

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

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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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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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 18, 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 and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill 19—The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Senior Judges)

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 19, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Senior Judges); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour provinciale (juges aînés), be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Swan:** This bill amends The Provincial Court Act by creating a senior judge program, which would allow the court to draw upon retired judges to provide additional judicial resources. Retired judges could be called upon to address a variety of circumstances, including when a sitting judge is on an extended leave such as maternity or sick leave, when judges are hearing inquests or when further judicial resources are needed in a community or region. The provincial court could also use these resources to support the addition of weekend bail sittings with judges.

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

### PETITIONS

#### 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 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 E. Pasemko, A. Sposob, T. Sposob and many, many other Manitobans. Thank you.

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

#### 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 those 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 the accident.

And this petition is signed by M. G. Harrison, G.I. Harrison, M.R. Rinn 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 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 R. Saul, M. Gillespie, C. Michon and many other fine Manitobans.

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

### **Flooding and Ice Jams Update**

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Mr. Speaker, flood-fighting officials were busy over the weekend dealing with flooding affecting an unprecedented area of the province from the Saskatchewan border to eastern Manitoba and from The Pas south to the US border. There are currently almost 700 people evacuated from their homes, around 500 municipal roads are closed and 29 states of local emergency are in effect.

Provincial crews have been following multiple ice jams on the Assiniboine River between Poplar Point and Baie St. Paul Bridge. The rapidly rising

waters in this area have been largely contained by the Assiniboine River dikes which were raised by the Province last month. Crews and equipment remain on-site today to reinforce the dike and put up secondary protection where it is needed. Two homes in the area have been evacuated as a precaution, and the RMs of Cartier, St. François Xavier, Headingley have all declared states of local emergency.

\* (13:40)

I would like to take this opportunity to commend staff who have been working on these dikes 24 hours a day, even sleeping in their trucks when necessary. Due to their work over the weekend, homes and farmland were safe from flooding from the ice jam. In addition, the foresight in raising the 70 kilometres of dikes along the Assiniboine has prevented significant flooding damage in the area.

I will also note that the forecasted peak of the Assiniboine River at St. Lazare has increased due to higher flows in the Qu'Appelle River and precipitation in the area. Provincial crews are raising a one-kilometre section of the community dike at St. Lazare as a precautionary measure.

Finally, I'd like to advise the House that Highway 75 will close at 2 o'clock this afternoon as a result of the rising flood waters. Notifications have gone out and proper signage is being put in place.

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for his latest flood update. As he outlined, there have been quite a number of developments since the Legislature sat last Friday. As he said, approximately 700 people have been evacuated and many of them are from First Nations communities.

There was a lot of weekend activity related to ice jams moving down the Assiniboine River, particularly east of Poplar Point. Crews went into action to reinforce the existing dike and a secondary dike was built to help contain water that had overtopped the main dike.

There's still a lot of snow to melt in the west, both in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, especially in the northern part of the west side of this province. Much of that snowmelt will end up in the rivers, in the Assiniboine, once again impacting levels.

I drove over the Portage Diversion this morning and noticed that it was running bank full. It's a clear indication of just how much water is starting to come in from the west.

Loss of road access is proving very challenging in many regions. More than 700 municipal roads are closed and there are at least 70 full or partial closures on provincial roads. Recovery will take many weeks.

Many individuals and communities in the Red River Valley continue to be affected by this spring's flood and the closure, I understand, later today, of Highway 75, will have a major impact on commercial vehicle traffic.

I, too, would like to acknowledge and thank staff and volunteers for their efforts during these difficult times. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**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, too, would like to thank those who've made a tremendous effort over the last few days to deal with a flood situation which is changing quite rapidly, for instance along the Assiniboine River where there're problems with ice dams and very rapid rises in the water levels and the concerns about such dams having an impact other places, like in the city of Brandon. And, hopefully, the situation will be contained but, certainly, a big thank you to all those who have put in an effort, sometimes around the clock, to help out in the difficult situation.

I note, as previous, that we have a large number of people evacuated, primarily in First Nations communities, and it certainly points to the long-run need to have permanent solutions in these communities, and, hopefully, the minister will be able to report on what those permanent solutions will be in the not-too-distant future. But as we continue to fight the flood and to hope that the damage can be limited, it's certainly extensive and worrying in many municipalities, and it points to the fact that we need to address, in a major way, improved water management in this province as we move forward. Thank you.

#### 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, we have the participants of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba's Fourth Annual Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy.

And also in the public gallery we have with us Linda, John and Heather McLean who are the guests of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

And also in the public gallery we have from River West Park School, we have 19 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Todd Johnson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

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

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Target Timeline

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members for their comments on the flood situation as it stands today.

Mr. Speaker, exactly three years ago, in April of 2008, this government promised to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 17.5 megatonnes by December the 31st of 2012. With that target now—that date approaching—it's 20 months from now—I want to ask the Premier whether he is committed to that promise of meeting the seven point—17.5-megatonnes emission level within the next 20 months.

It's a target that they were so confident in meeting that the premier at the time, Mr. Doer, said, and I quote: "If we don't achieve it, I suggest the ultimate penalty in 2011 will be defeating the government." That was what the premier of the day said.

I want to ask this Premier: Does he remain committed to achieving the target that was set out three years ago?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, we do remain committed to the legislation brought forward in the Legislature, and there will be a progress report put in front of the public this spring, and it will show substantial progress that has been made in Manitoba in reducing greenhouse gases. We believe we're on track at this stage of the game.

Clearly, there is an enormous challenge to meet the greenhouse gas targets, but we have several innovations that we've brought forward that will continue to move us along that path. As you know,

Manitoba is the North American leader in geothermal installations. We have 40 per cent of the Canadian installations when we have 4 per cent of the population.

The member opposite will recall that we just opened the 137-megawatt St. Joseph's wind farm in southern Manitoba, and if the members don't get in the way, we'd be happy to build more hydroelectricity to reduce greenhouse gases in the United States.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, four months ago when the Premier reiterated the promise that was made by Mr. Doer—it was following the Auditor General's report—it was reported that the government, as of four months ago, was on track to miss their target by more than three megatonnes. They are on track to emit more than 21 megatonnes by the end of 2012.

Does the Premier expect people to take him seriously when by his own policies he's adding 500 kilometres to the next major power line, which is the equivalent, Mr. Speaker, of roughly 20,000 vehicles in emissions. How can anybody take him seriously when four months ago he was three megatonnes off the target and why his—by his own policies he's going to waste more than 40 megawatts of clean power.

Why is he moving in the opposite direction, Mr. Speaker, when his own predecessor, who was elected, said that the ultimate penalty will be defeating the government in 2011?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that hydroelectricity supplied to our customers is an enormous displacer of other forms of noxious greenhouse gases, and the reality is that if the member had his way—a way that's not possible, given the potential litigation and holdups that will occur—and built it down the east side, he would be destroying one of the largest carbon sinks in North America on the east-side boreal forest.

So the result of his policy would be the destruction of peatlands, the destruction of boreal forests, the destruction of an opportunity to have a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We will build hydro in such a way that we protect our carbon sinks, our natural carbon sinks, and provide clean power to our customers, which will reduce their reliance on more noxious forms of energy.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier expects to be taken seriously when only four months ago the report that came out said they were moving in the wrong direction on greenhouse gas emissions.

He now argues, Mr. Speaker, that by adding 500 kilometres of steel and cable to a power line that somehow this is good for the environment. Adding 500 kilometres of steel and line costs up to 100 megawatts of clean energy, the ability to close down coal-fired plants south of the border, the ability to burn less coal in other parts of the world.

Mr. Speaker, his policies add 500 kilometres to the power line—they burn more coal—at the same time as he's building a highway through the boreal forest. How can he be taken seriously when he's building a highway through the forest; he's adding 500 kilometres to the power line; he's wasting upwards of 100 megawatts of clean energy; the greenhouse gas emissions are going up and his own predecessor says they should be defeated in 2011?

How can anybody take he and his five-year plans with any degree of seriousness when all of the numbers are moving in the wrong direction?

\*(13:50)

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, our hydro exports in '09 resulted in emission reductions in the markets of our exporters that were twice the Kyoto targets we're trying to achieve in Manitoba. The member opposite wants to destroy the reputation of Manitoba Hydro by ramming it down the east side. He wants to destroy the boreal forest. He wants to destroy the peat moss that we're protecting over there, and he thinks he's going to call himself a green member of this Legislature by doing all of that.

It's very clear, Mr. Speaker, that protecting the boreal forest is one of the primary policy objectives of climate change advocates throughout the world. They look at it as the Amazon of the North.

They also see hydroelectricity, properly developed, as an alternative to dirtier energy sources in North America. We have always used Manitoba Hydro as a resource for the benefit of North America. We don't flood anymore in the north like the members opposite did. We do not have 14 per cent more emissions like they did when they were in the '90s.

Our emissions have been relatively flat, and if we build Manitoba Hydro, which the members

opposite would clearly cancel, we will be able to provide more—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**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):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

I wonder if the Premier can provide the House with an update on the status of his east-side highway.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the East Side Road Authority has been working with local communities on benefit agreements to start scoping out how the road will be developed with the primary objective of using the existing footprint of the winter roads to advance a permanent all-weather road on the east side, at a time when climate change has made it difficult for winter roads to serve those communities.

So the objective here is to provide an alternative to those communities, which will allow them to have essential goods and services like all other Manitobans and, at the same time, to allow them to participate in the benefits of developing that road, which is something that is widely supported by the people on the east side, unlike the bipole.

**Mr. McFadyen:** I wonder if the Premier can confirm that the road that he was just speaking of in his response to that question goes through the very same boreal forest he was referring to in his response to the first question.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, if the member would have taken a second to listen to what I said, the road is intended to follow the existing pathway of the existing winter roads.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable—order. The honourable First Minister has the floor. We need to be able to hear the questions and the answers. I'm asking the co-operation of all honourable members here. Order. I'm asking the co-operation of all honourable members.

**Mr. Selinger:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the first leg of the road, which will move from the north and south legs, will follow the existing routes of the

winter roads. The road in the north from the Island Lake area, they're looking at the idea of connecting it up to its historic trading partner, Norway House. They're doing this in such a way that it minimizes negative impacts. They're providing themselves with essential goods and services.

Winter roads have been there for many years, Mr. Speaker. It's only reasonable that they get access to the goods and services that other Manitobans have, and those folks also support protecting the boreal forest and having a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The member opposite, he wants to put a major industrial hydro corridor through the east side. He doesn't care where it goes. He doesn't care what the impact is on the boreal forest. He doesn't care what the impact is on the reputation of Hydro. And he doesn't care what the impact is on the reputation of Manitoba. Shame on him, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, the highway that he now speaks of goes through the very same boreal forest that he was calling the Amazon of the North in response to his first question.

I want to ask the Premier: Since the reason he has given to Manitobans for building the power line 500 kilometres longer than it has to be, at a cost of thousands of dollars to every family, at a cost of up to a hundred megawatts of clean energy, if the reason that he has provided to Manitobans, which is that there will be litigation if you do anything through the east-side boreal forest, if he can just indicate again today that not a single lawsuit has been filed to stop his east-side highway through the very boreal forest that he claims, Mr. Speaker, is the reason for his decision to spend an added \$11,000 per family on the west-side power line.

The answer last week was zero lawsuits. Is that answer again today zero lawsuits filed in response to his east-side highway through the boreal forest?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, 90 per cent of the east-side roads that are being constructed follow existing winter roadways, and that's why people on the east side have accepted it.

Mr. Speaker, the reason there's no lawsuits yet is because they know that this government is committed to putting the bipole not through the boreal forest. They know that this government is committed to a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

If the government changed and members opposite were so fortunate as to be able to put the bipole down the east side, the lawsuits would fly. Hydro would never get developed. It's very clear that what their objective is is to cancel future hydro development in Manitoba.

The numbers they use suggest there would be no converter stations built; there would be no bipole built; there would be no hydro built; there would be no economic development in Manitoba, and rates would go up for all Manitobans. That's the future if the members opposite were elected.

Under us, there'll be no lawsuits; there'll be a UNESCO World Heritage Site; there will be abundant exports developed for markets to the south and to the west of us, and Manitobans will prosper.

### **Provincial Debt Servicing Costs**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, given the credit-rating downgrades by Standard and Poor's in the US this morning, citing rising debt and the cost of servicing that debt as the primary reason, I believe we in Manitoba have reason to be concerned.

Mr. Speaker, in the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance last week, the debt-servicing costs to Manitobans is at \$807 million, up 5 per cent over last year.

The NDP debt-servicing department is the equivalent of what would be the fourth largest government department in Manitoba, right behind Health, Education and Family Services. There are a lot of front-line services that could be paid for with this amount of money.

Why is the Minister of Finance not made it a priority of her government to address the rising cost of servicing the debt in our province, Mr. Speaker?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that looking at how we do finances in this province is a priority, but it's also a priority for us to make sure that services that Manitobans want are a priority as well.

We want to ensure that the infrastructure that Manitobans want, Mr. Speaker, and the federal government is supporting, and the members opposite always ask for one in their constituency. They ask for the money and then they criticize for it.

I can assure the member that our debt-to-GDP ratio is better than it was under the Conservatives, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to spend less than half of what the Conservatives did on interest.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, \$807 million would go a long way towards improving front-line services in this province.

What this Minister of Finance doesn't seem to understand is that if you pay down the debt, Mr. Speaker, you reduce the cost to service that debt and there's more money for front-line services for Manitobans who need it. It's as simple as that.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance: Why does she refuse to acknowledge this, and why is there no plan in place to reduce the debt, to reduce the cost to service that debt and put more money towards front-line services in Manitoba?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is wrong again. There is a plan. We laid out a plan in our five-year plan about—that members opposite voted against, the five-year plan that the members opposite wanted to take \$500 million out of. If they would have taken that money out, we would have had a reduction in the services that the member opposite is referring to.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. We're making payments on the deficit. We're paying down pensions plans. We're making all—we're following the plan. We're doing exactly what we said we would do at the same time that we are protecting front-line services, and we are investing in infrastructure and stimulus as other provinces are doing as well.

\* (14:00)

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is had the NDP government decided during the good times in this province to pay down that debt, then the costs to service the debt would not be as high as they are right now, and thus there would have been more money there for front-line services. It's very simple. The problem is this Minister of Finance doesn't get it.

Mr. Speaker, \$807 million, the debt-servicing department of this province is the fourth largest government—province in Manitoba, ahead of Justice, Local Government, Infrastructure and Transportation, ahead of Healthy Living, Agriculture, Advanced Education, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Civil Service Commission, Conservation, Water Stewardship, more than

Culture, ET and T, Housing, Innovation, Energy and Mines, Labour and Immigration, Sport, ahead of all of those government departments.

Given that the cost to service the debt is larger than all of these government departments, why is it not a priority for this government to put a plan in place to reduce the debt of our province?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I will remind the member again that we do have a plan. We have a five-year plan. The members opposite talked about paying down and whether we should have saved in good times. Well, we did pay down the debt. We started to pay for the pension plans that the members opposite always ignored. We put more money away into the Stabilization Fund, and we didn't have to tell—sell a Crown corporation to do it.

The members opposite sold our telephone system and that's how they balanced their books. I would never do that, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to invest in hospitals, in schools, in roads, in our health care. The services that are important to people are the services we will invest in, and we will continue to maintain our debt at less than half of what the Conservatives had when they were in power in the '90s.

#### **Child and Family Services Agencies Family Reunification Policies**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, on February the 17th I wrote to the Minister of Family Services and asked him to address a very serious issue, a Child and Family Services case where children were taken for a four-day visit from a foster home and never returned.

His department met with the foster family for two days and they have all of the details, and yet still today the foster family doesn't have any answers. I'd like to ask this minister why.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, we know that there may be some 4,000 foster parents in Manitoba that are heroes for our children, but even so much as one case where there are concerns about whether procedures were followed is of utmost concern to our department and to myself and my office.

That is why there is a very careful examination taking place of this case, and, as the member knows, there's more to this case than what she just put on the

record. The matter is also, I understand, before the courts.

But whenever there is a concern like that, our job is to make sure that the proper processes were followed, and that is what we are attempting to do in that particular case.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** But the very day after the children went for their four-day visit, the very day after that, Mr. Speaker, the agency wrote a letter which the foster family received four days later, after the children should have been returned, and said that the children weren't coming back. And they also indicated to the foster family that they would be able to appeal that decision.

The act, Mr. Speaker, states clearly that while an appeal process is going on—which it is right now—the children are to remain with the foster family. Why weren't those children put back with the foster family? It's his [*inaudible*]

**Mr. Mackintosh:** The member is going to some conclusions, Mr. Speaker, that are under careful consideration in terms of what the facts were, what the criteria that was in place was to be, and the member—I know that the member gets up in this House and says that children should never be allowed to return home anymore; they should be frozen in their foster placements. That's code word for scoop.

That's not the view of child welfare nor members on this side, Mr. Speaker. Where a child can safely go home, return to their siblings, that should be supported so long as the proper criteria is being followed.

My understanding is the child in this case returned to the child's siblings and parents, and the processes are being looked at to ensure that all of the proper notifications took place, Mr. Speaker. It's a serious question that is being addressed thoroughly.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** But on March the 10th in Winnipeg at a conference about exploitation of children, the minister met the foster mom. The minister went over and gave her a big hug and he said to her: I'm so sorry, this never should have happened and I want to make sure that it never happens again.

Mr. Speaker, the foster mom is in the gallery today and I want to ask the minister why he would've admitted to her that day that something went so terribly wrong and he has taken no action and—

taken any responsibility under legislation that he should be enforcing.

Why would he not ensure that those children were managed in a way that would not harm or endanger them?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, I know the member, she's been advertising in local papers for foster parents to come and bring complaints forward, and that's fine. That's very good. Sometimes it's very useful when the officials can drill down and discover what the actual facts are, particularly a matter—[interjection] Well, the member doesn't have any use for courts, doesn't have any use for due process.

Mr. Speaker, that's why we're getting to the bottom of what happened. If the proper procedures were not followed, we want to ensure that they are followed.

I also—as I reminded the foster mother, it is heartbreaking to say goodbye to a child. It's heartbreaking to have to say goodbye to a child that you have nurtured, but, Mr. Speaker, fostering is to be a temporary solution for a child so the child can eventually return home.

The question is here: Were all the procedures followed? That is the question that is being pursued, and the courts are involved, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Echocardiogram Tests Wait Times**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, the more money the NDP spends in health care, the worse things seem to get.

In 2005, about 2,000 people were on a waiting list for an echocardiogram to see how bad their heart problem is. According to the latest freedom of information, over 5,000 people are on that waiting list.

I'd ask—like to ask the Minister of Health to explain today: Why is that waiting list so long? Why has it more than doubled under her watch after she said she was going to fix it?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Indeed, we have more than doubled the number of cardiac surgeons in the province of Manitoba, from four to 11. We have more than doubled the number of cardiologists in Manitoba, from 12 to 31. The variety of diagnostics and tests that our health experts are ordering, as a result, logically increases.

We recognize that there has been an increase on the wait-list. What we paid most close attention to, Mr. Speaker, is wait time, and we're working with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the cardiac program to drive those times down. We've added additional resources recently to help drive those times down, and there are more resources flowing as we speak.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, those 5,000 people are now being forced to wait half a year to find out if they need heart surgery. That's worse—those numbers are worse than they were a year ago. A patient can't get on a long wait-list for heart surgery until they can get off this long wait to find out what their heart problem is.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health: Why are those waits so dangerously long?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member opposite that we are investing across the spectrum in cardiac care.

We know that the independent Canadian Institute for Health Information assesses Manitoba's wait time for cardiac surgery to be 99 per cent of getting the surgery within the medically recommended benchmarks. These are not arbitrary benchmarks, Mr. Speaker, as has been suggested; these are benchmarks that have been created by medical professionals. They're national standards.

And the assessments that need to precede individuals going on a list for whether or not they need surgery, these assessments are done by medical professionals. Those that are emergency situations, of course, are done right away. Mr. Speaker, those never go onto a wait-list.

\* (14:10)

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health doesn't seem to understand this issue. They're putting more money into it, but the wait-lists are getting worse. The long wait-lists mean that by the time the patient even gets to surgery, they end up from going—from being a selective case to being an emergency case.

She doesn't seem to realize that all of these waits contribute to the patient getting sicker so that by the time they have surgery they are sicker, their care takes longer, and this minister doesn't seem to understand that. Instead, she's always got an excuse and, again, today, Mr. Speaker, we see more excuses.

Why is she always full of excuses, Mr. Speaker, and no progress towards fixing this cardiac surgery program in Manitoba that is failing again?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, again I would reiterate that what we pay very close attention to, as has been recommended by medical professionals, is the wait time. And, again, by independent evaluators, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Manitoba meets the medically recommended benchmark 99 per cent of the time, and oftentimes it's 100.

When patients do not meet the medically recommended benchmark for cardiac surgery, they are offered an opportunity to go out of the province, Mr. Speaker, and, indeed, that's the case with the people on the list right now.

This, Mr. Speaker, stands in stark contrast to the members opposite who refused to send cancer patients out of the province when cancer radiation therapy was six weeks dangerously long, and their excuse for that was that it was not pragmatic.

I say to the member opposite, she has no credibility on dealing with wait times.

#### **Crane River Water Treatment Plant Upgrade**

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, the community of Crane River requires an upgrade to their water treatment plant. The upgrade was approved by Aboriginal and Northern Affairs several years ago.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why no work has been done on the Crane River water treatment plant?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Water Stewardship):** We've been working throughout the province, particularly in Aboriginal and Northern Affairs communities. I know there've been a number of challenges with existing facilities, including Pikwitonei where water was installed a number of years ago, a number of capital upgrades.

But we have also been accessing federal funding. I point out in terms of the Northern Affairs community, the community of Nelson House has been recently brought in to full water and sewer thanks again to infrastructure funding between the Province and the federal government, and we continue to work with all of the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs communities both on the design side in co-operation with the Water Services Board

and on the capital side, and we're proceeding to significantly expand sewer and water across the province.

**Mr. Briese:** Mr. Speaker, the Crane River Community Council has asked repeatedly about the status of the water treatment plant upgrade and why this important work continues to be delayed.

In October 2010, the letter—a letter the minister said the regional office will continue to work with engineering firms to make sure the design is completed as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: What is the delay in getting this project off the ground?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite should be aware that there is—significant work has to go into the design phase of any project. In fact, you go through significant issues in terms of identifying the water source, the particular type of treatment that's in place.

So I would say to the member opposite and certainly to the community of Crane River that I—we recognize certainly the work has been ongoing.

I do want to point out, though, we've had historic investment in sewer and water in this province over the last number of years. And one thing that we have done, by the way, when it comes to infrastructure funding, unlike when members opposite were in government where they did not add any additional funding to Northern Affairs communities, we made significant progress.

And I want to say to the member opposite, he should look at the list of communities where we brought in full sewer and water over the last number of years, the Northern Affairs, directly under our jurisdiction, and we're continuing to make significant progress on that, and I know that there's a lot of work that's been going on in terms of—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Briese:** Mr. Speaker, I'd remind the minister that there're almost 60 boil-water orders in the province right now. They've had historic levels of putting in water systems; they're sure failing on it.

Mr. Speaker, the Crane River community is very—has experienced many boil-water advisories. They have been told that the engineering work would be completed by the end of February, then the end of March, and now here we are at the end of April and there's still no answers.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit today to ensuring the project proceeds in the 2011 construction season, or is this community going to have to wait another year?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I'm advised by the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) that since 2000, 177 water advisories have been rescinded. We made significant progress across the province, and, indeed, if one looks at the current budget—and I know members opposite don't want to be debating this—the budget; they certainly have very few questions on it—there's significant resources in place.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know I'm not allowed to ask questions, but in a rhetorical sense I wonder if the member opposite is going to vote for the kind of resources that would ensure that communities can expand sewer and water. Will he join us and support this project?

#### **Protection of Persons in Care Ombudsman's Report**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, last fall I raised important questions about serious allegations of abuse in personal care homes. The Minister of Health, in her typical pattern of spin and unaccountability with respect to seniors, said all allegations of abuse were being investigated.

We felt at the time that this was not true, and, as we learned in a report last month of the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman agrees with us. The Ombudsman's Report on the Protection for Persons in Care Office, the PPCO, says the threshold for the abuse under the minister has been too high with the result that many seniors have been—become vulnerable to abuse under this minister's authority.

Mr. Speaker, now that we know that her office knew that this was an issue, when will the minister admit that she has wilfully neglected seniors in personal care homes?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Yes, we do know that we received a report that did ask for a review of how the word "abuse" was defined. It also made suggestions to us about when investigations are triggered. We accept those recommendations and we're going to react to them.

We also know, Mr. Speaker, that as I said last spring or fall—I can't remember what he said—that we investigate all allegations of abuse. This

is 100 per cent true. We're going to continue to do that.

On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, it was our government that brought in the Protection for Persons in Care Office. It was our government that increased the levels of staffing in personal care homes. It's our government that's invested in protections for seniors, and we're going to continue to invest.

**Mr. Gerrard:** But, Mr. Speaker, as has become clear now, all too many accusations of abuse—allegations of abuse—were not being investigated because this minister set the threshold too high. Indeed, as the Ombudsman's report says, and I quote: Applying the current working definition of "abuse", it is possible to have abusive actions, even criminal conduct, that will not be considered abuse by the PCCO.

That was the situation under this minister.

Last fall, the minister blamed the problem on complex numbers. The report makes it very clear that the minister's office was running this deliberately to make it more difficult for seniors to complain and bring forward abuse. Why is the minister minimizing the problem?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say to the member opposite once again that we received a report and some recommendations from the Ombudsman concerning definition. We accept that recommendation and are moving forward to change that.

I can also say to the member that, once again, allegations of abuse are investigated by the PPCO, and what the Ombudsman found was that too much of the investigation phase was informed—was performed in the inquiry phase and not recognized in the report as part of the investigation. It was not that the investigation was not occurring, but the recommendation was that it was to be recorded at a different stage of the investigation.

We accept that recommendation. We agree with that recommendation and we're going to follow through with it.

\* (14:20)

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, as the report makes very clear, too many allegations of abuse were not being considered seriously because the minister set the threshold of abuse too high. The fact is it's a sad day in the Manitoba Legislature today when the NDP

don't care about the suffering, under their watch, of senior citizens.

The minister still continues to blame the PPCO instead of admitting that there was a major problem under her watch, as outlined by the Ombudsman. How long did the minister know that this was going on? When is the minister going to accept responsibility and why it is that for so long the NDP government didn't care about the suffering of seniors?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we brought the protection of persons in care office into being. We have changed the staffing levels in personal care homes. We're going to continue to invest in care for seniors.

On the subject, Mr. Speaker, of not caring, I might offer the member opposite an opportunity that he's not yet availed himself of, and that is in a recent very serious case, when an individual was in hospital clinging to his life, the Liberal Party held a press conference, and the family said, my dad was clinging to life and we see the Liberal Party doing press conferences. It's hard to take.

Mr. Alexander was appalled. He still awaits an apology from the member opposite. Maybe he'd like to stand up today and give that apology now.

#### **Post-Secondary Education Government Initiatives**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Mr. Speaker, I see the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) is going to decline on that opportunity to apologize, so I am obliged to ask a very important question on a topic our counterparts across the way continually ignore: Advanced Education and Literacy.

If I'm a university or college student, I'm supporting this budget. I'm going to vote for this. When I was a university student, tuition on campuses doubled, Mr. Speaker, enrolment dropped and facilities were left in a dire state of disrepair. Our government came in and decided, oh, it's time to change.

We are continuing to change things and I'm wondering if our brand-new minister for Advanced Education and Literacy, who has yet to have a question from the members opposite, I will point out, if she might have any news for the Chamber on the next set of changes we're bringing for students and families in this province.

**Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question, and I know he will be very happy to hear that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and I were in my constituency, at J. H. Bruns, announcing nearly \$450 million in provincial support to Manitoba universities. *[interjection]* I guess they're not so interested in hearing what we're doing for universities.

They also announced that tuition will be frozen to the rate of inflation, which provides some predictability for students and their parents. Universities will also receive a 5 per cent increase over the next three years, of course, allowing them to continue building on their excellence.

We're also making sure that there aren't barriers to preventing accessibility for students, which means we're investing \$3 million in new funding to assist those students in reaching their goals of a higher education at university, and for those who want to continue their studies and graduate studies we are investing an additional \$250,000 in new funding to help them.

#### **High School Facilities Need in South Winnipeg**

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, for years this government has been saying that it's not a matter of if but when when it comes to building a new high school in southwest Winnipeg.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we have students who are in portable classrooms. We have students who are being bused throughout the southern part of Winnipeg because this government has refused to make the investment in schools.

Mr. Speaker, we see in this budget over \$4 billion for an extra 500 kilometres of steel and wire for the west-side power line. We see money for a vote tax but no money for schools for southwest Winnipeg.

Why are they putting the needs of students in southwest Winnipeg behind the desire to fund their political party vote tax?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, they obviously missed the announcement that the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) and myself made on high school and school capital broadly.

We are going to, for the first time ever, scope out sites for schools in southwest Winnipeg, as well

as in southeast Winnipeg. We are, for the first time ever, putting money into expanding gyms in schools. We are, for the first time ever, requiring all new schools to have daycare centres within it.

We have the highest amount of investment in school facilities in the history of the province. The only question, Mr. Speaker, is: Will the members opposite support the budget or will they vote against it when they know this budget is moving Manitoba forward on education?

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Heather McLean

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** Mr. Speaker—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. We're on the members' statements. We need to be able to hear them, please.

The honourable member for Kirkfield Park, would you start over.

**Ms. Blady:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it was hard to hear myself think.

Mr. Speaker, Kirkfield Park's own Heather McLean blew away the competition this February to claim the gold medal in the women's 100-metre speed skating at the Canada Winter Games. Congratulations to Heather, her teammates and to all of our Manitoba athletes who relentlessly test the limits of their endurance.

Heather McLean, or Iggy, as her teammates call her, skated a time of 11.33 seconds beating Izzy Dilger and Kate Hanly, both from Alberta.

As most athletes can attest, keeping calm on the day of a competition is just as important as the months of training beforehand, and Heather demonstrated that maturity at the games. Heather, who trained extensively at the St. James Skating Club, kept in mind an appreciation of how lucky she was to participate, to handle her nerves and to fight for the gold medal win.

Before the competition, although she had high hopes for the 100-metre and 500-metre races, Heather didn't want to put pressure on herself to win a medal. Last year, Heather competed in both the 2010 Canadian Nationals and the Canada Cup, but this is her first time placing in such a high profile competition. Not only is this a testament to the hard

work Heather put in to improve, but placing in the Winter Games means that she qualifies for the junior world championships.

Heather has been skating for over 14 years, but I hope that with a gold medal win under her belt, she can now prepare for another important milestone this summer—graduating from high school. Good luck, Heather, as you are entering your new phase of your life.

Our Manitoba athletes live and breathe their sport to get the chance to represent all of us. A well deserved congratulations to Heather McLean, her teammates and their coaches at the St. James Skating Club. Thank you for your perseverance and good faith, and we look forward to seeing where your futures will take you.

I would also like to ask all members of this House to join me in rising to congratulate Heather on her gold medal win.

#### Kelly Robertson

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to congratulate Neepawa's Kelly Robertson on winning several major curling titles. Mr. Robertson and his curling team have been on a winning streak, finding victory at the local, provincial and national levels.

The team consists of Mr. Robertson as skip; third, Doug Armour; second, Peter Prokopowich; and lead, Bob Scales. The team has impressive curling experience. Mr. Armour has seven provincial championships under his belt. Meanwhile, Mr. Prokopowich qualified for the Canadian Legion Championships this year.

Mr. Robertson first found victory at the Strathcona Senior Men's Curling Championship on February 28th. Although he has competed for a provincial title nearly 40 times, this was his first provincial title. With this win came another first for Mr. Robertson, his first chance to represent Manitoba at a national level.

Mr. Robertson and his teammates moved on as Team Manitoba to the World Financial Group Canadian Senior Men's Championship. The tournament was held in Digby, Nova Scotia, from March 19th to 26th.

The team was faced with stiff competition. Nevertheless, the team came out strong and advanced to the finals. Alberta's Brad Hannah proved to be an especially worthy rival, and the only game

Mr. Robertson lost during the tournament was to that team.

\* (14:30)

However, Team Manitoba had the chance to prove themselves as they faced Alberta again in the final. Here Mr. Robertson's team showed their skill, shooting 87 per cent and defeating Team Alberta 7-5 to take the top prize.

Two members of the team were given much deserved recognition at the tournament's victory banquet. Mr. Robertson and Mr. Armour were named all-star skip and third for the tournament. Kelly Robertson's team will now face some of the best curlers in the world, as he will compete for Canada at the World Senior Men's Championship in November 2012.

Though it may be hard to believe, these victories almost never happened. Mr. Robertson was considering retiring from curling earlier this year due to arthritis of his throwing hand. At times the pain of this condition made it nearly impossible for him to make his shots. Luckily, medication has improved the situation and made his exciting successes this year possible.

Congratulations to Kelly Robertson and his team, and the best of luck as they represent Manitoba and Canada at the world championships next year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Vaisakhi Festival**

**Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples):** Mr. Speaker, last week the Sikh community was commemorating the birth of Khalsa. This festival, called Vaisakhi, is a time when Sikhs across the world celebrate the birth of a new order of Sikhs based on purity and equality.

This year marks the 312th anniversary of the creation of Khalsa, which is the community of men and women who have been initiated into the faith—into Sikh faith. In 1699, the 10th guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, baptized five Sikh men from different caste backgrounds to become the leaders of a new faith based on social equality. Within Sikhism, people would no longer be judged first by their caste, which was a powerful message of compassion.

In the present day, Sikhs remember this new beginning in several ways. Sikh youth often choose to get baptized during Vaisakhi. It was also at the birth of Khalsa that the guru named the five Sikh

symbols representing holiness, defence, strength, cleanliness and self-control, which Sikhs still wear to this day.

Many people in The Maples celebrated the birth of Khalsa this weekend at several of our gurdwaras, our Sikh houses of worship, with great happiness.

On Thursday, April 14th, our Premier (Mr. Selinger) and I attended an evening service at the Sikh Society Gurdwara. On Sunday, another celebration was for those who could not come during the week. I attended services at the Sikh Society of Manitoba and at the Kalgidhar Darbar Gurdwara, where people came out for three days to sing religious hymns and share traditional food together.

Mr. Speaker, Sikhism is founded on values we can all learn from, including the principles of equality, generosity and compassion. Celebrating the birth of Khalsa is an opportunity for people from different backgrounds to connect over values we all share. Thank you.

#### **Heaman Family Farm**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise today to pay tribute to Betty, Walter and all of the Heaman family who farm northwest of Virden. They were recipients of the Heritage Farms designation from the Province of Manitoba in November 2010.

The Heaman farm was established in 1882 and is still producing today. A hundred and twenty-nine years of continuous production is a remarkable feat considering how much the farming industry has changed since the late 19th century.

Many Manitoba farmers will find similarities between their own family's experience and the history of the Heaman farm. Betty Heaman's great-grandparents homesteaded their original quarter section of land in 1882. During her father's management, another quarter section was added. Since Betty's marriage to Walter, the farm has grown to 6,500 acres. As is the case with many farms in Manitoba, as the Heaman farm grew, it also diversified. The Heamans grow wheat, oats, barley, canola, flax and peas. As well, they have a few feeder yearlings and operate a pedigreed seed-cleaning business.

A family farm in every sense of the term, the Heaman family has grown to include three sons, Doug, Bob and Ken, their wives and six grandchildren, who all contribute to the success of

Clearview Acres Limited. The Heamans, like countless other farmers in Manitoba, understand the significance of tradition and passing on an appreciation of farming and community to the next generation.

As I congratulate the Heamans for their Heritage Farm designation, I want to recognize the contribution to the settlement and development of Manitoba of all of the approximately 500 families eligible for the Heritage Farm designation. Life was not easy for the early homesteaders who suffered through isolation, endless work and poverty. It was their sweat and toil that laid the foundation for much of Manitoba's growth and development.

The contribution of farming families remains an immeasurable significance to southwestern Manitoba. Family farms like the Heamans' remain the lifeblood of our agricultural regions. It is the intergenerational nature of these farms that contribute to the economic growth and community health of rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, it is examples such as the Heamans that leave me very optimistic about the future of farming and rural communities in Manitoba. Thank you.

#### **Excellence in Teaching Award Recipients**

**Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere):** Mr. Speaker, late last week, eight outstanding educators received Excellence in Teaching Awards from Minister Allan. These annual awards are in recognition of Manitoba educators—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I've reminded members, I don't know how many times, but when mentioning other members in the House, it's ministers by their portfolios and members by their constituencies. So I ask the honourable member to, if she's going to use that in the future, to not to, but to address the ministers by the portfolios they hold and members by the constituencies that they're in. Okay, so that's a reminder also for all members of the House.

**Ms. Braun:** They are also an acknowledgement of the vital role all educators have in teaching, leading and guiding students of all ages throughout the province.

I would like to pay particular tribute to Jerry Sodomlak. He is the principal of Donwood Elementary School in the River East Transcona School Division and he received the prestigious Outstanding School Leader award.

Mr. Sodomlak is described by parents and colleagues as a person of wisdom whose strength is to work in his own quiet way, embracing patience, grace and fairness with students, staff and community stakeholders alike. Tamara Roehr, the parent who nominated him, described Principal Sodomlak as an exemplary leader who possesses the rare combination of superb administrative skills, commitment to the community, innovative educational leadership and a true love of children.

His many successful initiatives in the K-to-6, dual-track, English-immersion school include promoting respect and positive student behaviour, spearheading school improvement projects and strengthening connections with parents in the community. Mr. Sodomlak recognizes that in today's world the walls of a school reach far into the community and that a student's success needs the support of their family. I had the opportunity to hear about the Community Connector program that he has initiated and the work of Geni Lehmann in providing that school link to parents and community.

Jerry Sodomlak is, indeed, a very worthy recipient of the Excellence in Teaching Award. The atmosphere in Donwood school speaks to his caring leadership and commitment to children.

All of the award recipients are inspiring examples of the quality educators we are blessed to have working in our schools and communities throughout Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my fellow members to join me in congratulating Jerry Sodomlak and all recipients of this year's Excellence in Teaching Awards.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS BUDGET DEBATE (Fifth Day of Debate)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Resume adjourned 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, and it's standing in the name of the honourable member for Wolseley, who has 14 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Mr. Speaker, when we last left our hero, I was bravely explaining all of

the fantastic features in today's budget and—that we are trying to debate, despite the opposition's concerted efforts to not ask questions about the budget and to not engage with us on this very important political document in the history of Manitoba. They seem to be preoccupied with other things. It's quite remarkable what you can learn during question period. I learned last week that apparently no cars were stolen in all of Manitoba for, you know, the entire time that the Conservatives were in office, that long decade of the 1990s. I don't know, maybe it was only bicycles that were stolen, or horse carts or something, but there were no automobiles stolen while the Conservatives were in office.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, you hear something like that and it's like, well, we're all honourable members. We're obliged to bring what we think is factual information forward to this Chamber, and yet you take the member at their word, on face value.

But that one just didn't quite make sense to me, and I went and asked a few questions of some people that I think would know and, in fact, you know what? There were cars stolen during the 1990s. In fact, there were 80 per cent more cars stolen in the 1990s than right now. And I—it got me to thinking, how many other situations could there be where our budget is actually improving things for Manitoba, and the honourable members across the way just don't know that because they seem to be under some influence of delusion, which suggests otherwise.

\*(14:40)

So, you know, I'm just picking a few. You know, I don't have a whole lot of time left. I'm just picking a few, but the general frame—the general theory I'm working with is that there's something in this budget for everybody. Quite often there's several somethings in this budget for everyone.

Let's start with child care. My goodness, I'm the proud father of a couple of young kids. If I'm a young parent in this province, or if I'm a parent who expects to have young kids, or if I'm a grandparent who's watching their children try and raise their kids, I'm going to want to see some pretty healthy investments in child care.

Well, what does the budget say? Mr. Speaker, 2,100 more child-care spaces—2,100 on top of, what is it, over 8,000 that we've already provided since we came to office. That's going to be 10,000 more

child-care spaces that didn't exist when the Conservatives were finally removed from office. I think that's a pretty important fact to put on the record.

If I'm a senior, at the other end of the age spectrum, is there anything in this budget for me? Well, lo and behold, it looks like seniors are going to have their maximum education property tax credit increased in each of the next three years. That's pretty good to know. I'm also thinking if I'm a senior I might not be, by any means, the only one using the Pharmacare system. But for those seniors who do rely on our nationally best leading Pharmacare program in the entire country, I'm going to be kind of pleased to find out that the most that Pharmacare deductibles are going to increase is at the rate of inflation. And, meanwhile, we will continue to bring on new drugs which will be available to people in more medical situations than has been the case under the Conservatives.

And, speaking of health care, wouldn't you know it, the Conservatives often will stand up and say, where's my hospital, where's my clinic, my road is not yet paved in gold. And then the next Conservative will stand up and say, you know, government spending is bad, you guys really need to change what you're doing.

This black and white, back and forth, completely oxymoronic mentality over there is just going to get worse for them, because on top of the 100 health facilities we've already improved, look at this, Winnipeg, Selkirk, Ste. Anne, Flin Flon, Pine Falls, Oakbank, Springfield, Lac du Bonnet, Stonewall and Vita. What do they all have in common? They're getting improved health-care facilities under this budget.

*Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

And, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Acting Speaker, quite a few of those are not in NDP government ridings. Looks like we actually govern for everyone's health care in this province, not just the few people who might be able to pay cash, which is the, of course, Conservative mentality.

Maybe I'm a family or an individual who likes the idea of having access to a doctor. Most Manitobans have access to a doctor. More Manitobans have that now than they did when the Conservatives were in office, reducing the number of doctors that we train each year. Really smart move. Thank you. It takes 10 years to grow a doctor. Well,

look at this, in our budget it looks like we will be able to provide access to a family doctor for every single Manitoban by the year 2015 thanks to the responsible and dedicated budget outlined here today, which the Conservatives don't want to debate.

Well, let's think about those doctors heading into school. Let's think about all of the university and college students wanting to get a post-secondary education. If I'm a high school student now, looking at graduating, if I'm a family with students in it, if I'm anyone who wants to go back to school and upgrade my skills and my training, I might want to know what we're going to do as a government for universities and for colleges. Wouldn't you know it, tuition rates are going to be frozen at the rate of inflation.

Contrast that with when I was going to school in this fair province, granted, under the Conservative government of the time, when tuition doubled. It more than doubled, and enrolment declined, and bursaries were cancelled. Education became an elitist institution that was only available to those who could pay for it, rather than for anyone who had the guts and determination and brains to make a better case in their life. A fundamental turn of events there.

And maybe—maybe—I also want to know what we're doing for universities and colleges themselves. Looks like 5 per cent funding increase. Not a bad start, three years in a row. I think that's also important to note and maybe the education system from K to 12. That might just, you know, it might have an impact on a few people, like every single child and every single family with a child, and every single person who cares about the kids, who are going to be going to work and paying their pension when they retire. Just about every Manitoban will be concerned about what we're doing for education.

Oh, my goodness, an additional \$94.2-million investment just in school facilities, Mr. Acting Speaker. That means more renovations, more expansions, building more schools and school facilities, on top of our unprecedented investments made already.

Now, let's pretend that I am a business person. Let's pretend I'm an entrepreneur. Let's pretend that I am here to build the new economy here in Manitoba. Well, I look at this budget, and wouldn't you know it? Me and my family, working in the private sector, we're going to have access to a new five-year, \$30-million program to help Manitoba businesses grow and find new markets.

Maybe I'm someone who cares about the planet and actually sees a way for the planet and the economy and society to work together. Well, wouldn't you know it? If I'm interested in a geothermal heat pump—which I happen to know that I am, installed one in my former residence. By my count, no less than five current Cabinet ministers in our fair government have the same marvellous technology in their own personal homes—well, it looks like the tax credit I can get is going up from 10 per cent to 15 per cent when I install that technology in my home.

And let's pretend, Mr. Acting Speaker, just for a moment, that I have a few connections with non-profit groups, those fantastic volunteers, the community organizations moving social agendas forward in multiple, wonderful, fantastic ways. Well, I had the privilege of attending an announcement by the honourable Minister for Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross), and hosted by our Premier (Mr. Selinger), where he announced brand-new initiatives to provide more long-term, stable funding for more organizations and a new approach to reducing red tape for those same organizations so they can actually spend more time working on the causes that they and their volunteers and their boards of directors care so passionately about and less time on the government forms and the fundraising applications that everyone has to grapple with.

And last but certainly not least, let's just throw a little bit of a contrast—just a little bit of a contrast, Mr. Acting Speaker—on the flood. I seem to recall that our former premier under the Conservatives said that his answer to the flood was people should not live on flood plains. That was the Conservative response to people facing massive flood waters after getting approval from that same government to build there in the first place, no warning, no planning of what might happen. We are making and have made and will continue to make enormous investments, all of which the members opposite have voted against.

And speaking of municipalities, let's pretend I live in a city. Let's pretend I live in a town, and let's say, just for the sake of argument, I'm interested in knowing what the provincial government is going to do for multi-year funding on a go-forward basis for municipalities. Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, according to the budget, and in stark contrast to what Conservatives did in office, we are now providing the equivalent of one percentage point of the existing

provincial sales tax is dedicated to municipalities for infrastructure funding.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm going to close with a rumour. I'm going to close with a rumour that I heard. I heard that this budget is so good, it does so many good things for Manitoba and it's so difficult to argue against it, that that's actually why our Conservative counterparts aren't asking any questions about it. And I even heard—I thought this was pretty funny the first time I heard it—but I even heard they might be considering voting for this budget, making it unanimous across Manitoba.

Well, I got news for you, Mr. Acting Speaker. Manitobans aren't going to fall for that one. Manitobans will not fall for that. If you want to date a New Democrat, you got to put your principles forward a lot sooner than that.

And let's not forget, we will be here to remind every single Manitoban it was a mere few months ago that these same Conservative members said they would whack the budget by half a billion dollars, cutting all of the initiatives that I've just described and more. We will hold them to account. We will hold them to what they stand for, and we, Mr. Acting Speaker, are going to move Manitoba forward. Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I begin with a few comments to thank those who work every day in our Legislative Assembly to make this a good place to work, for us to engage in the democratic process, which, of course, is the foundation of so much of the good things that we cherish in our province and in our country. I want to thank the Clerk and the Clerk's office, those in the Hansard's office, those who oversee the spending and budgeting within the Legislature and those who help with human resource matters and, indeed, all the others who help in one way or another.

\* (14:50)

I want also to extend a personal thank you to my own staff members who contribute so much to what I'm able to do here.

I want to say a thank you to those who live in River Heights for their support. Each day that I'm here I do my best to help those in need in River Heights and to work for improved provincial governments, so that the lives of those in River Heights and those in constituencies around the province can be enhanced and improved.

And I want to thank those in the civil service who contribute their efforts and their time to improving our province. This year, with the flooding around the province, we all owe a great debt of gratitude to the many, many people who work for our province or for our municipalities to address the many issues which have arisen because of the high water and the flooding.

Thank you to all those who are helping as volunteers, as well, to keep our province in good shape.

And now let me talk about the recent budget. I can assure the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) that there will not be unanimous support for this budget. There will be at least one strong opposition vote against this budget.

Since the Premier (Mr. Selinger) came to office in October 2009, Manitoba's provincial budgeting has deteriorated drastically. In 19—[interjection]—since the Premier started in 2009, a year and a half ago. In 2009, the revenues were more than expenditures. There was a small surplus in core government operations and the provincial net debt was at 11.5 billion.

In just a year and a half, under the current Premier, the situation has deteriorated very rapidly. By March 2010, the Premier's government had burst all expenditure projections and was reporting a deficit in core government operations of more than \$500 million. This year, the government's projecting a second major deficit in core operations for the fiscal year just ended of some 490 million and a rise in the debt to \$13.2 billion. In the coming year, the projections are a third major deficit in core operations of 510 million and a rise in the debt to 14.8 billion. In just a year and a half the Premier—that the Premier has been in his job, the government has moved to have three huge deficits and a whopping \$3.3-billion increase in the net debt of our province.

The problem is that this NDP government and this Premier, and the Finance Minister in particular, are very poor at managing money. Every year that the NDP government has been in power, they have overspent their estimated budgetary expenditures for the year. Last year, for example, they overspent by more than \$200 million. In the latest third quarter financial report, this was estimated at \$242 million over budget.

The problem may be in the initial budgeting or in the process for spending, but either way the results

tell a sorry tale of a government which can't manage budgeting and expenditures well. I will be voting against this budget for this reason.

When it comes to education, the facts are clear. The longer this government has been in power, the worse Manitoba students have performed. The Program for International Student Assessment or PISA has shown it clearly. The PISA scores for students in Manitoba who are 15 years of age have deteriorated steadily since the NDP came to power. This has been true in reading, in mathematics and in science. Manitoba has performed less well than other provinces and other countries. While Ontario students' results have continued at high levels, Manitoba students' performance has dropped.

Mr. Acting Speaker, under this government Manitoba is doing worse, not better, when it comes to education. This is very sad.

And it's not just the PISA results which are concerning. In the last two years, I've heard increasingly from business people and others concerns about the quality of our high school graduates. Too often, business people are finding that there're high school graduates in Manitoba who are having trouble with basic reading, writing and math skills needed to hold down a job. While we certainly have many high school graduates who are doing very well, these concerns about underperformance of some graduates are real and they are not being addressed by this government, and decisions being made under the leadership of this government often don't make sense.

There are some students who don't do well in a traditional classroom and need an alternative learning program. One such very successful alternative learning program was being taught in Treherne by Donna Cuddy. It was highly successful and was enabling students who were not doing well in a traditional classroom to succeed. But what did this government do? It cancelled the program. It's very hard to understand why this was done but it adds to the mismanagement happening under the watch of this government.

The budget is clearly deficient and it doesn't recognize and address the fact that our students are falling behind. We need to get rid of this government so we can get back on track to succeed and have students improving instead of getting worse, and that's another reason I will be voting against this budget.

When it comes to crime in Manitoba, in 12 years under the NDP we've seen a very disturbing trend. The longer this government has been in power, the more violent crime we have in Manitoba. Indeed, the latest figures for the violent crime severity index in Canadian provinces show that Manitoba stands out as the worst performing of all provinces. Indeed, our rankings are twice as bad as five other provinces', three times as bad as two other provinces', and more than four times as bad as one other province. In contrast to British Columbia, for example, where the amount of violent crime has gone down, here in Manitoba, under the NDP, violent crime continues to rise.

Day after day, Mr. Acting Speaker, we hear NDP members rise in their seat in this Chamber to talk about how much they're spending and what they're doing to reduce crime, but the fact is that the violent crime continues to rise. This NDP government will likely go down as one of the most ineffective governments in this respect in the history of Canada when it comes to reducing violent crime, and as the NDP rhetoric goes up, so does violent crime. It's very sad. And sadly there is not in this budget a plan to reduce crime which is effective. An effective plan is badly needed because the track record of the NDP in worsening violent crime in Winnipeg is likely to continue—likely to continue. It is another reason I will be voting against this budget.

When it comes to the environment, Mr. Acting Speaker, the situation on Lake Winnipeg continues to deteriorate. The phosphorus continues to accumulate in Lake Winnipeg and the algal blooms continue to worsen. Those who witnessed the green scourge at Victoria Beach last summer know serious problems of algal blooms, know how serious these problems are on Lake Winnipeg. The algal blooms are preventing people from using the wonderful beaches we have. The algal blooms are a threat to people's health because the algae produce micro-toxins and the algae are an increasing danger.

Liberals want to keep people healthy and our Lake Winnipeg healthy, and we know that under the NDP the situation continues to worsen. Last fall at a—two major conferences happened, the Lake Winnipeg Basin Summit organized by Hank Venema and others at the Water Innovation Centre at our International Institute for Sustainable Development and the Red Zone II Conference, held by the Lake Winnipeg Foundation, which featured videos of Lake Winnipeg's situation and a panel discussion on the lake.

I was particularly struck by the comments of Bob Sandford of—the EPCOR chair of the UN Water for Life Decade program and director of the Western Watersheds Climate Research Collaborative from Canmore, Alberta. Bob Sandford [*interjection*—we found the money for the *Namao*. Bob Sandford had a broad perspective on water quality issues. He did not waste any time in calling Lake Winnipeg an international catastrophe and in saying that it's getting worse.

\* (15:00)

Those of us who live in Manitoba and know of the algal blooms in the north basin of Lake Winnipeg already recognize the severity of the problem on Lake Winnipeg. The north basin algal blooms may be up to 160 kilometres long. The sheer size and scale of this environmental catastrophe on Lake Winnipeg, at 23,750 square kilometres, the 10th largest lake in the world, makes it one of the largest environmental disasters on the planet.

It is sad that our lake, Lake Winnipeg, is now becoming a symbol of a large-scale ecological catastrophe. It's sad that it will occur when a government, in this case, the NDP provincial government, abrogates its responsibility and mismanages the environment in our province.

As Bob Sandford indicated, Lake Winnipeg's becoming known as a global symbol of a very badly managed lake, and it's disturbing to me as a Manitoban to hear this, and I'm sure it's upsetting to many other Manitobans.

The fact is, that under the poor management of the current NDP government, action has been too little and too slow, and the result has been worsening algal blooms and algal toxins in Lake Winnipeg. Indeed, so far there's no evidence at all that the situation in Lake Winnipeg is improving at all.

Last fall, I asked the Premier (Mr. Selinger): When is he going to set targets for reduction of phosphorus and reduction of algal blooms? The interim target of a 10 per cent reduction in phosphorus has not been met, and it was known as early as 2007 that this target was indeed hopelessly and irresponsibly inadequate to achieve the reduction in algal blooms needed.

I raised this in the fall of 2007, and it took three years for the NDP to acknowledge the inadequacy of their initial target. But we need a real target, and we need it soon so that we can all pull together in an effective plan to reduce the phosphorus in Lake

Winnipeg and to reduce the algal blooms in our wonderful lake and to return Lake Winnipeg to health. We were promised such a target in the Throne Speech, but we still haven't had it.

Indeed, when it comes to the largest point source of phosphorus going into Lake Winnipeg, sewage released by the City of Winnipeg, we continue to have a problem as the Province continues to argue with the City about whether removal of nitrogen is needed, and this results in continuing delays in actually getting things going in reducing the phosphorus in Winnipeg sewage, as we need to do.

So the poor management of the environment and Lake Winnipeg by the NDP is another reason why I will be voting against this budget.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when the NDP came to power, there were a little more than 5,000 children in care in Manitoba. Today, when last measured, we find the number of children in care has risen to more than 9,000, almost double what the situation was when the NDP came to power.

The number of children in care is an important measure because it is an assessment of how well the government is doing in supporting families and children so that children do not need to go into care. The NDP have been a disaster here, as they've done so poorly in supporting families that larger and larger numbers of children are being taken into care.

Let me give you a recent example: When compiled, the many who have come to us with concerns about the way this NDP government works but, of course, I won't be mentioning names or give identifying details. But I'll give you an example of what's happening in NDP Manitoba.

I'll tell you the story of a wonderful, hard-working family of six—a mother, a father and four children—who have been doing everything they can to make sure their children are well cared for. Yes, the family is struggling. No surprise here; this is NDP Manitoba. Yes, this family is not perfect in the face of obstacles that one would hope would not be there. One of the children is in primary school. He has trouble learning to read and probably has dyslexia. The parents do their best for this child and do their best to talk to the teacher in the school. But, sadly, the teacher has not been listening. They are an Aboriginal family, and what they say, sadly, doesn't seem to count with the teacher. Instead of help, the teacher blames the parents and won't help. The teacher implies they're bad parents, but they're doing

everything they can to raise their children well, and they're asking for help. Not their fault that the child is dyslexic. Their child needs help, but none comes. It's not easy being a family with challenges in NDP Manitoba.

One of the children is a teenager with a diagnosed behavioural problem, possibly a psychiatric disorder. She would be a difficult child to manage in any family, but this family do their very best, even when this teenager, in an attempt to get her own way, threatens to lie to Child and Family Services and to say that her parents are beating her. They continue to do their best with this child, even though it's increasingly apparent that it's a challenge. And when they ask for help from Child and Family Services, from Child and Family Services there is no help. But very quickly, when they ask for help, the police arrive at their doorstep and threaten to lay charges or to have the children taken into care. They are an Aboriginal family and, sadly and wrongly, all too often Aboriginal families are judged without the care being taken to establish the facts of the circumstances.

And then one day, because there was no help, the teenager makes a call and makes false allegations. She wants attention; she gets the attention. But Child and Family Services spent no time in trying to establish the facts of the circumstances. Child and Family Services spent no time in trying to support the family under difficult circumstances. The four children are swooped up. No, they are not put in a residential school, thank goodness. No, they are not scooped up and sent out of province to be adopted, as happened in the 1960s. None of these happened, but now the four children are put in a hotel. They are not able to go to school. They are not able to be in a safe, close relative's home while the situation is sorted out. They are promptly put in a hotel. The family is broken apart. The parents and grandparents are heartbroken. They have done their best to raise their children, and all they have is a family torn and broken apart.

Every day similar stories happen in our Manitoba. This is NDP Manitoba, and this is the way things work. Family after family is broken apart and broken up. A city of almost 10,000 children is in care, and largely because there's not been the support and consideration for families that there should have been. It will only change when we get rid of the NDP and their way. We need a new way, a way in which families are supported in staying together, instead of

being pulled and pushed and twisted apart, and that is another reason I will be voting against this budget.

We all know the problems with long waiting times which continue in health care. Hip replacement surgery waits were, on average, 12 weeks when this government came to power, and they are now an average 16 weeks. Knee replacement surgery waits were 16 weeks 12 years ago; they are now 20 weeks. In 2007, magnetic resonance imaging wait times were five weeks; they are now 18 weeks. In all three areas, wait times have gone up, not down.

Varied problems in health care continue. As the government well knows, they've done so poorly in the NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority that there's a full review going on. I can hardly go anywhere in Manitoba without somebody coming to me with a major health-care problem under this government.

And, of course, one of the really bad areas at the moment are the problems in personal care homes under this NDP government. I have raised, over the last many months, issues related to poor quality of care in personal care homes. I should say that there are excellent personal care homes in Manitoba, but there are also personal care homes where there's a need for major improvement and for a government with a real plan to ensure that the seniors in our rapidly aging population are looked after with dignity and with respect. And this budget did not provide any such plan for making the changes needed, and that is another reason why I will be voting against this budget.

\*(15:10)

And on early childhood education and child care in this province, based on NDP long waiting lists, we have waiting lists of 500 people for a single child-care facility. We have waiting lists that will go not just for days or weeks but for months and for years, and that's another reason why I'll be voting against this NDP budget.

For many years, we in the Liberal Party have been calling for a rapid transit system for all of Winnipeg. The provincial budget contains no commitment for this beyond the 3.7 kilometres of rapid transit already being built, and that's another reason I will be voting against this budget.

And while this budget does provide some more dollars for drainage, dams and control structures, we still don't have an adequate water management strategy for the province. And our farmers continue

to lose millions of dollars, perhaps tens or hundreds of millions of dollars each year because it has not been done, and that is another reason I will be voting against this budget.

And while there has been progress in permanently protecting people in the Red and the Assiniboine river valleys from floods, there are too many communities without such permanent protection, and too many of such communities without permanent plans and protection are First Nations communities. When I saw the statistics last week, more than 90 per cent of people who've had to be evacuated have been from First Nations communities. While the primary responsibility here may lie with the federal government, whether people live in First Nations communities or in other communities, we are all Manitobans, and this government has not been nearly active enough in working with and pressing the federal government to put in place the permanent protection and the permanent solutions that are needed, and that is another reason why I will be voting against this budget. *[interjection]* It's all true.

Mr. Acting Speaker, our Liberal position is clear. We have a very different vision of the needs of Manitoba than the present NDP government.

We believe in managing spending so that we meet our expenditure targets instead of overspending every year.

We believe Manitoba should have an education system where we improve the results for our children instead of the NDP system where we're falling behind.

We believe Manitoba should have supports for families so that fewer children need to go into care and the number of children in care decreases rather than increases.

We believe in a Manitoba where we see a reduction in violent crime instead of an increase in violent crime.

We believe in a province where Manitobans can get access to high-quality health care when they need it instead of the NDP system where they have to wait weeks or months or sometimes years for care.

We believe in a system which puts a priority on health, on care, on dignity and on respect instead of the NDP system which has put a priority on chemical and physical restraints for our parents and grandparents in personal care homes and which has

been putting people with Alzheimer's disease in jail rather than in a care home.

We believe in a well-designed water management system for rural Manitoba which protects farms from flooding instead of one which leads to large extra losses for farmers when their fields flood.

And we believe in a rapid transit system for all Winnipeg.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker. Merci. Miigwech.

**Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy):** Let me first start with thanking the people of Southdale for allowing me to do this job and to represent them in the House. I think that all of us in this Chamber know that it is a rare privilege to do what we do, and beyond that I am grateful for how this job has made me feel closer to my community. I love that wherever I go in Southdale, be it the local Safeway or the community centre or the local schools that I go to, I always meet friends that I have made since I have been doing this job. And sometimes our paths have crossed through casework and other times it's just because, after four years of attending various community events, people start to become familiar. It's been an unexpected blessing that comes with the role of MLA, and one certainly feels deeper roots in the community than perhaps would be otherwise.

I would also like to take a moment to thank the Premier (Mr. Selinger) for appointing me the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy. It has been a whirlwind of meetings, briefings and studying up on my new department, and at times I feel a lot like a university student cramming for finals. It's been more than 20 years since I hit the books, but I think it's a good way to feel like I'm relating to students.

I would also like to take a moment to thank my predecessor, the member for Lord Roberts (Ms. McGifford), who held this post for a number of years. She has kindly offered her advice and help, and I truly appreciate being able to learn from her experience.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it will come to no surprise to you that I am speaking in support of our budget as presented by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), a budget so good that even the opposition can't think of anything negative to say, a far cry from just a few short months ago, when every

member on that side of the House voted to cut \$500 million from the budget. Now they're saying they support things such as our three-year funding plan for universities and projects such as the daycare and school for Sage Creek. But, of course, we know that if you cut \$500 million from the budget, none of those things could happen. Then again, we're the ones who balanced the budget for 10 years in a row, so perhaps it's our numbers you should trust.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this budget reflects the priorities of Manitobans and Manitoba families. It's a budget that protects health care, infrastructure, education, water quality and public safety.

We hear a lot nowadays about an aging population, but that isn't actually the trend in Manitoba. And that's why we have such a focus and commitment on education in our budget. Our high school graduation rate has climbed 14 per cent since 2001. That's a graduation rate of 82.7 per cent.

But, of course, we know we can do better and do that we must support our teachers. And that's why we're guaranteeing an increase of 2.2 per cent for all school divisions, including support services for special needs students, reading supports for middle and senior year students, expansion of the Inner-City Science Centre program, a new stay-in-school initiative and expansions to SAFE Workers of Tomorrow for more schools.

We also need to support growing communities because we know people are moving to Manitoba and making Manitoba their home in record numbers. And that's why we'll see \$94.2 million in school capital projects including planning for a new school in Sage Creek in my community.

This budget also sees the Education Property Tax Credit increased to \$700; under the Tories, it was \$250.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm looking forward to touring all our universities and colleges over the next few months, and at every campus one can see construction. The Richardson College for the Environment and Science Complex at the University of Winnipeg, the Buhler building science lab renovations at the University of Manitoba, a new Health Sciences pavilion at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, a new Culinary Arts building at the Red River College and a new Swan River site for UCN, a new mining academy in Flin Flon and the campus expansion of Assiniboine Community College in Dauphin. None of those projects would be

moving forward if the opposition were to get their way and cut \$500 million from the budget.

Do you know what else didn't happen under the Tories? They didn't increase post-secondary funding by more than 80 per cent; that was us. No, under the Tory government, funding to universities was either cut or frozen.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I went to university in the mid-'90s. Back then, students couldn't count on a bursary. In the '90s, under the Conservative government, students racked up debt.

And in the 11 years since we've been in office, this NDP government has tripled the amount of scholarships and bursaries available to Manitoba students. We're also making sure that universities and colleges have the funds they need to continue improving the quality of education they offer.

That's why this year universities will see an increase of 5 per cent in the operating grant and can count on that grant for the next three years. And, although, I shouldn't say that very lightly: we're committed to funding the universities the 5 per cent increase in operating grant for the next three years, but since the Conservatives are planning to cut \$500 million from the budget, I don't think they have the same long-term commitment to funding post-secondary education in this province.

And history, of course, being our strongest indicator, we know how they funded post-secondary education—on the backs of students—those who could afford to go to university or college. The Conservative student plan worked for those at the top. Our plan is one that everyone should have the opportunity to go to school and that students should be judged on their passion to learn and not their ability to pay.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when the Conservatives were in government, they raised tuition by 132 per cent. Now, you can imagine the barrier that was for many students considering whether they should pursue a post-secondary education or not.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I will say a couple of good things that came from those dark Tory days. Because of those outrageous tuition hikes, it meant many students became activists and found their voice and spoke out against the injustice. And a couple of those folks found they had a passion for speaking out and standing up for average Manitobans. And a couple of those students who were motivated to speak against the Tories are here in the Chamber with us today,

and I'm so grateful to call them my colleagues and to know that the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) and the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) continue to be strong voices for their community.

\* (15:20)

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, when we came into office, we did something different. We cut tuition by 10 per cent and froze it for 10 years and, at the same time, we increased our support for universities. This year we're making it easier for students to plan their education, by freezing tuition at the rate of inflation: 1 per cent this year.

Manitoba has some of the lowest tuition fees in the country, and our 60 per cent tuition rebate has put \$7.8 million back into the pockets of more than 8,000 graduates. We know that there are more students going to post-secondary school than under the Conservatives. Enrolment is up one-third since 1999, and we know that some students choose college or apprenticeships over university, which is why we're adding an additional 4,000 new apprenticeship seats and well on our way to meeting that goal

Mr. Acting Speaker, we all know people in high school who knew exactly what they wanted to do with their life by the time they were in grade 10. There were some of those people who could see the path in front of them, get on that track, and stay focused on one goal until they completed their post-secondary education and began the career that they had planned back in high school. I knew people like that in high school; I wasn't one of them.

For most people, going to college or university is a time of growing, of learning about yourself, of trying new things. For some people, that might mean switching new programs or maybe even going from college to university or the other way around. We know from some students coming out of high school, university can seem a bit daunting, can be a little bit intimidating, so some decide to start at college and when they get a grasp of that, they think maybe they're ready to try university.

This, Mr. Acting Speaker—we want to make it easier for people to do just that. Our colleges and universities are already working together on about 30 programs that transfer between the institutions, and we know that our institutions do try to recognize credits, and some even have a system to do that. But, by working with post-secondary institutions, we

want to expand that. We want students to be given the credit for the work that they have done and we believe that that would help them get through school in a more timely manner, and encourage even more students to graduate.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I've been talking a lot about post-secondary education but we know that some people, often by no fault of their own, don't complete high school, and this government wants to make sure that everyone has the same opportunity to finish high school if they choose to. We live in a knowledge-based society, and having a high school diploma is more important now than ever.

I said earlier that I'm looking forward to touring our many campuses around the project, and Mr. Acting Speaker, I was able to tour one of our adult learning centres—adult learning and literacy centres, the McLeod centre, recently. The people there ranged in age, that I met, from 19 to 50. They spent a lot of time speaking about their stories, and as I spoke with students, I was left with a great deal of respect for their courage.

There were many stories behind their reasons for not finishing high school. Two young men I had met had only studied until grade 6, when civil war broke out in their home country. They fled to relative safety in a nearby refugee camp but school was not an option. Now, here in Canada, they are back learning, both with lofty ambitions, one to be a social worker, the other an engineer. And can you imagine the wealth of knowledge that these men will bring to their chosen careers?

They have a long road ahead of them. They're currently just getting ready to begin studying for a high school diploma, and they know that they have post-secondary education to look at after that. But they have already travelled a much more rocky road than most of us here can even imagine, and so I think the road ahead is going to look a lot smoother for them, and I wish them all the luck in it.

I met another man while I was at the McLeod centre who is the same age as me. He was at the learning centre to get a high school diploma. He'd done really well in life, maybe not what you had imagined of somebody who didn't have their high school diploma. But he owned his own auto body repair shop for the last 15 years, had made good money at it and was raising his family. But he told me that he's finding it gets harder and harder each year to bend down and work under the car. He told me that he's looking to upgrade his skills so that he

can find a job using his mind instead of his hands because he doesn't think his knees are going to last much longer. And, again, he wasn't sure of the path that he was on, but he knew that high school diploma was the start and from there perhaps a post-secondary education. He had another long road in front of him but was confident that he could make it.

He also shared another story about one of his personal reasons for wanting to go back to school: his nine-year-old son. He's helping him with his homework and is finding that more and more in math, he's having a hard time helping his son to understand some of the things that he's learning about in school, and he felt that, at the very least, he had to stay ahead of his son's learning so that he could be an example, a role model and a help to him as well. These are just a couple of the stories I heard that day.

I heard many stories from women who had chosen to work on raising their family and contributing to their household in many different ways. But, at some point, as their families got older, thought it was about time for themselves; time to take a moment to do something for themselves, and that included getting their high school education and perhaps going on to further studies after that. These are just a couple of the stories that I heard that day.

I did hear one thing again and again, and that was how scared people were to come back to school. Each of them spoke about how long it took them to finally stand up and sign up for a course. They talked about how nervous they were that first day to walk into class, and every single one of them told me that they were put completely at ease by the incredible caring teachers, and that by the end of the day they felt at home. And they felt respected, which was another thing they weren't sure they were going to get when they walked in that door. I can only imagine how nerve-racking it must've been for people that first day of class and how scary it must have been to walk into a classroom after 10, 20 or 30 years.

For many of these people, high school the first time around wasn't really a good memory for them and they were scared they were going to be repeating the same thing. As they spoke I felt proud of this government for supporting adult learning centres, supporting 40 adult learning centres around the province. Well, of course, you cut \$500 million from the budget you aren't likely to support any adult

learning centres. But, then again, we know that that's exactly where the Conservatives were cut—would cut, because under—in the '90s under the Tories they didn't fund adult learning centres. If you wanted to go back to high school you had to figure out a classroom the same as your kids, and you can imagine how difficult that would've been.

But we know who the Conservatives worry about. It's not the average family trying to get ahead, trying to do better and trying to be role models for the next generation. They worry about their friends at the top, their friends that can afford 132 per cent increase in tuition.

There was a time when people thought of daycare as a social support. Mr. Acting Speaker, daycare is an essential tool in our economy. Without available daycare, people can't get into the workforce or train for a new career, and I saw, when I visited the McLeod centre, how daycare and training and school all go together. There was a daycare at one end of the centre so that parents could know that their children were in a safe place while they were learning—everybody working together and everybody learning and moving forward.

Mr. Acting Speaker, without high-quality daycare people can't focus on what they're doing at work, and our licensed daycares provide a stimulating and safe environment for children. And I can tell you, as a working mom, when you know that your children are in good hands, it makes you able to concentrate on your job.

I can't tell you how many times I've also relied on the educated opinion of child-care workers to advise me on how to deal with those issues that come along while raising a family. Our educated child-care workers are experts on early childhood development, and when your child attends one of our licensed daycares, those people become experts in your child. Not only can they tell you a little bit about how their day went and what things they may have faced during the day, and simple things like what sort of nutrition they've had as well, and we know they're having nutritious meals in our licensed daycares. But they can also give you some advice on how to deal with things, like, sibling rivalry or tantrums or other issues that come up as a parent, because, of course, these folks who work in our licensed daycares are experts in childhood development.

Budget 2011 will fund an additional 2,100 child-care spaces, including in Sage Creek. The daycare in Sage Creek will be built on a future

school site, part of this government's initiative to build daycares in or near schools, which makes a lot of sense. Children and schools and families and daycare all go hand in hand. I spent a lot of time in Sage Creek this past summer. I noticed that every door I knocked on had a new baby. In fact, most of the time when I knocked on the door someone came to the door opened it quietly, whispered I'll come out on the porch and speak with you because the baby's sleeping. Incredible how many doors I heard that on. It is a fast-growing community and this government is planning for it.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we know that people want to feel proud of their communities and they deserve to feel safe in them, and that's why this budget will increase the municipal infrastructure and transit grants to the equivalent of 1 per cent to the point of the existing sales tax. We're also hiring 66 more police officers and 10 prosecutors to protect communities. We've added many officers in our time here, but, of course, the opposition has voted against each and every one of them.

\* (15:30)

Mr. Acting Speaker, the opposition may have frozen or cut grants to universities, something that we don't believe in doing, but this is the 12th straight year in which major business and personal taxes have been cut or frozen, and our debt-servicing ratio is half of what it was in 1999.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that is smart fiscal management, making cuts that help the economy and ensuring front-line services, something you couldn't do if the Tories were in power and cut \$500 million from this budget. We believe it's about choices.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I do want to spend a moment talking about health care, something we know is a priority for Manitoba families. The Canadian Institute for Health Information says that Manitoba has the third most cost-efficient in-patient care and the third lowest administration costs in the country. Corporate spending at the WHRA is below 3 per cent of the total budget, and that means more money goes towards front-line workers: more money to doctors, 400 more since we've been in office, and more money for nurses, 2,500 more nurses than when the Tories were in office. And we are well on our way of having a family doctor for everyone in Manitoba who wants one.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am proud of our province, and while the opposition may complain about

Manitoba, that's not the Manitoba that I know. The place I call home is full of warm, optimistic, friendly people, and we may be too modest to call ourselves the best at anything—although Saskatchewan calls us the most affordable province; we'll settle for being in the top three of affordability. This is the little province that can, and we have everything we need, and the people on this side of the House believe in it. Thank you.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Acting Speaker—*[interjection]* Good advice, good advice.

I do want to put a few things on the record in regards to the motion that was brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), and we're pleased to see a number of those initiatives, Mr. Acting Speaker, that we've been calling for the past number of years. It's unfortunate that the government decided to bring the initiative forward on an election year, and we know that those promises that have been brought forward will definitely make a significant impact on all Manitobans as a result of some of those changes.

In regards to the justice issue, I know that the government set on some \$14 million of federal transfer payments that they set in place just in the budget the other day in regards to extra policing for this province of Manitoba. It's unfortunate that they decided to wait, again, until the eve of an election before they made this become a reality.

I, along with my colleagues, will save Manitoba Hydro. We're not in the position to sell it. What we need from this government is leadership and vision, somebody that's going to move Manitoba forward, and we're going to do this with an east-side line. And I know that the government has made it very clear they're prepared to build a road down the east side, but they're not prepared to put a Bipole III line down the same side, in affording those residents in that area the opportunity to have the same staples and services that we take for granted here in southern Manitoba. Also, I know that the cost of going down the west side is going to cost every family in Manitoba some \$11,748, which, again, is a wasteful detour. It's going right through a huge amount of area that—it's going to be through the flooded area as well, and it would be much cheaper and more reliable if we put it down the east side.

And I also know that, in talking to a number of those residents on that side and also those on the southern part—they talk about lawsuits going down the east side as opposed to the west side. A number

of those RMs who we've been in contact with have made it very clear they're not going to allow the government to go through their RM. They're going to have to be expropriated. And they're making some backroom deals: well, if you sign on we'll give you a community centre, we'll do this or we'll do that, and other backroom deals that are not going to be sustainable for this government or any others, for that matter.

I know that, you know, the government has done—not done their homework in this particular—this issue as well, because of the tornado corridor, the flood corridor. And I have Bipole I and Bipole II running through my area, and I can tell you it's a significant issue. In fact, I brought it up in the House a number of times.

The government can't be trusted, because what they did in my area, they decided all of a sudden to start taxing the farmers for looking after the land underneath the tower. Mr. Acting Speaker, what had happened in result of that, we did contact Manitoba Hydro. They have since backed off, which we thank them for that. But if—this is just a prime example of what the government's prepared to do, is just come and attack whoever is there—is in their way in this particular initiative, to make sure that they get what they want. And I can tell you the producers in our area are making their voices loud and clear for those that are going to be impacted if it does come down through the west side, and it will have a significant impact in regards to their livelihood as a result of that line coming through.

Now, I think every Manitobans wants to make sure that Manitoba does move forward. With our leadership and moving the line down the east side, that will happen.

Also, I know that the budget contained a large additional support for drainage, and I think that's ultimately imperative as well when we talk about what actually needs to happen in the future.

And the conservation districts, I know that they have worked extremely hard, but they haven't had the money to move forward on a number of those projects. Again, it's another way the government can off-load some of that responsibility to the municipalities, but not give them the funding to do it.

And in my particular area, I know March the 25th of this year, after we asked questions in the House last fall and, of course, since 2000 we've been bringing this to the attention of the government, and

that's the Shoal Lakes area. It's very similar to that of the Devils Lake. There's no outlet for it. The government has said they're looking at it along with the RMs. And I know, talking to a number of producers, and one in particular, John Dyck, and several others that are in the area have—Walter Dziedzic [*phonetic*], Dennis Morin [*phonetic*], Larry Torske—all those farmers that live in that particular area have been trying to get the government to pay attention.

And the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) and her staff has said that, time and time again, they're prepared to look at it. The municipalities are on side. We need to make sure that those in fact do move forward. It's called a drain, the Wagon Creek Drain, that would go into the Lake Manitoba. Unfortunate we haven't seen any action on that particular file. But I can assure the government, unless something happens very, very soon, that water will come through Argyle, Stonewall and then actually into the city of Winnipeg. It will have a devastating impact on economies through that area. And I know that we need to pay attention to it and we have to move in a very timely manner. And with the detour that would come through on the Wagon Creek Drain, the water would then go straight into Lake Manitoba, result in an impact that would be beneficial for all those people.

In regards to the buyout as well, they really don't want a buyout. There's very few that want a buyout. Most of them are saying, give us the opportunity to make a livelihood on that land, and that's what we want to do, and that's what most of them did as a result when they moved out into that particular area.

I know that the issue in regards to the education side of things—in regards to schools was another issue that we wanted to talk about. In fact, it was a school that was announced last year in Woodlands along with some other schools, and I know that we recently went through a lead billing program with Stonewall, Balmoral and St. Laurent. They didn't get certification on those project, and that's unfortunate in regards to the criteria that was set forward by the government. They announced this back in 2006, and then they moved it over to Department of MIT, and it's very clear that they don't have the leadership on this particular file that they need to be having. It's an area they mean to be addressing. I think that every project that moves forward within the province of Manitoba should be looking towards those and types of initiatives in order to ensure that those resources are there for the next generation.

So I think, also, that we—*[interjection]* In regards to the insulin pumps, again, it's something that our critic has been calling for, something that we need to be addressing and, certainly, with our amendment we'll be able to support this budget when it's been amended.

Also, the Grace emergency and the Ste. Anne Hospital upgrades, that's another area of which we're very pleased to see. I know a number of my constituent—in fact, I was visiting one of my constituents yesterday, that was at the Grace, and I can tell you he was very pleased to hear that those upgrades were come—become forward in a very near future in order to make sure, because of the fact that most of rural Manitoba is being transported into the city and losing those hospitals in areas that are critical for the well-being of rural Manitobans.

So—*[interjection]* Exactly. The ambulance is another issue of highway medicine. But I won't get started on that particular issue because we do know that we need doctors in rural Manitoba, one that we've been working very hard with and our health critic has also done an outstanding job in order to ensure that the government's held to account to make sure that rural Manitoba has those services that are so important to all Manitobans.

\* (15:40)

Also, I just want to close on a—the concept of—our resolution or the amendment to the budget, Mr. Acting Speaker, that, as amended, we'll certainly be happy to support this budget, and we look forward to hearing those comments on the other side of the House, that they will be supporting this amendment.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Acting Speaker, I could very easily answer that last question: no.

You think we would support something like this that you put on the table, something as shallow and meaningless as what you've put on here as an amendment you want us to vote for? Are you kidding? No way, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The—it's been really fun—it's been really fun, from my vantage point here in the second row on the government side of the House, to look across at people in the rows on that side of the House flip-flopping all over the place on this budget. Absolutely amazing to see the flip-flopping going on across the way. They can't make up their minds, Mr. Acting Speaker. They have a big problem on their hands. It's a good budget that they should vote for.

Deep down, I don't know if they'd realize that or not. They like the old ways.

**An Honourable Member:** You got to pay down the deficit.

**Mr. Struthers:** They like the old—oh, bring down the deficit, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) says. Well you know what, Mr. Acting Speaker? The first thing they should do, they should be a little more honest with people and stop talking in code because that's what this amendment's all about. They've invented a new language here. George Orwell would really be proud of members opposite for the work that they've done in disguising their real views on this because, see, they know that Manitobans have told our Finance Minister very clearly that we want a budget that stimulates the economy and protects front-line services—puts money into health care, not take it out; puts money into public schools, not take it out; puts money into agriculture, not cut it out. That's what Manitobans have told us.

So here we are, Mr. Acting Speaker, here we are, just a few short months away from an election in October, and we've got a group of people across the way who don't get it, but they sure want to be in government awful bad because they'll say anything to get there, absolutely anything, including trying to tell people—you know, the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), she was kind of laughing the other day when the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) said there was no such thing as car thieves before 1999. Well, the member for Charleswood I remember saying one time that there was no such thing as bullying in schools before 1999, either. What nonsense.

Mr. Acting Speaker, they'll say anything to get themselves elected, anything at all. The—there's a couple of areas outlined in their own amendment that shows what I said is just true, shows that they'll say anything, absolutely anything. They'll write anything off as good common sense. This is not good common sense, in this amendment.

Mr. Acting Speaker, probably the—one of the reasons I really was looking forward to getting back into the House here was that at least in here, I think, we have we be accountable. I think that instead of being like the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) and roaming around rural Manitoba, just making stuff up about Bipole III, instead of just making stuff up, he'd have to stand in this House and be accountable for the things he says. Because what we say is recorded on *Hansard* and can be used back.

When I heard that member talking about—

**An Honourable Member:** That's because he's going to go into fiction after he retires.

**Mr. Struthers:** Fiction would be a good spot for the member for Brandon West after he's finished here.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, that member went around talking about Manitoba Hydro rates and purposely comparing residential rates and commercial rates to each other, trying to make the case that Manitoba Hydro isn't quite what it's cracked up to be. Well, there is no issue in today's political discourse in this province where the Conservatives have been more dishonest than what they've been saying about Bipole III and about Manitoba Hydro, and I think our Premier (Mr. Selinger) smoked them out the other day.

I think our Premier's exactly right, when he pointed out that the members opposite are setting this up just like they did with the Manitoba Telephone System. They're downgrading, they're badmouthing Manitoba Hydro, trying to make it sound as if the only way—the only way you can handle this, the only way that we can move forward is by privatizing Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think the Premier is on to these people across the way, and I think he's smoked out their agenda, should they happen to get elected in the next election. But we're not going to let that happen. I am absolutely convinced that Manitobans will ask those tough questions of members across the way, and I'm absolutely convinced that they, too, will come to the same conclusion, as what we have here, and that is that your ultimate goal is to undermine Manitoba Hydro and sell it to your friends.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we have members across the way who pretend to care for rural Manitoba when they don't. We have members across the way who pretend to know how to run a farm when they don't. We have members across the way who pretend to know how to run a business, and yet they think that you can run a business without ever considering the amount of revenue you're going to bring into that business.

They go around blabbing about how much the expenses are, and they hike up those expenses. Well, I say to you, very clearly, you pick a number, you pick a number and stick with that number. You pick a number, whatever you like, inflate it to whatever number you like, like you've been doing for the last several months. You just keep jacking it up to

whatever you like and, Mr. Acting Speaker, the business case still says to go down the west side of the province. Because if you build that line down the east side of the province, you will have built a hydro line to nowhere. Because there's no market at the end of that hydro line. You will waste whatever money you put into it, and you will lose the sales to Minnesota and Wisconsin.

And on top of that, you'll lose the sales to Saskatchewan, Mr. Acting Speaker. You know what? You won't have a business case to be made, so inflate that number to whatever you like. You go ahead and you do that. You do the dishonest thing. We're going to stick to the facts. We're going to sell this to Manitobans, and we'll get the job done and you won't.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there are some people across the way who have run farms in the past, and I'll give many of them credit for knowing how to do that. I'll give many of them credit because they were successful in farming because they understood that their revenue had to outstrip their expenses. It's pretty easy.

I shouldn't say pretty easy, Mr. Acting Speaker, because I don't want people to misinterpret that. It's tough out there in the farm world, and I think we all know that. But you have to make decisions, good decisions, business decisions on the farm, which enhance your ability to bring in revenue.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if they—if the Conservatives on the other side took their approach to Manitoba Hydro, and to the bipole, and translated that into decisions that you make on the farm, they'd go broke on the farm. You've always got to consider the revenues. You can't just forget about the \$22.5 billion that we're going to realize through export sales. And you have to remember that if you're on a farm, and you're raising cattle and you're selling cattle, you pay your expenses as you sell your cattle.

That's what we're going to do with Manitoba Hydro. We're going to pay off—the one fact of this, that members opposite never want to admit, is that as we've signed deals for export sales, as we bring in those dollars, we use that to pay for the infrastructure, even converters—yes, converters, which you will never admit that you're going to put money into, but—yes, we pay for the infrastructure as we move along with the revenues that we make.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, in the end I think the honest position will prevail and the Tory position won't. I mentioned earlier that George Orwell would be very pleased at the kind of code and secret words that the members opposite use, and I will refer directly to the oh-so-faulty amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). It's the very, very last—very last of the paragraphs, it's (b), the second—the last amendment.

\* (15:50)

After they tried to—after they tried for so hard, in this amendment, to pull the wool over people's eyes by pretending that they like health care now, and pretending they like universities and colleges, and pretending that they like excess moisture conditions—I mean, they throw the federal minister under the bus every chance they get, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Relief for—school tax relief? Well, that's in the budget too. So they're pretending they like these things. But, oh, by the way, it wasn't those Conservatives across the way that introduced a motion to cut a half a billion dollars out of last year's budget? Is that code? What did they call that in this motion? It's a spending review process.

I mean, I remember when they brought Connie Curran into this province to do a spending review process. I was sitting over in that empty seat, just next to where the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) is currently sitting. I remember looking at that from there, thinking: that's not a winning—that's not a winning approach by a government of the day. They brought Connie Curran in.

What came of that, Mr. Acting Speaker? I remember those days. I saw what happened when they brought Connie Curran in, when they did a spending review. It wasn't good. It was nasty.

They say, in one part of their amendment, that they're, oh, they're all in favour of protecting the front lines. With a Connie Curran spending review process? Come on. George Orwell would love that. I mean, doublespeak or what?

Mr. Acting Speaker, they're going to reduce waste. Well, we've heard that before, haven't we? We—that means fewer nurses, that means fewer doctors, that means fewer specialists, that means fewer teachers. That's what these folks think of waste. It's always been like that. They're going to try to get Manitobans to believe they've turned over a

new leaf somehow—flip-flop back and forth. Come on. Protect front-line social services.

It was interesting in question period today. Do you know how they're going to protect front-line social—front-line—what'd they say here? Front-line social services.

Well, first, you have to pay down the debt. How do you pay down the debt? You reduce front-line services. So to protect front-line services, you have to reduce front-line services, according to what they're saying. You lay off a whole bunch of them, promising maybe some day they'll come back on. In the meantime, services are cut; Manitobans suffer.

Mr. Acting Speaker, another good old chestnut from folks across the way: more balanced fiscal approach. More balanced. Well, we've heard that one too. We've heard that—those code words in the past. We've seen those when former Premier Filmon and some of the members opposite talked about a fiscal balance. You know, we saw what that meant for front-line services. We saw that in a good point in the 1980s with acute—1970s with acute protracted restraint measures, all to make it prosperous in the future.

Well, it might be prosperous for a few of the Tory friends, Mr. Acting Speaker, but it doesn't mean prosperity for all Manitobans.

I do want to say, though, I will be voting against the amendment that was brought forward, but I will definitely vote in favour of this budget. I would strongly suggest the members opposite get over their problems in terms of their amendment and get on board with this budget, even just from the—even if it was just and only from the perspective of agriculture, Mr. Acting Speaker.

There's a couple of things in here that I want to highlight. First and foremost, a number of years ago, this government said we would move to the 80 per cent level, in terms of the farmland school tax rebate, which even in Steinbach should have some kind of a sway with the member representing that community. I mean, I would think he would want to support a measure like that. Mind you, he's so busy flip-flopping with the rest of his caucus on this budget and the amendment that he—who knows where he lands. They'll be flipping nickels right up to the vote later this week, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Let's hope that nickel lands on the side of supporting a budget that's good for Manitobans, like this one. So we came through with our commitment

to move to an 80 per cent level of funding on the farmland school tax rebate. That will—represents, that commitment, somewhere in the area of 35 and a half million dollars back into farmers' pockets, which is a good thing, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the Conservatives across the way should vote for.

The other initiative that I want to mention is our initiative to move from 80 to 90 per cent in terms of compensation for farmers who lose livestock to wildlife, to predators. One could only imagine the disappointment that a farmer has when they find a calf, that represents so much of the future of that farmer's business, chewed up, destroyed by a wolf, and this government understands that.

This government has committed dollars in this budget to moving from 80 to 90 per cent compensation and to phase in the rest of that compensation next year, from 90 to 100 per cent. That is a very practical example of this government working on behalf of farmers. I would encourage members opposite not to close the door on the farm community and to support this budget. But as I said, it depends on whether they're flipping or flopping that day and depends how much rhetoric they've tied into this. But, as I said, Mr. Acting Speaker, that group, they'll say anything. Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and put just a few words on the budget debate and indicate clearly that certainly we could support this budget if the government would seriously consider the amendment that we have put on the table. And if, in fact, they decide that it's an amendment that's worthy of support, we would be standing right beside them supporting the amended budget as it would exist.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, we are hesitant—well, I suppose I might be cautiously optimistic that those on the government benches of the House might see the light and really consider ensuring that future generations of Manitobans aren't burdened with the kind of debt that this government, in this present budget, is leaving to them. And I just have to look to my two young grandchildren and I want them to be here in Manitoba. I want them to stay here, to grow up, to be educated and to get good meaningful jobs right here in Manitoba.

I don't want them to be forced out of our province as a result of government's decision today to burden them with so much debt, to burden this province with so much debt that there won't be that opportunity for them to stay here, to get a good job

here, and to want to be part of a Manitoba that we believe can be an exciting Manitoba, but certainly not under the policies and the kind of budget that this government has put in place.

And we just have to go to the whole bipole issue—Bipole III issue and look at what this government is doing, the ill-thought-out process that they've used and the final decision to direct Manitoba Hydro to build a more costly longer line on the west side of the province that will burden future generations to a point where we're not sure it's even going to be sustainable. And we know that the bipole decision on the west side is going to cost Manitobans over \$11,000 more, Mr. Acting Speaker, money that they will not have in their pockets to make the choices and decisions that they need to make or would like to make with their hard-earned dollars.

And it's unfortunate that we are presented with the dilemma of trying to ensure that we support those initiatives in the budget that are good. And, you know, there isn't any one government that makes all the right decisions or all the wrong decisions. None of us are perfect, Mr. Acting Speaker. No one has ever said that we are always right. I only wish that members on the government side of the House would understand that some of the decisions and some of the spending that has been put forward in this budget is money that will be well spent. But we know that there are many, many decisions in this budget—there's waste and mismanagement that has to be brought under control, and there's the whole issue of Bipole III that is a wrong-headed decision by this government. And we are expecting that maybe some on the government benches would come to understand fully the implications of what they're doing with the west-side line, a more costly longer line that is less environmentally friendly. And, you know, we know that those in rural Manitoba that will be impacted or affected by the west-side line have spoken out pretty loudly and clearly in opposition to what this government is doing.

\* (16:00)

Do you know, Mr. Acting Speaker, it took a little longer for the message to start to resonate in the city of Winnipeg. And I'm hearing it on a daily basis from my constituents, and as I'm out and about in the city of Winnipeg, hearing from many, many residents of the city of Winnipeg that are shaking their head and saying, I cannot believe that this government would make the kind of decision that

would burden us and future generations to the kind of expenditure that the west-side line is going to cost.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, I agree with those Manitobans, and I will continue to encourage them to speak out and to ensure that they don't support a government that has no vision for the future when it comes to spending their money foolishly on a line that will not produce positive results for Manitoba. So why I—while I like many of the initiatives in the budget that have been put forward, I cannot look at supporting a budget unless the government can support the amendment that we have put forward. And I would readily stand side by side with the government should they support our amendment and ensure that we have a budget that we can live with and future generations can live with.

So, with those comments, Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to encourage some members on the government side of the House—they may not all stand with us, but I would hope that some would think very clearly, use some common sense and ensure that we have a budget that we can move forward with, that Manitobans can support and will support, that shows some vision and some leadership for the future. Thank you.

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** It's an honour to rise today and speak in response to the budget and reflect on how it addresses the needs of my neighbours and the needs of Manitobans. The commitments made in Budget 2011 continue with our five-year plan that reflects the directions that Manitobans want their government to take, now and into the future. This budget also maintains a tradition of over a decade of fiscal responsibility that has always been coupled with social responsibility. It is the next step in continuing this province's prosperity.

I know that my neighbours appreciate the balance and the forethought that this and previous NDP budgets have provided for them, especially in stark contrast to what came before our time here. I look forward to my opportunity today to comment on these commitments and what they mean to my neighbours.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in my comments I will also address the amendment to the budget proposed by my former classmate, the member from Fort Whyte, and reflect on how this amendment addresses his own career goals and meets the needs of his caucus as they desperately try to align themselves with the needs of Manitobans and seek to curry favour with

an electorate that they are so disconnected from that they are willing to discredit one of this province's fine Crown corporations for their own gain. This connection had them scrambling last week to dust off the word progressive in hopes of rebranding themselves when Manitobans and my neighbours—well, we all know better.

Monsieur le président, dans mon rôle de députée de ma conscription de Kirkfield Park, j'ai l'opportunité de représenter un voisinage vibrant, actif et plein d'individus et d'organisations qui sont passionnés de travailler pour faire avancer leur vision de l'avenir—notre vision de l'avenir—pour un voisinage confortable et où nous nous appuyons l'un l'autre. En travaillant avec mes voisins, ils me disent souvent qu'ils aiment faire le travail avec une députée qui les consulte de façon ouverte, qui les écoute et qui peut exécuter de manière efficace le travail et le services demandés par les gens de Kirkfield Park.

#### **Translation**

*Mr. Speaker, in my role as an MLA for the riding of Kirkfield Park I have the opportunity to represent a vibrant, active neighbourhood full of individuals and organizations who are passionate about working to advance their vision of the future—our vision of the future—for a comfortable neighbourhood where we support one another. In working with my neighbours, they often tell me that they like to work with an MLA who consults them openly, who listens to them and who is able to effectively perform the work and the service requested by the people of Kirkfield Park.*

#### **English**

Mr. Acting Speaker, the past four years have been busy in Kirkfield Park, as my constituents have adjusted to having an active MLA that works with schools and community groups, something they have repeatedly remarked to me that they were previously unfamiliar with, under long-time Conservative representation. So, when members opposite try to brand themselves with vision change and progress, I can tell them they're about four years too late for Kirkfield Park. My neighbours were tired of the empty promises and saw the vision provided by the NDP, and they made the change to the winning team and they've seen the progress ever since.

So, to members opposite, all I can say is that imitation is the highest form of flattery. I thank them for the compliment, manifested in their belated attempt to connect with my neighbours. But, the

prospect of their revision, chance and regret really hold no appeal from my part of town.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it is also been busy times in Kirkfield Park because we have been busy working together to build our neighbourhood to be what we feel is one of the best places to live in Manitoba. This budget reflects the ongoing investments that this government is making in my community and throughout the province. And I know that my neighbours are pleasantly surprised by what can be done when they have a committed MLA working for their needs.

I have enjoyed the past four years and I look forward to the ongoing relationship that we have built, continuing into future years, to ensure that what we have built will keep growing and not be dismantled and destroyed by those who seek to represent my neighbourhood for their own self-interest, rather than for the betterment and growth of our community.

Mr. Acting Speaker, as I've said, the work that I've been doing with my neighbours is reflected in this year's budget. Our neighbourhood has seen an unprecedented level of growth and investment as it gained an advocate willing to work with and for the neighbourhood.

I've especially enjoyed working to see the transformations that are occurring on the Grace Hospital campus. Our beloved Grace is the heart of our neighbourhood and the surrounding communities, as the place we all go to in times of medical need. Over the years, the Grace has evolved to meet those needs and this year's budget commitments to the St. James Access centre at the Grace, and the \$20-million commitment to the upgrading and renovation of the emergency department, will ensure that the needs of our community continue to be met at the highest possible standards.

In addition to this \$20-million project, this budget also commits \$1.5 million to meet the short-term transition to the expansion, with specific focus to meeting the health needs of seniors in our neighbourhood. Everyone in my neighbourhood was thrilled by this commitment, as it recognizes the evolving needs of our community and anticipates future needs and expectations to ensure our collective health and well-being.

Mr. Acting Speaker, these investments are sharp contract to what happened under their—under a

government comprised of members opposite. Our beloved Grace was left to flounder and, like so many other hospitals, it had its emergency department closed. Yes, in my neighbourhood back then, you'd only better have had an emergency during daylight hours because the ER at the Grace was only accessible for 14 hours a day.

Now, I'm sure you're aware, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the one thing about emergencies is they don't tend to be something you can schedule. Stuff happens and strangely enough, often at the least convenient time, and a quick and competent response is what is needed. That option wasn't always available at the Grace when members opposite were in government and, interestingly, when they campaigned in '07, members opposite tried fear mongering in my neighbourhood, spinning yarns about the Grace ER closing.

But you know what, Mr. Acting Speaker? I'm not quite sure they saw the irony in their theatrics, while the member from Charleswood was running around like a pot looking for a kettle. I think they also failed to see the irony in their budget amendment, acknowledging the importance of investing in our beloved Grace. After years of neglecting the Grace, and then years of voting against budgets which have demonstrated our commitment to the Grace, and to accessible health care for all Manitobans, they now seem to think that in feigning recognition of this value now, it will somehow erase their tragic record on health care.

\* (16:10)

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I have only two words to say to that: "really" and "seriously." I wonder what exactly do members opposite think of Manitobans, that they believe that with a few words and an amendment, that they can erase, from our collective memories, two decades of their neglect for health care, demonstrated equally while in government and while in opposition. It is a desperate grasping to win the favour of people they treated so poorly in the past, and all the while hoping that these same people will somehow forget their behaviour in the last two decades and, for some reason, hand power back to them.

I ask again, Mr. Acting Speaker, what do members opposite think of Manitobans that they think that they can treat them so poorly and expect to be rewarded for such behaviour?

Monsieur le vice-président, un chef du parti doit avoir une vision convaincante de l'avenir pour tous les Manitobains et Manitobaines. Je peux dire avec confiance que notre premier ministre est quelqu'un avec une vision claire et forte pour mon voisinage et pour notre province.

*Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Comme chef de notre équipe, et autrefois comme ministre des Finances, notre premier ministre comprend la valeur d'investir dans la jeunesse et dans les infrastructures dans le domaine de la santé. Il y a d'autres chefs dans cette chambre, qui n'ont pas la même vision, et qui font une volte-face avec ce budget, pour lancer un ballon d'essai dans une manœuvre politique et avec un agenda caché.

C'est dommage pour eux, Madame la vice-présidente, parce que, à Kirkfield Park, on peut voir leur manque de vision et leur réaction impulsive, et en même temps, voir la compréhension et la vision dans ce budget. Mes voisins ont confiance en notre gouvernement et notre plan de subventionner 2 100 nouvelles places de garderie et 400 nouvelles places de prématernelle, et élargir à l'ensemble de la province le Registre en ligne des services de garde d'enfants. Pourquoi ont-ils cette confiance? Parce que, Madame la vice-présidente, mes voisins savent qui va garder ses promesses : ce gouvernement et notre premier ministre.

**Translation**

*Mr. Acting Speaker, a party leader must have a convincing vision of the future for all Manitobans. I can say with confidence that our Premier is someone with a clear and strong vision for my neighbourhood and for our province.*

*As the leader of our team, and in the past as Minister of Finance, our Premier understands the value of investing in youth and in infrastructure in the area of health. There are other leaders in this Chamber who do not have the same vision and who are reversing their stand with this budget to launch a trial balloon in a political manoeuvre with a hidden agenda.*

*It's unfortunate for them, Madam Deputy Speaker, because in Kirkfield Park we can see their lack of vision, their impulsive reactions and at the same time see the understanding and vision that are contained in this budget. My neighbours are confident in our government and in our plan to fund 2,100 daycare spaces and 400 new nursery places, and to expand the online child-care registry province-wide. Now,*

*why are they confident? Because my neighbours know who are going to keep their promises—this government and our Premier.*

**English**

Madam Deputy Speaker, these investments in our children are an investment in our future, and I know that my neighbours appreciate our government and our leader's commitment to their vision of the future. It has been a pleasure to work with the neighbourhood daycares to bring their projects to fruition with funding through the Community Places program, including our most recent commitment of \$4.5 million that sees money flow to the programs in my neighbourhood like the natural play space being developed at the Horizons daycare on the Grace campus or the upgrades and renovations to the Crestview Park Day Nursery for the Early Learning Christian Centre in Westwood.

So many of my neighbours remember a time when access and funding to daycare was merely a pipe dream under members opposite. I know, as a grad student and a mother in the 1990s, that the only affordable access I had to daycare was my sister-in-law who was one of the many nurses fired by members opposite. Madam Deputy Speaker, can you believe that that was their solution to accessible daycare? Shame.

Madame la vice-présidente, cette vision et ce budget incluent aussi la création d'un nouveau crédit d'impôt pour la participation des enfants à des activités artistiques et culturelles, pour aider les parents à offrir de nouvelles possibilités à leurs enfants, en plus d'un crédit d'impôt pour la participation des enfants à des activités athlétiques déjà créé par ce gouvernement. Madame la vice-présidente, on a une vision complète et claire, pour nos enfants et nos familles. De l'autre côté de la chambre, tout le monde peut voir une vision composée de révisions historiques, de risques politiques et pleine de regrets.

**Translation**

*Madam Deputy Speaker, this vision and this budget also include the creation of a new tax credit for the participation of children in artistic and cultural activities to help parents offer new possibilities to their children, on top of a tax credit for children's participation in athletic activities, which was already created by this government. Madam Deputy Speaker, we have a complete and clear vision for our children and our families. On the other side of the House,*

*everyone can see a vision made up of historical revision, of political risk and a vision that is full of regret.*

### **English**

Madam Deputy Speaker, investing in our children must be done in a holistic manner that includes healthy living, that encourages healthy physical and intellectual growth. In addition to the new tax credit for children to participate in arts programming, we continue to support our local community clubs.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I earlier mentioned the Community Places funding to our daycares, but forgot to mention that the funding announcement was done right in Kirkfield Park at the Kirkfield Westwood Community Centre at the site of the new basketball court, which should be up and running before the fall. It was such a thrill to be there with the club president, Terry Wolowiec, and the board member Donna Sagness to see another project come together, and to reflect on the many activities that have been going on there recently, like the Bunnies ringette tournament in March or the Manitoba Moose visit to the club in January. I was humbled when Donna thanked me not only for my commitment to the club, but also for informing the club about the contest which brought the Moose to KW. So, unlike my former classmate, I didn't promise to bring the Jets back to Winnipeg, but I'm happy to have helped bring the Moose to Westwood.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the funding commitments of this year's budget are a continuation of the ongoing funding and support to our children and their families. And I am proud to have worked with the Woodhaven Community Centre on their evolving renovation project, and would like to extend my thanks to past president Greg Bankowski for the excellent working relationship we have had and welcome working with the new president to keep things moving forward and ensure that they get the financial supports they need from this government. Woodhaven has hosted my Creek Clean Up every year, and are now also home to a new men's shed group, providing senior men with a place to build projects and share their knowledge.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's a privilege to work with such committed neighbours and friends, and I am inspired by them to keep working for my community to ensure the realization of all of our dreams in the future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the investments in this budget extend to all aspects of healthy living in our community and this year sees our ongoing commitment, not just to daycares, community clubs and health cares, but also the ongoing commitment to organizations like the YM-YWCA, including our own West Portage Y, where there's such a stark contrast between this government's ongoing financial support for its growth and evolution, and the relationship that I've built with them in the footsteps of our Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), in comparison to the time when there was no Y in our end of town, and there was no government support for a Y in my end of town.

So, as I've said before, Madam Deputy Speaker, my neighbours already made the move to vision and change, and they've experienced progress towards their goals and needs under this government with a working on-the-ground MLA. All that can be said to members opposite is that it's amusing to watch them try and crash the party after the doors of opportunity have long since closed on them, and remind them that my neighbours are well aware of the consequences of going back to those who are limited to revision, chance and regret as their promise for the future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are two final areas of commitment that I would like to address in this budget before my time runs out: seniors and post-secondary education.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in Kirkfield Park, like so many other areas of the province, we've had a growing—we have a growing and vibrant seniors community. Whether they are at the 55+ Centre or the PRIME centre or busy as volunteers at local churches, community clubs or grassroots organizations, I can tell you, it takes a great deal of energy to keep up with seniors in my neighbourhood.

Part of keeping up with their energy and activity is keeping up with their evolving needs. And I have enjoyed staying in touch with our community elders, either in their homes, at the Westhaven and Sturgeon Creek I and II residences, and at the variety of seniors forums I've hosted over the past four years. My 55+ neighbours are the new face of community elders. They continue to share their knowledge and, at the same time, show us how important aging in place and financial supports for those who have retired can be, all the while being committed to healthy, active lifestyles.

The commitments to health care and healthy living mentioned earlier in this budget response reflect their needs, as do our commitments to hiring more personal care home staff and enhancing the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit, increasing the basic personal exemption by \$1,000 over four years, starting with \$250 this year. And once this measure is fully implemented, almost 22,000 more Manitobans will pay no provincial income tax at all.

We are also increasing the basic Education Property Tax Credit by \$50 to \$700, saving renters and homeowners an extra \$16 million this year, something that I know the seniors in my area appreciate, as well as helping seniors by increasing their maximum Education Property Tax Credit in each of the next three years. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, these kinds of budget commitments are continuations of previous investments for seniors, so they represent both the consistency and assurance of a secure fiscal future for the seniors in my neighbourhood.

Like others in Kirkfield Park, the seniors too, remember what occurred when their representation and their government came from the other side of the Chamber. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to caution members opposite about trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the elders in my community, because it didn't work last time and, again, seniors in Kirkfield Park have been pleasantly surprised by someone committed to building ever-building together for everyone, rather than those who offer, again, revision, chance and regret for our neighbourhood.

Madame la vice-présidente, notre investissement dans l'éducation et la formation professionnelle continue dans ce budget parce qu'on va faire en sorte que la hausse des frais de scolarité dans les universités ne dépasse pas le taux de l'inflation et que l'augmentation des frais de scolarité dans les collèges plafonne à cent dollars et fournir aux universités un financement pluriannuel important et stable, qui verra une augmentation des subventions de fonctionnement de cinq pour cent par an pendant les trois prochaines années.

#### **Translation**

*Madam Deputy Speaker, our investment in education and professional training continues in this budget because we're going to ensure that the rise in university tuition fees does not exceed the rate of inflation and that the increase in college tuition fees is capped at \$100, and we are going provide*

*universities with multiyear financing that is stable and significant and that will see operating grants increasing by 5 per cent per year for the next three years.*

\* (16:20)

#### **English**

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to close my remarks by addressing our ongoing commitment to post-secondary education and thank my friend and colleague, the new Minister for Advanced Education and Literacy, for maintaining the commitment to affordable and accessible education, as was done by her predecessor.

I would also like to provide a brief history lesson for those university and college students in Kirkfield Park and for members opposite. Some—I know the youth in my neighbourhood, for some of them, they will be voting for the first time this year, and they may not have a solid recollection of a time previous to this government's investment in post-secondary education. I believe that some of what I would like to say was addressed by my friend and former university classmate, the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), earlier in debate, but I think certain salient points bear repeating.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the best way to get a sense of the true visions and commitments regarding academic investments should be very simple for our youth. I merely ask them to think about where current members of this Chamber were during the rampant tuition rate increases that occurred under members opposite. I can say proudly that, as students concerned with affordable and accessible education, it was myself, the member for Wolseley, and the minister of Immigration and Labour that protested those increases on the front steps of this very building while the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) was part of the University of Manitoba Board of Governors and adviser to Premier Filmon, and he favoured the same increases that we were protesting. He seemed to think that these 132 per cent ridiculous increases were not only acceptable but favourable.

So, as part of the critical thinking that is required of post-secondary students, I ask Manitoba youth to consider who is really committed to their education. Those whose entire careers as activists and educators have been dedicated to affordable and accessible education, or those who have, at the eleventh hour, submitted a half-hearted budget amendment without

an ounce of credibility or commitment to education in nearly two decades.

You know what, even if you're not a grad student in history, this kind of question is what clearly qualifies as a no-brainer. This government and its members are committed to post-secondary education and career development for our youth while members opposite are committed to their own career development at the expense of our youth.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is so much more that could be said about how this budget addresses the needs of my community and reflects our collective vision for the future. However, I will end now and thank my neighbours once more for the faith they have had in me these past four years and how I look forward to continuing to build together for everyone in Kirkfield Park for many more years.

I know that while others run around proffering promises of revision, chance, and regret, that together with my neighbours, we will see beyond such opportunistic ploys and continue to be a neighbourhood filled with compassion, commitment, and true vision for a strong and growing Manitoba under a compassionate, honest, and dedicated NDP government.

Merci, Madame la vice-présidente. *[Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.]*

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** It is a privilege to rise today to speak to the budget amendment motion as brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). We are pleased to finally see a number of measures and initiatives be a part of this budget, measures we have been calling for for many years. It is, however, unfortunate that it took so many years, and for Manitoba to face an election year, for this government to move on these items.

Before I go into some of the specific issues, I just want to thank a number of the members who have already spoken for their kind words. There's some of us who will not be returning here in October, and there may be others who had thought they would but will not be. And so I just want to thank them for the kind words that they've put on the record. Now, there are those of us who are doing it by choice and others will be—those choices will be made for them.

First of all, regarding Justice, we have been calling on this government to increase police services for years, and, on the eve of the election, they finally

have listened, and I hear the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) who is nodding his approval to the comments here, but more police is a start to cracking down on violent crime and making our communities safer. And I know that the area that I represent, this is a big issue. We don't have a lot of crime out there, but we want to keep it that way.

We're unimpressed that they sat on more than \$14 million from the federal government for policing. They had this money for three years, and they just announced how they were going to allocate it. For the three years, we have had 30 more—we could have had 30 more police officers on the street prevent and solving crimes, but this was a choice that the government—that the minister made to sit on these dollars and, consequently, they were not put to the good use that they could have been.

I want just to make a few comments regarding the immigration and the growth that we have seen in southern Manitoba. And I know that this government has been applauding the work of immigration, and I must indicate, again, as I have indicated numerous times over the years, as the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), who actually initiated and started the nominee program which has been so successful.

But a—anyway, what I want to indicate is the fact that, when looking at schools—and also members present will know that for years and years I have been talking about the need for additional schools within the area that I represent. And it is important that we continue to give our students and the youth of our province the opportunity to get—have a good education and in good facilities. And I know that I asked a number of questions regarding the huts and the lack of restroom facilities available to the students and, in fact, the point that—and it still is occurring. Now, I know that the minister has indicated that we will be receiving a new high school, but what I wanted to indicate was the fact that many of our students would need to leave the school and go home in order to use washroom facilities.

And so this is something that, again, this government did not pay heed to the fact that we had growth, the fact that we had infrastructure needs, and so I am looking in anticipation to the new schools that will be coming on stream. However, until there is a shovel in the ground, we're not totally sure that this will take place.

But I want to thank the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan), present and past ministers for having

looked and come to the Pembina constituency and seen some of the areas of growth and the needs that we have out there.

The other area I wanted to look at, as well, and just to commend the local communities, is the area of water stewardship. Now, I know that we have been talking and, of course, every day we get a briefing in the House on the nature of the flood that's taking place. And, again, it's been my contention for many, many years that we need to have water retention plans such as dams put on—and the facility or, rather, the river that I would like to see it put onto is the Pembina River.

And we know that in the '97 flood that the water from the Pembina actually contributed a foot to the north end of the Z-dike, and so there's a lot of water that comes and runs down the Pembina, comes to the Red River. And, of course, all we are doing right now is trying to move it north as quickly as possible.

We will have years where we have dry years and, of course, the wet years, and a dam could serve the purpose for both the wet and the dry years. So, again, I just wanted to indicate that I think it's very important that we look at water retention while we're, in fact, dealing with the flood that's taking place out there right now. So and—once the waters have passed, again, I would like to encourage the minister to look at some of those areas.

I want, also, just make a few comments regarding the Pembina Valley Conservation District and the work that they continue to do on our behalf in the Pembina constituency. It's a good organization. And I know that the conservation districts were started when we were in government, and I'm glad that the government of the day has continued to see the need for them and has continued to support them.

Now, there's a few other areas, of course. The one that we continue to really be concerned about is the direction that this government is heading with the Bipole III. We feel that this, again, is not necessary to have the added distance put on to that line. And we've said this a number of times that the added costs now that are going to be associated with this are large and will be passed on to the consumer. And so, while we continue to pride ourselves with having some of the lower rates, although I would say not the lowest rates of electric power within the country, it is something that we want to keep. And so I would encourage this government to seriously look at the direction that Manitoba Hydro, in fact, has been encouraging them to go, but they haven't listened.

\* (16:30)

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, last by not least, I want to talk about the—some of the fiscal areas of this Throne Speech that we are concerned about and, of course, that has been addressed by the leader of our party. I've said this numerous times, that we make some of our worst decisions during the best of times, and I would contend that we've had 10, 11 very good years. And some of the decisions that have been made, we are now bearing the brunt of that. And so we have to be cautious and careful when we're making decisions what the long-term effect is going to be.

One thing I can't understand about the present government is the fact that they are—it appears that they are proud of being a have-not province. The direction that we need to go and should be going is—and we could be there if we managed our finances properly, would be a province, a have province. We've seen the province west of us go in that direction; they were a have-not province. And they have changed that within a few years, and I'm convinced that as a province we could do the same.

And so I would encourage this government to go in that direction, to do the best that they can and, certainly, within a year we will see a different government in place, which is going to be going in that direction. And so again, as I've indicated, we make some of our best—or rather the worst decisions during the best of times, and we need to heed those words carefully.

So, in conclusion, a more balanced and responsible approach is vital for the growth and prosperity of our province. And we, therefore, urge this government to reduce its wasteful spending to focus on protecting front-line services and to return to a balanced budget and a reduction of our debt.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I sincerely hope that this government will support the amendment that we have put on the books and that's in front of us to the budget for 2011, making it a more balanced budget and a budget for all Manitobans, rather than for the NDP government. Thank you.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs):** I strongly support the budget, and I support it because it's driven by the priorities of hard-working families. You know, when the going gets tough, the tough get with families and with their priorities. We're on their side and the proof is in this budget.

In both its overall objectives and on the individual lines in the budget, we see a focus on making the province the family-friendly province—the best place to raise a family. It strengthens, not weakens, front-line help for those families, whether it's helping a child with disabilities blossom from therapy; creating a child-care space in the neighbourhood to allow a struggling family to enhance its means by a parent returning to work; help a devastated laid-off worker get the right training for a return to work, to address labour shortages but to allow that individual to become a contributing taxpayer again; getting an abused woman into a shelter and hooked up with counselling so she's okay and has the strength to move on; let kids in the family that's had a bitter divorce know it wasn't because of them; get an abused child away from an offender, and the family who were on the street into a safe and supportive place and pursue justice with the police; stop a landlord for wrongly raising the rent of a senior on fixed income; take action to stop a business from ripping off a family.

The key to this budget is its determination to manage our fiscal challenges over a few years to avoid a hit on these children, on seniors, on families in a tough spot. That's not the way Conservatives in Manitoba would do it. They'd cut deep as they have always done. We repaired their damage and we did that by teaming up with those who deliver help for families and, more importantly, teaming up with those who need help themselves. So we won't sit by while Conservatives destroy all over again the kind of help for families that I just talked about.

I want to look at six selected ways that the Department of Family Services and Consumer Affairs, for one, what they'd do to support families and expose what Conservatives would do if they were ever elected to government. And I make these predictions carefully based on what Conservatives say and do. Then let's compare the Conservative approach to ours and what's in this budget.

First, in the area of child care, Conservatives would hike parent fees. As their leader stated in April 2008, and I quote: They, the government, should look at the fees being charged. Families are able to afford spending more. End of quote. That's what he said. So \$12,000 in fees for two parents with two kids, for example, is too low according to Conservatives. How out of touch with the everyday challenges of families can you be?

Instead, under Family Choices, we ensure the lowest parent fees outside Québec. In fact, we lowered the non-subsidized daily fee and, for the first time since 1991, increased the subsidy levels. That's our respect for the needs of families when the cost pressure's on them.

Conservatives would not prioritize new child-care spaces. Their only commitment on child care is to repeat the federal Conservative pledge to provide a hundred dollars a month to a family with a child under age six. The federal government didn't create one single space and neither would their plan here. It will cost \$105 million, though, almost the cost of the whole child-care program, equal to 1 per cent of the PST. Therefore, they would write cheques to the wealthy and then clawback the hundred dollars and much more from the rest of us and likely cut the child-care budget to pay for those cheques. Instead, under Family Choices, where—we're adding 6,500 more funded spaces by 2013. We've already—we're already up to 5,600 with this budget and we committed to 35 more child-care centres by 2013. With this budget, we will far exceed that target.

Let's talk about standards. Conservatives would lower child-care standards. They want an ideologically driven campaign so that more private providers can set up profit-making operations and charge parents whatever they want. Their leader complained in April of '08, and I quote: With the regulations in place, that creates barriers for private providers from coming into the system. End of his quote.

Standards were also dissed when they said last session that when it came to our Child Care Safety Charter, workers at centres shouldn't be looking to see who comes in the door, but should be caring for the children. Well, surely, protecting children from who comes in the door is a fundamental of caring for children.

Under Family Choices, we're instead now strengthening standards, not just for greater safety, but with a new learning curriculum in this budget. Unlike members opposite, families understand that high standards for child care are their early step for their children to later complete college or university.

Let's talk about workforce stability. Conservatives would destabilize centre care for families. We know their wage policies.

I also strongly suspect they hardly endorse the position of the CFIB and the taxpayers' association, that our pension plan for child-care workers was a wrong decision last year.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

Under Family Choices, we're increasing remuneration by 20 per cent. We now have the second highest worker wages in Canada and the only pension plan outside of Québec, so we can recruit and retain workers.

Manitoba now has among the highest standards for staff training in all of Canada. Since 2006, the number of centres meeting staff training requirements has increased by 22 per cent because we've added over 2,000 more child-care workers.

In this budget, in addition to more funded child-care spaces, we're expanding the online child-care registry province-wide. We're strengthening workforce stability even more, with more help for pension contributions and centre-operating priorities.

What we built together that's at risk is this: The number of affordable, operating funded child-care spaces has increased by 10,300, or by 80 per cent, since 1999. And there's now historic momentum to build with communities well over 35 new child-care centres across the province. So this is the choice for families. Rewind to slash and burn all that we've built together or strong and steady ahead. It's slash and burn or strong and steady; two choices.

I want to talk about rent regulation. Conservatives would eliminate rent regulation. Here's what they say: Is it perhaps a time to go the other direction insofar as to acknowledge that rent controls are not working and that we should perhaps abandon them all together and let things go to the free market.

Well, rent regulation has just been given a big thumbs up by an outside review by University of Winnipeg Economics professor, Dr. Hugh Grant, who concludes that unwarranted increases are gouging—this is his quote—that might be expected in a period of excess demand have been prevented. In other words, Conservatives support gouging. So Conservatives believe that families can afford higher rent too. How out of touch.

Dr. Grant also found that our rent regulation encourages investments in rental housing. Indeed, 2010 was the strongest year for apartment

construction in the history of the statistics. We won't get rid of protection for renters; we'll strengthen protections. And this budget will support additional measures to increase the supply of rental units.

\* (16:40)

What we built together that's at risk is this: The average annual rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Winnipeg is now almost \$1,400 cheaper than in Saskatoon, where there is no regulation, and more rental housing is being built in Manitoba than at any time we know. So this is the choice for renters: rewind to slash and burn all we've built together or strong and steady ahead.

Let's talk now about consumer protection. Conservatives would abandon our let's-make-a-better-deal strategy we launched for stronger consumer protection. They say this about consumer rights, and I quote: More rules, more regulations ultimately take away one's rights. And I suspect they wouldn't agree to rules for fair play even if business asked them to level the playing field to enhance consumer confidence in products and services as is the case, by the way, for many of the sectors that where we're introducing rules for greater fairness for families in the marketplace.

We'll introduce protections for consumers of travel packages with the Travel Industry Association, for new home buyers with the Homebuilders Association, and for vehicle and home repairs, for cellphone contracts to protect, as well, grieving families. What we built together that's at risk is this: Let's make a better deal contains over 40 significant consumer protections. So this is the choice for families as consumers: rewind to slash and burn all we've built together or strong and steady ahead.

Let's look at the area of child abuse. Conservatives would endanger children by cutting funding and, once again, imposed outdated and discredited practices on Aboriginal families. They've said that, and I quote: You know, devolution was a failed experiment. And the leader has recently reminded Manitobans that the Conservatives, and I quote, didn't accept the recommendation from the AJI for devolution. Moreover, they will stop the safe reunification of Aboriginal families by freezing foster placements. That's the '60s scoop all over again, not by adoption this time, but by permanent foster placement.

We'll proceed with the overhaul of child welfare called Changes for Children that's been launched.

We respect that by giving Aboriginal people the ability to provide child welfare services we empower them and, indeed, create communities that are able to, in fact, care for children. In this budget, our government invests more in keeping families safe with the new funding model with the federal government, which allows up to 140 more workers to help families in trouble, especially on a reserve. A new child-victim centre will be opened, phasing in co-ordinated supports and effective interviewing for child victims of sexual and serious physical assault. Funding will be enhanced and red tape reduced for the helping agencies, and more supports for fostering will be introduced.

The important challenge of parenting will be acknowledged with a Triple P hotline and a new, leading-edge parenting resource will be launched. What we built together that's at risk is this: The rate of unnatural child foster deaths—or foster child deaths has been cut by over 40 or 50 per cent since 1999. The cutbacks of the '90s directed at foster parents have been reversed. Kids are now mostly out of hotels and into up to 3,200 more foster beds and Aboriginal people now have greater control over the care of their children. So here's the choice for struggling families, for Aboriginal families, for all who care deeply about children: rewind to slash and burn all that we built together or go strong and steady ahead. Rewind or forward.

When it comes to disabilities, Conservatives would curtail efforts to make buildings and employment more accessible for persons with disabilities. As they said about the new ramp at this building's main entrance, and I quote: I wonder sometimes when persons are really truly in need of a roof over their head because they are homeless, and this government wants to replicate a change to this building that essentially is not recognized in the historic value. They went on to say that the side basement door that persons with disabilities were relegated to was absolutely magnificent, and they said that our efforts to promote employer awareness about the great potential of Manitobans with disabilities called the marketAbilities Campaign was a waste of funds.

In this budget, our government is supporting a new, integrated centre to help—to locate help for children with disabilities, provide 3 million more to improve accessibility for students with disabilities, help more families and Manitobans with intellectual disabilities live in the community as independently as possible and help more families and children

living with autism and FASD. What we built together that's at risk is this: Autism supports have increased 700 per cent serving 1,150 more children, and 1,565 more Manitobans with disabilities are living independently in the community or receiving day services since 1999.

And I want to turn to the very important issue and challenge of poverty. Conservatives would end the ALL Aboard poverty reduction strategy and worsen poverty by, for example, ending minimum wage increases. The Conservative leader calls minimum wage increases political candy. They groundlessly say that minimum wage increases just eliminates jobs.

When it comes to fighting poverty, all I have ever heard Conservatives say they would do is just increase the basic personal tax exemption. But their recent view that it's a good idea to cut half a billion dollars from the budget is more than code for their plan to deeply cut the services I described at the outset.

And their plan to raise hydro bills for families by \$900 by going to a market rate would hit hard, especially on low-income families. And they still defend their notorious clawback of the National Child Benefit. So look out single mums.

In this budget, our government is further addressing housing availability, providing more help to pay rent, helping service organizations do their job better, implement a higher minimum wage and take action so that refugees can successfully integrate. We're also growing training opportunities for unemployed older workers. Tax measures include not just increasing the basic tax exemption, but will remove 22,000 low-income Manitobans from the tax rolls by 2014, including 5,600 this year.

We're increasing the Education Property Tax Credit for seniors by \$300 over three years and by \$50 this year. We now invest over \$1 billion a year to fight poverty and have directed almost \$80 million more in income support annually to low-income families. More measures will be announced under the ALL Aboard strategy in the coming weeks.

What we build together that's at risk is this: Manitoba is now leading the provinces in the reduction of child poverty and now has the lowest poverty rate for single parents and the second lowest rate for seniors. So the choice for Manitobans with disabilities, for those whose vision is a safe and cohesive province where all families have an

opportunity to prosper and participate in our economy, the choice is this: recklessly rewind to slash and burn all we've built together or let's go strong and steady ahead.

Families are better off today than in 1999. We have more than mitigated the setbacks of the '90s. Our actions are working. Manitobans can't afford the risk of going off track again. Let there be no doubt: the only choice that works for families is strong and steady ahead with today's NDP. Thank you.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to put a few words on the record in regards to the 2011 budget that was brought down by the government on April 12th. I also want to, more importantly, speak to the amendments that put forward by our leader, member for Ft. Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) and the reasons why the government should unanimously accept those amendments as a reason to provide hope and optimism for the future of Manitobans and get their hands, maybe, out of their pockets a little bit more than—by allowing them to manage their own funds and help us provide the social programming that this province needs.

Mr. Speaker, there are a few issues, a few areas of concern or of agreement that we had in this budget. I felt the same as some of my colleagues have spoken. There is dollars for—or some dollars there for justice and—but, you know, on the eve of an election after all the work that our—my colleague from Steinbach has done in regards to putting forward issues on justice issues and the needs, considering Winnipeg being the violent crime capital of Canada, once the car theft capital of Canada, and when they refocused those areas, it became the area of greatest break-ins. There are some things that we could do to move Manitoba forward in that area.

And, in regards to some hospitals and school facilities, we certainly believe that their NDP have fallen behind in those areas and need to catch up on some of it, and they haven't done it completely in this budget, Mr. Speaker. So that just leaves many, many areas that could go.

\* (16:50)

I heard with interest this afternoon a couple of my—or the government colleagues across the way on the governing side of the House and, you know, trying to defend their record with desperation in their voices, desperation as they move forward to the coming election this fall. You know, I heard the

Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers), now the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh), talking about the desperation of trying to—hopefully, they can do better. Well, they've had 11 years, Mr. Speaker, and I am concerned that after 11 years of the same old, same old, that this government has run out of ideas. Manitobans are telling us every day, or telling me and, certainly, in my area and other areas that this government has run out of ideas, that it is time for change.

There is a great deal happening down in my corner of Manitoba in regards to the excellent agriculture lands that we have, but also in the expansion of the oil industry, Mr. Speaker, and I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the activity in the oil field with—I think it was very public. In the *Free Press* there was an article, but I have spoken with some of the people from Penn West, as I know the minister in charge of energy has as well, where they indicted that over the next 10 to 15 years they would invest one to one and a half billion dollars in investment in southwest Manitoba, particularly around the community of Waskada. And this is a great influx of investment in that area. It is certainly helping the local citizens as well as the people on the governing side of the House and in regards to them being able to help balance their books and do the work that they need to do as a government.

But, Mr. Speaker, citizens have telling us that they haven't invested—they haven't reinvested those dollars back into road infrastructure in that corner. There is a lot of problems with road infrastructure when you get heavy equipment moving like that, and I don't think coming out once in a while and having a look at it from the government's perspective as they've done is going to fix that. I do appreciate the fact that a member of the department that I spoke with on Saturday might have had a chance to see some of it as well, first-hand, I hope, on the weekend, but there is a great opportunity for Manitoba and particularly for southwest Manitoba as we move forward in that area. And we've seen investments in housing and lodgings and other areas, and certainly in restaurants.

I also want to say that, though, that on the side of the government accepting the amendments that we have put forward, there are two very clear amendments that have come forward, Mr. Speaker. One of them is that they could change their minds in regards to Bipole III and move it down the east side of the province. Just take their last two Finance ministers who've been in charge of Hydro, both of

them, the present one and the one before who's now the Premier (Mr. Selinger), and look at the directive that they give. It wasn't, you should look at these options and you should, you know, consider. It was, you can't come down the middle, which we agree with, because there's two lines there already, and you—thou shalt not come down the east side because we won't be able to sell power to anybody if we come down the east side.

Well, that's just scare tactics. And the government isn't willing to talk with the First Nations or others on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to make the—or they would already know that they would accept some of those areas. And they certainly haven't 'talken'—spoken, rather, with the people on the west side, Mr. Speaker, because they haven't dealt with the landowner issues on that side as well or they would have known that—or they could have dealt or expected some of the resolutions that have come from some of the rural municipalities who are very concerned about this government not talking with them or the landowners in relation to bringing the Bipole III down the west side all the way around by The Pas.

And, of course, there's the extra costs of \$11,748 per household in this province is just absolutely horrendous that the government thinks that they can waste Manitobans' money like that, or the—never mind the extra 500 kilometres, almost 500 kilometres of line that would be built.

And, you know, I hear the member from Gimli saying, wrong, wrong. Well, he is—he's just listening to the, well, I would say, ostriches, Mr. Speaker. I guess he certainly hasn't been listening to the people of Manitoba or he'd know better than to say those things because, you know, if they were to bring it down the west side and then put these extra burdens on not only Manitobans who are going to pay for this, but expect to recover it out of Americans who will purchase this power or other Canadians is just—it's not credible. It's at the very best ludicrous to think that they would be able to recover those costs in that manner.

And so I think, Mr. Speaker, it's—you know, it negates the idea that was being spoken about by the member from Dauphin earlier today about a market-based economy and who he thinks will be able to pay for those types of energy in the manner that he is—of the volumes that he is looking at collecting dollars on.

Mr. Speaker, the second area I hear, of course, is a balanced fiscal approach that we think needs to be taken. The NDP have skyrocketed the debt in Manitoba since 1999. It's well over double what it was in the core debt that we had in those days. And, if you look at a total debt of over \$25 billion today, it's certainly double what it was in 1999.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that's why this government should take a look at accepting the amendment put forward by our side of the Legislature to deal with the responsible review of the waste and mismanagement that they have put in place over the last 11 years. And there needs to be a very clear approach to dealing with the impacts that this is going to have on future generations of Manitobans as not only hydro rates go up, as not only their very basic personal exemptions which haven't kept up with inflation even. They made an announcement today, or in the budget, that there would be personal exemptions over four years. And, basically, it doesn't even keep up with inflation in regards to the types of savings, if you will, in putting these issues forward.

It's a circumstances that was raised by my colleague the member from Tuxedo today, the critic for Transportation, from our side of the Legislature, whereby debt financing is the fourth—would be if it was a department unto itself—the fourth largest spending budget in the government's side of the House today, Mr. Speaker.

And so for those issues, I mean, if the government would have a review of the spending, the waste and mismanagement that they're doing and if they would accept the amendment to move Bipole III to the east side of the boreal forest where it is more environmentally friendly, where it is cheaper to run, where it is not going to impact the ability to have a UNESCO designation on that side of Manitoba, and where it is not going to interrupt the wildlife as much as the west-side line, Mr. Speaker. I can't see why they fail to see the common sense in being able to do that. They always talk about a balance; this would be one of the best approaches that they could possibly have.

And so, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to say that I encourage the government to vote for the amendments that we have put forward and—but if they fail to do that, I would have—well, I wouldn't be able to support their budget in regards to that, and I think that's just a very good use of

common sense. Something that's going to cost in the neighbourhood of \$1.75 billion in regards to the waste and mismanagement of the Bipole III line, never mind the other areas, is something that shouldn't be tolerated by Manitobans. Thank you.

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to give my response to the budget, my full endorsement to the budget and, of course, my adamant opposition to the movement of members opposite to amend that.

I, too, like others would like to take just a moment to acknowledge all of the people who will be leaving this Chamber and not returning after the next election, no less than eight sitting members, including yourself, Sir, as Speaker and the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes). You've been a real inspiration to me over the years.

I've been in here for about 12 years now, and you have guided us with an iron fist and—but also with a lot of understanding and patience too, I would say. Not too, too often you have lost your patience with us, although at times, no doubt, we deserved it.

So we acknowledge your sound leadership, and you've done an exemplary job. And we thank you all for that and wish you the best in your retirement—as two other members in the House on our side as well—the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and I won't list them all because there are too many, to be frank—too many.

One of the things that I've learned to appreciate over the years in the House is the wisdom and experience and understanding on both sides of the House. Whether members of the New Democratic Party or the Conservative or Liberal opposition, all of us come here with the purpose to serve the people of Manitoba.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member will have 28—will have 27 minutes remaining.

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Monday, April 18, 2011**

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