

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

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

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

**Vol. LXVI No. 37B - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, March 27, 2014**

ISSN 0542-5492

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
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CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
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GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
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JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 27, 2014

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**Mr. Speaker:** Introduction of bills? Seeing no bills, we'll move on to petitions? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

#### 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 Lauren Sawchuk, a teacher at Sisler High School, and students from the Lord Nelson School under the direction of Monique Russell and Michelle Wolfe, who are the guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight).

And also seated in the public gallery, from Saint-Norbert Collegiate, members of the St. Norbert Celtics junior varsity boys basketball team, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau).

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Cottage Fee Increases Fixed Income Owners

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, the owners of Manitoba's 6,000-plus cottages are the latest victims of NDP fiscal mismanagement.

As Tom and Arlene Cutts, third-generation cottagers in the Whiteshell, noted in a letter to the minister: Your 750 per cent increase in lease fees is redirected to the Minister of Finance, of which they are nontraceable and consequently nonbeneficial to cottagers. This is not the cottagers' fault, and it can be directly attributable to your government's fault in maintaining a dysfunctional financial management system with the parks department.

Mr. Speaker, the Cutts are on fixed-income pensioners. Why is this minister threatening their dream of cottage life?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** I thank the member for Morris for the question.

Mr. Speaker, we believe cottage life is one of the great dimensions of our quality of life in this province of Manitoba, and we want our—Manitobans to enjoy our lakes and our rivers and our great outdoors, which is why we have added 1,392 additional cottage lots in Manitoba during our term in office, which is why we have improved investments in parks, including in roadways and infrastructure such as lagoons and upgrading campsites as well, so that people of a variety of income levels can enjoy the cottage life.

It is always a challenge when you have to take a look at how we pay for things, Mr. Speaker, and we want to do it in the fairest way possible. And I want to assure any cottager that is concerned about that that our door will remain open to listen to their concerns, identify how we can make things better.

But we do have to have a system, Mr. Speaker, where we have a reasonable and fair assessment of what the rates should be paid by cottage owners, as having the benefits of living in and participating and spending a good part of their year in those beautiful parks in Manitoba.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier may listen to their concerns, but it's pretty clear that he's not willing to take any action on their concerns.

Mr. Speaker, the Lussiers own a cottage at Falcon Lake. Based on an invoice from Crown Lands and Property Agency, their rent fees will increase 443 per cent. They are not hooked up to town water or sewer. They don't get services in the winter. Garbage pickup is communal. They personally pay for dust control on their gravel road with their neighbours.

They wrote to the Minister of Conservation: What the NDP government is proposing will take away the possibility of the average citizen owning a cottage and making it affordable only to the elite.

Mr. Speaker, why is this minister so intent to drive the Lussiers out of their cottage?

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the objective is to make cottage life affordable for all Manitobans and also fair in terms of the responsibilities that all of us have to contribute to these public assets calls provincial parks.

These are great assets in the province of Manitoba. We're expanding those assets. We're creating more parks. We're creating more cottage lots in parks. We want people to enjoy the great outdoors. We're ensuring that the wildlife species that have—we have are protected and regenerated, whether it's fishing, other forms of wildlife.

So if there's a specific issue that the member opposite wishes to raise and he thinks there's an unfairness on how any fee or any levy has been indicated on a specific individual, the minister will be happy to receive those concerns and review them and ensure that they are properly done in the interests of fairness for all people that enjoy the parks.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, myself and the cottagers that have joined us today aren't buying what the minister's selling, and it's not just because of an 8 per cent PST. To a person, cottagers have told me that they are willing to pay their fair share.

The problem comes from a government that refuses to abide by sections 18(3) and 20 of The Provincial Parks Act, which state the minister not only—must prepare an estimate of all costs, indirect and direct, associated with a park district and share it with cottagers. I'm sorry, but the NDP's mantra of, trust me, we know best, has worn thin.

When will this government, when will this Premier live up to the parks act and show the cottagers the true costs?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I have examples of the transparency in the information that has been provided here. We'll—we're happy to table them. I know there's abundant information online. If there's any additional information that people wish to make themselves available to, we will provide it to them.

But it is important to have transparency. It is important to understand what the costs are and how those costs should be distributed in a fair and equitable way.

And I do believe that cottagers do want to pay their fair share; I've never doubted that for a second.

The issue now is to have the proper communication between officials that are trying to work out a proper and fair system and the cottage owners. Our doors remain open to have that discussion with them at the ministerial level, at the official level, and to provide all the documentation necessary. That will be provided.

And as the members know, if there's any doubt about that, there's always a review by an independent officer of the Legislature called the Ombudsman. There is an ability to have a higher review of that.

But I think that the best approach is for people to come together. The acting minister is here today, is willing to meet with them right after question period today, and we will continue to have a constructive and respectful dialogue on the appropriate distribution of—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The minister's—First Minister's time has expired.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** I regret to interrupt the honourable member for Agassiz, but I have a very pleasant duty.

And on behalf of all honourable members of the Assembly, it's my privilege to introduce to members of the Assembly our Olympic gold medal athletes. We have with us here this afternoon Dennis Thiessen, Jennifer Jones, Kaitlyn Lawes, Jill Officer, Dawn McEwen and Janet Arnott.

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

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** I regret to interrupt the honourable member for Agassiz, but I'm sure he understands. The honourable member for Agassiz has the floor.

### Provincial Parks Cottage Fee Increases

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** That's a tough act to follow.

Mr. Speaker, in municipalities, fees and taxes collected must be accounted for. We have legislation in this province that protects renters from being taken advantage of by landlords.

Why does that legislation not apply to the spendDP when they raise property rental fees to cabin owners in provincial parks?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** Mr. Speaker, I think the first thing that's important to note is that there's historic reinvestment taking place in our parks. Just over the last five years, we've put in place expenditures that are five times when members were in office, in fact, the last five years, five times the investment. We're now committed to a more than a \$100-million investment in our cottages.

And I can tell you, I meet with cottage owners—all members on this side meet with cottage owners—and there's a continuing support and, in fact, pressure for even more services.

We have put in place a review of the park service fees and the land rentals. And in terms of the accountability, I invite the member to google the 2013 park service fees and rent. He will find one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight documents—

\* (13:40)

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

**Mr. Briese:** Mr. Speaker, the minister recently changed the wording of the regulation from appraised values to assessed values and then used that as an opportunity to raise rental fees by as much as 750 per cent to feed spenDP spending habits.

Does the Minister of Conservation believe that rental increases of up to 750 per cent are appropriate?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I invite the member—in fact, if he doesn't want to google it, we can provide copies of the various reports. They identify that the portion of the costs that are assessed in terms of our parks in terms of cottagers is approximately \$4 million. Currently there's approximately \$1.7 million paid in terms of fees, and clearly it would not be appropriate for other Manitobans to subsidize that.

I talked to many cottage owners, many other members on this side of the House as well. They are the first ones to say, Mr. Speaker, that they're more than prepared to pay their fair share.

And I would invite the member opposite to read the Grant Thornton independent auditor's report or any of the other seven documents I reference. It identifies not only the broader principles of what's happening, it gets right down to the specific costs per park. In fact, you can even find specific costs per—

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

**Mr. Briese:** If a municipality tried to raise their assessments by up to 700 per cent, the residents would ride them out of town on a rail. Yet this minister and his spenDP government, with their spending addictions, think they can.

I ask the minister again: Does he think rental fee increases of up to 750 per cent are fair and equitable?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if the member was to look at any of the documents—and I'm not sure if he has; again, we can provide that—he'll find in many cases the land rental portion at any analysis—and it's documented in the auditor's report—the methodology, the specific analysis, in many cases, land rental reflects the fact that the actual value of that land has gone up 500 per cent plus since the last time this was done, which was in the 1980s. There has not been a change in terms of cottage fees for the past 10 years, and, again, everybody agrees on one thing: cottagers are more than prepared to pay their fair share.

We took the time to document it. We held meetings throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. We're more than prepared to provide any and all of the information.

The bottom line here is we want to make sure we have proper financing for our parks and we are going to continue to invest them in the future.

#### **Cottage Fee Increases Fiscal Transparency**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** It's interesting that the minister can stand up in the House and try to defend his position but he wouldn't go out and face the cottagers today on the front steps of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, day after day we continue to see the arrogance of a government out of touch with Manitoba taxpayers, hard-working taxpayers. It's a saga of disrespect and deceit.

Mr. Speaker, will the government come clean today and admit that this is just another example of cottage owners—showing disrespect for cottage owners and picking their pocket once again? When is enough enough?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I was here during the debate, private members' hour, and, as the Premier (Mr. Selinger) indicated, as acting Conservation minister I'm more than prepared to meet with representatives of the cottagers, and I have met with cottagers in my own area. Proud to represent many cottagers who go to Paint Lake and Setting Lake. So I need no member—no lectures from the member opposite on showing respect.

I'd also point out, Mr. Speaker, that it was this government, during the 2011 flood, for the first time provided protection through a stand-alone provincial

programming for the cottage owners that were impacted, and whether they—we're dealing with cottage owners in or outside of provincial parks. That speaks volumes for our commitment.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this comes down to the kind of investments we're making in our parks. Everybody agrees that they're prepared to make—to pay their fair share. We've documented—there are eight documents online that do this. Have been consultations throughout the province, and we're more than prepared to sit down with the cottage owners to discuss any of their—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** And this from a government that didn't consult at all on the increase in the PST, and they—as a matter of fact, they indicated before the last election that they weren't going to raise it.

Mr. Speaker, The Provincial Parks Act is clear. The minister must prepare and provide a list of expenses for ratepayers. Another example of an arrogant government that snubs its nose at cottage owners and snubs its nose at the law. They say, trust us, we know what's best for you. But they've been caught time and time again in lie after lie after lie.

How can anyone trust this government? Will they open the books today and let cottage owners see what the real costs are and how they're being fleeced by this government?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, that's quite something coming from someone who was part of government that sold off our telephone system. No consultation, Mr. Speaker, when the member for River East was in government, was the Cabinet minister.

And if she's really concerned about cottagers or if—maybe it's just a question of politics here, Mr. Speaker—I would suggest she take the time, I don't know if she's checked the website, it's pretty—you can google it. There are eight documents that get down to not only the overall independent auditor's report, but I actually pulled up Paint Lake, and identifies by cottage, by the cottage area, it's got all of the detail there. The only reason I stopped printing this, I was actually starting to calculate how many trees would have to go into printing this to bring in the House.

My suggestion to the member opposite: go online, google it. We have been transparent—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Well, but increased costs to cottagers, up to 750 per cent, without the accountability that should be there on where the money is going, Mr. Speaker, this reeks of disrespect. It reeks of desperation and it reeks of deceit.

Will they show some respect to cottage owners today and open the books?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the books are open. They're online; they're available. They have been available to cottage owners. They're available to members of the general public.

And I would just point out, to give some sense, Mr. Speaker, yes, there are some increases. But just to look at what we've done, there's a cap of \$3,000.

By 2018-19 we're going to move to a system that reflects a differential value of cottages. Someone with a million-dollar-plus cottage—and I'll put that in quotation marks—being treated the same today as someone with a hundred-thousand-dollar cottage. We don't think that's fair, Mr. Speaker, and that will change.

But we're looking, just to put it in perspective, for example, a 1,400-square-foot home in Falcon Lake with assessed value of \$550,000, this year the fee is going to go from \$800 to \$980. That is to reconnect with the actual cost of providing that service. Again, we don't think anyone—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

### **Provincial Parks Cottage Fee Increases**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I encourage the minister to google integrity and transparency and accountability. That's what he should be googling.

Today we have a group of cottage owners and homeowners that expect to pay fees that are reliable and offer services for that. What they don't understand is why this government is 'unilateral' increasing fees without transparency or accountability.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. When fees are increased by a whopping 750 per cent, it's nothing more than a tax grab for this desperate government looking for any and all ways to drain pockets of hard-working Manitobans.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** Well, it

turns out we have printed some of the copies, and I'm more prepared to table this, Mr. Speaker, for members opposite. And I would invite the member to perhaps read the top document, and this is just, by the way, for West Hawk Lake. We could probably reach the ceiling of the Legislature if we printed every single document that's there.

We've been transparent, and I want to say, by the way, our park staff has been working on this with auditors, our dedicated park staff. And I want to stress again, Mr. Speaker, no one here is questioning anything other than cottage owners paying their fair share. We calculate it. I appreciate there have not been fee increases for 10 years. There has not been a review of the land rentals probably for 30 years.

\* (13:50)

But I'm wondering if the member opposite's suggesting that there should be a subsidy put in place. We spend \$4 million. We collect \$1.7 million. I think the—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Eichler:** Many homes and cottages have been handed down from generation to generation with great pride, just like the Jones family from Hecla. Now, this family and many others like them are wondering if they can afford to carry on this tradition under the financial pressures of this tax-happy, fee-happy 'spee' NDP government. Under this government, they have seen their fees increase by up to 750 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we know the spend government has a tax-and-spend problem. Why are they punishing this group of homeowners and cottage owners in such an air fair way—unfair rate? This increase is totally unacceptable.

**Mr. Ashton:** We have been working very hard in terms of accessibility in cottages. It's this government that put in place an expansion of the number of cottages in this province, Mr. Speaker, so that's an important point to put on the record.

The second point that's important to put on the record again, Mr. Speaker, is it's a question of \$4 million of expenditure and \$1.7 million of fees being collected. I would say the member opposite might want to ask the broadest range of his constituents whether it's fair for the taxpayers to subsidize it.

Well, the interesting part, Mr. Speaker, cottage owners themselves have said they want to pay their fair share. So the bottom line here, whether it's paving roads, whether it's providing services like garbage services, many of the other basic services are put in place. All we're doing in this case is collecting revenue to match the expenditures, and we're doing it—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Eichler:** I'll ask the minister: Did he ask the public about \$1-million 'bote'-vote tax that every member on that side of the House took? I don't think so.

When hard-working Manitobans try to get ahead, trying to demonstrate to their children that work reaps its rewards, this government knocks them down, takes away everything that they can. They don't respect taxpayers.

People like the Tomasons are not rich people. They have worked very hard, budgeted wisely to make ends meet. I join with them in saying, shame on this government for their heavy-handed dictator-style of governance.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this government to do their job, be honest, be accountable, be transparent and make sure that all taxpayers understand this is nothing more than a tax grab.

**Mr. Ashton:** I find ironic the member would even put the phrase—the word taxpayer in his comments, because, Mr. Speaker, we spend \$4 million providing services. Right now we collect \$1.7 million in fees. It's all documented. It's all available online. I have printed copies that I've tabled for members opposite.

Everyone agrees that everyone should pay their fair share, whether it's cottage owners, seasonal campers, day campers, members of the general public, Mr. Speaker. And I want to put on the record, I don't—I haven't heard, actually, any of the cottage owners I've talked to who've said that they expect the taxpayers, the general taxpayers, to subsidize their costs.

Clearly, there have been concerns expressed about some of the costs. We've been transparent. We're more than prepared to meet with the group. But, Mr. Speaker, our interest is to protect the broader interests of the taxpayers to make sure that everyone gets their fair share and pays their fair share.

### **Cottage Fee Increases Impact on Seniors**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Many cottages that exist today were built by young couples with a dream of being able to enjoy the rural areas of our great province with their young families as they grew up. That was over 60 years ago.

Today seniors in this province are being penalized by this government. This government has lied about increasing the PST, lied about the school tax and have lied about tax increases.

Mr. Speaker, why did this government break their promise to seniors and raise the tax on cottages by up to 750 per cent?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** The members opposite, when their government did nothing in terms of the education tax paid by seniors, and it's this government and this budget that's bringing that in, Mr. Speaker, and they voted against it. So let them not lecture us about seniors.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've talked to a lot of cottage owners in my area, and they're seniors as well, and I'll tell you, not one of them said they want to do anything more than pay their fair share. What we've done, we've documented through eight documents. We've documented down to the level of the cottage, and what we've said, we're more than prepared to sit down with the cottage owners, discuss their concerns.

He can talk all he wants about seniors, but it's this government that's going to, for the first time, provide relief for education taxes. He voted against it.

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, we just heard another untruth. They did not eliminate the school tax on seniors that they promised two years ago. One thing is consistent from this government: there isn't a tax that they haven't fallen in love with yet.

Seniors have worked hard to enjoy their retirement, and many of them have planned to retire to their cottages. For many, that dream is now out of reach.

With an increase in the PST and a 750 per cent increase in their cottage fees, Mr. Speaker, why does this minister and this government continue to break their promises to seniors?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, actually, it's this government that got rid of the education support levy, which many seniors had to pay, and in this budget we're moving to eliminating the education tax that seniors pay.

And I want to put on the record that the seniors that built this province, they believe fundamentally in paying their fair share, and we are more than prepared to sit down. We put everything on the Internet. We've met throughout the province. Our park staff—our dedicated park staff has costed it out.

I want to put on the record it's easy for members opposite to talk about this, because when they were in government they let our park system crumble. We're already spending more money on our parks, and what our cottage owners want are they want decent roads, decent services; that's part of our plan as well.

**Mr. Graydon:** We have talked to many, many cottagers that said they'd like to see 'em mowed last year, that the toilets didn't work. This is under his management.

And seniors of this province deserve to know how their tax dollars are being spent, but their government has decided not to tell them. A 750 per cent tax increase is a broken promise. A 14 per cent PST increase is another broken promise. Seniors in this province deserve answers, not more broken promises.

Mr. Speaker, why does this government continue to break their promises to seniors? Can't this minister and this government show some respect, a little bit of respect, for our seniors and keep the promises that they have made in the past?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I note of—a bit of a political dimension here. I suppose we could also talk about this government fundamentally being opposed to two-tiered medicine, something that his leader has put forward as the option. I would advise the member opposite to check and see what that will do to seniors when you go to a health-care facility and you're going to have to have your Visa and your MasterCard to get health care, because that's their vision.

And when it comes to the seniors of this province, let's be very clear, Mr. Speaker. There's not a senior in this province that doesn't believe in paying their fair share. What this is about is taking \$4 million of expenditures, \$1.7 million worth of



revenue, making sure that nobody subsidizes this, making sure it's fair.

And to the members opposite, I want to stress again, we take no lectures from members opposite in terms of seniors. They voted against the seniors' property tax credit. And the bottom line is they have nothing to say about seniors in this province.

### **Fortune Minerals Plant Government Relations**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods):** Mr. Speaker, I've asked the Minister of Mineral Resources on two occasions on his government's inability to land a hundred jobs in the private sector. Of course, that's 500 jobs by NDP math.

Instead of simply saying they were not competitive with Saskatchewan, the minister chose to blame the president of the company. He even chose to make derogatory comments about the president. As typical with the NDP, it is never their fault.

I ask: Why would the minister choose to blame the company itself?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources):** Mr. Speaker, the other day when I answered the question, I simply quoted what that president had stated in a document.

But with respect, I find it very curious, Mr. Speaker, that when Canadian Tire set it up—set up its computer system here in Winnipeg, the Leader of the Opposition said we should not have offered any subsidies to that company. He said, no subsidies to that company.

And, in fact, the company the member's talking of got significant subsidies from the Saskatchewan government. You can't have it both ways.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I raised the issue again to see if the minister would take another approach to this issue. I realize the minister and the NDP are sensitive about not securing private sector jobs, and they should be. But to fault the president of the company and the media for their inability to land the jobs is very disturbing.

\* (14:00)

Maybe the minister today should—is he prepared to apologize to the president of Fortune Minerals for the comments he's made?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite do not like to talk about the lean, mean, evil years of the '90s, so I won't. I won't.

But I want you to know—let the member guess. At one time there was about 4,000 people working in the mining sector. Right now there's over 6,000 people working in the mining sector. When do you think there were 4,000 people working in the mining sector? Let them guess. I'd say it was about, oh, I'd say about 14 years ago.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the irony is this minister got up this morning and talked about respect. We're simply asking the minister to do the respectful thing and apologize for the comments he's made.

We know Fortune Minerals looked at a number of sites across Manitoba. We know the NDP couldn't land those hundred private sector jobs—or, of course, 500 to them. We know the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen) was disappointed his colleagues couldn't land the job.

We also know, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP's watch we've gone from No. 1 in the world to No. 26 in terms of mining attractiveness.

I ask the minister again: What is the real reason Fortune Minerals headed to Saskatchewan?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite could defend—can defend the big corporate interest all they want. On this side of the House, we want to work for the seniors; we want to work for working Manitobans; we want to work for those people.

For example, when they privatized MTS, the IBEW lost 500 workers. Since we've been in office, with Hydro we've increased IBEW membership by 600 workers. That's 600 families with jobs, paying taxes.

We're increasing hydro. We're selling hydro to Saskatchewan. Where's Saskatchewan getting their hydro from? From Manitoba. Why? Because we're building it.

They don't build; they cut. It was a poor province when we took it over; it's a lot better today than it was under the management of those people.

### **Provincial Parks Cottage Fee Increases**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, there are many Manitobans who've come here today concerned about this NDP government's

covert operation of provincial parks. The NDP government's lack of openness and accountability and complete disregard for Manitobans with cottages in our parks is very disturbing.

The government is putting in place lease rate increases of up to 750 per cent in provincial parks, as the documents I table shows. Mr. Speaker, hard-working Manitobans want to enjoy their well-deserved breaks with their family and friends at their cabin.

I ask the Premier: Why is he making it so expensive for Manitobans to enjoy what little summer we have?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite needs to understand the fundamental issue, which I believe he does. The expenses incurred to provide services to those cottagers—and they have been broken down on a cottage-by-cottage basis, unlike any municipality in Manitoba—are \$4 million. The revenues generated are \$1.7 million.

Is the member asking that all other taxpayers subsidize that? Does that mean the little senior living in a little house on Magnus Avenue has to pay additional taxes to pay for somebody's cottage at West Hawk Lake? I don't think anybody believes that is fair, Mr. Speaker.

We're looking for a fair system. We're looking for a fair system where the costs of the services provided are recovered. If there's any anomalies, the acting minister or the minister's completely prepared to review that.

The transparency is there. We've brought in independent auditing firms to look at it. I've never seen a research in the history of this province that breaks down the expenses on a cottage-by-cottage or a property-by-property basis. That's online, that is fully transparent, and if there's any issues that arise out of that, we're willing to discuss it and find a way to do this as fairly as possible for the benefit of all Manitobans.

#### **Cottage Fee Increases Fiscal Transparency**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the government continues to hide information. Why is the government, instead of putting the money coming in from the lease rental rates towards services, putting it into general revenue? That's not accountability.

Dan Klass, with the Whiteshell Cottagers Association, told this morning of a meeting with a government representative. He asked for full information on the expenses and the revenues of the Whiteshell Provincial Park. Instead of the information, the government representative replied, you don't want to know. This is abhorrent in a democratic society, to have a government dedicated to secrecy and not letting people know basic information.

I ask the Premier: Why is he not providing the basic information cottagers need and want?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, if there's any information that any cottager wants, the department will provide it. They'll provide it on a cottage—they'll provide it by—on a cottage-by-cottage basis. The acting minister is prepared to meet with the—a delegation from the cottage owners after and make arrangements to identify any specific information they wish to receive. Nobody wants to hide anything.

As a matter of fact, when there—when it's fully transparent and people fully understand it, I believe that fair-minded cottagers will work with the government to find a reasonable way to advance the recovery of the expenses that are incurred to provide those beautiful services to those cottages in beautiful provincial parks.

We want high-quality parks where people can have a good experience, a good quality of life experience, and we want to do it in such a way that other people that don't have the opportunity to own a cottage don't have to subsidize it.

#### **Government Intention**

**Mr. Gerrard:** When a government representative says, you don't want to know, instead of providing information, it tells it all, Mr. Speaker.

Having a cottage and living at the lake is one of the really wonderful reasons for being a Manitoban. You know, this morning we learned the real reason for the government's high increase in fees and rental costs. The MLA for Flin Flon said, I quote, it's about taking cabins out of the parks. Mr. Speaker, the strategy never mentioned this goal.

Why did the government hide its intention to take cabins out of our parks and to evict cottagers from our provincial parks?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we've added 1,392 additional cottage lots in parks in Manitoba.

Only the member from River Heights could turn that into subtraction.

That's 1,392 more cottage lots, and we're looking for ways to increase more opportunities for families to enjoy the parks, whether it's electrified campsites, whether it's yurts, whether it's additional cottage lots. Additional opportunities to enjoy our parks in Manitoba are very important and we are creating more parks in Manitoba. In the North, just this week we've expanded the parks around Camp Morton, Mr. Speaker.

We will look for ways to increase our parks, and, by the way, we're going to pave the roads to those parks so people can get there safely.

#### **Manitoba Business Community KPMG Competitiveness Ranking**

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** Our government is focused on building the economy and the future with investments in core infrastructure, training skilled workers and protecting services that the families rely on. Our economy has continued to perform well, and businesses are expanding their operations and creating good jobs for Manitobans.

Can the Minister of Jobs and the Economy please tell us a little bit more of how our low-cost business costs and taxes make Winnipeg and Brandon among the most competitive cities in which to do business, especially among North American western cities?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

It is my privilege to share with the House today that KPMG produced their biennial report on business alternatives and competitiveness, and I'm delighted to report to the House that, indeed, once again Winnipeg is the most competitive city in which to conduct business in the North American midwest. Yes, indeed, Winnipeg ranked at No. 1 out of 26 midwestern cities, ahead of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, Edmonton, ahead of Phoenix, Dallas-Fort Worth, Minneapolis, Denver and Chicago.

And not to be outdone, Brandon was second most competitive of eight additional midwestern cities that were benchmarked by the report. Brandon has improved its cost advantage by 2.9 per cent—

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

#### **Provincial Parks Cottage Fee Increases**

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has no integrity.

Dan Lussier and his family own a cottage on Falcon Lake. He received his notice in February that his new assessed value is seven and a half times what it was last year, increasing his tax bill to almost \$6,000.

Mr. Speaker, how can the minister justify this massive tax increase, or is this just another NDP tax grab to feed their out-of-control spending habits?

\* (14:10)

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I invite the member opposite to look at any one of the eight reports. They're all available online.

If he looks at the information that was provided during our outreach—meetings were held throughout the province with cottage owners—he will find that in many cases land rentals have increased dramatically since they were last assessed in the 1980s. In fact, in terms of the fee side, as well, there has not been any change in fees for the last 10 years. And it's probably one of the reasons why we're spending \$4 million and collecting \$1.7 million in fees.

Going to match the expenditures with what we raise, Mr. Speaker, that's about fairness, and I hope the member opposite would actually support that, because every cottager I've talked to has said they support fairness. There may be disagreements on the methodology, but nobody wants to have any subsidy for cottage owners, nobody, including cottage owners. Maybe perhaps only—

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

**Mr. Smook:** A tax increase of 750 per cent is hardly standing up for Manitobans, and this government is failing cottage owners. This government has increased taxes on everything, and yet they want more money.

Cottage owners deserve the respect from this government. What they got was a 750 per cent tax increase.

Mr. Speaker, why is this minister raising taxes by 750 per cent? How can he justify this?

**Mr. Ashton:** Again, all of the information is available. There were meetings held throughout the province.

But I do want to put on the record again what this government has done. First of all, in this budget, which the members opposite voted against, removing—that's the first major step, by the way, the only step by any government to remove the education tax, Mr. Speaker, for seniors; the work we've done in terms of seniors' property tax credits; the work we've done in terms of many other issues, including on the health-care side, repairing or rebuilding our health-care side, providing ambulance care, including helicopter ambulance care throughout the province.

So members opposite can talk all they want in terms of seniors, Mr. Speaker, but the bottom line here, it's this government that stood up for seniors. We'll stand up for seniors today, tomorrow. We fight for seniors every day we're in government.

#### **Provincial Parks Cottage Fee Increases**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, Brett from Selkirk owns a family cottage in the Whiteshell. He and his family are tired of this Minister of Conservation's dictatorship-style politics.

Section 18(3), as the member from Morris had stated, and many of our other caucus members on this side of the House, states that they should be preparing estimates of services and costs. Section 20 states that these documents should be readily available. Mr. Speaker, these are absolutely not readily available to all these cottage owners.

Why are they not being transparent and accountable, Mr. Speaker? Why is this minister breaking his own act, or is that just another promise broken, as usual?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, I appreciate that members opposite have been trying to outdo each other in terms of the political rhetoric.

But the reality is we met with cottage owners throughout the province. There are eight separate documents online. It's all audited. It's provided in terms of detailed information.

And it, again, comes down to \$4 million of expenditures that can be allocated to cottage owners, and right now the current fee structure collects

\$1.7 million. We, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of fairness—in fact, cottage owners say the same thing: if it's \$4 million, you collect \$4 million. That's fair to cottage owners and it's fair to all Manitobans.

They can talk all they want. They can put all the rhetoric on the record, Mr. Speaker. This is about fairness, and we'll fight for fairness any and every day in this House.

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

#### **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**Mr. Speaker:** It's time for members' statements.

#### **St. Norbert Collegiate JV Boys Basketball**

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** Today I would like to welcome several outstanding youth athletes from my constituency to the Legislative Assembly.

On March 10th the St. Norbert Celtics JV Boys Basketball team faced off against the Louis Riel Rebels in the South Central Athletic Conference AAA Basketball Zone 2 championship.

The St. Norbert boys came together beautifully to play an exciting game and won, taking home the championship banner. Not only did the team play excellently during the championship, but also throughout the entire year, finishing the season with 17 wins and only three losses. Of their 20 games this season, the talented group of athletes won 14 straight games in a row.

Parents, coaches and teachers are not only incredibly proud of this team's win, but also of their personal maturity and character these athletes have developed over the course of the season.

For their entire season, these boys have been role models for students at Collège Saint-Norbert Collegiate. During games, practices and in class, teammates brought out the best in each other. They respected their coaches, teachers and teammates both on and off the court.

For those continuing on to the junior varsity program, I wish you another incredible season together. For those students moving into the varsity program next year, continue to lead by example. Your hard work, dedication and motivation have been—have made the winning championship possible.

I was proud to be at the championship game and cheer on the team in their amazing win. Congratulations again to the Saint-Norbert Celtics JV basketball team. Way to go Celtics.

Mr. Speaker, to close, I ask the leave—the minister—the names in Hansard

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave to include—

**Mr. Gaudreau:** After that raucous applause, I would ask to leave to leave the team's, athletes and coaches as they appear in Hansard.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave to include the names of the team in today's Hansard? *[Agreed]*

*St. Norbert Celtics JV Boys Basketball Team: Chris Dyck, Anmol Verma, Kurtis Hyatt, Austin Sorokowski, Matt Oleskiw, Tyson Schneider, Alex Kitsul, Harold Buckle, Derek Anderson, Gage Trudel, Branden Sorokowski, Trevor Fontaine (coach), Leah Harpelle (coach) and Neil Reavley (coach)*

#### **Dennis Thiessen**

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to recognize a very talented member of my constituency, Mr. Dennis Thiessen from Sanford, Manitoba, who's not only Manitoba's first winter Paralympian, but also came home from Sochi, Russia, with a gold medal this year in the Winter Paralympic Games.

Mr. Speaker, from March 7th to 14th, more than 600 Paralympic athletes from 45 countries competed in the games. For years they have offered an opportunity to persons with physical disabilities to compete in Olympic level sports. One of these games is the sport of wheelchair curling which Canada's dominated since it's made its Paralympic debut eight years ago, winning gold in 2006, 2010 to go along with triumphs in 2009, '11 and '13 world championships.

Dennis has always been passionate about sports. Before he was injured on the family farm at age 17 he was an active hockey player. Dennis was introduced to wheelchair curling about eight years ago and quickly rose to the top, winning medals at four consecutive Canadian Wheelchair Curling Championships. It was only after a two-year trial process that Dennis was named to Canada's wheelchair team in 2012. At this year's game, Dennis came home with gold medal, a dream come true for his team who handily defeated host, Russia, 8-3 in the finals. This marks the first time a country has won all three curling tournaments in the same year.

Dennis' accomplishments extend far beyond the ice. He's also instrumental in starting the provincial branch of the Manitoba Farmers with Disabilities, an

organization dedicated to presenting farm safety programs to children, youth and adults. And when he's not training with Team Manitoba, Dennis helps to mentor the next generation of wheelchair curlers at the fully accessible Assiniboine Curling Club.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Dennis on his incredible performance at this year's Winter Paralympic Games, his commitment to sport and making life better for persons with disabilities is an inspiration and has ensured that the impossible becomes I'm possible. Thank you.

#### **Lauren Sawchuk—Champion for Sustainability**

**Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows):** Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud to represent the Burrows constituency. We are a tightly knit community where people work together for the long-term health and sustainability of our neighbourhood. This month I was delighted to learn that the efforts of our community are being recognized with two local projects receiving the Manitoba Excellence in Sustainability Award. The Manitoba Excellence in Sustainability Awards honour people, projects and ideas that successfully turn the province's sustainable development principles into concrete and lasting achievements.

Lauren Sawchuk, a home economics teacher at Sisler High School, is this year's champion for sustainability. She joins us in the gallery today. Lauren has implemented composting, gardening and recycling initiatives in her classroom, and uses the study of food to discuss important global issues from environmental concerns to world hunger. Her after-school cooking program uses local, organic and fair trade ingredients including produce from the school garden.

The Education for Sustainability Award went to Lord Nelson elementary school. Lord Nelson has been a leader in integrating sustainability into the classroom, extracurricular activities and the students' lives. One of their most successful projects is an outdoor classroom made up of five different habitats and over 400 indigenous plants. The outdoor classroom connects students, staff and community members with the wonders of nature right in the school's backyard.

\* (14:20)

Joining us in the gallery are members of Lord Nelson's Winnipeg Harvest team and the Human Rights Club. These groups educate students about poverty, social justice and human rights issues and empower them to take action through various

projects. Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of the incredible work being done in my constituency but, of course, there are many great projects across Manitoba.

I want to congratulate all of this year's Excellence in Sustainability Award winners and nominees. Your creativity and innovation creates a brighter future for Manitoba.

Thank you.

#### **Team Jennifer Jones**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, for 17 days this February the world was watching Sochi, Russia, the site of the Winter Olympic Games. Once again, Canadian athletes showed that they are among the best in the world, and several Manitoban athletes showed that they are the best on the curling ice.

Team Jennifer Jones based out of the St. Vital Curling Club here in Winnipeg, composed of skip Jennifer Jones, third Kaitlyn Lawes, second Jill Officer, lead Dawn McEwen and Coach Janet Arnott, represented Team Canada.

Having defeated the best teams in Canada in the Roar of the Rings, Team Canada entered the 2014 Sochi Olympics as the favourite. Canada breezed through the round robin going undefeated, entering the playoffs as the No. 1 seed. Team Jones made quick work of their opponents and claimed the gold medal, proving that Manitoban and Canadian curlers are truly among the best in the world.

Families, Mr. Speaker, are a great support throughout curling, and this Team Jones was no—had no exception. I know that all of them had very strong family support helping and guiding them right through the Olympics. With Mike, Camryn, Devlin, Isabella and Brent, I know that the young ladies were very well supported throughout their family home and their own home communities.

Kaitlyn, I had the pleasure of knowing your dad, and I know he would have been extremely proud of you and he was with you in spirit.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Jennifer, Kaitlyn, Jill, Dawn and Janet on their gold medals in these Olympics and set an undefeated record at the Olympics that only can be tied. Wow, what a feat.

They have proved time and time again that Manitoban and Canadian curlers are the best in the

world on—and on the biggest stage. Team Jones truly made us proud to cheer for Canada.

My wife, Tracey, myself, the PC caucus, wish all of them the best of luck in the future, both to their families and their curling careers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Biofuel**

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** Mr. Speaker, over the last few years I've seen many interesting ideas for energy alternatives, but none as exciting as biofuel energy.

Biofuel or biomass is a source of renewable energy made from organic materials like wood, agricultural crops and plants. Bioenergy is clean and green, and Manitoba has excellent potential to develop this fuel in an ongoing, sustainable way.

Many of my constituents in the Interlake are becoming involved in biomass alternatives. I recently attended the 7th annual Biomass Workshop in Arborg, Manitoba. Organized by the Manitoba bioenergy and bioproducts team in partnership with other local institutes, these workshops connect stakeholders across the province. People are able to network and share their skills and knowledge around biomass development. To date, over a thousand people in total have participated in biomass workshops. Participants come from all walks of life; producers, boiler manufacturers, Hutterite farmers, entrepreneurs and many others. Workshop participants also had the opportunity to tour Erosion Control Blanket and Spruce Wood Loggers, two local biomass processing facilities in the Interlake area.

Mr. Speaker, as all of us governments, businesses and individuals continue to look for ways to cut down our greenhouse gas emissions, biomass offers a promising alternative. This year, Manitoba announced \$444,000 in grants for 20 farms and agribusinesses across province to help them switch from carbon-emitting coal to biomass heating systems. This program called The Biomass Energy Support Program will help reduce carbon emissions by 7,000 tonnes a year. We will continue to look for opportunities to further develop this technology so that green energy alternatives can successfully complement our hydro power and compete against coal and natural gas in the marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to commend the workshop organizers for their excellent work. Thank you, as

well, to the Arborg Bifrost Community Centre for hosting the event. I look forward to seeing future biomass developments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### House Business

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** On House business, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** On House business.

**Mr. Goertzen:** In accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private members' resolution that will be considered on the next sitting Thursday is the resolution on Reducing Red Tape in Manitoba, sponsored by the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that, in accordance with rule 31(9), that the private members' resolution that will be considered the next sitting Thursday is the resolution on reducing red tape in Manitoba, sponsored by the honourable member for Tuxedo.

### GRIEVANCES

**Mr. Speaker:** Now, grievances. The honourable member for Morris, on a grievance.

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on a grievance. My grievance is related to the government's treatment or, I guess, in this case, the mistreatment of cottage owners here in the province of Manitoba.

It was very interesting, Mr. Speaker, listening to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and his righteous indignation when it came to the claim that parks are in a deficit position and that we are subsidizing—the taxpayers are actually subsidizing cottage owners, that this isn't fair. Yet his government doesn't bat an eye about subsidizing his own political party to the tune of a million dollars through the vote tax. At the same time, his party posts a \$400-million deficit.

Mr. Speaker, let's get down to brass tacks and let's really understand where this argument is coming from—the NDP's perspective.

And I think we heard it this morning, as noted by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in his comments. The NDP noted in his comments, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen), that his goal is actually the removal of cottages from provincial parks. Let's just bulldoze provincial parks out—

bulldoze cottages out of our provincial parks, that that is their end game, which is really quite, quite a shame. We are going to tax them out, my colleague notes.

Mr. Speaker, this government continues to paint a picture—a false picture, a 6/49 vision of millionaire cottage owners, sitting there on their decks on a lake—on a loon-filled lake—and nothing could be further from the truth. If the government members had decided—had made the decision to come outside and listen to some of these cottage owners, they would have learned that when cottages—or provincial parks were open 50-60 years ago to cottage owners, they were taken advantage of by blue-collar workers, by teachers, by waiters, by truck drivers, who had the dream of owning their own cottage, a dream now in jeopardy because of the ineptitude, the financial ineptitude, of members across the way.

Well, Mr. Speaker, who better to list a grievance than a cottage owner himself? In correspondence that this individual, Mr. Ryback, sent to the Minister of Conservation, he notes that: I've required to add my voice of opposition to the many letters you've received about this administration's non-compliance with The Provincial Parks Act in its continuing deception and attempts of manipulation of public opinion. This government action is part of a diversion to deflect attention from continuing poor management and abuse of the public trust.

The gentleman goes on to write to the minister: I am paying my invoice service fee under extreme protest. Because of your government's continuing abuse of its presently unchallenged power, it is expected you will receive many other similar complaints from concerned cottagers. The current administration's immeasurable failures are highlighted by No. 1: Contrary to public statements, the government has not frozen fees over the last decade, but chose not to charge actual costs due to its inability or unwillingness to properly document and provide an explanation of these costs, as evidenced by the Provincial Court on 2005 Whiteshell cottage association challenge and 2007 decision requiring the provincial non-compliance to be addressed by 2008.

Conservation's decision to waive the requirement for purchasing provincial park fees for three consecutive years. Invoicing for 2013-14 season was five months late, Mr. Speaker, with declared costs continued to be adjusted or manipulated prior to and during the Grant Thornton audit that the minister

likes to reference, as evidenced by revisions to posted cost data on the Conservation website as seen since January 2014.

Mr. Speaker, the parks act requires service fees to be invoiced annually based on the previous year's costs, with cost overruns applied to the next year. There's no provision for charging anything other than actual costs under the act, nor using estimates on any basis for costing.

Phased-in increases remain an additional attempt by this government to manage public opinion.

Statements made about applying a consultative process are grossly misleading, this individual wrote to the minister, to the public, to improper notification of public meetings, and the unwillingness of the minister to partake in meetings or allow questions.

\* (14:30)

The government has failed to support data that attempts to forecast cottage demand service usage and allocations based on unsubstantial assumptions for the number of bedrooms and users that have no bearings on service fees that should be invoiced.

Manitoba park facilities and services are provided for all citizens' interest, regardless of who has occasion to use them. Cottagers should not be targeted unfairly as a means for paying for an unequitable share of park facilities' capital and operating expenses.

Increases in lease rentals are determined by this administration's insatiable need for additional funding. Undeveloped land achieves its real value after improvements and documented sales records. Land cannot be sold in the parks by law; it is only leased. And the government has taken advantage of leasers who have traditionally depended upon the past government record of relative fairness regarding rent fees. Lease renewals force leasers to accept whatever terms the government chooses to impose. The government's intent to use property assessment as in municipal models is unprecedented and impractical with no logical comparison for parks and municipalities where there's some measure of accountability.

Continuing abuse of the public trust does not lend any credibility to any lease appraisal appeals process for a process that has practically no basis as a starting point. This individual goes on to say to the Minister of Conservation that the current government model is an attempt to unfairly penalize cottagers for

Conservation's cost and inefficiencies and is particularly unfair to cottagers outside of parks that are also subject to municipal taxation.

The Manitoba government's administration appears to be targeting cottagers as a new source of revenues based—because they are captive and they are entirely at the administration's mercy with respect to lease renewals. The government has again demonstrated its fiscal mismanagement. Wasting taxpayer funds purportedly well in excess of \$1 million for Deloitte consulting in Grant Thornton's audit to develop and spend this latest revenue grab in an effort to make it more palatable for public consumption.

The current parks act is one piece of legislation that requires some degree of government accountability, which is extremely refreshing in a period when more public accountability and openness is demanded. It seems the current administration seeks to avoid that openness and accountability by again circumventing that law. It is hoped that the government will see the injustice and inequity of its action and reform itself to truly represent the best interest of Manitobans. But, as he comments, he is not holding his breath. He ends his letter to the Minister of Conservation by stating that my payment is tendered with a copy of this letter to the Crown Lands and Property Agency.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all cottagers in the province of Manitoba, and on behalf of Gordon Ryback, cottagers have every reason to grieve this government's actions when it comes to cottagers who in—for some reason have decided that cottagers and cottage ownership should only belong to the elite, which for this side of the House is completely unacceptable.

Thank you for your time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Are there any further grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

*(Continued)*

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Mr. Speaker:** Seeing none, we'll move on to orders of the day, government business.

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader):** Could you resolve the House into Committee of Supply to consider the resolution respecting the Interim Supply bill.



**Mr. Speaker:** The House will now resolve into the Committee of Supply to consider the resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair?

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

#### Interim Supply

**Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We have before us for our consideration two resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

The first resolution respecting Operating Expenditures for Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$4,231,334,000, being 35 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set forth in part A, Operating Expenditure, of the Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2015.

Does the Minister of Finance have any opening comments? I thank her for that.

Does the official opposition Finance critic have any opening comments?

Seeing none, the floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** I'm just looking for a clarification of the Finance Minister, if she could indicate how long this period of time will last, how long will this funding be able to take the government?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** Thanks for the question. My understanding of the sessional order is that it is agreed that the budget bills will pass by mid-June, I believe, and so this amount of money is designed to enable the government to carry out its services and actions until that time.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Can I ask the Minister of Finance whether this Interim Supply will fund any new programs of the government, or is it just intended to fund the existing programs?

**Ms. Howard:** Thank you for that question. I'm going to seek some clarification on that. My understanding is that it is to fund existing programs, that the authority for new programming would have to come as a result of passing of the budget bills, although I have come to know in the past that sometimes things that are perceived as new programs are really the existence of older programs; those things can be funded.

So it's not entirely a hundred per cent clear cut, but the—what we're doing today is to fund continuation of programming that currently exists, and that things that are brand new would have to wait until BITSA passes.

But I will get some clarification from that because I have asked that same question myself, and the answer is not as crisp as I would like it.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Does the minister know how this percentage of appropriation compares to past years? Has it been similar in terms of the percentage of advance on the budgetary funds?

\* (14:40)

**Ms. Howard:** I do have some of that historical information, I—the question was what is this percentage similar to past years. So I do have some of that—and I'm looking for it, I did just see it. I believe it is. I think, you know, as the member knows well, this is a bit of a unique session in that we do have some certainty in terms of when the budget bills were—are going to pass, so we have more ability to be more certain in terms of the percentage.

But, if you look in past years, last year there was—special warrant was 37.3 per cent of operating. The interim appropriation act, of course, was 65 per cent. Last year might not be the best comparator. The year previous to that it was 38.5 per cent of operating. Before that it was 37.5 per cent; 2010-11, 48 per cent. So, to my glancing through, it looks like it tends to range between about 35 to 50 per cent.

**Mr. Chairperson:** No further questions?

Is the committee ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Shall the resolution pass?  
[Agreed]

The second resolution respecting capital investments for the Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$556,184,000, being 75 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part B, Capital Investment, of the Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2015.

Does the Minister of Finance have any opening comments?

Seeing none, does the official opposition Finance critic have any opening comments?

Seeing none, does the honourable member have—  
[interjection]

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Friesen:** I wonder if the Minister for Finance could just indicate how this percentage, how this advance compares to other years of expenditure. It's certainly similar circumstances.

**Ms. Howard:** Thank you. So this represents 75 per cent of the total amount. Looking through past years it has ranged in past years. I'm going to skip 2013-14 because it was an exceptional year, so I'm not going to compare it to that year. The previous year it was lower, it was 25 per cent; '11-12 it was 26 per cent; in '10-11 it was 75 per cent; in '09-10 it was 75 per cent; in '08-09 it was 34 per cent; in '07-08 it was, looks like it was 75 per cent. So there has been a range there.

I think some of that is probably due to the timing of when we want to put out tenders and get projects going. And we know that this year, in particular, we want to make sure that we are able to get a jump start on the construction season. So I would anticipate that's why it is 75 per cent this year, but certainly 75 per cent is not unprecedented, there have been at least two or three years—one, two—about two years in the past five that it's also been 75 per cent.

**Mr. Chairperson:** No further questions?

Is the committee ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The question is, shall the resolution pass? [Agreed]

That concludes the business before the committee. Committee rise.

## IN SESSION

### Committee Report

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Chairperson):** The Committee of Supply has considered and adopted two resolutions respecting Interim Supply.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight), that the report of the committee be received.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Selby), that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public

Service for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015, out of the Consolidated Fund, the sums of \$4,231,334,000, being 35 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part A, Operating Expenditure, and \$556,184,000, being 75 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part B, Capital Investment, of the Estimates, laid before the House at the present session of the Legislature.

*Motion agreed to.*

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 40—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2014

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 40, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2014; Loi de 2014 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, be now read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

*Motion agreed to.*

\* (14:50)

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill 40—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2014

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), that Bill 40, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2014; Loi de 2014 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, be now read a second time and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

*Motion presented.*

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

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** No.

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** It is my pleasure to stand this afternoon and put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 40, the interim appropriation act. And, Mr. Speaker, I know that throughout the debate on this year's budget, we have made clear as an opposition party that there is an important context to consider which I think informs the conversation and the debate that we are having this day.

The context that we must consider is that this government has—for the period of time that they have been in government, has had a record of debt and deficit, a record that has become expensive for Manitobans, increasingly. It is a record of rising

revenues to government, it is a record of mismanagement and it is a record of that at a time when the fundamentals, when the context in which they were governing, was good. The fundamentals were positive and there was every opportunity to have done better.

I know that, Mr. Speaker, you have heard members of our party in this Chamber over the past number of days talking exactly about what some of those opportunities were, and, of course, those things include—like the lowest interest rates in a generation, interest rates that have remained stable and low, and those conditions also include rising revenues accruing to the government. Even at a time when this government was talking about a period of time that they defined as a period of economic recovery, even at that time, we saw that revenues coming to government were continuing to increase and not decrease.

And I know that the minister and I had a good exchange on this in the departmental Estimates. And we discussed that context, and while it was clear that all across the globe there were pressures on government, it was this government, last year, that out of one side of the mouth was saying how very good it was in Manitoba, and yet on the—out the other side of their mouth they were trying to make an argument that would justify them going back into legislation and adjusting the period of time that they themselves had defined as a period of economic recovery, and prolong the period of time so that the government would not have to make—not have to restart its regular payments on Manitoba's debt. In essence, what they did is kick the can down the road, leave it for someone else, and that would allow them to have more flexibility to do what they want to do with Manitobans' money.

And, Mr. Speaker, this became clear because there were questions asked a year ago at the Public Accounts Committee in the consideration of the annual reports. And at that time, the deputy minister had said he would get back to members of the opposition who were asking questions about the period of time of economic recovery. Well, the deputy minister's response had come back. It clearly indicated that the period of economic recovery would end on March the 31st, 2014.

So what was clear is that this was the time that which the government was finally able to set aside all of that period of time they had defined as economic recovery and set their sights again on

doing the hard work of having to reconcile themselves to years and years of overspending and now set a course for the future to pay down Manitoba's debt and to indicate, to convey to Manitobans that they could steer the province through this course.

And what did they do in that context? Well, the minister stands up at committee and says, yes, but don't forget the fine print. Don't forget what else that we wove into the legislation and Bill 20. What they wove in—what they did to trump the deputy minister's response that he provided back to the committee, because he committed he would do so, was that they would extend, built on some rationale that they cook up, that they would extend that period of time that they called economic recovery by another couple of years to effectively kick the can down the road.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you look at Budget 2014, what you find is that when the government wants to, they paint a rosy picture as to what's going on in Manitoba.

But the fact of the matter is when they don't want to, they paint another picture, depending on whether it's boom Monday or bust Tuesday, depending who their audience is, depending on what they're trying to emphasize.

They were—they're talking about, Mr. Speaker, at the very moment last year when the government under-reported revenue and when the government spent more again than they took in, in that context, they went back and fiddled with the wording and said, oh, yes, well, we meant it was going to end but now we don't mean it's going to end anymore. And that's the kind of leadership that this province has come to see from this government.

Mr. Speaker, it was only this week that the C.D. Howe Institute came out reinforcing exactly the claims I'm making in this place, the arguments that my colleagues have put forward about this government's propensity to spend and spend and spend. What the report showed this week is that when it comes to cumulative spending overruns over a 10-year period, this province, this government is near the top. It may be one of the only comparisons where they are near the top because we get used to, time and time again, we are right at the bottom of the list when it comes to the performance and management and premier ratings. But on this report, showing senior governments who, year after year, spend more than they are—say they're going to spend, this government is near the top of that list. As a

matter of fact, they indicate that Manitoba has spent cumulatively \$3.3 billion more.

Now what is the effect of this? Is there an effect because of this? Are we any worse off? Are we any better off as a province? That is the essential question with which legislators must grapple.

So what is the effect of that? And I hear the minister chirping from her seat. Well, here's what the report says. The report says more accuracy, more accuracy, in hitting budgeted amounts would have made today's taxes and public debt lower. That is the effect of a government that overspends by \$3.3 billion. It means taxes go higher, public debt goes higher.

Is that indeed the case in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, I will ask. Yes, it is. That taxes have gone higher and debt has gone higher.

\* (15:00)

How much, you might ask. Well, let's consider that question. We know that in the last even five years of this government's mandate, they have managed to add \$10 billion to this province's debt, meaning that we are now at a place, Mr. Speaker, we are in uncharted territory here. We—this is unprecedented. The debt owing in Manitoba is exceeding \$32 billion. As a matter of fact, the budget indicates that there is an additional cost, and that is the cost of carrying that debt year after year, and I'm seeing here that the cost, just this year, has increased \$36 million from last year. But, wait, it's actually up even that amount again from the year before.

What the government would try to convey to Manitobans is that it's all good. There's no cost. There's no day of reckoning that will come.

And yet we find that it is exactly the record of this government that means that that day of reckoning is coming, both for them but also for our province. And it is Manitobans in the final analysis who pay more. Just like the C.D. Howe report indicated, if you are more accurate in hitting your budgeted amounts, it means that taxes would be lower. Well, what does that mean for Manitobans? Is it the government who, right after their 2011 election, went back into this House after having told the province they wouldn't raise taxes—and they came across the line. There's a number of my colleagues who, along with myself, who were brand new to the Legislature, colleagues on both sides of this House. We were newer to this enterprise than some of our more seasoned colleagues who

perhaps have been here a little longer than us. But, Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you and I've shared with you before, it was a shock for me to see the rate of speed at which a government would cease saying one thing and start saying another and break its word to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, this government came in, they were no sooner elected and they came in and they widened the RST, effectively shaking \$184 million loose from the pockets of hard-working Manitobans who were blindsided by the exercise. They were shell-shocked—more money they're paying on everything from haircuts and personal services to home insurance and life insurance policies.

And they, you know—and the government saw the efficacy of that exercise and, emboldened by that, they went back a year later and then they really did the coup d'etat, which was to then go back and break that fundamental promise about tax hikes and increase the PST to 8 per cent, effectively costing Manitobans more for everything they purchase. This is a—the most fundamental betrayer of the trust that Manitobans placed in them. They made the election a test of whom Manitobans could trust to not raise taxes. They betrayed that trust of Manitobans. As a result, we all pay more.

Mr. Speaker, we, of course, understand, and I know you are well aware from the debate that has taken place in this Chamber, that the costs that Manitobans incur as a result of this government's spending problem are far more than just that. Of course, we know we pay more for fuel because they raised the taxes there. We pay more for our MPI vehicle registration. We pay more for our insurance policies. We pay more in every area of the economy. And those are the costs that, day by day, Manitobans must bear.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the time that I have left to me, I have to take note of the debate today because at the same time that this government has raised taxes on Manitobans, effectively taking in about a half a billion dollars more per year out of the pockets of Manitobans, at the same time they are costing Manitobans money, where other jurisdictions are at least trying to keep up with the effect of inflation. And we had some good discussions about this kind of thing when we were in the Estimates process.

I know we had some good discussions in debate but, Mr. Speaker, today in the House we were talking about cottage owners and costs that are being assessed by—from this government to them, costs that

are in excess of a 750 per cent rate increases, and I heard the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen) and I heard the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and I heard this First Minister all talk about the principle of fairness. And they said, well, you know what, those rates have been unadjusted for a number of years now and it is only fair that now we turn our attention to those things. And they made this a test of fairness.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have to say to you that when it comes to the PST, it was completely unfair because the law prohibited this government from raising that tax without a referendum. They broke the law to bring in that increase.

But, even if we consider just the costs incurred by Manitobans, we can talk about things like the land transfer tax and, Mr. Speaker, this tax means that there's huge money that flows to government as a result of this tax. As a matter of fact, I think that even the gain, just the gain, the increase in the revenue coming to government from the land transfer tax this year is over \$11 million, and yet this government says, no, we are not willing to go in and to adjust any of the thresholds at which this tax begins to be assessed. When it comes to first-time home buyers, we're not willing to consider their plight.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to things like even the basic personal exemption, talking about taxation, this government says, we're unwilling to decrease the burden on the backs of Manitobans. We're unwilling to do more than anything but a simple petty gesture when it comes to raising the basic personal amount. We understand what the effect of that is. They understand what the effect of it is. It means those Manitobans of the most modest income are taxed sooner.

These kind of effects are in place all across the economy. They talk about fairness on one hand, but they are unwilling to decrease the burden that Manitobans incur as a result of their spending habit. Mr. Speaker, that's the context in which we operate.

It was only a few weeks ago when the Finance Minister got up and said in her third quarter financial results, you know that this result was going to demonstrate to Manitobans that they were on the way, that they were finally on the track. They were moving in the right direction and that they were narrowing the gap between revenues and expenditures, and what a betrayal to open that document to page 2 and to realize what the minister

didn't tell Manitobans. What she didn't tell Manitobans is that once again, as always, core government spending was \$31 million over her initial projection.

Mr. Speaker, all of these things mean, when it comes to this government's record, they have put themselves first. They've taken a vote tax. They've hiked taxes for Manitobans. They have put Manitobans last. The debate today reinforced that they are putting Manitobans last. While we understand that today this minister will move into Interim Supply, that she needs this bill passed in order to cause the money to keep flowing to government, the real fundamental issue, the broader context this government continues to ignore: the plight of Manitoba taxpayers; the fact that they pay more while this government continues to take in more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank my colleague for his comments and put a few words on the record.

We had this debate around Interim Supply last year in a very different session, and the then-Government House leader, the now-Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), talked about a fiscal cliff. Of course, that was a phony fiscal cliff. There was never any danger of such a thing. There was certainly going to be Interim Supply and there was going to be money to allow the good people in our civil service to be able to continue to do the work that they do. In fact, the minister of Finance a year ago was out there telling people that they wouldn't be able to fund new programs without certain provisions passed.

Today I asked her that very question again, whether or not new programs could be funded. She wasn't sure. So a year later we found out that, in fact, she really didn't know last year. She doesn't know this year, and all the banging and clattering last year, all the noise about fiscal cliff wasn't true. But, in fact, there is a real fiscal cliff that might be coming, Mr. Speaker, and I think the Minister of Finance did herself a good service for Manitoba by talking about a fiscal cliff last year because one might be coming.

I noted yesterday on social media that there was discussion about the brochure that the Minister for Jobs and the Economy (Ms. Oswald) had put out, and there was some discussion about whether or not the two young people on the brochure that she was talking about having been hired were actually in

Portugal, because in the background was a tower that apparently is a Portuguese tower, not actually in Manitoba, and she's nodding her head in the affirmative. So she had a picture on her brochure talking about the jobs in Manitoba that had two young people from Portugal.

\* (15:10)

Now I think that it is good that young people in Portugal have jobs, although I'm not sure why she wouldn't want young people in Manitoba to be featured on that brochure. But then I thought about it a little bit more, Mr. Speaker, and I did a little bit of research yesterday on the Portuguese economy, and I found out that, in fact, in Portugal they're dealing with excessive debt. They've been dealing with excessive debt. In fact, in 2011, the EU had to come in and bailout the Portuguese economy because things were going so bad. And then I understood—then I understood—why the member—the Minister for Jobs and the Economy would use a picture of two Portuguese young students on her brochure. It was kind of—it was Freudian in some ways, Mr. Speaker. She was trying to insinuate that there was something more deep—that there was a deeper sort of meaning to something. And the deeper meaning, of course, was that just as the Portuguese government has had to deal with excessive debt and ultimately hit their fiscal cliff and had to have a bailout, that in Manitoba that could happen as well; not exactly in those circumstances, but we are moving towards some type of fiscal cliff if we continue to have debt over and over, more debt and more debt. Eventually, somebody's going to have to pay for that.

Now, in some ways we're getting bailed out already by the federal government through the transfer payments that have come in, the record transfer payments, Mr. Speaker, but we wouldn't want to have something even more difficult. So who knows where we'll see the Minister for Jobs and the Economy, where she'll feature young people from around the world in difficult economies on her brochures in the future? I hope she can focus on jobs for young people here in Manitoba, though.

On this particular issue, of course, there's never been a concern about ensuring that the civil servants got the funding to ensure that they can continue to do the work that they do for Manitobans, and, for that reason, we will proceed to approve Interim Supply, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there any further debate?

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

The House will now resolve into the Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill 40, the interim appropriation act, for concurrence and third reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair.

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

### Bill 40—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2014

**Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff):** Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order.

We will now be considering Bill 40, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2014.

Does the honourable Minister of Finance have an opening statement?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** So, Bill 40, of course, is required to provide interim spending and commitment authority for the 2014-15 fiscal year, pending approval of the 2014 appropriation act.

The amount of interim spending authority included in section 2(1) of Bill 40 is \$4,231,334,000. This authority represents 35 per cent of \$12,089,526,000, which is the total amount to voted, as contained in the part A, Estimates of Operating Expenditure, in the 2014-15 Manitoba Estimates of Expenditure.

Section 2(2) of Bill 40 includes an amount of Capital Investment authority of \$556,184,000. This authority represents 75 per cent of \$741,579,000, which is the total amount to be voted as contained in the part B, Estimates of Capital Investment, in the 2014-15 Manitoba Estimates of Expenditure.

And section 2(4) of the bill simply affirms that money expended under the authority of this act must be duly accounted for in the appropriate department in the event that there is a shifting of responsibilities during the fiscal year.

Section 3: Authority of \$800,000 is being provided for the development or acquisition of inventory, primarily for the development of cottage lots in 2014-15. When these lots are sold and the title transfers to the new owner, the related expenditures and revenue will be included in the main Estimates for that fiscal year.

Section 4: Authority of \$20 million is being provided for remediation work in 2014-15, which will reduce the long-term liability previously accrued for environmental liabilities.

Section 5 provides authority of up to \$350 million to make commitments beyond the 2014-15 fiscal year to ensure the completion of projects or fulfillment of contracts initiated but not completed prior to March 31st, 2015.

And, with those remarks, I will pass on for any questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Does the official opposition Finance critic have a statement?

We shall now proceed to consider the bill clause by clause.

The title and enacting clause are postponed until all other clauses have been considered.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; clause 6—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes the business currently before us. Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

## IN SESSION

### Committee Report

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Chairperson):** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 40, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2014, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino), that the report of the committee be received.

*Motion agreed to.*

## CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

### Bill 40—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2014

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), that Bill 40, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2014; Loi de 2014 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there any debate?

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, just a few comments on the record as we look to third reading on the Interim Supply bill. And I certainly think that there's been good caution that's been put on the record during the main budget debate and continues on in the Estimates process about ensuring that this government understands that it's not just about spending money, but that it is about getting results for the money that you spend and understanding that you need to look within government for savings. That is what Manitobans would expect all of us to do, to look for those savings within government.

\* (15:20)

Because I believe that Manitobans feel that there is enough money within the current budget to ensure that services are provided and that the budget can be balanced. I think that they believe that, if you looked for waste and mismanagement, that, in fact, you could do both of those. And I would challenge the members during the week that we have ahead of us, where all of us have a chance, not only to reconnect with our families and I wish members well in that and everyone, I hope, has an opportunity to do that next week, but also to reconnect with Manitobans and to spend some time with constituents as well and to talk to Manitobans about the fact that there is an ability to find efficiencies within government and to eliminate waste and to ensure that mismanagement is corrected, Mr. Speaker, and then through that to move towards that balanced budget and not have to cut services. But that needs to be looked for; that is not what this government is about.

They made promises in the past, of course, of having to raise taxes when we don't think that that was necessary. I think that Manitobans would believe that you didn't have to raise taxes to achieve those things, that you wouldn't have to have raised the PST to achieve a balanced position. And, in fact, when you look across the country, we see very few governments that looked at the approach of this government. And yet many were able to achieve better results, not just in Saskatchewan but in other provinces as well.

And so that would be a challenge to the government to consider that and to talk to their own constituents, who, I think, would acknowledge that you didn't have to raise taxes, that you could have looked internally within government, that you didn't have to go to Manitobans and ask for those additional funds, Mr. Speaker. And that is what I

hope that members opposite will do during the week that we have in front of us during spring break.

But I also hope—and I'll say this sincerely, Mr. Speaker—that members will have the opportunity to spend some time with their families. We have this break that members of the Clerk's office and our staff here in the Legislature will also have that opportunity.

We know that last summer was a little bit of an aberration in terms of the length of the session, and many people didn't get the chance to spend time—we're not in summer yet, but they didn't get a chance to spend time with their family the way they would have liked to during the summer. Now that we're under this sessional agreement for this particular session—it does to an extent beyond that—but I would encourage members to take advantage of the opportunity they have now, because next year's a new year and you never know what's going to happen in the new year, Mr. Speaker.

But I would encourage them to take the opportunity while they have it this coming week and in the break week that will happen in May as well, to spend that time with their family and their friends—why that opportunity exists and also to reconnect with the constituents and find the priorities of those constituents and what they are looking for us as legislators to do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there any further debate?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** I do also just want to put a few words on the record and, certainly, listening to the advice of the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) about what we should be doing in the week ahead and listening to our constituents and reconnecting and hearing about their priorities, and we, of course, will do that. And I do believe that the budget that we presented, this interim appropriations act, do represent the priorities of Manitobans.

The priorities of Manitobans are to invest in job creation, to invest in infrastructure, to make sure that their children, young people in this province have the opportunity to go to school, to get the kind of skills training that will lead to good jobs, to make sure that people who are disconnected from the labour force have that opportunity; that's what this interim appropriation act sets aside money to do.

I also believe that the priorities of Manitobans are to invest in those services that they depend on every day, whether that be home care and health care, education services for families. And that's also what this budget does.

And I know, through Estimates, I had to convince my critic that there actually was a recession in 2008-2009—and I know they continue to disbelieve that, but there was. And there was a decision by this government and by many governments, including the federal government, to go into deficit to ensure that we could provide the stimulus funding that would protect jobs. And, when we took that decision, the party opposite disagreed with that decision. They put forward an amendment that would have seen us cut, in that year, half a billion dollars out of the budget, and they haven't backed away from that position. Every time they are asked to come with up alternatives, it is the same story, cut deeply into the services that Manitobans count on, because that was their approach when they underwent financial challenges in the '90s. And I don't dispute that there were financial challenges.

You know, the other day we were treated to what I found a amusing display of the Liberal member and the Conservative members trying to out argue each other for who was worse in the '90s in terms of cutting the budget. And they were both bad; they don't have to argue. I'll give it to both them. They equally—equal—they were equally bad at cutting things and visiting pain upon Manitobans in the '90s.

And, you know, the approach then, when the party opposite was facing difficult times, was to cut into things like health care, was to reduce the number of nurses and doctors in training positions, and that is something that continues to—that is something that continues today to be challenging for the health-care system, because when you don't train nurses in 1996, '97, '98, '99, you know what, they're not around today to mentor new nurses. That makes that more challenging. They're not around today to take on those leadership roles. So those decisions, while I'm sure helped their bottom line, have caused long-term challenges to Manitobans and to the health-care system.

And so, yes, we take a different approach. We take an approach to balance the budget responsibly while putting money into the services that Manitobans count on, while continuing to invest in that. Looking for efficiencies? Absolutely. The member opposite talked about efficiencies. You



know, when we came into government, there were two regional health authorities for the city of Winnipeg alone. Now, there are five in the entire province. But we took that step to amalgamate—to further amalgamate regional health authorities that resulted in savings that today are providing front-line services to Manitobans, that today are helping to provide things like free cancer-care drugs to Manitobans.

So we'll continue to look for efficiencies, absolutely. Everybody wants us to provide excellent services as efficiently as possible to Manitobans. But what we won't do is take the advice from members opposite to cut deeply into the services that Manitobans count on, to lay off people, to create a deeper and longer lasting recession. If what they want to say to Manitobans, that when times were difficult, when the recession came, they would have stuck their heads in the sand, pretend nothing is happening, not invest in stimulus programs, that approach would have cost thousands and thousands of jobs in this province. And, if that is the approach that they would have taken and that is what they want to say to Manitobans, what they would do when times were tough, let them say it, because I believe Manitobans will know who was on their side when times got tough, who made the decision, yes, to go into deficit for a period of time, yes, to have an economic recovery period. But to use that time to grow the economy, to help people get the skills training they need to be successful, to invest in infrastructure in an unprecedented way and to protect the services that Manitobans count on—that is a responsible approach. The approach that they would have taken is reckless, Mr. Speaker, and it would have put us deeper and deeper into recession, and it is not the recipe for success in Manitoba.

So this, I believe, interim appropriation act, is another good step towards a budget in Manitoba that reflects the priorities of Manitobans, that is, a budget that sets us on a path to economic growth, and that is the responsible way to balance the budget, Mr. Speaker, not deep cuts that provide perhaps a short-term better financial picture, but also sets you up for long-term pain and worse results down the line.

Thank you very much.

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

I believe that concludes the business of interim appropriation, and I think we'll take a couple of moments to prepare for the arrival of the Administrator.

\* (15:40)

### ROYAL ASSENT

**Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Ray Gislason):** His Honour the Administrator.

*His Honour, Chief Justice Chartier, Administrator of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Mr. Speaker addressed His Honour the Administrator in the following words.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly asks Your Honour to accept this bill.

**Clerk Assistant (Ms. Monique Grenier):**

Bill 40—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2014; Loi de 2014 portant affectation anticipée de crédits

**Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk):** In Her Majesty's Name, the Administrator of the Province of Manitoba thanks the Legislative Assembly and assents to this bill.

*His Honour was then pleased to retire.*

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**Mr. Speaker:** Please be seated.

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader):** Would you canvass the House to see if there's agreement to call it 5 o'clock.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on April the 7th, and hope everyone will please come back safe.



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