to build the future of Manitoba Hydro. His reckless and irresponsible decision to unilaterally cancel those converters is one of the things that will set the Manitoba economy on a backward trajectory, move us backwards.

Now, let's take a look—let's take a little look at his numbers. He says it'll cost Manitoba families \$11,700 *[inaudible]* 500,000. Mr. Speaker, you multiply that number by the number of families or ratepayers in Manitoba, it exceeds the cost of—it exceeds the costs of the converter stations. It exceeds the cost of the bipole. It is a number that is so out to lunch, so misleading, so misrepresenting reality, the member should really get up and apologize to the people of Manitoba for the tremendous amount of misinformation he continues to put on the public record every single day he's in office.

Lake Winnipeg East-Side All-Weather Road

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, to go from \$3.2 billion two weeks ago to \$1.1 billion as of yesterday, Mr. Speaker—and, in fact, he and his Finance Minister came out with three different numbers yesterday as they try to roll this price back. By next week, they'll be trying to convince Manitobans that it's free. He's found a bunch of volunteers and a bunch of people to donate some free steel.

The reality is rates are going up on the hydro bills, and Manitobans know that fact, and there's nothing that this Premier can do to spin his way out of it.

Mr. Speaker, one—so he left the bipole project out of the budget. One thing he did put in the budget was his plans for the east-side boreal forest highway.

I wonder if he can just provide the House with an update on how he's doing with that highway today, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, that long preamble again contained the usual misinformation the member opposite puts on the record.

Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker; let's be clear. There's only one politician in this Legislature that has promised the people of Manitoba to lift hydro rates to the market rates around us, \$900 more for every Manitoba ratepayer on an annual basis. That's the Leader of the Official Opposition.

There's only one person who has done that. There's only one person that has mused about privatizing Manitoba Hydro, just like he privatized the telephone system, and now wants to erase all traces of his role in privatizing that telephone system. The strategy is very clear. Run down the utility and disable it from being able to develop its resources. Use that as an excuse to privatize it. They said they wouldn't do that on the telephone system, and now they want to do it with the Manitoba Hydro system.

Nobody can trust the member opposite when it comes to Crown corporations. He is the specialist in privatization. He is the specialist in rolling back the future of Manitoba.

And, yes, we will build an all-weather road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg so the people on that side of the lake can have the goods and services and the access to basic essentials that all Manitobans have, and he votes against that.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been trying to spin to Manitobans that the reason for his decision to force them to pay more than \$11,000 each for his long west-side power line is because of litigation if they touch the boreal forest on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

I just want to ask the Premier: In connection with the east-side highway project, how many lawsuits to date have been filed in order to stop this project?

Mr. Selinger: Here we again have the slippery-slope argument.

The winter roads on the east side and, indeed, in many parts of Manitoba are no longer serving those communities because the winter freeze-up has been shortening with changes in the climate. These communities, these Manitobans, equal in rights and

access to every other Manitoban, deserve to have access to decent roads so that they can have the goods and services that all of us enjoy in other parts of Manitoba.

The member opposite has consistently voted against any improvements to highways in northern Manitoba. He actually ran on a platform of taking money out of the north for roads and putting it into the south, once again using his approach to wedge politics, to divide Manitobans up against each other.

We have made a commitment in this budget, which he will vote against, to the highest degree of investment in roads in the history of the province, roads in the north, roads in rural Manitoba, roads in the city of Winnipeg and roads in southern Manitoba and, yes, roads on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, and the member opposite will vote against it as he has done every single year he's in the Legislature.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I don't know—I don't understand why the Premier's having such a hard time responding to what's a very simple question.

He said that an east-side transmission line would get tied up in litigation and, yet, Mr. Speaker, he's building the UNESCO expressway to the very boreal forest of the east side of the province that he claims to be concerned about.

And I want to ask the Premier if he can confirm that all of this talk about lawsuits on the east side of Lake Winnipeg was completely made up, because as of today not a single person has filed a lawsuit to stop his boreal forest expressway of the east side.

* (14:00)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I didn't even detect a question there, just a lame defence of his previous argument.

The reality is this: The people on the east side have said they need winter roads; they need all-weather roads; they need access for basic goods and services. They have also said they do not like the bipole going down the east side because of the impacts on the environment.

There clearly is a difference when the local citizens support all-weather roads so they can have basic goods and services. There is a huge difference there. The member opposite won't acknowledge that. The UNESCO World Heritage opportunity is a world-class opportunity to build ecotourism in this province. And the member opposite wants to wash that away just like he wants to cut half a billion

dollars out of the budget, which he refuses to debate because he knows it's a good budget.

He refuses to debate the budget which will provide all-weather roads, which will provide health care, which will provide education and will keep Manitoba growing as a prosperous economy including developing our hydro resources.

Budget Advertising Costs

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance admitted that she has veered away from following her own five-year economic plan.

Mr. Speaker, according to a freedom of information response that my office received, the NDP government spent over \$200,000 in pre-budget advertising. At a time when this government should be showing fiscal restraint, why are they spending tax dollars advertising an economic plan they have no plan to even follow?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this is a good budget. This is a budget for the people of Manitoba. This is a budget that addresses all the issues that families have raised with us and they want us to move forward with.

Mr. Speaker, are we spending money on research to promote this budget? Yes, we are. No—every budget that has been put in place by the previous administration, by this administration, has a rollout. There is a rollout and there are dollars spent so that Manitobans know what's in the budget.

Obviously the member opposite knows this is a good budget and she doesn't want us to tell Manitoba families about it.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister said yesterday so much as she's not even planning to follow her five-year plan. Then to add salt to the wound, she decides that she's going to go out and spend \$200,000 on advertising pre-budget, before the budget even took place.

And if this is what she spent on pre-budget advertising, I'm wondering if she would indicate for the House today how much she plans to spend on post-budget advertising, advertising a budget she has no plan to adhere to, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, when we hit challenging times, we decided that we would not follow the advice of the members opposite. Nine

months ago, they were going to cut \$500 million out of this budget. They were going to act just the same way as they did in the '90s, slash and cut, lay people off, lay nurses off, lay doctors off. That's what they announced that they would do nine months ago.

They've had a little change of heart, it seems. They are recognizing that there are good things in this budget. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said there were good things in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that's the difference between them and us. We listen to the people. We implement what they want in the budget. The members opposite make plans to slash and cut.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that this Minister of Finance spent over \$200,000 advertising a five-year plan she has no plan to adhere to. Why did she waste \$200,000–\$200,000 that she could have saved that could have gone towards decreasing the deficit?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite never did support our five-year plan, because they know it's about the people. They never supported our five-year plan.

Our budget in 2010-11 came in \$78 million lower than projected. Our budget is projected to come in \$10 million under the projection that we put forward in our five-year plan.

Why is this happening, Mr. Speaker? This is happening because there is confidence in Manitoba. Our economy is growing, and with that change in the economy, we are able to deliver for Manitobans, for our families, not slash and cut like the members opposite did.

Sandbagging Machine Community Use and Resources

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, at a March 3rd photo op in Brandon, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) unveiled a new sandbagging machine. I tabled for the House the news release from that event. In it the Premier stated, and I quote: "The new machine will be ready to produce thousands of sandbags for use in the Westman area..." End quote.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier also acknowledged the risk of flooding along the Assiniboine. This week, states of emergency were declared in several rural municipalities near Brandon, including Cornwallis,

Glenwood, Souris and Elton. Eight people have been evacuated from Douglas. Yet when the town of Souris considered using the new sandbagging machine, they were told they'd have to pay for the sandbags, pay for the sand and supply the volunteers to run it.

Mr. Speaker, can the government explain why the sandbagging machine is sitting idle in Brandon while area municipalities are trying to battle the flood?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that one of the things that we have done over the last two years is expand the tools available in the province. We have brought in Amphibexes. In fact, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) recently announced the third Amphibex. They're being deployed throughout the province. We have deployed sandbags, sandbag machines, super sandbags. We have at least three types of flood tubes that are currently being used. We have wave barriers. The reality in deployment is that we look at what's appropriate. I want to stress that in many areas, by the way, we continue to work with sandbags.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure quite why the member is questioning what is, in this case, a decision made by our Emergency Measures staff and Water Stewardship about what—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Rowat: I see the members opposite are a bit uncomfortable with this question, and they should be. There is a new sandbagging machine for Westman and Brandon, capable of producing 35,000 sandbags in eight hours, that is sitting idle. In the March 4th *Brandon Sun*, which I will table, the Premier talked about the merits of the machine. He stated, and I quote: "... what's good about having it out early ... is they can stockpile sandbags." End quote. Yet there are no sandbags stockpiled in Brandon that could have been trucked out to these communities in need.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this government again: You've known about the flood risks for months. Where is the action plan to ensure that the sandbags were made available in advance so that they can quickly be shipped to the communities that needed them?

Mr. Ashton: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if this is something that the member has been

aware of since this morning, but I certainly do want to indicate again, we had a briefing with a dozen members opposite. I've had briefings with members here, and we're more than prepared to get into full detail about the deployment.

I want to stress, by the way, that we have been involved with production of sandbags at a number of central locations. I want to stress it's not the only form of flood protection that is used. We have—the City of Winnipeg, for example, has also been preparing a significant number of sandbags, and in terms of the flood preparation, I want to put on the record that we are going to be spending upwards of \$50 million, Mr. Speaker, for this flood event.

And I want to make it very clear that when it comes to our government and this Province's approach in terms of flood protection, if we're going to be criticized for anything, it will be in terms of erring on the side of protection and preparation. We've been working diligently as a—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:10)

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, my question is with regard to the ethics of this Premier (Mr. Selinger) when he stands and does a photo op and then doesn't fulfill the promises that are being portrayed to the communities.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has spent \$35,000 on a sandbag machine that can make 35,000 sandbags every eight hours. They staged an impressive photo op where the Premier touted the benefits of the machine which would provide help for Westman region. Yet, as we have seen this week, the—when Brandon area communities and municipalities quickly needed sandbags, there were none available. Where is the logic in that?

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that protecting individuals and communities threatened by flooding should take greater precedence than photo ops, photo ops designed to place him on the front page of the *Brandon Sun*?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that members opposite would keep politics out of dealing with flood management.

And, perhaps, Mr. Speaker—and I'm also surprised that the member opposite didn't even mention the fact that we—within a matter of days, we approved funding for permanent diking in Brandon. At the request of the City of Brandon we approved

the cost sharing, and that is in place protecting residents, 900 residents, in the city of Brandon.

I think the member opposite might also wish to talk to the many dedicated staff in our departments, the municipal leaders and officials that are out there. We're dealing with unprecedented flooding in terms of geographic scope at this point. We are looking at a flood that in many areas of the province will be equivalent to the 2009 flood, which was the second worst flood since 1852.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the member opposite that we're proud of the response of Manitobans.

And, Mr. Speaker, that kind of criticism I think is inappropriate. If the member opposite has concerns, we'll deal with it. We're fighting the flood. That comes first, not the kind of question period politics we're seeing from that member.

Town of Rivers Police Officer Funding

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Minnedosa, on a new question?

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I think the message is easy: If you can't deliver, don't do the photo op, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Town of Rivers has operated a local police detachment for over 100 years and is classified as a primary police agency. They employ three officers and have effectively developed and implemented a community policing plan which was shared with the Justice Department months ago.

Recently, Aboriginal and municipal law enforcement, under the Department of Justice, had conveyed to Rivers police chief their support for an additional officer for the Town of Rivers. Unfortunately, in Tuesday's budget, Rivers Police Service was ignored in the funding allocation of new police officers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Justice why he ignored his department's recommendation to allocate an additional police officer for the Rivers Police Service.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm quite pleased to have a question about our support for policing across the province of Manitoba, and this is a government which, since 1999, has added funding for 255 police officers across this province, in Winnipeg, in Brandon, in many, many centres across the province.

Now, in this particular case, we've added additional officers in communities where we've not added officers before. We've added officers in Altona. We've added an officer in Morden, in Winkler, in Ste. Anne, as well as six communities that have contracts with the RCMP. We relied upon the advice of the RCMP in adding those officers, and we have decided to move with communities with the best plans to make sure that their officers are on the street as soon as possible, enhancing community safety in those communities. That is our priority, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, Chief Flannigan said that he was embarrassed by this NDP's government's decision to ignore Rivers community policing needs. He's confused as to why this—why his agency is the only primary policing agency left out of the funding announcement.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Justice explain why he believes the community of Rivers does not deserve the same support for the public safety as other communities in Manitoba received?

Mr. Swan: And, again, we've worked very closely with police across this province. We've taken their advice on where investments are most needed.

And I should point out to the member opposite, there are 13 municipal police forces in Manitoba. Six of them are receiving additional officers; seven of them aren't, including Rivers. I would point out, we've put our investments where we know we can get the biggest bang for our buck and have officers out on the streets doing the most to enhance safety.

With the RCMP, their advice has been on the nature of various communities. I'm actually quite proud of the work that Chief Flannigan and his officers have done in Rivers. Rivers is a community with very, very low levels of crime. It is one of many very, very safe communities in this province. I've spoken with Chief Flannigan and, as well, have invited him to put forward proposals for further investments that we'll be making in the years to come.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, he's saying best bang for his buck; I think he's meaning to say the best political bang for the NDP buck.

The entire policing community in Manitoba has been waiting three long years for this NDP government to act on the allocation of federal funds for this type of initiative.

Mr. Speaker, in a recent conversation with the Justice Minister, Chief Flannigan was told that there were funds still available from this source. Mr.—Chief Flannigan said there were still funds available from this source. So Mr. Flannigan's statement, and I quote, is: Since money is available—is still available, this injustice—injustice—could literally be corrected by a stroke of the pen.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Was it lip service or will he actually fund a staff person for the Rivers Police Service today?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, the member from Minnedosa wants to play politics with—she is suggesting that we've added a police officer in Winkler and a police officer in Morden and a police officer in Altona for political reasons. It may be because every time the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) opens his mouth, more and more seats become target seats for our New Democrats.

But having said that, the member from Minnedosa is one of the members who has stood up and has voted against every investment we've made in policing in this province. Every year she stands in her place and she votes against more police officers. She votes against more Crown attorneys. She votes against more probation officers. She votes against more Corrections officers.

I don't need any lessons and our government needs no lessons from one member trying to play politics with historic investments that we are making across this province to keep Manitobans safer, Mr. Speaker.

Bethesda Hospital Redevelopment Project Status

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, the more the member talks, the closer Minto becomes to being a target riding for us.

Mr. Speaker, it's now been 1,259 days, more than three years, since the much-needed expansion of the Bethesda ER was announced. The initial announcement came in 2007 and then nothing happened. And then it was announced in 2008—nothing happened; 2009 and nothing happened. It was announced in 2010 and nothing happened, and, lo and behold, on Tuesday, almost unbelievably, it was announced again in the budget and still there's no construction date.

Now we hear from local Health officials that it's the Premier (Mr. Selinger) who's stalling this project;

he is the problem. Will he stand up and tell us when the construction date for the Bethesda ER is scheduled for, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, certainly nobody can argue the member opposite's passion about the emergency room. I certainly won't. And I can inform the member that, yes, we have been very active in construction projects, capital construction projects, across Manitoba.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that during an economic downturn things become more challenging, and members opposite chose to freeze their health capital budget, issued a news release, disparagingly say that they had no choice.

We've been forging ahead with capital projects. We're building health capital across the province and I can commit to the member that we're going to be commencing with construction at Bethesda emergency this spring.

Mr. Goertzen: Of course, it was also the Minister of Health who said in this House that we'd be commencing with construction Bethesda last fall, and so it's pretty hard to believe her, Mr. Speaker. More than 700 emails have come in to the Premier to get this project started and to give a construction date.

One of the medical professionals who emailed indicated that many assessments in the Bethesda ER are done on stretchers in hallways where complete physical examinations are not possible. I know people lying in hallways in 2011 not able to get an assessment under the NDP. That's their health-care system.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier why for three years he has put the safety and the health at risk, of residents of the Steinbach region in southeastern Manitoba?

*(14:20)

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have the utmost respect for the medical professionals at Bethesda Hospital. They do extraordinary work every day. The employees of the regional health authority that are working on developing capital infrastructure are also working very diligently.

Mr. Speaker, we know that since 1999 we have renovated, rebuilt or built from the ground up, brand new, over 100 health facilities. We didn't, when times got tough—we didn't, Mr. Speaker, when times

got tough choose to freeze all health capital spending because we know that health care is the No. 1 priority of Manitobans.

And just as an aside, Mr. Speaker, isn't it odd that when he makes reference to us mentioning the Bethesda emergency in the budget last year that he voted against it?

Mr. Goertzen: What I voted against was the fact that they froze this project for three years, Mr. Speaker. By the time the Bethesda ER is finally built, it will have taken longer to plan and build it than it took to plan the Empire State Building, a 102-storey building in New York City.

Residents of my riding, who are among the most gracious in all the province, already have come to a conclusion. They have come to a conclusion that this government froze this project for three years because the NDP, the Premier, doesn't like the way they vote.

Won't the Premier just acknowledge—just acknowledge that the reason he froze this project for three years and put the health of residents at risk was because he just doesn't like the way they vote, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say clearly that we support and want to build our health-care system for all Manitobans as evidenced by our commitment to build a new personal care home in Morden-Winkler, an area, I would argue, that, you know, has the most potential to grow for the NDP.

I can say that, but I can also say that we've made a commitment to Lac du Bonnet. We've made a commitment to build a health centre in Grand Rapids. We're building dialysis in Berens River and Peguis First Nation, Mr. Speaker, and we are committed to work to keep the ER services functioning as the tender and the construction happen at Bethesda ER, just as the professionals have asked us to do.

Health care is for all Manitobans, not just the special few, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III Underwater Location

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans were stunned to learn this week that, once again, the NDP is using Manitoba Hydro to cover up this government's mistakes.

Manitobans know that the underwater option for Bipole III is the safest, most financially secure, but was the victim of poor planning by this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) own up to the fact that she goofed by ignoring the underwater option for so long and has been recently ordering Manitoba to send out phony press releases to misread—mislead Manitoba voters?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): The underwater option is one that we think has attractive possibilities, and we want to commend John Ryan for the work he's done on that. And, if it could be done right away, it would be done right away by Manitoba Hydro.

The reality is that it's a concept and a technology to be applied in Manitoba that some feel could be useful in the future but could not be applied immediately. But the work that John Ryan has done and the research he's done to review this option, to look at the technical challenges in terms of moving cable across the prairies and putting it down the lake and the challenges of ice and the wearability of how long it would last, all of those issues are—require study and thoughtful consideration.

But the reality is that kind of an option was one that was put forward in the spirit of finding a solution to transmission that would be one that everybody could embrace in Manitoba as opposed to the polarized, divisive politics of the members opposite.

Mr. Gerrard: I, too, want to congratulate John Ryan on his work and draw the attention to what John Ryan has said on the underwater cable very recently, and I quote: DC cable is a technologically viable system right now, and it could have been used for Bipole III except for NDP bungling. NDP government continuously intervenes with hard-working engineers and makes poor political decisions.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the department, the Minister of Finance hit a new low this week when Manitobans learned that Hydro bureaucrats deliberately misled the public with their deceptive stand about the underwater line.

Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. When is the Minister responsible for Hydro going to admit that her mismanagement and micromanagement of Hydro is hurting everyday Manitobans?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to commend Dr. Ryan for the work that he has done.

I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition that I talked to Dr. Ryan this week about this study, and the study that they were doing was looking at the future, the future of where we might use underground cable—underwater cable.

They were not looking at whether it could be used for Bipole III, and if he talks to Mr. Ryan he will hear the same thing. Mr. Ryan believed that the technology could be used earlier, but the study that they were looking at was looking at how we could use the technology of underwater cable into the future, and that study was done. Professionals were hired to look at it and they made some recommendations and they did say that it could be used in the future.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it is the minister, herself, who is, in fact, confused. The public knows that the NDP is doing what it can to discredit the use of the underwater line right now. The minister's department blew it in their planning on Bipole III. One is left to wonder if her micromanagement had something to do with the phony-baloney press release that went out very recently.

John Ryan says that the underwater line is viable right now. He's the co-author of this report, and he's aware and has commented that the Hydro press release was very misleading, but it went out to mislead the public anyway.

Mr. Speaker, again, because we're fully aware of the micromanagement that takes place from this minister's office, I ask the Minister of Finance if she was the one who ordered Manitoba Hydro to issue the press release and mislead the public.

Ms. Wowchuk: The member opposite is absolutely wrong, Mr. Speaker. He is absolutely wrong, but, of course, that's not the first time. We've heard many comments in this House from the member opposite, the leader of the official Liberal Party, and when we've checked the facts they have not been correct.

But I will say to you, Mr. Speaker, the report review panel found that an underwater route was not an option at this time due to the current state of the cable technology and unproven cable transportation methods. In addition to the technical difficulty, the report also indicated that every metre of underwater

route would be up to 6.6 or up to 11.9 times more expensive than the comparable overhead line.

Mr. Speaker, we—Manitoba Hydro put in place a panel. The panel made a report and I thank the people who sat on that panel.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Southdale Scouts

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, it's exciting to see the Southdale Scouts taking root in our community. On February 22nd, the first Southdale scouting group hosted the Baden-Powell potluck supper at the Southdale Community Centre to celebrate the Scout leaders and volunteers. My family and I were happy to be there and to give thanks to the members who are the backbone of the Scouts.

Highlights of the evening included recognizing the Scout troop for their first-place finish in this year's Wilderness Challenge, as well as recognizing leaders who completed several different Scouts Canada training courses. These included winter camping, where two Cub leaders spent a comfortable night in a snow shelter that they made the weekend before, and, of course, these are great opportunities for volunteers to then return and transfer their skills to our youth.

*(14:30)

The supper was both a big success and a small token of our appreciation. Volunteers and leaders given in so many ways that to truly define all their contributions would be impossible. The Southdale Scout leaders invest passion and energy into making sure that each child recognizes the individual gifts that they have to contribute, and at the end of the evening the Scouts have their chance to demonstrate their teamwork. They invited all of us to race the model cars called Beaver Buggies, Kub Kars and Scout Trucks that they built themselves.

Since the Scouting movement began in the 20th century, this tradition has been a safe environment in which to challenge our kids. The Scouts' motto, "Be Prepared," which not only involves practical skills but also being prepared to help others when they need it. The Scouts continue to uphold this, which is not always easy, but is always rewarding.

Thank you to everyone who supported the Scouts at the potluck supper, and to the Scouts

themselves, who were such welcoming hosts. And most of all, thank you to the leaders and volunteers who go so far beyond the minimum of asked of them.

Sterling Lyon

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise to speak about the life of an extraordinary Manitoban, who had a significant impact on this province. The Honourable Sterling Lyon, former premier of Manitoba, passed away on December 16th, 2010, following a brief illness. A lawyer by training, who also served as a judge on the Manitoba Court of Appeal, Sterling Lyon was a dedicated public servant. He represented the Progressive Conservative Party formidably in this Legislature for 20 years, as leader of the official opposition, as a minister of the Crown, as premier and, first and foremost, as an MLA.

I had the great privilege of knowing Sterling Lyon and benefiting from his tremendous intellect and sharp wit. I will remember him as a man of great integrity, who was a great orator. His passionate commitment to public service is a strong example to young Manitobans. As premier in the late 1970s, Sterling Lyon played an important role in the patriation of the Canadian constitution and the enactment of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. His firm belief in maintaining the supremacy of elected parliaments led to the introduction of the notwithstanding clause in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Sterling Lyon believed in a combination of fiscal responsibility with prudent public investments to build a better future for all Manitobans. His dedication as premier led to the expansion of community-based health care and the modernization of social programs while, at the same time, enhancing the economic growth and prosperity of our great province.

When he was not engaged with his political life, Sterling Lyon was an outdoor enthusiast. He enjoyed spending time in his vegetable garden, as well as at the family cottage at Delta on Lake Manitoba, usually with a beloved golden retriever at his side. He was also an avid reader of political and historical biographies and, in particular, enjoyed reading the works of Winston Churchill.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the entire Progressive Conservative caucus, I'd like to extend my

condolences to the family of Sterling Lyon, including his children Nancy, Andrea, Peter, Jennifer and Jonathon. In addition to being a deeply committed public servant, Sterling Lyon was also a devoted husband, father and grandfather, and I know that's how he'll be remembered by his family.

Sterling Lyon's passing is a loss for all Manitobans, and his legacy will not be forgotten.

St. James the Assiniboine Anglican Church

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend and support the outreach work of the St. James the Assiniboine Anglican church. This March, I was invited to attend an event hosted by the church and Winnipeg Harvest called Famine Feast. This unique event aimed to raise awareness of the plight of those living in refugee camps around the world.

Unlike your typical fundraising dinner, each person who attended the event was given a randomly numbered refugee card and only a small ration of rice and beans, equal to what would be served in a typical refugee camp. I think it would be fair to say that we all went home feeling especially fortunate. For us this was barely a taste of the kind of poverty present in refugee camps, but this can be a family's reality for months or years at a time.

Furthermore, we know that, even here in our own province, too many families struggle to put food on the table. But in the end, that was the goal of the evening: to raise awareness and to provide our support. The proceeds of this event went to support Winnipeg Harvest, which tries to ensure that we all have enough to eat right here in Manitoba.

Another important project that the church supports is an after school drop-in centre at George Waters Middle School through the Manitoba Justice Lighthouse program. The centre provides a whole range of opportunities for youth in the St. James area. Proceeds from the Famine Feast also went to support the important outreach work that the church has been doing for a number of years, such as raising funds to build a medical unit in the remote village of Myungwe, Uganda.

The silver lining to learn about some of the world's greatest injustices is that it inspires us to take action and support the work that has immeasurable benefits for not only St. James, but for all Manitobans and even places beyond our own borders. It is projects like these that remind us of the significance of the phrase: Think global, act local.

I think all Manitobans envision a time where everyone in the world gets enough to eat, and we all have our part to play.

Once again, thank you to the St. James the Assiniboine Anglican Church, to Reverend Canon Murray Still and Paul Hazelton, here in our gallery today, and to Doreen Webb for her work with the Lighthouse program. And thank you to all the volunteers for their hard work and contributions. Keep up the good work.

Education Week

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to recognize Education Week. Education Week was officially kicked off in Manitoba on Monday, April 11th, and runs until the 15th.

This year's theme is "Our Classrooms are the World" and celebrates international education. Every year over 85 countries around the world recognize Education Week and take the opportunity to celebrate education and its importance for successful futures. In Manitoba, Education Week will be marked by thousands of teachers, students and supporters of education, province-wide.

International education is one of the key ways that cultural co-operation and understanding can be fostered here in Manitoba and around the world. As our province and country become increasingly multicultural, and as the barriers to communication across the globe are cut down, intercultural dialogue will continue to grow in importance.

Work has been done in Manitoba to make it easier for international students to come and study in our province. Some of the countries who have worked on this initiative include China, Germany, Italy, India, Australia and Switzerland. The number of international students in Manitoba has increased over the last few years.

And as has been done in previous years, the Manitoba School Boards Association and the Manitoba Teachers' Society have partnered with the Manitoba government to make Education Week come to life. The Manitoba School Boards Association website offers ideas for ways to mark the occasion.

This is the fourth year that Education Week has been recognized in Manitoba. Last year's theme was "Public Schools: Open Doors, Open Minds."

The celebration of diversity during Education Week will help our children learn, and remind us all about the importance of cultural understanding among people globally. As well, our educators, family-families and everyone involved in students' success deserve praise for the great work that they do.

MV Namao

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, the health of Lake Winnipeg is something that all Manitobans have a stake in.

Gimli is proud to be the permanent berth for the research vessel used by the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium, LWRC, the *MV Namao*, and we're also proud to support the work of its general manager, Dr. Kristofferson. His dedication, optimism and the scientific research that his team is conducting are invaluable to the—determining the future of our lake.

The LWRC is a co-operative group of about 30 agencies and organizations who contribute to the study of Lake Winnipeg.

Dr. Allan Kristofferson, a lifelong Gimli resident, is a fisheries biologist and general manager of the LWRC. He has been a consistent advocate for the lake since the group's inception in 1998, and under his leadership the *MV Namao* was converted from a Canadian Coast Guard vessel to a ship now owned and operated solely by the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium. It tours the lake in spring, summer and fall, surveying 65 stations and taking samples of the water and zooplankton.

Scientific research from the last 70 years, including that of Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium, demonstrates that the lake is overfertilized, depriving the ecosystem of essential oxygen. The consortium uses the *Namao* as a platform for both research and educational outreach, including the Lake Ecology Field Program, which invites students between grades 6 and 12 to spend a half day out on the water and participate in hands-on research activities.

Dr. Kristofferson does not downplay the gravity of Lake Winnipeg's condition, but he is also an eternal optimist. He believes in people's individual power to make a difference, by changing their personal lifestyles to be more eco-friendly. Dr. Kristofferson firmly believes, as I do, that we can restore the lake to an ecological balance. Gimli has been home to the *MV Namao* since 2000, but our

community has been tied to the lake for much longer than that.

Thank you to Dr. Kristofferson, and thank you to the crew of the *Namao*, for your dedicated research and advocacy on behalf of one of Manitoba's most precious resources.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that Dr. Kristofferson has joined us in the gallery today. He is also joined by Mr. Bill Barlow, a member of the board of directors of Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium, and I'd like members to join me in thanking them for the good work that they are doing on behalf of Manitobans for the health of Lake Winnipeg.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE

(Third Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member—Minister for Labour and Immigration, who has 18 minutes remaining.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to continue some of the comments I was making yesterday about the budget.

And now, you know, I've had an evening and a night to digest the amendment motion that came forward from the Leader of the Opposition and, you know, much like a sweet and fluffy dessert that is a bit appealing in the moment, but then you feel hungry not that long afterwards and a thirst for something real to digest, that's much how I felt after reading this amendment. Lots of sweet words, nice sentiments, feel warm and fuzzy that, finally, after 11 years they've come to the conclusion that this government is on the right track, is doing things that Manitobans want and want us to do more of. But then, you know, there's a few little hints in the resolution in the amendment of really where they would take Manitoba.

And I'm going to start by looking at the part of their motion that calls on the provincial government to undertake a spending review process. Now, when I first read this I thought, where have I heard that phrase before? It sounds familiar. I can't quite place it, and then it dawned on me. One of the most famous spending review processes in all of Manitoba history was that undertaken by Connie Curran under the last Tory government.

So let's talk a little bit about what came out of that spending review process that was the brainchild of the Leader of the Opposition when he was working in Premier Filmon's office. Well, let's—some of the things that we were left with from the spending review process that Connie Curran undertook when she looked at health care in Manitoba, well, included interesting recommendations. What were one of those recommendations? Well, one of those recommendations resulted in a lot fewer nurses working in Manitoba. She was very consistent with her advice that really one of the problems with health care was there're just too many gosh darn nurses delivering care to patients, and if you could get rid of some of those nurses, well, you can save some money. And so we saw, throughout that decade, a thousand nurses fired and 500 more driven away from the province of Manitoba under the guise of spending review.

What other kinds of things did that spending review process result in? Well, although it's hard to believe today, when you look at the need for family doctors and the number of doctors that are committing to come and work and practice in Manitoba, in fact, you know, throughout the 1990s—the last time that we had a Tory government in this province—medical school spaces were actually cut. They believed that the way to deliver better health care was to have fewer doctors. So that's the formula: fewer doctors and fewer nurses delivering care for people's families. In fact, the medical school spaces went down from 85 spaces to 70 spaces, and it's only through this government, through constant, steady progress that we've managed to increase those medical school spaces again and again so that now we're training over a hundred doctors in the medical school.

In fact, you know, throughout that period, there were fewer doctors practising in Manitoba, over a hundred doctors fewer between '94 and '98. And it's very interesting, if you looked at the graphs of nurses and doctors, if you look at them in the 10 years from

1990 to '99, and then you look at them in the subsequent years, you see a very similar curve, looks very much like an S. It goes down, down, down, down through the Tory years, and then it goes up, up, up, up through the NDP years. It's a U curve that is very clear in those graphs.

You know what else they did to review the spending of health care? They froze all health capital. They actually put out a news release saying that we have no choice but to not invest in another personal care home or another hospital, in the time that they were in government.

And you know the kinds of things that that resulted in when we came into government were fruit flies buzzing around the Health Sciences Centre operating rooms. The trauma centre of the province had—*[interjection]*—fruit flies buzzing around the Health Sciences Centre operating rooms. Well, I hear the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) says it isn't true. Well, he should go there and talk to some of the nurses that worked in that OR at the time, because that's exactly what they told us over and over again. In fact, you know, we went to talk to them about finally—finally—building and renovating that hospital. It took a few tries before we could get them to believe that somebody was actually finally going to take their concerns seriously, because it certainly wasn't the experience that they had had for the previous 10 years.

And now, you know, we don't—but we don't really even have to look as far back as the 1990s to know what the cost would be to health care if the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) had his way. We just have to look—let's look at 2008. In 2008, the Leader of the Opposition said he thought health-care spending should increase at the rate of economic growth. And that might sound like something that could be defended, but let's be clear what that would mean in this budget. If that's the kind of idea, if that's the kind of philosophy that's going to inform his spending review process, then what that will mean to Manitobans is a cut of \$756 million out of this year's health budget, close to a billion dollars cut out of the health budget. Now, we thought last year when they promised to cut half a billion out of the entire budget that that would be a tremendous cost to Manitobans; I can't imagine what \$750 million cut out of the health budget would look like.

And so it's clear that those priorities are not the priorities of Manitobans. This is not what Manitoba

families want, and once again we've seen from the Leader of the Opposition that he just doesn't get what's important to Manitoba families.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And then, you know, the other thing that we see in this resolution that he brought forward was once again reiterating the same misstatements and misinformation that he's been putting on the record for a long time now about Bipole III and what that would mean for Manitobans.

And I suppose, Madam Deputy Speaker, that one shouldn't be surprised, although disappointed, that there is a kind of cynical view of politics on the other side that, really, if you keep saying something that you know is not exactly accurate, if you say that over and over again, if you say that loud enough, people are going to believe you. And the more inaccurate it is, the more people will believe you, and that seems to be the kind of view of politics that they subscribe to on the other side.

They know full well that the bipole will not cost what they're saying that it will cost. They know that. It doesn't matter; the facts don't matter to them.

But, you know, let's take a look at what really the real agenda is over on the other side there for Manitoba Hydro, because I was also thinking last night to where—where have we seen this played before? Where has this happened before where there's a lot of talk about a Crown corporation and a lot of talk about how badly they're doing and how bad everything is? Well, the last Crown corporation that I remember the members of the opposition talking about in that way was the Manitoba Telephone System. And, you know, the Manitoba Telephone System, the sale of that stays in my mind, as I know it does many, many members in this House, because it was for me one of those formative moments where I saw something that belonged to all Manitobans sold off, sold off without regard to the wishes, to the desires of the people that owned it: everybody in Manitoba.

And it's not like, you know, they ran and said, we're going to sell off the MTS. Nobody promised that, that I can recall anyways in that election. But soon after they were elected, that was exactly what they planned to do.

And, you know, you look at that sale and you look at the biography and some of the things that the Leader of the Opposition was very proud to brag about when he was running for leader, that one of

those things was the fact that he was—and he's pad this in his bio—he was one of the top strategists for Premier Filmon. He was an adviser on major files, including the sale of MTS. And it's not his only experience with privatization. In fact, he's a bit of a specialist in privatization. He's had a lot of practice.

* (14:50)

Another thing that he is very proud of, including amongst his accomplishments, is providing strategic counsel to former Ontario Premier Mike Harris when he tried to privatize Ontario Hydro. So he's had some practice when it comes to privatizing hydro and he's—loves to talk about it, something that he's very proud of. In fact, he's already said, as late as 2007, that he would look at involving the private sector to finance hydro projects. It's already out there. They're laying the groundwork for that kind of privatization.

And a lot of what they say and do about the bipole project is simply that: laying the groundwork for a time when, God forbid, they should ever have the reigns of power, they would sell Manitoba Hydro, just like they did the telephone system. Because that's the kind of vision that they have over there, a very short-term vision: immediate gain and no real regard for the future of Manitobans.

So I know in the coming months they're going to be doing everything they can to look like they're going to deliver the kind of progressive, steady government that we have delivered for the last 12 years.

But I don't share their cynical view of Manitobans. I don't believe that Manitobans are fooled by this last-minute desperate flip-flop, that suddenly, you know, they haven't met a nurse or a police officer that they didn't like. I believe that Manitobans will remember these positions that they've taken over the last decade, over the last 10 months.

We don't even have to look that long ago. It was only nine months ago that every one of them stood in their places and voted for an amendment that would have taken half a billion dollars out of the budget, that would have cut funding to education, that would have cut funding to health care and child care, that would have cut funding to conservation of our valuable natural resources. Every one of them voted for that.

So that is the opposition and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) of nine months ago. And today, they would have us believe that they have changed course, that they have seen the light. And what will they do nine months from now? I think that's the question that we all have to be asking. This is not a motion that you can believe in. It's not an opposition you can believe in.

So with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks and sit in my seat and be very interested to hear what other members of the House have to say.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I appreciate the opportunity to put, hopefully, some words that the members opposite will listen to on the record with respect to the budget.

We do know that the member who just spoke, the Minister of Labour, took some time to analyze the amendment that's been put forward and obviously didn't perhaps understand the amendment quite as she should have.

We know that there are significant improvements in the amendments to the budget, and I would suspect that each and every member opposite should look at, very seriously, supporting this amendment.

The amendment does speak of some certain areas within the budget that, historically, have been Conservative policies that have been put forward in this budget, and she did mention police officers. Certainly, our member from Steinbach supports police, supports justice and supports resources being put into the police forces. And we, in fact, do support additional police officers. Quite frankly, those police officers should have been put into place some times sooner, because this government did have \$14 million of federal money some three years ago that they've been holding on to and not putting into the police forces of Brandon or Altona or Winnipeg or, for that matter, Rivers. Rivers, they didn't put any police force—any police officers in Rivers. But that is a positive step forward, certainly is, to help police forces within the province and give them additional resources.

I certainly looked at the budget and personally looked very favourably at the four-year capital infrastructure and recreation program that has been proposed by this government because I do have a couple of projects in the city of Brandon which,

in fact, could take advantage of a long-term funded recreational project, whether it be with the Sportsplex or with the Keystone Centre, which is more of a provincial facility than it is just simply one for the city of Brandon. So that's very positive, and we look at that and certainly support that, and I do.

I don't know if the members opposite remember or not, but when I was standing in this House over the last three years with budgets, I was the one who always suggested an increase in basic personal tax exemption. I—they probably don't remember that, but I was the one who suggested and made comparisons to other provinces, in that basic personal tax exemptions is a very good way to put money into pockets of Manitobans. That way, people who make more money, and if they have a higher basic personal tax exemption, don't have to pay as many taxes on it. What a great, great thought process.

Now, the government of the day, and in this particular budget, have taken baby steps because, you see, they don't use the inflationary factors or cost of living to increase the basic personal tax exemption, and they haven't over the past numbers of years. But they are going to give a \$250 increase in that, from \$8,134 to \$8,384, which isn't going to amount to an awful lot of money, but at least it's a start. And we're going to have a thousand dollars over the next four years, \$250 a year for four years, which should've happened a long time ago. But, unfortunately, Madam Deputy Speaker, it still is a very small part because, you see, in Saskatchewan right now the basic personal tax exemption is some \$14,000 and in Alberta it's some \$16,000. But it's a crawl, not necessarily a walk and certainly not a run, but it's something that's positive going forward.

So there are certain aspects of the budget that are somewhat positive. We talk about some new schools. We talk about—well, we haven't necessarily talked about it, but there was some discussion about the continued relocation of ACC from its current campus to the North Hill campus and that's positive. We've been suggesting that for any numbers of years in this House.

But there are red flags, too. There are a number of red flags in this budget. There are a number of ways that they should be—the budget should be improved. And certainly we look at one of those red flags and that's deficit and debt. And I do know the difference between the two, a deficit on an annual basis as opposed to an accumulated debt that's going forward in the province of Manitoba.

The deficit this year, as you're probably aware, in this budget, is some \$510 million because they've also taken \$50 million out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. So they have expended more than they've taken in on revenue. And that's fine for the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), to say that we'll do this for a short period of time, but that deficit, in my opinion, is a structural deficit. It's becoming a structural deficit. It's not something that is going to be reduced over the next numbers of years. In fact, that deficit is the same as it was last year and the same as I suspect it's going to be next year because when you do a structural deficit on an annual basis you continue to spend more money than you get in revenues.

Now, the revenues have increased in the province of Manitoba because there isn't necessarily that recession. In fact, we've heard a number of comments from the members on the other side that we are doing so very, very well here in the province of Manitoba that everybody else is envious. Well, we are increasing our revenues but they're only increasing by about 2 per cent, but the expenses have increased by 5.5 per cent. Now, it doesn't take an economist or a business person to recognize that when you're spending 5.5 per cent more of the total yet only taking in 2 per cent more in revenues, that's going to be a deficit.

That means you have less money, that you're spending more than you're actually taking in. That is scary when it becomes a structural deficit, and that's where we're heading with this government at the present time, Madam Deputy Speaker. And that, I think, we have to look at very carefully and I think the government has to look at very carefully, as well.

Now, the debt is equally as disappointing and equally as difficult to get a handle on with this particular government because right now they're—they've increased the debt from last year by \$1.6 billion. And I was looking through the budget documents and it seems that there's some cash requirements going forward in this budget document for Manitoba Hydro. There's cash requirements required for the deficit that they're going to incur. There's cash requirements that are necessary for other capital expenditures and those cash requirements, unfortunately, are \$2.7 billion.

They have cash requirements of \$2.7 billion. They have no revenue streams to cover that off. So that means they're going to borrow the money again. Well, right now our debt's at \$25 billion in the

province of Manitoba. An additional 2.7 is going to take it to around that \$28-billion mark and, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's a red flag.

* (15:00)

It's a red flag for the opposition. It should be a red flag for the government because it's going to be a red flag for those people who lend the money to us because eventually the interest rates are going to go up, and we're going to have to pay more money to banks outside of the province of Manitoba. Right now, we're spending \$800 million in debt servicing; \$800 million a year go to debt servicing. That's going to grow quite dramatically in the next little while.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this amendment, which should be supported by the government, speaks of two things. No. 1 is they would like a review of the expenses. In fact, it says: efforts to lower the deficit and control debt through the spending review process that will reduce waste, protect front-line social services and bring a more balanced fiscal approach to government. Pretty solid, pretty solid amendment, something that should well be accepted by everyone.

Now, the other portion of this amendment speaks to Bipole III, and in Bipole III what they're saying simply is, let Manitoba Hydro manage its own affairs. Do not allow government and political interference to dictate what Manitoba Hydro is going to do for the province of Manitoba and its ratepayers. Because, quite frankly, there is some red flags and some concerns with Manitoba Hydro and the way it's operating at the present time with that government interference.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger), former minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, told Manitoba Hydro that they had to go down the west side for a Bipole III instead of the east side. Now, that in itself is wrong because Manitoba Hydro over the last 20 years had been planning on going the east side. All of a sudden, someone over there decided that there was this epiphany and they were going to go down the west side and spend or waste some \$4 billion. That in itself is wrong, Madam Deputy Speaker, because, quite frankly, when they did their summary budgets, they use Manitoba Hydro's net profits to balance off their net loss or their deficit for the Province of Manitoba. The summary budget uses the net income from Manitoba Hydro. That net income was \$346 million—\$346 million—in 2008, but only \$134 million in this budget. It's going in the wrong direction.

So, please, Madam Deputy Speaker, I implore the members opposite to follow this amendment, allow these two improvements to go forward, and all Manitobans will be better for it. Thank you.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): I'm so pleased to have some time today in this Legislature to put some words on the record in regards to our budget, Budget 2011. It is our vision for Manitobans and we—I know this will come as no surprise to members opposite, but I will be supporting this budget with my colleagues on this side of the House. We believe that Budget 2011 is a budget that keeps Manitoba moving forward. It's a plan that is working. We—I'd want—I would like to compliment the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), who went across this province and consulted with the communities and families and employers and stakeholders in this province in regards to what they felt were the priorities for our province.

You know, we've all seen the *Maclean's* article, that it compliments Manitoba in regards to how well it is doing. It—we're called the Manitoba miracle, and I believe that it is the hard work of a lot of stakeholders in our community that are working with us to keep Manitobans working and to keep our economy thriving.

We are going to continue to invest, of course, in our health-care system because we want that health-care system to be there for people when they need services, and we will continue to work to protect our front-line services in health care. And, of course, one of the most important things that we have done, Madam Deputy Speaker, is we have, you know, more doctors and more nurses in the province of Manitoba. And I remember the days of the '90s when, you know, the Progressive Conservatives were going through a similar kind of economic recession in this province and their response to that recession was to cut the number of seats for training for doctors at the University of Manitoba. That was their vision for the province, and that is not our vision for the province of Manitoba. We believe that we must continue to invest in health care so that Manitobans can have the services that they need when they need them, and we will continue to do that.

I'd like to comment, of course, because I am the Minister of Education, I'd like to say—make a few comments of—about our education system. We believe that our education system, and many of the educators that I've had the privilege of working with over the course of the last 18 months have told us

that we have the best education system, right here in Manitoba, in the world. And I want to thank the educators and the administrators and the trustees and the parents and all of our education partners that are working hard, every day, on behalf of the parents and the students in our education system.

We have—education is the equalizer in our society, regardless of your economic background, regardless of your circumstances. If you have an education you can participate in our economy, you can participate in our society, and it's lifted many, many people up in regards to, you know, their education, how they can participate in jobs and careers, and that is certainly something that we have been very focused on in regards to the strategies that we've been working on and our education reform strategies over the last year.

Of course, as everyone knows, we cannot have an economic strategy without an education strategy, and we have made record investments in our public education system through our funding formula. We made a promise in 1999 to fund our education system every year at the rate of economic growth. We have met that commitment every year for 12 consecutive years and we will continue to invest in our public education system because we know that that's an investment in our economy, it's an investment in our communities, it's an investment in families and it's an investment in our young people.

We do, of course, remember the record in the 1990s when the Progressive Conservative Party froze or reduced funding for five consecutive years. And, you know, there was so little money put into our public education system during that time. You know, I often say to people, can you imagine if you didn't fix your car for 12 years, you know, or you didn't put anything into your house for 12 years. Can you imagine the kinds of investments that you would have to make to repair it or bring it back to health because you had such a disrespect for the public education system?

And that's what we've been doing since we got into government. We have been making sustainable investments in our public education system because we know that that is an investment that is critically important to all of Manitoba.

I'd also like to mention, because another area that was ignored throughout the 1990s, when the Progressive Conservatives were in power, was the public investment into our infrastructure. And we have worked hard on our investment strategy in

regards to building new schools and repairing new schools. I just had the pleasure of making our school capital announcement last week and—with the Premier (Mr. Selinger), and it was well received. In fact, it was so well received that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) is actually supporting it in his, you know, in his motion to the budget. He appreciates our funding announcement so much.

And so, you know, oh yes, well, you know, the MLA for Steinbach is chirping from his seat. I was pleased to be, you know, to be in his community about a month ago, and to turn the sod for his new middle school there, and I was so pleased when the superintendent, Ken Klassen, told me that I will always be welcome in that community, and that he's going to make me an honorary minister in Steinbach, and that he's going to invite me to all of his events in Steinbach regardless of, you know, regardless of what community I'm in—you know, portfolio I'm in. We've had such a great working relationship with everyone in Steinbach, and I want the MLA for Steinbach to know that.

* (15:10)

I do want to just comment, as well, in regards to the capital budget, you know, announcement that we made last week, you know. I think it's important, you know, to remember the Tories' commitment to public education, and particularly the one that they made in the 2000 election—2007 election campaign. It—the Leader of the Opposition said that he think—he thought the education budget wouldn't have to increase because enrolment was declining. And that was his commitment to the public education system in 2007. And that is certainly not our commitment.

We are going to continue to invest in our public education system. We're going to invest in our funding formula. Through the funding formula we're going to continue to invest in schools. We're going to continue to invest in our daycares in schools. We're very pleased that our schools recently have seen over 400 spaces put in schools, 400 daycare spaces put in schools because of our moratorium legislation. So we're going to continue to work with school divisions.

We also announced, in our capital budget, something I'm very excited about. It's called an Active Schools Fund, and it's a five-year, \$50-million investment in our gymnasium construction and renewal program. And this is very, very important because everyone knows that we now have mandatory physical education in Manitoba.

It was introduced in 2008. And, you know, we all know that the healthier kids are, the more they achieve academically, and the more that they are going to learn in school, the healthier they are. So we believe that we have now married up our—particular education policy with our capital policy and, I have to tell you, it was very well received in the field. We will be working with our school divisions, in regards to what those priority gymnasiums and renovations will be, and we will continue to keep healthy kids in our communities so that they can continue to learn and participate in our economy.

Some additional funding, you know, that we had to put into the budget this year was \$20 million, and that \$20 million is for existing schools, and that's for the air quality mechanical systems, roofing, structural and building envelope renewal. And I noticed that the Progressive Conservative Party was critical of this announcement when it was announced by the Premier (Mr. Selinger). And I just want to remind them, you know, once again, you know, when you don't put any funding into school divisions for 12 long years, things fall into disrepair, and you've got to make investments in that—in those schools. And we've been putting historic amounts of money into our public education system, and this is just another boost to assist those school divisions that are having difficulties in regards to repairs, make sure that the spaces are incredible learning environments for our young people so that they can continue to be academically successful in our learning institutions.

We also announced a hundred dollar—a hundred-thousand-dollar-per-new-school construction project to support the greening of outdoor spaces, and this is very, very exciting.

An Honourable Member: And winter.

Ms. Allan: All of the educational—well, there's actually an article in *The Globe and Mail* that I'm sure the MLA for Steinbach would like to read, about how important outdoor spaces are to learning, and outdoor learning spaces provide young people with an opportunity to learn in a different way than they learn in the traditional classroom. And this has been very, very well received by the field and we're very excited about this new initiative. So that it's not just the physical space of the school that you're providing for young people to learn in, but it's an outdoor sustainable environment for young people to learn to be active citizens in our society.

And, of course, the other piece of funding that we announced in that budget that we're very excited about is a—\$3 million for projects to improve accessibility for those students with disabilities. We have had some situations recently, you know, where we have young people that have mobility issues. It may be an elevator, it may be something that the school is—requires so that we can provide opportunities for those young people with disabilities to be mobile in the school.

And we will continue to do that, work with our school divisions, provide them with sustainable funding in both areas because we believe that education is the equalizer. This is what drives our economy and grows healthy communities.

Of course, I have to take a moment to talk about property taxes. You know, I remember, you know, in the '90s when taxes were, you know, spiralling and schools were stagnating because of the underfunding of the Progressive Conservatives, and, you know, we have had a very, very serious tax-mitigation strategy here at the same time as we've been investing in our public education system.

The Education Property Tax Credit is going to increase this year in this budget, from \$700, from \$650 and, of course, that's a huge tax saving for Manitobans. It's an additional tax relief of \$16 million. And, of course, I'm sure members across the way will be critical of it because, you know, they said, you know, well, it's about time you got around to this.

Well, I just want to remind members opposite that in 1999, when we got into power, that tax credit was \$250, and we have slowly made progress over the years to the \$700 in 2011, and it's in the budget, and I know that Manitobans will be pleased to see that in this budget.

I want you to know that that tax credit will help 293,000 homeowners and 128,000 tenants. So we're very pleased that that is in the budget.

The other tax-mitigation strategy that we have had is completely and totally eliminating the education support levy. This is a further savings to Manitobans of over \$145 million annually; every year they save that. And, of course, the other tax incentive—the other tax-mitigation strategy we've had is the tax incentive grant. It's a grant that is provided to school divisions, and they have to keep their mill rate at the mill rate from the previous year.

Officials in my department work with school divisions in regards to protecting front-line services and working with them in regards to what the challenges are that they're having in their school divisions. And we're very, very pleased that this tax incentive grant has been very, very positive over the last four years.

The first year we introduced it, 17 school divisions took it, and then the second year we introduced it, 23 school divisions took it. Then last year, when we introduced it, 30 school divisions took it—or sorry, 25 school divisions took it. And this year, 27 school divisions took it and another three school divisions didn't have to take it at all because the funding that they were receiving through the funding formula was enough funding for them to keep their mill rate at the mill rate from the previous year. So we actually have 30 out of 37 school divisions that are holding the line on mill rates in 2011.

This is significant, Madam Deputy Speaker. Stats Canada has identified Manitoba as the only province in the country to see property taxes remain relatively stable since the year 2000. Our tax increase has been 1.2 per cent overall, while the average Canadian increase was 33.7 per cent.

So, you know, we're very pleased that at the same time that we are investing in our public education, that will benefit, we believe, all Manitobans, we're also providing tax relief for homeowners so that they do not see their—so that they can remain in their homes and they don't see their taxes go up.

Obviously, I'd like to take this opportunity to talk a little bit about what an incredible quality education system that we have here in the province of Manitoba. You know, we have so many incredible educators, principals, superintendents, vice-principals, just so many wonderful people working in our public education system.

And, today, I had the opportunity to celebrate the excellence in teaching, and it was the Minister's Awards. And I'd like to thank the previous minister of Education—it was his idea to implement this incredible event.

*(15:20)

And today I had the honour of recognizing some very, very, very talented people. We presented awards for teaching excellence to Katherine Penner for early years teaching excellence; in the middle years, Ralph Backé; teaching excellence in the

senior years, Gregory Shedden; the outstanding new teacher, Pamela Doerksen; and the team collaboration award this year went to three teachers, Harold Enns, Susan George and Maria Nickel, and we recognized a principal this year who, for his—as an outstanding school leader, and that was Jerry Sodomlak. And it really was an incredible ceremony downstairs in the dining room. The award recipients had their families with them and, of course, their nominators.

This is a very special award because these individuals that receive this award today were nominated by their peers. And I don't think there is any other recognition that you can receive that is more important than when you receive an award from the people that work with you, that think so highly of the work that you do in your organization, in your school, that they think enough of you to nominate you for the award.

And it was very, very moving to hear their stories about the work that they are doing in our public education system, and I just want to, on behalf of all of my colleagues—and I know my colleagues across the way feel the same way. We really need to take a moment to recognize all of the absolute incredible work that has been—being done by all of the individuals in our public education system. They really are one of the reasons, Madam Deputy Speaker, that our graduation rate, quite frankly, has increased as much as it has over the last 10 years. Our graduation rate has gone from 72 per cent to 82.7 per cent. It was mentioned in the budget speech, and we're very, very proud of that. And it is the work that has been done by all of our education partners in our public education system, and they have participated in that success with us.

I'd like to just talk for a couple of minutes about our—my legislation, Preparing Students for Success Act. We will be raising the mandatory age in Manitoba from 16 to 18 for going to school. And this is a piece of legislation that we believe will help young people participate in our economy. It'll help them move from our post—move from our K-to-12 system and move into our post-secondary system. If we can—we know that quite often young people could become disengaged in the public education system around the age of nine—or around grade 9, excuse me.

And we know that by working with teachers and providing programs and services to teachers that, if we have teacher mentors in schools, and that was an

initiative that we started—a pilot project we started three years ago. If we have mentors working with those young people that we think are vulnerable of dropping out of school, that we can work one on one with them, and we can encourage them to stay in school.

You know, not every young person fits into the traditional classroom. Lots of young people, you know, need to know their teacher on a more personal basis. They need to have a real connection with the teacher. The teacher needs to know the—their name. The teacher needs to know their personal circumstances. That young person, they could be a single parent living on their own. They could be a young person who is working two jobs to help their family. They could be young people that have maybe struggled in the past with attaining their credits, and they're just not sure, you know, how to get back on track—and these kinds of programs that we have already happening here in the province of Manitoba, some of the best programs.

You know, I had an opportunity to visit the off-campus school in Brandon, the Neelin High School. What a remarkable, remarkable program, and I want to congratulate the Brandon School Division for that program. They've graduated over 250 students who dropped out of school. And one of the most incredible stories I heard was a young man who dropped out of school. He ended up in the jail system, and when he got out, he went straight to that off-campus school and he connected with those teachers and he got back on track and he is now an engineer. And when he graduated, everyone was so proud of him, and it just brings tears to your eyes what these kinds of programs can do.

I was at the Manitoba School Boards Association awards evening. It seems like just a couple of weeks ago, but I'm sure it may have been longer, and Argyle School received an award from the Manitoba School Boards Association because it's an alternative school and it provides programming for young people that doesn't fit into the traditional classroom, and these are the kinds of programs that we are going to develop. This legislation is going to go into place and we're going to continue to work with our education partners so that young people, when they go to school and they're in school and they might lose their way, we're going to be able to make sure that we identify those young people, we engage them and we find a way to get them back on track so the doors aren't closed to them so that they can get that diploma in their hands, so that they can

move on to the post-secondary education system, whether it's university, whether it's college, whether it's a technical-vocational program.

We're going to do more work in regards to setting up programs for apprentices. We're going to do more work in setting up apprentice option programs in the senior years. And, of course, I have to talk about my daughter who is an electrician apprentice who just wrote last week her final exams at Red River College and will be a journey person. She is so fortunate that she got into a trade because that's what turns her on and we got to find more programs for more kids that turn them on because when they get turned on, they get the—they are on and they will succeed and they will get jobs and they will participate in our economy and they will build healthy communities all across this province.

And that's what this legislation is going to do, and I'm very, very pleased with it, and I'm quite sure that members opposite will be voting for that legislation when it's in the House because I'm quite sure that they know that this is what's good for our—for Manitoba and what's good for young people and what's good for parents, families and communities.

I do want to make some comments about early childhood education because I'm very, very thrilled that my department has set up an Early Childhood Education Unit in the Department of Education. This is something that I believe is absolutely critical. We all know that the investments that you make in young people—or in really young people, are the most important investments that you can make.

We were the first jurisdiction in Canada to have an early childhood education—or to have a Manitoba Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet and a Manitoba Healthy Child portfolio, and the reason for that was we know that the investments that you make in the early years are investments and learning that will last far beyond any other kind of learning that happens. It's absolutely critical. And, you know, we've had great success with our parent-child coalitions. We've had great success with our Triple P programs, and we've had, you know, great success, you know, with our early development instruments, an EDI instrument that is used by—it's a measurement taken by kindergarten teachers so that they can identify whether that child is ready to go to school.

And in our last—in our recent funding announcement in January, we identified funding for all school divisions so that if school divisions need

more programs and services to identify those young people when they get to school that aren't quite ready to—that might be vulnerable and might need more help, that funding is there for those school divisions to provide programs and services to them so that we can get them ready to learn.

*(15:30)

The Early Childhood Education Unit is very, very exciting. We put it together in my department with no new funding, and they are going to work with all of our partners. They're also going to work with Healthy Child portfolio and they will continue to work alongside our partners because what we're going to do is promote integrated programming and services to support families before they reach kindergarten. That is absolutely, critically important for us. It is an investment that we are going to make because we have now—we now know that it's—what's really important is not the K-to-12 system; it's before sometimes that baby is even born, and we need to work with those parents to get ready for that baby being born. The Healthy Baby benefit, we all know that prenatal benefit, how important that benefit was—or is, and we need to continue to work with young people, get them ready for the K-to-12 system and then move them through that K-to-12 system into the post-secondary system. So we're really taking a holistic approach to our public education system for all young people, and that's one reason why I am so proud to be part of this government.

And I am so proud to vote for this budget because this really is a budget that invests in Manitoba families. It's a budget that takes their priorities into account, and there is nothing more important than investments that we make that continues to keep our economy growing. We're going to continue to strengthen our front-line services. We're going to continue to create jobs; we have the lowest unemployment rate in this country and we're proud of that. We're going to continue to grow our population; we have more young families building their future here in Manitoba than ever before in this province, and we are proud of the work that we have done in that regard. We're going to continue to move Manitoba forward. We're going to continue to invest in Manitoba, in the priorities that we believe are Manitobans' priorities.

Thank you very much. I see my time is almost out, but I encourage members opposite to remember the dark days of the '90s and maybe—[interjection]—yes, and, you know, because I remember it every day

as a school trustee—when I was a school trustee. I remember it quite often as I look across the way and remember their record and then think about the investments that we have made on behalf of Manitoba families here in our province. Thank you.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): It's a privilege for me to rise today to speak to the budget amendment motion as was brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). What we're looking for is a sensible approach to budget improvements, and amendments presented by the Leader of the Opposition are reasonable and they are responsible.

We're pleased to finally see a number of measures and initiatives be part of this budget, measures we have been calling for for many years. And it is, however, unfortunate that it took so many years and for Manitobans to face another election year for this government to move on many of these initiatives.

Policing and justice. We've been calling on this government to increase policing services for years and more police to start cracking down on violent crime and make our communities safer. We've seen, you know, this government receive a substantial amount of money well over three years ago. We've had a number of policing organizations within the province wondering when this government was going to actually address the shortages, and of course they would wait until the election year to make those announcements.

Unfortunately for Rivers, my community did not see the benefit of an additional police officer, but I'm trusting that the minister will take the questions raised in question period today and the comments made by the chief with regard to the need within that community and do the right thing and revisit his decision. He did indicate there was still some additional money left in that initiative, so I'm assuming that he still has an opportunity to revisit that and help out the good people of community—of Rivers.

Advanced education and training. Universities have been asking for a long-term funding strategy plan for a number of years, and we're pleased to see that this government has finally listened to them and we're waiting to see if the colleges in the province will be the beneficiaries of the same plan. When I was the critic for post-secondary education a number of years back, this was an issue that came up continually when we met with the presidents and the

administrators within the facility, so I'm pleased to see that this was recognized as a need, and we look forward to seeing how this government will lay out its strategy.

Students, too, have said that they'd like to see predictability in tuition fees, something that we hope they will receive from this budget, and we need to hear from the new Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby) about whether this will apply to each facility. I have two children, one in grade 11 and one in grade 10, and I'm looking at this announcement and this promise very closely, as I will be looking at tuition fees for my children down the road, and I really want to see if this government actually did make a promise that they will be able to keep in that area.

Education and health. We've seen this government fail so many young people—young students in this province. We see a policy that this minister was just speaking to, of having students stay in school until they're 18 years of age, and I've heard from all of my schools with having concerns with regard to that policy and wondering how that is going to be implemented. I—so I'm looking forward to the minister sharing more about that policy and, actually, how she thinks that this is going to actually work within the school system; how they're going to make young people accountable to the school system to their 18th year, and how schools are actually going to be able to enforce that type of a policy.

Health bureaucracy. Well, we've seen this government fail Manitobans in so many ways, with regard to the ballooning bureaucracy within the RHAs, and we've asked this government to do a review, to have a look at the RHAs, and to look at the administrative costs, and to help make those costs more transparent to Manitobans, instead of burying them in different parts of their budget. We really want to see this government take some leadership in this area. And I think that once they do, we would then see a better-run system.

We have communities like Minnedosa and Neepawa who are waiting for this government to show some leadership on their new—their concept of a health facility proposal. We have 11 municipalities who have signed off on a memorandum of understanding, waiting for this government to make a decision on a facility that was introduced and supported by the doctors of the region.

So we look forward to this government doing some smart things in the health area, and we're

assuming that that could be done sooner rather than later.

Insulin pumps. We've been calling on the government to make this option available to young people with diabetes for years, and it's good to see them come to the table for the young people with diabetes. And we hope that it will give options to young people with diabetes and make their lives easier to manage, because this is a disease that is actually growing in this province, and we don't appear to have any type of a strategy to address the diabetes epidemic in our province. And I believe this is just one small step in addressing this illness and making life easier for so many Manitobans.

Water stewardship. It's rather interesting that we have a minister that is very invisible to the community—to the—to Manitobans. We hear that from so many municipalities, that they just can't get a meeting with the minister, that they can't get her attention. And it's very unfortunate that that has taken place and that that's the perception that Manitobans have of a government; that it should be more open and transparent, and show that they actually want to work with Manitobans. So, when we see that this government is talking about addressing some of the issues that are out there, I look forward to seeing what this minister will actually be able to put forward.

Water management problems exact a considerable toll—economic toll on individual communities and the larger provincial economy. And not only economic toll, but emotional toll. We see families that have lost their livelihoods because of poor management structures, and we need to see a better system in place, and we need this government to take a leadership role in addressing that.

* (15:40)

When Budget 2011-12, the government formally acknowledged that there is still more work to be done, and we agree. There's a lot of work to be done in this area. Progressive Conservatives have long toted the need for a comprehensive water management study for this province, and it's positive that this NDP government is finally listening to us on this very, very important issue.

We recognize the importance of added capital investments in water management, such as drainage, dams and control structures and culvert replacements, and this commitment is particularly timely in light of the excessive moisture challenges

of recent years. I know that so many municipalities across the province and, in particular, in my constituency, that I'm aware of, where they're going to have to rebuild so much infrastructure, and I really believe that this government has a role—a leadership role to play in making sure that these communities' needs are addressed.

We also appreciate the government's recognition of the valuable work being done by conservation districts. They play a very critical role in managing matters like water on our landscape, and we support their ongoing efforts across the province. Conservation districts are a key resource for me when I'm asking questions on behalf of my constituents who may have concerns with regard to a management issue of water, and I believe that they should be respected and treated very, very well by this government as a resource for all of us within this Chamber.

Family services. In the area of child care—we believe that more child-care spaces and spaces for nursery schools are always welcome. But let's be very clear that this only scratches the surface on addressing the issues within child care. I hear from my child-care centres within my constituency that frozen operating grants and a shortage of workers are making their facilities very stressful environments to work in. They are finding that they need to be looking at an increase in their operating grants to address this—the extra burden that are being put on facilities to meet the needs of safety within the facilities, and I believe that when government offloads regulations and requirements without providing the supports to address that, and working with a frozen operating grant, that really makes it a challenge for facilities to maintain what they have.

My children both attended child-care centre in Souris. The workers are amazing. The director was a strong leader within the community, as well as within the centre, and I believe that child-care spaces are an integral part of a community. Whether it be in Winnipeg, in the north, or in rural Manitoba, it is a tool that community development people look at as an asset for a community, and I believe that we just need to build on that asset.

Bipole III. While we're pleased to see the above measures be part of the budget, a number of issues remain within this budget which should be addressed, which are unaddressed, and Bipole III is one of them. We believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, that one of the major issues we continue to see with

this budget and this government is its continued support for routing the required Bipole III transmission line on the west side of the province. Manitoba Hydro has recommended building this transmission line along the east side of Manitoba, and we believe that is the better route.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we believe that there are so many things that this government can be doing, should be doing. The budget amendments presented by our leader are excellent, and I believe that, going into an election year, I truly believe that the amendment should be supported. We can make Manitoba a better province and show that we are working together to make Manitoba a have province, which we presently do not see in our province. Thank you.

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity to rise in support of our Budget 2011. Our budget shows that our government is on track with its five-year economic plan. Our recovery has been strong and steady, and, indeed, we are coming out of our first year \$78 million ahead of plan. But there are commentators who have suggested that our budget is recycled, classic or following a blueprint, and I think the word "boring" may have also slipped in there somewhere. It seems they mean these cracks to be disparaging.

Yes, admittedly, it is our 12th budget in a row to bring in tax cuts that will benefit all Manitobans. Once again, we're investing in ways to train and keep more doctors and nurses. And, yes, our government is still working on ways to keep tuition fees affordable.

Would you say that we're in a rut by increasing our financial support to schools at or above the rate of inflation? But I believe, for the majority of Manitoba families, when I say that our government should continue delivering what Manitobans have come to expect of an NDP government, and that is fair, responsible and economically sound budgets. And if that is boring, then bring on boring, I say.

As a veteran school teacher, I take great satisfaction from the fact that we are continuing to build on our success in getting more of our students to complete their high school education. Our graduation rates are up 14 per cent from 2001. This translates into hundreds and hundreds of lives turned around, careers embarked on and dreams fulfilled. It means more people contributing to our economy to

the best of their ability. It means a stronger Manitoba.

Our 47 per cent increase in over–overall financial support to our schools is no doubt a key factor in this success. But, most of all, credit must go to our dedicated teachers who go to extraordinary lengths to engage our students in their education and overcome a range of personal and socio-economic obstacles to staying in school.

Our government has demonstrated that we value our educators as important partners in our education strategies. Unlike the '90s that I recall clearly, as do many teachers in this province, since the infamous Fridays that were imposed on teachers, when salaries were rolled back, when collective agreements were gutted, when, according to the Education minister of the time referring to the future of our schoolchildren, there is only so much room in the lifeboat.

When I hear the opposition leader's reference to spending review process, well, I have to say, the ghost of past spending review processes looms large. Cutbacks to teaching time, but let's say it's mostly cutback to our children's learning time.

So, unlike the previous government and, as announced in the budget, our government is putting even more resources into boosting the province's graduation rate by putting more resources into the Bright Futures program. Bright Futures is a community-based program that provides tutoring, mentorship and various other supports to high-school-age kids in Winnipeg neighbourhoods at the lower end of the socio-economic scale where dropout rates are alarmingly high.

Members have seen an enthusiastic write-up of the program in *The Globe and Mail* recently. It got off to a promising start just last summer on the recommendation of the Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship. I'd like to note that Bright Futures is working because of the efforts of volunteers, and I'd urge people to look into this opportunity to make a big difference for a whole generation of kids in the North End.

I also want to commend our Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) on the legislation to raise school attendance to age 18. This is landmark legislation. It will provide the incentive to all educational partners to develop inventive ways and creative options for students.

The Adolescent Parent Centre is a prime example of the education system meeting the needs

of a group of students who in the past would have been lost. I taught in that program for many, many years, and I was always impressed with the wonderful way in which we were able to adapt and create opportunities for these students, that they would have a chance to bring their children to school and to learn not only parenting but the academics that would give them a way to their high school diploma.

I would like to highlight an announcement in the budget that has so far received scant attention by the media and that is the Children's Arts and Cultural Activity Tax Credit. Some people might think that this is a credit that will draw the most interest from the more well-to-do constituencies. I'd like to assure them that this is not so. For families in my constituency of Rossmere, it is significant, and I will explain why. Do you know that, according to the 2006 census, up to 20 to 25 per cent in large chunks of Rossmere speak German, and that the figure for Ukrainian averages about 5 per cent? We have two grassroots organizations anxious to see their children—to see that their children are part of this rich linguistic legacy. Manitoba Parents for Ukrainian Education and Manitoba parents for German language education, which, incidentally, it was presided over by my predecessor in Rossmere, the former MLA Harry Schellenberg.

* (15:50)

We have been successful—they have been successful in lobbying for Ukrainian and German language instruction in a number of schools in River East Transcona, particularly in the Rossmere area. They sponsor various extracurricular activities to promote the Ukrainian and German culture, such as language camps, excursion to communities with large concentrations of Ukrainian and German speakers, multicultural field trips and an exchange program.

There are, inevitably, fees for these programs, and now the Children's Arts and Cultural Activity Tax Credit will see—will ease the financial burden for families by providing a 10.8 per cent income tax credit for the cost of these programs up to \$500. This will save families—excuse me. This will save families who made full use of the credit, but it also goes beyond language instruction. Eligible activities also include such supervised lessons—such as supervised lessons in music, dramatic arts, dance and visual arts, natural environment and wilderness activities, private tutoring in school subjects, and the

development of interpersonal skills through organizations like Girl Guides, Scouts and Cadets. It's a wonderful way of helping to enrich the lives of young people which will continue to bring returns as they enter the workforce and start families of their own.

My constituents would put a big seal of approval on this tax credit, and let me add that this tax break is a made-in-Manitoba idea. It was in the works long before the federal government announced a similar credit in its proposed budget.

Rossmere's demographics also show a very sizable community of seniors, and this budget has many reasons for seniors to support it. One is the increase in the seniors' Education Property Tax Credit to \$1,100 over three years. This year the maximum credit goes from \$800 to \$950. Another bonus is the increase in the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit by \$255 to \$1,275. This is in recognition of the very valuable services that relatives, friends and neighbours perform to care for seniors who are living in their own homes and help them stay in their own communities.

As someone in the demographic that has elderly parents, I can speak from personal experience, but also the experience of almost all of my close friends as well as many constituents in my community who have found the supports that we provide through home care, long-term care and rehab have been crucial in providing a quality of life for their loved ones, but also for themselves and their own families. I shudder to think what my life, my father's life and that of my mother would have been had the spending review for health of the previous government come to fruition. Thank goodness Manitobans could see through the smokescreen in 1999 and chose our government to shepherd in the kind of quality health care that provides for all its citizens. And I trust Manitobans will see the smoke and mirrors again.

In Rossmere, we are fortunate to have provincial government support for what is perhaps the most effective of seniors—senior centres, the good neighbour—the good neighbours alive—pardon me—Active Living Centre. Thanks to our Province's support and the many, many hours of work put in by its volunteers, its champions and participants, it has become what I would like to think of as a model. Two years ago it relocated to the new Bronx Park Community Centre, which boasts a gym, computer lab, home improvement lab and creative arts lab. Good Neighbours reaches out to a membership

of over 1,000 to provide a variety of programs of over—a variety of programs and activities designed to keep our older citizens active and engaged.

One of the programs that operates out of Good Neighbours is funded by the WRHA, and it's called Supports for Seniors. Run by Leza Mondaca and Megan Wallace, it focuses on a number of apartment complexes in the Rossmere area, and these apartments have primarily a seniors population. I've had a chance to highlight the work of Megan and Leza in the past, but it is worth repeating since it demonstrates the commitment our government has made to ensure that our elders are supported in the community they choose to live in. As more seniors move to apartment living arrangements, programs such as the one Leza and Megan provide builds community in their complex, offers social activities and, when issues arise, gives direction or clarifications of the option for these residents. Many of these folks do not have regular contact with family, and having someone who can assist them is absolutely crucial.

Many families in Rossmere need two incomes to get by, and affordable child care is vital to them. The budget provides reassurance that this is a priority, and—with a further 2,100 spaces on the way. More funded child-care spaces are a perennial in our budgets, enabling us to increase their number by 65 per cent since 2000.

As a graduate of the U of M's Faculty of Human Ecology and a home economist, I do have to put in a good word for the budget's focus on nutrition. I had a most enjoyable experience representing the—our Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) at Ag Days in the classroom, and I was absolutely taken with the programs that are available to help our students in our schools understand the business of food production and being able to come up with creative ways of using these products. Partnering with Peak of the Market to have schools across the province sell fresh Manitoba-grown vegetables, instead of sweets, to raise funds for school functions, it is a win-win move. It sends a clear message to both students and the neighbours who buy the vegetables from them about the importance of making healthy choices when it comes to their diets.

I welcome the announcement that the Province is contributing to the Winnipeg Foundation's nourish potential fund, which will support nutrition programs for kids in need. It is shocking to think that more

than 6,000 Winnipeg youngsters would have had to skip breakfast or lunch without these programs.

We will also be beefing up investments in our northern healthy food initiative, which enables residents of remote communities to supply their own food. The government will also continue funding for the Dial-a-Dietitian hotline, which puts free professional advice about nutrition within the reach of all families.

In conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a budget for all Manitoba families. It presents sound financial management. It builds on our strong economy and the optimism of Manitobans. It is a budget that I support and, I believe, will keep us on the track that Manitobans want, moving forward.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Madam Deputy Speaker, and as I rise to speak to support the amendment brought forward by the leader of our party and, certainly, it does add some context to a rather listless budget.

And, first of all, Madam Deputy Speaker, just to speak about local flooding around my area: obviously, the Carman constituency is just on the outside of the Red River Valley and is not part of the Red River flood, although we do contribute our share of water into the Red River. There has been extensive overland flooding in my constituency and a number of roads have been washed out and there's been some economic damage already in some of the dairy producers not being able to ship their milk and trucks not being able—because trucks can't get down the roads, so it has an immediate effect on the constituency and the landowners.

And as the—obviously, the municipalities will have to—are spending a lot of time and a lot of effort in fighting this—the flood waters, the local flood waters, it is a drain on their finances. So—and I'm getting a number of calls out of my constituents who are not pleased at all about the water coming down and that, but really it reflects back on a larger picture.

This—the landowners, the municipalities, the conservation districts, they've all talked about developing a comprehensive water management strategy. And that's something that our party's been talking about. The leader's talked about it; I've been talking about it. I have some very excellent groups in my constituency, such as Deerwood soil and water management group, that have over 20 years of data

in flooding—retaining flood waters back, nutrient management.

And it's—the missing link in this whole thing has been the Province, because, and it's not—we're not looking—we don't want more regulations coming down from the Province. We want the Province in here as a partner, working with the municipalities, working with landowners, because they're the ones who really know the land and know how it works. And—but they—they're looking for some sense of support from the Province to manage water in a better way.

*(16:00)

And it's not only to manage water in times of flooding. We're also looking at drought protection, and it's hard to talk about drought protection when we're in the middle of a flood, but weather cycles come and go and we know that we will be back in a drought cycle again some day down the future.

We've got some excellent projects on the works right now to develop dams and that's to store water. It helps during flood years when you can retain some water back and whether it's large dams, small dams. The Deerwood—as I mentioned, the Deerwood Soil and Water have been very successful in the small dams projects in retaining flood waters—holding flood waters back.

But we're also looking at some larger dam structures to store water for these drought years so we have potable water, so we don't have communities running short of water—which, again, seems to be a strange thing to be talking about in these days of flooding, but we have to look down the road and what we can face. We need these dams, as I said, for potable water, for irrigation, for livestock supplies—watering for livestock supplies.

It takes a much larger vision than what this government has had and there is a real sense of frustration out there, both from the municipalities and landowners, about the lack of co-operation they're getting out of this government.

In terms of the budget itself, we see the annual deficit rising. We seen the debt rise substantially. And I, in a past life, I do have a fair bit of experience in budgets and doing budgets and I do know the difference between debt and deficits, unlike some members opposite. And this is a very, very troubling trend that we're heading here, because there's—spending seems to be out of control, and yet we're not results-oriented on this spending.

And if—just as an indication of—this government seems to be always very proud of pouring more and more money into health care, and yet why is it now—and I have a constituent who is waiting for an ultrasound, who needs an ultrasound. To go to Boundary Trails Hospital right now, you have an eight-month wait to get an ultrasound. And we hope that she can get in then. We hope that the tests are positive but that's an awful long time to wait.

So why is it that we're pouring more money in and yet we're getting less results all the time. We have severe doctor shortages throughout my constituency and we have worked—my communities have worked with the RHAs. I have two RHAs in my constituency, and they're working with the RHAs to recruit doctors, but for all the hype about bringing more doctors in, we still face severe shortages in rural Manitoba.

And of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, it wouldn't be anything for me if I didn't mention Bipole III and the ongoing mess that this government has created with Bipole III. The budget didn't address the waste and the mismanagement of their proposed west route. They continue to sink their head down and just try to push this through and that's—we have, as the leader said today, I think we're up to seven different cost estimates on this and it's kind of like a daily thing. You sort of want to check the latest news report to see what the latest cost estimate is on this and I really feel they have no idea at all. The only thing that we know for sure is that it's going to cost Manitoba families a lot of money. Because their cost—their expense side on this is out of control. We've seen it on other projects that this government has managed and this one hasn't even started and the costs are going through the roof.

The whole idea of this going the west side and travelling through my constituency, in particular, and neighbouring constituencies—the interruption to the farmland, to the farmland practices—we're talking food production here. You're going to interfere with this line. You're going to interfere in some of the most productive land in Manitoba.

With this proposed west-side line, you're going to put in jeopardy livestock operators, whether it be dairy farms or wintering sites for beef cattle, intensive hog operations, chicken operations. You're putting them all at risk by proceeding with this.

And not only that, you're locating this line close to residences. I have a young couple who bought a residence in my constituency, and their sole reason

for buying this was to be off by themselves and away from the main traffic, and they're originally from Germany. They know about intense populations, and they wanted to get away from that. And, lo and behold, this proposed line now is going to come right through their property, right beside their residence and, needless to say, that they are very upset at the prospect of this coming through.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

By my calculations, and I'm sure the government has—will refute the numbers, but I see this line as 160 miles through agricultural—intensive agricultural land, and you're going to create an economic dead zone with this line because there will be no new development within a half a mile on each side of this line. No one will build a house, will build a shed, will build anything within a half a mile of this line.

And this—you know, we're talking about a hundred and some thousand acres with no new development on it. The economic impact, or the lack of being able to develop, the income loss to both homeowners and farms is going to be astronomical, so I really urge this government to take a second look at this foolish project of the west side, build it on the east side where it should be and let's get on with it. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Acting Speaker, when the Martindale family drove from Thornhill, Ontario, through Manitoba on the way to Vancouver in the summer of 1959, I never dreamed that someday I would be a member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

I have two memories of Manitoba of that time: one of the broad main street of Portage la Prairie and the other of the fine hospitality of my mother's first cousin, Lila, and her husband, Don Fennel, with whom we stayed in Lenore, Manitoba. I have deep Fraser roots here since my great-grandfather, John James Anderson Fraser, homesteaded on the Assiniboine River in Breadalbane District six miles north of Virden.

I also never imagined that almost 21 years in this Legislature would pass by so quickly. The nine years in opposition, though, felt like a long time, whereas over 11 years in government with the busyness that that entails has flown by. I would not be here if it were not for the good people of Burrows Constituency, and to them I owe a great debt. It is true they rejected me and my party in 1988 when I was a candidate and the one who lost by the least

number of votes of any candidate in Manitoba in that election, 109 votes. I recall that during that election I ran into a gentleman canvassing for the Liberal Party who knew me, and he said at the doorstep, he told the voters, Martindale's a good guy but wrong party. In 1990, the voters in Burrows and elsewhere flocked back to the NDP, and I was successful in that election and was re-elected four times.

Those of us who are successful need always keep in mind that it is the voters of our constituency who put us here, and it is they that we serve, as well as the need to be faithful to our party principles and the platform we ran on. Life is full of surprises and changing careers and getting into politics is one for me. It wouldn't have happened except for my colleague in ministry and now in the Legislature, the MLA for Elmwood. After his ordination in the United Church, he was on the staff at North End Community Ministry, formerly Stella Mission in Winnipeg's North End. His election to Parliament in 1979 created a vacancy to which I was encouraged to apply. After two interviews in January and February 1980, I was hired and moved from Eatonia, Saskatchewan, to Winnipeg in June 1980.

So how and why did I change from working in an outreach ministry of Winnipeg Presbytery to the Manitoba Legislature? This is a question I've been asked frequently over the years. My job description was to work on social issues affecting residents of the North End, and I spent most of my time working on housing and poverty issues. I was often working with other organizations or coalitions such as the Anti-Sniff Coalition and the Housing Concerns Group and many others.

*(16:10)

One of the first meetings I had in June 1980 was with the executive director of CEDA, Community Education and Development Association, who is now our Premier (Mr. Selinger). He talked me into joining the Inner City Committee for Rail Relocation, which met for years trying to get the CP rail yards relocated, unsuccessfully, and also to stop the building of the Sherbrook-McGregor overpass, in which we were successful.

For three years, I worked on a contract with Winnipeg Housing and Renewal Corporation on converting St. John's United Church into Charles Cathedral Housing Co-op, which was a fascinating process of which to be a part.

During the 10 years that I was at North End Community Ministry, I realized that it is not just decisions by various levels of government that affect poor people in the areas of social assistance and housing, but almost all government decisions and often the effects are negative. For example, when the Salter Bridge needed replacing in the 1980s, city councillors were concerned about complaints about delays if the old bridge were torn down first and the new bridge built in its place. So they decided to leave the old one up and build the new one beside it. To do this, they persuaded the school division trustees to give up part of the playing field beside R.B. Russell School. The school then moved the playing field to the back of the school and wiped out a very successful community gardening project that provided fresh vegetables to dozens of people in the community. It also meant the demolition of a child-care centre.

I had been involved in lobbying government, including a provincial NDP government on poverty and housing issues. Yet I felt that the North End needed a strong advocate inside the Legislature to advocate on behalf of some of the poorest citizens of this province.

To me, I was not changing my ministry—much of it a prophetic ministry in the sense of speaking truth to power—but, rather, I was continuing my ministry in a wider forum.

After I was elected, I continued to represent many of the same people on the same issues inside the Legislature as I had in the community. I was appointed the Housing critic for my party and then the Family Services critic.

Our parliamentary system, as it currently stands, has a limited role for opposition members who are given voice but no power to change things, especially when the government has a majority in the Legislature. Since my party formed government, I have had the privilege of being the caucus chair, legislative assistant to three ministers of Family Services and Housing, and government whip as well as serving on numerous standing committees, particularly the Public Accounts Committee.

The role of a backbencher is not an easy one because much of what we do is behind the scenes. Nonetheless, there is a significant role to play internally, for example, on the Legislative Review Committee which vets legislation, in our case, before it goes to Cabinet and caucus.

And let me give you just one example of how I, as an individual, influenced legislation. One of my constituents wrote me about a concern about maintenance enforcement. In fact, there was a reason, a legislative reason, why she couldn't collect maintenance enforcement for her children.

So I wrote a letter to the Minister of Justice, at the time the MLA for St. Johns, and recommended that the next time we amend The Maintenance Enforcement Act, we make the specific change, and he agreed to do that and it was in the bill. And on the day that he had a new conference to highlight the amendments, I phoned this constituent. She rushed down to the Legislature to congratulate the Member for St. Johns, and she was interviewed and quoted in the *Free Press*.

So, sometimes, even an individual constituent can influence government to make progressive changes; in this case, to get money for her children that was denied to her.

Thank you to all my caucus colleagues and Assembly colleagues who have made my time here both interesting and enjoyable. I think I've got along well with—well, most of the time with almost everyone. If one treats others with respect, it is usually reciprocated, whether it is someone of your own party or someone from across the aisle.

I look forward to seeing some of you at functions of the association of former MLAs, and I wish everyone here well who is retiring either voluntarily or involuntarily.

It has been a privilege to tour Manitoba extensively, including to 12 First Nations communities. Some of my fondest memories will be of travelling with colleagues, especially to out-of-town caucus retreats where we get to spend more time together and have time for socializing.

We have a beautiful province which everyone should get to see. I can highly recommend taking the train to Churchill, which my wife and I did several years ago and it was certainly worth the trip to see our varied geography and to view beluga whales and polar bears.

There are many staff in this building without whom we couldn't do our jobs. Caucus staff work behind the scenes to assist us in many ways and their efforts are appreciated. I'm especially grateful for the internship students who do considerable writing and research for us and always do an excellent job.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The most beautiful room in this building, I think, is the reading room, and the library staff there are extremely helpful.

I had the pleasure of being on the committee that hired our current Clerk, Patricia Chaychuk, and I have great respect for the parliamentary knowledge of her and her staff.

The Chamber staff, including one of my constituents who, on occasion, gives me a ride home, are always friendly and courteous.

What are some of the thoughts I have about my political philosophy? From the time I came to Winnipeg, I've tried to incorporate important principles in all that I do, such as the need for social and economic justice, respect for others and their opinions, win-win approaches, inclusivity, harmony and building community.

I try to treat people accordingly and set high standards of conduct for myself. I accepted others from where they started and encouraged them through providing opportunities to evolve. I spent my time devising and running programs. Where the community needed building, I tried to find ways to build it. Where I saw harmony was lacking, I brought people together. Where justice was missing, I spoke up and created arenas for others to voice their needs.

By listening to and perceiving what was going on around me and by returning to my principles, I've been able to prioritize and thus advocate for the action that needed to be taken first in order to build a better society. Someone has kindly said that my personality is such that when people meet me, they get it, that my actions rest on the principles for which and on which I stand.

I have persisted in trying to provide for the people of Burrows what brings dignity and worth to any human being anywhere. People before profits is not only a slogan on the roof of the autobody by the Salter Bridge, but a slogan that I believe in, and it fits for the people of Burrows. Not everything I have wanted has been accomplished. Sometimes the principles I believe in have been eclipsed by a list of P's: power, privatization, profit, propaganda, polarization, pettiness and pandering.

I want to thank my family starting with my wife, Carol, who is in the public gallery. She has supported my political career by volunteering to feed election workers, assisting with the Burrows NDP potluck

suppers and AGM and tolerating my frequent absences, especially on weekends. By choice she attends very few political events and does enjoy attending cultural events, such as Folklorama and a few of the numerous banquets and the celebratory events I'm invited to such as the Greek Independence Day dinner and dance. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has a spouses' program, and Carol has attended a number of those as well.

Our son, Nathan, has volunteered in every Burrows NDP election campaign where I've been a candidate since 1988, and he did a fine job as my campaign manager in the 2007 election. I tell people he is the best campaign manager in Winnipeg since his candidate had the highest NDP percentage vote in Winnipeg. He did this while working full-time, and was a campaign manager from 3 to 10 p.m. every day except Sunday. In Burrows we don't campaign on Sundays. In addition to campaign manager, he was also the election day organizer, volunteer coordinator and sign crew chair. He was recently elected vice-president of the Winnipeg Teachers' Association, for which I congratulate him.

Our daughter, Tanissa, also worked on election campaigns in 1988, 1990, 1995 and 1999, after which she was travelling and working around the world. I remember an election when Tanissa was in junior high school and volunteered, along with some of her friends, to drop literature in mailboxes. Someone on the street made a racist comment about her visible minority friends, so Tanissa made the wise decision to return immediately to the election community room. Instead of quitting, she said, give us a different poll and we'll go back out. It is no coincidence, given how she handled this situation, that she is enrolled in a Master's degree in Dispute Resolution at the University of Victoria. I'm very grateful for the immense contributions to Burrows NDP and my political career by Carol, Nathan and Tanissa.

I've been blessed for almost 21 years with active and committed members of the Burrows NDP executive. They have always made good decisions and given me sound advice. Representing Burrows constituents has had unique challenges not found by other MLAs. For example, within a short period of time, the barber in the office adjacent and connected to mine died in his sleep in the kitchen where the landlord and I found him. Then a tenant was stabbed and died in the same suite. I scouted alternative office space and consulted Burrows NDP executive for advice. They said, if you move, people will think

you're afraid of the neighbourhood, so stay. I stayed. Subsequently, there was a serious fire in the suite above me and my office sustained considerable water damage, and I was forced to move out for six months while renovations took place.

I have been blessed by having excellent presidents of Burrows NDP Constituency Association, such as Minerva Burgess, Donna Pachalok and Melanie Wight. I have had excellent official agents, including Jim Burgess and Bill Hinthier. I have also been blessed with excellent staff, only three in what will be 21 years in September. All of my staff, Klaus Tibelieus, Halyna Kinasevych and Nancy Ursuliak have been extremely loyal, hard-working, conscientious and excelled in dealing with constituents in a friendly and courteous way.

* (16:20)

I'm especially indebted to Nancy Ursuliak, also in the public gallery today, who delayed her retirement by two years to stay with me until the election. Thanks also to Svitlana Maluzynsky, my part-time constituency assistant for her invaluable research and writing skills. Thank you Klaus, Halyna, Nancy and Svitlana for your superb service to the constituents of Burrows as well as to me.

My goal when I was first elected was to be the best possible representative for my constituents in Burrows. Did I achieve my goal? If one looks at electoral success, yes, although someone else will have to be the judge of whether I met my goal.

Did I make a difference? I made a difference because I was part of a Premier Doer NDP government in 1999 and the government of the current Premier since 2009. This made a big difference to the North End which the Filmon government neglected for 11 years. Whereas the Filmon government wouldn't commit any money to rebuilding the north YM-YWCA, our government, in 2000, committed a million dollars. Eventually, a beautiful new building, the North End Wellness Centre, arose on the same site.

Our government has invested in significant ways to make the lives of North End and Burrows residents better through the Neighbourhoods Alive! program, North End Community Renewal Corporation, the Building Communities program, the new North Centennial Recreation centre, the renovated and expanded Sinclair Park Community Centre, and the soon to be constructed Nor'West Access Centre.

In addition, legislation such as The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act has made our communities safer since it has been used over 500 times to evict people carrying on illegal activities. I'm especially proud of our government for making substantial reductions to poverty, especially for single parents on employment income assistance.

There are many, many more programs I could talk about such as Healthy Child, Pathways to Success and other programs but time does not permit. The list is just too long. Has Burrows been left a better place than before we were elected as government in 1999? Absolutely.

Thank you to all the people who have congratulated me on my pending retirement on October 4th. I think I've received more congratulations on retiring than I did on getting elected in 1990. What does that say about politics? I am not retiring, though, and instead, I'm changing careers.

I think I'm very fortunate to be able to combine my first career with my second career into a third career, namely teaching. I look forward to teaching REL 395, Politics and Religion at Booth University College beginning in September and the same course at Providence College in Otterbourne beginning in January 2012.

I am very comfortable with my decision to retire from the Legislature, and especially pleased is my wife, Carol. I also plan to get involved again in the United Church. How and what that role is has yet to be decided. I will be open to discerning where God will lead me as I always have and always will.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Well, I was hoping the member from Burrows wasn't going to cry because then that always starts the women in this House crying. But we do want to indicate that we wish the member from Burrows well.

It's always emotional to do your final speech in the House. And I have to say that while I have worked here for many years with the member opposite, I haven't always agreed with him but, certainly, I have always enjoyed talking to him and we have had a, you know, a civil relationship as two members across the way.

So I do want to wish him well and same with Carol. I have had an opportunity on a number of occasions to sit at the same table with them at Folklorama and we have had a good time. We do get

along and it just shows that, you know, there are times that we actually do, as two different caucus members, still support each other.

So I want to wish him well. I know he's put a lot of time into public service in the Legislature. He will now have an opportunity to provide public service in a different way, but he will, you know, be remembered for, you know, 21 years of contributions that he brought to this Chamber, and on behalf of his constituents. And I always have said that public service is a very commendable position to have, and you do have a chance to try to make a difference for your constituents. So I do wish him well.

I also want to say that I am very privileged to be able to stand up for Manitobans, and especially my constituents in Charleswood, and make some comments on the budget. We are very privileged to be able to have that opportunity as members of the Legislature. Before I do that, though, I, too, would like to congratulate Rick Yarish, our new Deputy Clerk and a fellow Charleswoodian, and also to Blake Dunn and Ray Gislason on their new positions as well.

I want to start by saying that there are parts of the budget that we do like. I'm not sure why members opposite are a little bit surprised by that, but I—you know, there are some parts of it that we can support, and there are some parts of it that they borrowed from our ideas, and we're actually glad to see that they found our ideas worthwhile, and that they are going forward with them. We certainly do support more police, funding for health care, support for recreation and educational facilities, primary care improvements, increasing the number of doctors and nurses in Manitoba, finally attempting to improve maternity care, and there's finally some movement towards improving mental health, and those are things that we can support.

And I see that the NDP are finally starting to talk about controlling increased bureaucratic costs, which is interesting because after 11 years of allowing them to rise as rapidly as they have it is nice to see this conversion on the road to Damascus. So it's too bad they didn't try to rein that spending in, but I guess they're starting to see the light just before an election, and know where the, you know, where the public is actually on that issue of rising bureaucratic costs.

And, finally, we were happy to see their announcement of investments in long-term care, which was interesting because we know, through a leaked report, that they were planning on closing

over 600 long-term-care beds, and now we see that they realized they got this wrong, and now they realize that we need more long-term-care beds. So, after they've caused a crisis in our hospitals, they finally did wake up and realize they better change directions and start to put more long-term-care beds in.

And we do actually support the Grace Hospital ER redevelopment, but I'm worried that they made this announcement and they're not going to do anything about it for about five years. That is disconcerting, I think that's troubling. They are saying that it's gotten busier over the last year. There's an 18 per cent increase in the number of patients going to that ER. We know that it's only going to get worse because of the large senior population in that area, so I am troubled by the fact that they're taking—you know, making this announcement, but that there will be nothing happening for another five years. I also would note that this is the last community ER in Winnipeg to be fixed, redeveloped, upgraded. I don't know why they left it to the last, but I guess better now than not at all.

We do know that there was talk by this government a few years ago about closing the ER. It created a real stir in the community, Mr. Speaker, and the community rallied around, and I'm glad that this government paid attention to that and instead, now, of moving in that direction, that now we are going to see a firmer commitment from this government, that they won't be closing the ER, that, in fact, they will be expanding it and so they need to. That is a very important ER in Winnipeg. There are a lot of very, very needy people in that area, so we were glad to see that in the budget.

* (16:30)

We were also really glad to see that they have borrowed our first election promise to fund pediatric insulin pumps. We were surprised not to hear any mention, though, in this budget of the CCSVI clinical trials for MS. It had been announced earlier, with a commitment of \$5 million, but they didn't talk about it in the budget speech at all, so I wonder what that means. I hope they follow through with that announcement. I am concerned that it wasn't in their budget speech; however, I do hope the \$5 million is targeted in the budget.

But there are some concerning aspects to this budget, Mr. Speaker. There is no commitment to bring down the growing debt and deficit. This is

something that's bothered me in this province for years. I think I've mentioned it in probably every budget speech I've had the opportunity to speak to, and I am very, very concerned. I worry what it's going to do to future generations. My sons are going to be the ones that are going to be stuck with this bill and I worry about them, and I worry whether or not this debt and deficit that the NDP have cranked up are going to chase a number of our young people away.

Mr. Speaker, I worry what this will do to our front-line social programs. This government doesn't seem to realize that when you crank up expenditures like that, and raise deficits and debt the way they have, at some point somebody's going to have to pay for this, and this NDP government doesn't seem to have a clue, and, in fact, the way they have seemed to have set things up it's going to take them 24 years to pay down the debt.

We've seen that they've strayed from their five-year plan. We're seeing more spending. We're seeing them continue to crank up the deficit and the debt, even though Manitoba was barely touched by the recession. Some people said it wasn't touched at all. But yet the NDP have used it as an excuse, year after year they've used it as an excuse, to continue to pour money into a lot of areas. They don't seem to realize that somebody's got to pay for it at some time, and we see, in this particular budget now, that there is a lot of money now being put into the debt. And that money, you know, around something like \$800 million, imagine what we could do with that if it was put into front-line services. But now we're having to pay down the debt, and the way they're cranking up the debt that number is going to have to increase more and more and more. So pretty soon we'll have to be putting down a billion dollars into the debt.

Where do they think that money is going to come from, and what do they think that's going to cause to front-line workers or to people in—whether those are teachers, whether those are nurses, whether that is related to daycare spaces? *[interjection]* And, Mr. Speaker, they can laugh and howl. We saw where this Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) doesn't quite seem to understand some of the aspects of it, so for her to be sitting here laughing is a little bit—kind of interesting. But, you know, they need to rein in this sinkhole of debt that they have created because the challenges are only going to get worse. Why they are feeling they can justify increasing debt and deficit at this time is really mind-boggling.

Mr. Speaker, their idea of trying to make Manitoba—feel that Manitoba was in dire straits and had to do all this spending to save the province is a bunch of poppycock, and they know it. And I guess that's why there are some members there, including the Finance Minister, that think this is all a big joke. But at the rate of debt payments that this government is making it is going to take them 24 years to pay it down, not by 2014, as they had promised.

So, you know, the Minister of Finance, I think, is trying to fool a lot of people into believing some of her hype and some of her spin. But I think more and more people are waking up to the fact that this government has a very, very serious spending problem, and they will go far enough as to borrow money to make the situation even worse. But they really need to have a look at some of the suggestions that have been put forward in our amendments, and then maybe they would realize that there is still a chance to pull some of this together if they would support the two amendments that we put forward.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is a hydro line issue that is raising a lot of concern throughout the province of Manitoba, and it truly is the worst public policy decision ever made by any government in this province, and this is something that if this government would realize, then, in fact, they would, you know, leave Manitobans better off if they would reverse their decision. So, if they would keep their noses out of Hydro and Hydro's decisions and reverse their poor decision making of routing that line down the wrong side of the province, we could actually balance our budget a year earlier.

Now, we put forward two amendments. They're reasonable. They are good for Manitoba families, and if the government would support them, it would make a big difference to families in this province. So, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP vote against our amendments, they would, in fact, be voting against Manitoba families. So let's see whose interests they really do care about. This will tell by the end of the budget debate as to where their interests really lie.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to put a few words on the budget on the record.

First, I'd like to compare and contrast the NDP government under—that's held power for the last 11 years and the Conservative government that held power in the previous decade. And, Mr. Speaker, I

look at the comparisons and they're stark. I—here's an example: the property tax credit in 1999 was dropped under the Conservative government from \$350 down to \$250. That was a decrease in credits for people who tried to live in their houses, for renters, et cetera. I'm pleased that this budget has increased it to \$700, almost a 300 per cent increase in the decade that we've been in power. The other interesting part is for 10 years we have continued to progress on this tax credit helping renters, helping property owners. And, you know, every single time the Conservative Party voted against those increases for this tax credit.

I—every single year I look at the personal tax exemption, and it's interesting because the members opposite are harping about the personal tax exemption. If you look at what it was in 1999, it was approximately \$6,500. This year it's going to be moved to \$8,384; \$8,634 in 2012; \$8,884 in '13; and \$9,134 in 2014. And, by the way, Mr. Speaker, that's exceeding inflation. And you know what? The interesting part is the members opposite have, when we've increased the personal tax deduction, they voted against it. And you know why? Because when they were in government, there was no big movement on the personal tax exemption.

Let's go into the other one where we're talking about the seniors tax credit. I'm pleased to see that the members opposite, again, continue to vote against tax credits to assist seniors. And they did it year after year after year. And did they increase the seniors tax credit when they were in government? No, Mr. Speaker, they didn't. They will hug a senior this coming-up election, but I'll tell you their policies prove differently. An example is: we've increased the seniors tax credit from \$800 to \$950 this year. Previously, when we've increased the tax credit, they voted against it. They voted to not assist seniors, and they've done that year after year after year.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, when they're talking about waste and excess, they're talking about these programs that help seniors, and we don't believe so. We believe it's important to help people who've built our province, built our country and have given to this province. And I think that's the difference between an NDP government and a Tory government.

I look at other things that we've done, and I look at just comparisons, the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit. This was an initiative that we took last year. I'm pleased to say that we were one of the first ever to talk about Primary Caregiver Tax Credit. It helps

people in need, whether they're old or young and, you know, it really gives credit for those people who serviced their community and serviced their loved ones. And you know what? We have increased that to \$1,275 maximum. And, you know, Mr. Speaker, when we introduced it last year, every single Conservative voted against the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit, and it's a sad thing.

*(16:40)

I look at other small, small differences between us and the Tories. The friends of businesses, the Tories, had one of the highest small business tax rates in the country. I am pleased to see that under an NDP government it's dropped regularly and now we are the first tax-free zone for small business. And, you know, Mr. Speaker, the NDP voted for that. The Conservatives voted against the tax-free zone for small business.

I look at the capital tax. Again, when I was Minister of Industry, they talked about being charged taxes on investment of capital, and you know what, the Tories did it at a very high rate. We have removed the corporate tax rate. And I'll just give you some quick comparisons. A single person—this is just talking about the comparison of personal costs and tax rates—the budget on—is mentioning that a single person earning \$30,000 has the second lowest costs after New Brunswick. Single-earner family of four earning \$60,000, second lowest after New Brunswick. Family—two-earner family of five earning \$75,000, second after Québec, and these are facts that are put forward. And, you know, I'm pleased to live in a government—in a province that has a government that cares about people, that looks at what their costs are and works on it.

I look at programs. The members opposite—it's kind of interesting because they say that you might have administrative savings, and I find it interesting because, under the members opposite, they did do administrative savings. And I'm happy that I followed the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) because under the Conservatives, they hired Connie Curran and handed her, I believe, 4 to 5 million dollars to see what administrative savings there were, and they were good administrative savings, according to the Tories, not according to us.

Their administrative savings was firing nurses, cutting medical school, and cutting doctors, not doing any investment on capital, not building emergencies. And, in fact, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I got involved in politics is I took a loved

one to Grace Hospital in 1998 when the member for Charleswood was part of the government, and you know what, it was closed. It was closed evenings and weekends under the former government. We have made a commitment to open it up and, in spite of the rhetoric, in spite of the protests that the Conservatives held, we continue to enhance the Grace Hospital, enhance the Grace Hospital emergency, build an access centre, hire more doctors and nurses. In fact, we have 400 more doctors, 2,500 more nurses, and you know what, we voted for that, the NDP. And the Conservatives, every single Conservative over there, voted against it. So I think that this shows the different types of governments that would be there.

I look at programs that we've done. Safety Aid: this is a program that helps low-income seniors go there, fix up their houses, make them safe, pick up things that people could trip on and all this. We implemented that program where thousands of seniors have had their homes renovated, had more safe conditions. And, you know, Mr. Speaker, we put that program in and the members opposite voted against it. And I think that what they thought was that was a luxury. That was administrative saving that they could have removed.

I look at other programs, the Northern Healthy Food program, the Peak of the Market Farm to School program, the gardening program which was established by the Northern Healthy Food program, that has established 750 gardens in the north, was recognized as one of the most sustainable, long-term programs for healthy food and nutrition in the world by the United Nations, and you know what, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a government that implemented that program. I'm proud to see that we're expanding that, and, you know, the members opposite voted against that. I guess they thought that was an administrative saving.

Let's talk about other administrative savings that they talked about. We've made sure that we contributed \$3.9 billion to the pension liabilities of civil service, of the teachers. Now the members opposite didn't do that. They thought there was this liability out there that they would never have to address. If you'll look at what's happening in the United States right now, Mr. Speaker, New Jersey, New York have basically become technically broke. Why? Because they didn't approach their debts. I'm pleased to be part of the government that put \$3.9 billion towards the pension liability which will ensure that the people who have worked in the civil

service, who have worked as teachers, who have worked as jail guards, has worked as civil servants get their money.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker, when we borrowed the money, invested it, we actually have a better return than it costs us. So those funds are making a difference. They are invested to make sure that people are paid their pensions, and you know what? We have been told that this is good fiscal prudence. And you know what? The members opposite didn't put money into the pensions; they didn't fund them. It was an unfunded liability, and we did that. And that was good fiscal policy. It's good for the past and present employees and, you know, we voted for that good fiscal policy and the Conservatives voted against it.

Let's talk about investments to capital assets. Over the last number of years, we invested \$3 billion into hospitals and schools. We invested \$3.2 billion to highways and roads. In fact, we have a 400 per cent increase on highways budget. We've invested \$2.5 billion for the floodway, housing, parks. We've—we have a \$1.8-billion capital project this year. And the difference between us, Mr. Speaker, and the Tories is during the last recession in 1995, they didn't invest. They fired people; they laid people off. And you know what that does is every one causes a contraction in the economy. And, you know, then what happens is people don't spend. And because their way of dealing with the economy during the recession in the '90s was to pull back, fire people, cut the budget, cut services—and you know that makes the recession longer; it makes people have a harder time.

And so I agree with my good friend from Kildonan who always says, Tory times are tough times because what they do is they cut—instead we invested. We're investing this year \$1.8 billion in capitals into schools, into hospitals and daycares and all these different things, and that's what we need to do. And I'm proud to—that we are part of a government that kept 29,000 people working.

And, Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange where they are offside to their federal counterparts who spend \$16 million advertising their billion-dollar program keeping people working, which is exactly what we did. So they're the only ones who don't believe that we should stimulate the economy. They're the only ones who don't believe we should keep people employed. They're the ones who don't

believe we should be investing in hospitals, in doctors, nurses, teachers.

And, you know, it's funny because they talk about half a billion dollars, taking half a billion dollars out for administrative savings. I do believe that history does repeat itself. I look at what happened with the Conservatives in the—when under previous administrations, and they have continued to do that, and so—

The other interesting part is the debt-to-GDP. The Tories had a debt-to-GDP of 32.7–32.9 per cent. We have a debt-to-GDP of 24.7 per cent. That's getting better.

I look at health care. I look at the whole idea of investing in new technology, investing in hospitals, investing. And you know, I know what the members opposite invest in. They invest in political rhetoric; we invest in reality.

And I look at other examples. I look at the rates. And one of the things opposite—is members opposite have been saying is all about hydro. Let's talk about hydro times. It was interesting to note that a Conservative government was calling Limestone lemon stone. They had predicted that it was much better to go into coal-fired generation capacity. They crowed on how silly it was to invest in Limestone. I understand that the \$1.4-billion investment—at the time they said that the Province would bankrupt themselves. We have made almost a \$6-billion profit on Limestone; that's a 400 per cent profit. And, Mr. Speaker, I think if you invest \$1.4 billion and get \$6 billion, that's a good move. And that's an NDP move; that was not a Conservative move.

*(16:50)

I look at the sale of the whole argument about privatization of MTS. You know, it's interesting to follow the debate. They said: Oh, wait, MTS needs too much capital. Government can't afford the capital. Government can't make the investments in MTS. It's too hard for a government to invest in a technology. I look at that argument and I see what's happening now. They're saying, oh, they're inflating the numbers for the line. They're inflating the problems that Hydro would have, and, you know, Mr. Speaker, I believe hydro is our oil. Hydro will be the renewable resource that continues to create a good fiscal reality in this province.

So I look at it and I say, this is something that we should invest in. Well, the previous NDP

governments did invest in hydro. They did build dams. They did invest in lots of it. So we have built the last dam. Yes, we did do it with retained earnings. We're going to build more dams. Why? Because then we can become richer over time. And I looked at it and I said, listen, there's got to be something that's happened in the past that's the equivalent. Here's the past equivalent.

The Tories sold MTS. Rates doubled and, you know, lots of Conservative people I know have made lots of money on the dividends, and, you know, people are sitting on the boards and people are sitting with that company. I look at Hydro now. Ah, could there be a similar argument? Of course, there could, where a small group of people benefit.

I believe that we need to invest in the next dams. I believe we need to invest in the hydro lines. I believe we need to invest in energy efficiency. I believe we need to make sure we have security of supply, to make sure we have transformers on each side. I think we need to continue to expand our markets to Wisconsin and North Dakota, et cetera, and Saskatchewan and Alberta. I think we can be an energy superpower, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to be a government that will do that. Tories mothball Hydro; we build Hydro. We look at the opportunity of all people benefiting by having a Crown corporation. Members opposite look at how they can privatize so a few people can get the profits. I believe that we need to continue to have Hydro as a public assets and not sell it.

Following, I find it interesting that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) talked about how necessary it is to double or better the hydro rates to average Manitobans. He is on record saying that he believes that they should be at market rate. Right now, Manitobans pay about 7 cents a kilowatt. He's talking about being 14 cents a kilowatt, which would increase the hydro rate for average Manitobans by double, which means that they would be paying \$900 to \$1,000 more for electricity. That's what the member of—the Leader of the Opposition has actually said. I think that's strange, but, you know, if it was a Crown corporation, they might follow the same pattern as MTS, which has doubled the rates.

I also look at other things that we need to do. I think it was interesting that the member from Charleswood said that they—we weren't touched by the downturn. I think that's because we as a government govern for all. We listen to the manufacturers. We listen to all the people. We work

together with them to grow the economy, and, by the way, Mr. Speaker, it's passing strange that during the '90s there was an out-migration of people. There was a flattening of the economy. There was tough times. Businesses were having a hard time. You know, we've basically doubled the economy in 10 years, and I don't say that as government, I say we as all of us working together and I think that's important.

I look at where the members would cut, and I was around in the '90s. I was in education, so I know they cut. Their administrative savings are front-line teachers. Their administrative savings are front-line nurses. Their administrative savings are roads, daycares, police officers. It's everything that touches society.

And, you know, I always think it's interesting because what we do is we actually tell our plan and work our plan. The members opposite say, well, we're going to look at things and, no, maybe in the future we're going to do a small administrative cut of half a billion dollars, but it's not going to have an effect. Well, past has proved them wrong.

So, I look at the amendments. What are they saying? They believe that they have a better solution. Well, in the '90s, there were reports that they had to do something on dependability. What did the Hydro—what did the members opposite do when they had the keys to the premier's office? Nothing. Nothing. There was a power sale to Ontario that didn't go forward. There was a plan for a dam that didn't go forward. They actually put everything under the carpet and did nothing, even though they were told that there was an issue on reliability. I think it's important to build converter stations. I think it's important to have discussions with Saskatchewan and Alberta and all provinces to see where our next markets are, because, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's not just now, it's forever, and we are building the economy forever.

And, finally, I'll close with a couple of things that we are doing for seniors which I'm proud of. I'm proud that we've moved forward on the whole idea of elder abuse, and we actually have safe suites. We put that program in; they voted against it. I'm proud of the fact that we continue to support senior centres and activities and the MSOS Games and all the other programs that we are to keep seniors as a vibrant part of our economy.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, we put those—we supported those programs over the last 10 years and the members opposite voted against it. I look at the

whole idea about age-friendly, where we're talking about getting all people a part of the society—where all people have the ability to participate in programs, get supports they need. We put that program in; the members opposite voted against the funding for that program.

I look at all the changes for health care, and, you know, I live in an area which has a lot of seniors in it. And I'm proud to continue to expand the programs there, but lest we forget, we must always remember the records of the Conservatives. And they may talk administrative savings, and when they talk administrative savings, it will be painful, because it's firing the people we rely on. And, you know, it's interesting because my mom always taught me that you should be penny—you shouldn't be penny-wise and pound-foolish—not fixing infrastructure, penny-wise, pound-foolish; not having doctors or technicians trained in this province and cutting those training programs, penny-wise, pound-foolish; not supporting gang prevention initiatives, very penny-wise, pound-foolish.

And, you know, the final comment I'll make is the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said, in an alternate budget, that he would remove the Department of Healthy Living—the department that I am minister of. And I look at it and I say the prevention initiatives, whether it's Healthy Child, whether it's working with seniors, whether it's the addictions and mental health. And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite keep on saying they didn't—they had choices to make. Well, here's an example: in 1995 to 1999 cuts to addiction services were 9 per cent—9 per cent cut, and they criticize our 115 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, in my department, giving food to kids that are going to school, a quarter of a million dollars breakfast program for kids that can't afford food—that's a positive thing, and they voted against it. And, finally, when you look at *in motion*, where we're getting people active; dealing with chronic disease, where the federal Conservative Party government pulled out of the Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative, pulled out the three-quarters of a million dollars that gets people to stop smoking and exercise and decrease diabetes and all this. That was an administrative savings from a Conservative government.

And Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that we followed in afterwards and made up for that cut because chronic

disease is important to address. Smoking is important to address; kids are important to address; and, you know, lately I'm proud of what we're doing with youth to keep youth busy, keep them healthy, keep them occupied, because busy kids are good kids. That's another program that is delivered through the Healthy Living program, and the Leader of the Opposition said they would eliminate this department. They would eliminate prevention; they would eliminate all those things. And I think that's penny-wise, pound-foolish. So I think we need to contrast what they have said, what they've done in the past, and what their beliefs are to what we believe. And I think there is a huge change—there's a huge change and I'm proud to be on this side of the House and a part of an NDP government that cares about all people and will invest in the future. Thank you very much.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to the amendment brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition on the budget. I do—

An Honourable Member: Can you keep it up, Stu?

Mr. Briese: I'll try. I do want to recognize the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). I've only been in here for the last four years with him, and it's been definitely enjoyable to be in here with the member from Burrows. And I've had several conversations with him over that period of time that were very enlightening to me and very educational to me, and I hope equally as educational to him at times.

But we will miss him in this Chamber after him being here for 21 years. There's—that's an enviable record that he has put forward in this building. So it is very much appreciated that he was—served those years in here.

I do want to respond a little bit, and I see—I want to respond a little bit to what the member from Assiniboia has been blowing about in his remarks. Talking about the \$6 billion worth of—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Ste. Rose will have 29 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 14, 2011

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