

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
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
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	Ind.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 11, 2014

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 37—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Connecting Schools to the Internet)**

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 37, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Connecting Schools to the Internet); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (branchement à Internet), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Allum: This bill will permit school divisions to partner to improve broadband access in schools in our rural and northern communities. School divisions will first have to look to a public partner such as a municipality, Crown corporation or other school division to help share the cost of broadband access before pursuing any partnerships with a private body.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

**Provincial Sales Tax Increase—
Reversal and Referendum Rights**

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act is a law that guarantees Manitobans the right to vote in a referendum to either approve or reject increases to the PST and other taxes.

(2) Despite the fact that the right to vote is enshrined in this legislation, the provincial government hiked the PST to 8 per cent as of July the 1st, 2013.

(3) The provincial—or the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba has asked the courts to rule on whether or not the government broke the law failing to address the referendum requirement before imposing the PST tax increase on Manitoban families.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the PST increase.

(2) To urge the provincial government to restore the right of Manitobans to vote in a referendum on increases to the PST.

And this petition is signed by M. Bond, K. Wiebe, S. Brimson and many other fine Manitobans.

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

**Beausejour District Hospital—Weekend and
Holiday Physician Availability**

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The Beausejour District Hospital is a 30-bed, acute-care facility that serves the communities of Beausejour and Brokenhead.

(2) The hospital and primary-care centre have had no doctor available on weekends and holidays for many months, jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of those in the North Eastman region of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

(3) During the 2011 election, the provincial government promised to provide every Manitoban with access to a family doctor by 2015.

(4) This promise is far from being realized, and Manitobans are witnessing many emergency rooms limiting services or closing temporarily, with the majority of these reductions taking place in rural Manitoba.

(5) According to the Health Council of Canada, only 25 per cent of doctors in Manitoba reported that their patients had access to care on evenings and weekends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to ensure that the Beausejour District Hospital and primary-care centre have a primary-care physician available on weekends and holidays to better provide area residents with this essential service.

This petition is signed by D. Michanlenka, P. Sanclemente, D. Sanclemente and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions? Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection): I'm pleased to table the third-quarter report, 2013-14, for the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none, ministerial statements. No ministerial statements, and I have no guests to introduce at the moment.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Speaker: So we'll proceed directly to oral questions.

Immigration Minister's Actions Chronology of Events

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Repeated questions directed by me to the Premier on the issue of when the Premier first became aware of the abuse of the trust of Manitobans by this government in respect of the neutral civil service remain unanswered or at best answered in a general way, and I want to ask the Premier some more questions, I guess, about dates that he may remember.

There was a big day in October of 2013, and I wonder if he remembers it. I'll give him a hint: It was an especially big day for four of his colleagues.

Can he tell me what date that was in October?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): In fact, we've seen a number of questions about the immigration program in Manitoba and the settlement services, and when the resolution was brought to the House in the spring of 2012 we thought it was a motion which would be supported broadly in this Legislature because of the tremendous value of immigration in Manitoba and how much benefit this province has received with all the newcomers that have come here over the last decade and over the generations.

But the Leader of the Opposition and his caucus, that day, they did not stand up for Manitobans. And we've seen the same thing happen again. They want to cut \$550 million out of government services. They want to lay off civil servants, teachers, nurses, police officers. That's not standing up for Manitobans.

Any question that needs to be answered is, why does he continue to pursue a policy that he pioneered in the '90s of laying off and cutting services to Manitobans?

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate the Premier rehearsing to ask questions, Mr. Speaker, but the answer was October 18th. That was a big day.

It was also a big day for the members for St. Vital, Assiniboia and Riel, who were dismissed from his Cabinet on that day, and I'm sure the Premier (Mr. Selinger) remembers the day, perhaps not as well as they do.

That being said, he knew for approximately 15 months that the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) had directed a civil servant to participate and—in the preparation of a partisan political rally. He knew that for 15 months, and yet he complimented her and said she did a stellar job 15 months later, which calls to

question his sincerity when he claims he understands the importance of a neutral civil service that is non-partisan.

*(13:40)

Now, I have to ask him: Does he seriously comprehend the importance of an impartial, non-partisan civil service in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said he didn't lay off nurses, that the WRHA did. The Leader of the Opposition says he didn't lay off teachers, that the school boards did it.

It was him that put the budget together at the Cabinet table that reduced the funding for nurses. It was him that put the budget together at the Cabinet table that reduced the funding for teachers. When will he take some responsibility for the dates that he laid off teachers and nurses?

Mr. Pallister: Again, I appreciate the Premier's questioning.

In February of this year the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) was expelled from caucus by this Premier after years of loyal service to her party and her colleagues. *[interjection]* The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) asked if I like her.

I respect the fact that she's a member of the NDP caucus and deserves the respect of her colleagues, and I don't respect the fact that she was dismissed—not dismissed when it became clear that she had misled the public, not dismissed when she—it came to the knowledge of the Premier that she had asked the civil service to help organize a partisan political rally, not dismissed—not dismissed at all—dismissed when she recalled that the Premier's staff had helped her to do so.

Does the Premier remember that day, the day in February? Does he remember the day that he moved that member out of his caucus?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite takes no responsibility for anything he's done. It's always somebody else that has done it.

Mr. Speaker, on April 22nd, 1996, the premier of the day said, let me be absolutely clear: I am not in any way dodging responsibility for the privatization decision on home care, not that I made it personally, but certainly Cabinet approved it, and I chair Cabinet.

Who was in the Cabinet? The Leader of the Opposition. He pretends he wasn't there. It was the WRHA, it was the school boards, it was everybody else but him.

We've taken responsible decisions to fund core services in Manitoba. We've taken responsible decisions to build infrastructure and create 58,000 jobs in Manitoba. He has said he will cut those projects and lay people off.

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

Mr. Pallister: Again, for the Premier who conveniently likes to forget dates, that was February the 4th.

Now, let's recap. The Premier believes in the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick). He believes in her so much he leaves her in his Cabinet for at least 15 months after he knows that she's manipulated the civil service, misled this House and him, 15 months.

Now, he knew in the spring-summer, he says, of 2012, he knew that that had happened, but he covered it up.

What day did the cover-up begin?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite goes on the radio and pretends that he had nothing to do with the cuts of teachers and civil servants in the 1990s.

As recently—and I quote from his quotes in the Sun of April 18th, 2013—that's a date he might wish to remember: The plan was based on layoffs and leaves the possibility of further job cuts to meet other targets. That was as recent as April 18th, 2013.

Will the member acknowledge that he made that statement and take responsibility for it, or will he run away again from that commitment but keep the scissors in his hands?

Mr. Pallister: The Premier makes my point. He conveniently remembers a date that serves his purposes even though he misrepresents the facts of the quote, but he cannot remember October 18th.

From the spring-summer of 2012, that Premier, right up until October 18th of 2013, from that whole time he covered up the fact that a civil servant was not at fault, his government was. He covered it up. And then in February he dismissed a member for forgetting. No, wait, he kept her when she forgot, he dismissed her for remembering.

Will the Premier verify that he kept the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) in Cabinet in spite of her bad memory but he removed her from caucus when she got her memory back?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member claims he had nothing to do with the layoff of nurses or teachers, and yet we have documentation in 1992 that there had been a drop of 1,573 nurses, as reported by the independent nursing colleges. That is documented evidence.

Will the member take responsibility for the decisions he made? Will the member take responsibility for his statements of April 18th, 2013, when he said, again, we will have layoffs and further job cuts if necessary, when he made his commitment to balance the budget with across-the-board cuts all across all the public services of Manitoba? Or is he once again running away from that responsibility but keeping the scissors firmly in his hands?

Mr. Pallister: I sincerely appreciate the references to 1992. They say the short-term memory is the first one to go, Mr. Speaker.

That being said, I want the Premier's backbenchers to take note. If they plan, if they have any plans whatsoever, on getting advanced in this Premier's Cabinet or, in fact, if they plan on staying in caucus, they need to understand something. Having a good memory is not important. Having a bad memory, that is incredibly useful. And, actually, forgetting entirely is priceless.

Now, I want to ask the Premier again, the Premier who does not understand—it is apparent to me and to everyone in this House—does not understand the vital importance of an impartial civil service that is not being manipulated by a government: When did the cover-up of the reality that this government was manipulating the civil service of our province begin? On what date?

Mr. Selinger: The member seems to think that he had nothing to do with laying off nurses in Manitoba. I'm going to table three documents that show the trend line in the number of nurses in the province. And when we came into office in 1999 there were 14,092 teachers, but when he was in office there were 15,665 nurses.

Will he acknowledge that there are 1,500 less teachers during his time in office when he says he had nothing to do—he had nothing to do, even though he was at the Cabinet table—with nurses being laid off, Mr. Speaker? Will he take responsibility for that

today? Or will he then take responsibility for his commitment in 2013, on April 18th, when he said he's going to have more layoffs and further job cuts if necessary to meet his budget targets?

Provincial Budget Government Record

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): It's this First Minister who should start taking responsibility in doing some remembering.

Mr. Speaker, just two years ago the NDP government predicted a deficit of \$176 million in this current fiscal year. Now they are massively revising their numbers. They are off by \$256 million, a quarter of a billion dollars, at a time when interest rates were stable, when government revenues were up, when federal payments were up.

What makes this NDP government think that Manitobans will believe them this time?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): I want to thank the member for the question. This—we are making progress every year towards a balanced budget. We are making progress every year to reduce the deficit responsibly.

We will not take the advice from the members opposite to go down the road that they went down in the '90s, just as months ago, not even a full year ago, the Leader of the Opposition's advice was the way to balance the budget was to chill the civil service, to administer some tough love, to cut across the board all the services that Manitobans count on. Banks think that's the wrong way. But they still cling to that wrong path that they were on in the '90s. They clung to it a few months ago. They're clinging to it today.

We're on a better path. We're on a path to a brighter future for Manitoba families.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, let's just examine for a minute the Finance Minister's claim that they are making progress every year.

Two years ago they said they were projecting a surplus for the upcoming year, and then they were—this year, how are they doing? They're massively revising their numbers again. They're off by \$380 million in terms of their projection for the 2014-15 year.

* (13:50)

So when in this budget the government says that they are on track to return to balance in 2016,

why should Manitobans have any faith in this government's ability to keep its promises?

Ms. Howard: Well, this is coming from a party that campaigned on balancing the books in 2018. A year after they said that we should balance the books in a year. Today they're saying we should've balanced them two years ago. I don't know what the story will be tomorrow.

But I do know—I do know—what the constant will remain is their faith in deep cuts as the road to prosperity even though that's failed in the past, even though that's failed in other countries around the world. It is very clear what their plan is. Their plan is to cut deeply into health care and education. In the past that led to teachers and nurses losing their jobs. That was their plan a few months ago. That is their plan today. It is the wrong plan for Manitoba.

We are on a path to balancing the budget responsibly, to protecting services for Manitobans, to growing the economy so our children can have good jobs here. That's what Budget 2014 delivers.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, only weeks ago the third-quarter financial updates show that the NDP got lucky and that huge Crown corporation profits of \$250 million came to them. So they breathed a sigh of relief. They went to the media and they said they were on track.

But the numbers tell a different story. That same financial update shows that the NDP is still \$31 million over budget for core government spending.

Mr. Speaker, why would Manitobans believe the Finance Minister's promises this time about freezing core government spending in multiple departments, and what does she think about the fact that the Free Press called this thing a piece of political fraud that taxpayers can quickly toss in the garbage can?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, as long as we're quoting media, I'd love to provide this quote from April 18th, 2013, when the Leader of the Opposition, the member opposite's seat mate, said that his plan was based on layoffs and leaves the possibility of further job cuts to meet other targets.

Now, he is going to run hard and fast away from that commitment. But that is what he believes, because that's what he did when he was at the Cabinet table in the '90s. That's what he believed when he said it a few months ago, and no matter what he says today, that's what he believes.

His claim today is kind of like Colonel Sanders waking up and telling the chickens, don't worry, I'm a vegetarian now.

Manitoba Hydro Development Plans PUB Review and Recommendations

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, it's shameful that while a hugely expensive and restricted NFAT is under way by the PUB, Hydro and government interference is plowing ahead with a plan full of holes by experts, a plan has enormous risk and cost for taxpayers while providing a bonanza of its own for the spenDP government.

The question is simple. External consultants have even Hydro officials are calling economics the plan that is risky at best.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Will he listen to the PUB reviewers and put the Hydro development plans on hold at least until the review is complete?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that our population is growing, our economy is growing. We—if we don't do anything about that, then we will run out of power within the decade.

Mr. Speaker, the—a request from members opposite to pause or to delay is simply a request to cancel these projects, which leads to their ultimate goal of privatizing Manitoba health—Hydro. That would mean that rates would go through the roof for Manitoba families. That would mean that Manitoba families would lose out on employment opportunities.

We're not going to take that kind of advice, that backward advice from members opposite.

Mr. Eichler: From a finance expert to a Hydro expert, I don't know if this minister even knows what direction he's going. Mr. Speaker, it's clear that this answer to this question is no.

Yesterday the minister signed off on a \$1.4-billion contract of construction, just the start of Keeyask, despite the fact that whether the PUB or the Clean Environment Commission approvals are in place. The hearings have turned into a sad joke. The PUB has accepted Hydro's objections to expert reports involving Bipole III, the ongoing spending and commitment of both Hydro and this government.

Mr. Speaker, according to Hydro's own numbers, hydro rates are going to increase by 75 per cent by

2033 and doesn't include the 4 per cent requested yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, will this government respect the advice of experts and put the brakes on a plan that will double Manitoba Hydro rates, yes or no?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, the member for Lakeside is absolutely wrong.

Mr. Speaker, if he wants to quote some experts, why doesn't he quote the Conference Board of Canada, the Conference Board of Canada that does believe that Manitoba Hydro is on the right path with their development plan? Len Coad, with the—he is the director of energy, environment and transportation policy with the Conference Board, said very clearly: Continuing down the path with hydro is the more economic choice. Provinces with thermal generation, like Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario, have higher wholesale prices for electric power and higher delivered prices to consumers.

If we take the advice of members opposite over that expert, Mr. Speaker, if we take the advice of members opposite, we will ensure that rates in Manitoba for Manitoba families will go through the roof and we will ensure that those jobs remain in Alberta when this province runs out of energy. We're not going to let that happen.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, 2019 to 2022, according to Hydro's own numbers, the utility plans to post losses despite repeating rate increases.

This plan is what Manitobans cannot afford. It's a plan that will double Manitoba's debt and also double Manitoba Hydro rates.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the government one more time: Will he respect the advice of experts and put the brakes on this plan, on hold until the PUB has the opportunity to do its due diligence, yes or no? This government has to be held to account. Will they listen to the PUB?

Mr. Struthers: Well, we've gone to the PUB to make sure that they look at all the alternatives that are available, and they have 15, Mr. Speaker, 15 options before them.

What the Conference Board of Canada has very clearly said is that the option that is the best option is the hydro-preferred option because that's going to keep rates down low and that's going to keep job employment numbers up high in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, you can't build a dam overnight. We have to be ready to move. We're going to have the environmental licensing and NFAT and all of the regulatory processes we will go through. But we are not going to leave Manitoba families in a position where their rates go up simply because the ideological-driven people across this hall think that it's a better idea to privatize Manitoba Hydro than invest in Manitoba families.

Manitoba Hydro Development Plans PUB Review and Recommendations

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): I need some clarification from the Premier (Mr. Selinger).

The Minister in charge of Manitoba Hydro just cited the Conference Board's favourable comments toward the proposal. But he was asked specifically, would you listen to the PUB?

Is the Premier planning on replacing the PUB with the Conference Board of Canada and making his own decision regardless of what the Public Utilities Board says in respect of the proposal before them?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, Mr. Speaker, I thought that members opposite would be interested in knowing what the Conference Board of Canada had to say about something as important as hydro rates in Manitoba. Obviously, they're not interested in that.

They're interested in their ideology, which simply says, we're going to sell Manitoba Hydro just like we did to the Manitoba Telephone System, just like we tried to do to home care in Manitoba, just like their position in the last election was to sell MPI and just like they said, the member opposite has said over and over again, that they prefer an American, two-tier system of health care.

We're going to fight you every way on that.

Mr. Pallister: Why does the government have a Public Utilities Board convened? Why do they have a needs-for-and-alternatives-to analysis, which they've already constricted in its ability to analyze this situation, if they're simply going to proceed anyway?

I'm asking the Premier again: Is his minister correct in his assertion, or does the Premier and will the Premier state today that his government will listen to the Public Utilities Board when they make their recommendations following this process?

* (14:00)

Will they listen to the Public Utilities Board, or will they ignore the Public Utilities Board and proceed with their own agenda regardless of expert testimony, an incredible expense being absorbed by the people of Manitoba in respect to this proposal? Will they listen to the Public Utilities Board?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite is making the case that we should ignore the PUB, then he should just come out and say that.

What we have said is that the Public Utilities Board—what we have said very clearly is the Public Utilities Board is there to look at a needs for and alternatives to. They are looking at 15 options. They will go through that.

Manitoba Hydro has been more than co-operative. They have provided all kinds of details on all of those options. There are a—there's a raft of consultants that have looked into each of those options.

Mr. Speaker, it's very clear, whether you're the Conference Board of Canada or Manitoba families, who stand to gain the most by this, that say to us: Don't privatize. Continue to invest in hydro. Keep those rates down low—

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

Mr. Pallister: Well, it's a high level of arrogance even for that member, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is this government has already approved over a billion dollars of investment in the Keeyask proposal, which is just a proposal that has not been approved, and that's an incredible level of arrogance.

Now, to ignore the recommendations of the Public Utilities Board, if that's what the government is planning on doing, is also reflective of a level of arrogance that is dangerous, I think, to the people.

So I'm asking again for the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to stand up and assure Manitobans that the Public Utilities Board's recommendations will be listened to by this government.

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, on the one hand this member tells us that this is a body that we should be listening to. On the other hand he tells us that it's a political partisan body that we shouldn't be listening to. The member opposite should pick a story and stick to it.

Mr. Speaker, the facts remain. Manitoba Hydro, in public hands, works for the benefit of Manitoba families. Selling power into the export market, with firm long-term sales—\$9 billion since 2010, firm sales—that is what helps us to keep rates low in this province. That is what puts people to work in Manitoba rather than putting people to work in Alberta, because you will leave us in a position where we import natural gas.

A little bit of common sense goes a long way, and that's what the—

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

Brandon School Division Elimination of Positions

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, 11 teachers lost their jobs in Brandon thanks to the new Minister of Education. Teachers across this wonderful province of ours are now fearful of their job security, and new teachers are unsure if they will find work.

Mr. Speaker, the new Minister of Education stated on January 30th of this year in the Free Press that, and I quote, school divisions should already have the financial resources to do the job in the classroom. Well, trustees in the Brandon School Division believe otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, the question is simple: Why did this new Minister of Education fire 11 teachers?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I thank the member for the question. Let me be categorical in saying that the Brandon School Division had no reason to eliminate teaching positions at their meeting last night.

Since this government was elected, we have increased funding to schools by the rate of economic growth or better every single year. This year alone, the Brandon School Division received \$2.3 million more. Over the last three years, the Brandon School Division has received from this government \$9 million in total, and since we were elected, \$44.5 million.

Mr. Speaker, Brandon is growing. The Brandon School Division is growing. The last thing you'll want to do—

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

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, as a teacher myself, I know that teachers care about today, tomorrow and the future. This new minister promised the school divisions would have enough money. He broke that promise, plain and simple.

Eleven teachers lost their jobs thanks to this NDP government. More teachers can lose their jobs before September thanks to this new Minister of Education.

How many more teachers are on the new minister's chopping block?

Mr. Allum: In fact, since we were first elected, we've done nothing but hire teachers. In the small class size initiative alone, we have hired 213 more teachers. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the Brandon School Division has hired almost a hundred teachers in the last several years.

On this side of the House, we fund public schools to the rate of economic growth. On this side of the House, we made class sizes smaller. On this side of the House, we hire teachers.

On that side of the House, they cut, cut, cut.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, with the school boards and trustees meeting this week, it's going to be interesting when they take a look at what this minister has to say.

The new minister believes that school divisions have enough money, but he also believes that firing teachers will lead to a better quality of education. He cannot have it both ways.

Eleven teachers were fired thanks to this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, how many more teachers does this new minister plan to fire?

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, as I just said, small class size initiative alone, 213 more teachers teaching in Manitoba.

But let me be clear. The difference between our side and their side is very clear. We fund schools to the rate of economic growth every year since we were elected. When the Leader of the Opposition was at the Cabinet table, they cut \$50 million from the budget, the education budget, and fired—fired—over 700 teachers.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. On this side of the House, we invest in schools. We invest in small class sizes for one-on-one time. We invest in new gyms.

We invest in new science labs. On all those counts, they voted—

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

PST Revenue Infrastructure Spending

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between action and words. Action, what you actually do, is more important than what you say you will do.

In this fiscal year the government will receive \$196 million from the increase in the provincial sales tax. The Premier said that every dollar will go toward additional core infrastructure, but the budget documents show that \$71 million of this money has been spent on other items. Tom Brodbeck and Dan Lett have today both mentioned this discrepancy. So Manitobans obviously want an answer.

Why did the Premier not spend all the \$196 million collected from the PST on additional core infrastructure this year?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, last week we tabled The Five-Year Plan to Build a Stronger Manitoba focusing on core infrastructure, and as I indicated to the member from River Heights yesterday, on page 12 it shows how the money will be spent over the next five years.

Over the next five years, it will be \$21 million in the '14-15 budget over what is required. In the year '15-16, it will be \$66 million over what is required. In '16-17, it'll be \$79 million over what's required. In '17-18, it will be \$103 million over what's required, Mr. Speaker, and in '18-19, it'll be \$151 million over what's required, for a total of \$5.5 billion, \$420 million over what the PST would generate plus what we had in the base budget.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, look, everyone is aware of the Premier's \$5.4-million re-election plan. It's here, but what I would like the Premier to focus on is the actual budget.

* (14:10)

Future commitments to make up the shortfall in infrastructure spending are not all that meaningful coming from an NDP government that has consistently underspent on infrastructure and overspent elsewhere. Manitobans are very skeptical of the Premier's future promises given that he's broken so many in the past.

I ask the Premier: Why did he not act as he said he would to spend every dollar collected from the PST on additional core infrastructure this year?

Mr. Selinger: The five-year plan is completely congruent with what's in the budget on page 16, priority area, the five-year core infrastructure program. It shows \$5.567 billion of expenditure, \$5.1 billion in the base with an additional \$420 million over the next several years. It's all laid out. We're ramping it up.

We're making major commitments. You saw one in the newspapers today on the Headingley bypass, significant commitment, one of the busiest arteries in Manitoba. It will directly connect up to CentrePort way. It will connect up to CentrePort, which connects up to Perimeter, which connects to Highway 75. It'll move goods and services in Manitoba, create 58,000 jobs and grow the economy by \$6 billion.

What's he got against the plan, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Gerrard: The Premier, just like he did in the last election, is now already talking about his re-election plan, which is I—when, as I emphasize action, what he actually does and did this year in failing to spend all the money collected from the PST on additional core infrastructure is actually much more meaningful assessment of how well he's doing. It is particularly problematic that actually delivering on his five-year re-election plan depends on his getting re-elected, something that's hardly certain.

Why did the Premier not plan properly to spend the whole \$196 million raised this year by the PST increase on additional core infrastructure this year?

Mr. Selinger: Our industry partners have made it very clear. In order to meet these targets, very ambitious targets for infrastructure, very needed infrastructure, including the \$250 million we announced last week over five years in the city of Winnipeg for filling potholes, doing residential streets, doing regional streets—we will have similar announcements in rural Manitoba.

We're doing—we did Victoria Avenue last year in Brandon, Mr. Speaker. We're working on the Daly street overpass, and we've done flood protection all throughout the Assiniboine valley, and we will continue to do that.

The announcements we're making pave streets this spring. It 'blays' down asphalt this spring. It also has a long-term vision to grow the economy

of Manitoba with infrastructure investments and generate 58,000 jobs in the province, Mr. Speaker, and \$6-billion lift in the economy.

The member opposite, I hope he votes for the budget, because then he will see the money flow as we ramp up this program to build a more prosperous Manitoba in the short run and in the long run, which is what we need, a clear vision and a plan for the future.

My Health Teams and QuickCare Clinics New Health-Care Initiatives Announcement

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): If my memory serves me correctly, when the Leader of the Opposition was around the Cabinet table, he cut medical spaces to school—at the University of Manitoba.

I was pleased to be in St. Vital this morning with community members and professionals from the health-care system, and I was particularly pleased that Dr. Duerksen came from Steinbach to join our press conference to talk about our investments in ensuring that every community member who wants to find a doctor can find one. And so it is a great day in St. Vital, it's a great day in Riel and it's a great day in Steinbach, Mr. Speaker, and a great day in Assiniboia.

So could the Minister of Health tell this House of the important investments that we are making here in St. Vital and all across Manitoba to ensure that there is better access to care for all Manitobans?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): I want to thank the member for St. Vital for her strong voice in the community.

Mr. Speaker, I was in St. Vital today, of course, to announce the fifth QuickCare clinic, one of four in development in St. Vital that will serve southeast Winnipeg, of course, our QuickCare clinics just being part of our plan to get more access to health care.

We also announced 14 My Health Teams, primary-care networks that help people get more connected and are suited to the needs of the community, the first one opening in Steinbach.

And we also announced 50 new health-care professionals to work in private doctors' offices to help interprofessional collaboration, which allow doctors to take on a thousand more patients.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about 23 new clinics right across the province: QuickCare clinics, access

clinics, another mobile clinic in rural Manitoba. We're talking about more access of health care for Manitoba families, more nurses. Because when it comes to nurses, we hire, they fire.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

STARS Helicopter Service Wheeler Report

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health admitted yesterday that someone from her department leaked the Wheeler report on STARS to the media.

Besides punting this serious breach over to the Ombudsman, can the Minister of Health tell Manitobans: What has she done about it herself internally, within her own department?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Well, and as I said yesterday, when those concerns were raised within the department, steps were immediately taken, including making sure that the Ombudsman was contacted.

Mr. Speaker, privacy is a very important part of our health-care system. Patients deserve to know that their privacy is protected. And I want to be very clear. Patient privacy, patient safety remain the top priorities for Manitoba Health.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, another priority for Manitobans is transparency by the government on a very serious issue.

The minister can't just wash her hands of this, punt it over to the Ombudsman and just not take responsibility, like she did when she blamed taxicab drivers for the death of two patients.

Mr. Speaker, she's supposed to be in charge of her department. She's supposed to show leadership. What is she doing internally to deal with this issue within her own department?

Ms. Selby: Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. We are very happy to see STARS back up in service for emergency flights. We know how important this is to Manitobans, particularly to rural Manitoba.

It's why we brought in the Clinical Oversight Panel under the leader of Dr. Postl. They're going to follow through on all the recommendations from the report and guide the resumption of the entire service.

Mr. Speaker, the STARS leadership has been very supportive of it. They said they are committed

to making any changes needed to ensure that we provide the highest quality patient care. Dr. Wheeler's report even says that STARS has taken a number of concrete actions to address concerns, moving ahead on many others.

When it comes to safety of patients, STARS is on board, medical experts on board. The only one not on board with putting patient safety first is the critic for the Conservatives.

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

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the one that's not on board is this Minister of Health, who seems to be ducking and weaving on transparency around this whole issue and her responsibility.

She indicated yesterday that when the Wheeler report was leaked, patient confidentiality was breached. We know that the fine for this can be up to \$50,000.

This Minister of Health seems to be in somewhat of a cover-up mode with the whole lack of transparency around the STARS issue.

So she is either trying to hide something or she's lost control of her department. What is it?

Ms. Selby: Well, I guess the Tories haven't noticed, but things have changed a lot in health care in Manitoba since the 1990s when they were cutting services.

Mr. Speaker, in the 1990s there was no law requiring them to report on medical errors. They didn't get investigated. Medical errors were swept under the rug.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I'm asking for the co-operation of the House. Keep the level down a little bit so I can hear both the questions and the answers.

The honourable Minister of Health, to conclude her remarks.

Ms. Selby: I'm not surprised they don't want to hear me say this, Mr. Speaker.

There was no law requiring them to report medical errors under their government. We brought in critical investigation reporting because we want to know, when something goes wrong, is there something we can learn from?

Unfortunately, in the 1990s they saw 12 babies die in the pediatric cardiac service program at Health Sciences Centre because they wouldn't face mistakes and try to fix them. Mr. Speaker, they never did apologize for what happened in that—under their care, but I can assure you, we will always, always tell people—

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, members' statements.

* (14:20)

Safer Internet Day

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, February 11th marked Safer Internet Day, a collaborative effort between several groups and stakeholders in the education industry, with the goal of creating an environment on the Internet that is open and safe for all age groups around the world.

The Internet has gone from a tool with very few users to something that is available on everyone's cellphones regardless of where they are. The ability to connect to the Internet whether you are in this building, out on Broadway or halfway across the world has brought society closer than ever. A closer society and increased usage of the Internet have brought significant challenges. Youth have wide access to the Internet, and while safety should be the No. 1 concern, it is often hard to track where our children is—are going on the Internet. The rise of social media venues like Facebook, Twitter and more, have created environments that may be unsafe, and parents, teachers and youth need to work together to solve issues that arise of that.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection is the lead organization on Safer Internet Day in Canada. Programs such as Kids in the Know, Cybertip.ca, Commit to Kids and MissingKids.ca are all vital tools that are used to try and create a safer Internet and a safer society for children.

Students in grades 7 and 8, along with their teachers, now have access to a new educational kit that allows them to learn more about issues that are arising on the Internet and how to combat them. Over 1.3 million safety material packages have been sent out to schools through this program and through

the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, putting Canadian students and educators at the forefront of the fight to keep the Internet a safe place for all.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Canadian Centre for Child Protection for all the work they do in making the Internet a safe place for kids, and I would like congratulate all the students, educators and parents for the work that they do each and every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Kathleen Rice: Canadian Mining Hall of Fame

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, mining is an essential element of northern Manitoba's history and economic livelihood. Last week I attended a Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference in Toronto, and it was clear to me how vital Manitoba's mineral industry is for the 'uccess' of our region. We have many pioneers and prospectors to thank for early discoveries of the minerals in Manitoba, and one of whom is Kathleen Rice.

Kathleen "Kate" Rice was the first female prospector in Canada. She blazed a path for herself in prospecting when it was still considered a male-only profession. In 1911, still in her 20s, Kate began exploring in northern Manitoba. She was the first prospector to discover nickel deposits in the province. Nickel deposits in our province now account for over 13 per cent of all nickel mined in Canada.

Kate's early love of mathematics and her personal interest in geology helped her master prospecting as a career. She was taught to shoot, trap and speak Cree through her friendship with the local First Nations. She lived and travelled the wilderness alone, something unheard of for women.

On January 16th, 2014, Kate Rice became the second woman inducted into the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame and was honoured for her vast experience, talent and bravery.

Thankfully, men and women today have many opportunities in the mining industry. Women are carefully growing their presence in the mining sector. HudBay, for example, has eight female professional geologists and geophysicists employed in the region in Flin Flon.

Mr. Speaker, honouring women in mining, like Kate Rice, is an important step in recognizing and validating the important role women play in the

industry. Just as her epitaph reads, she truly was an extraordinary woman of the wilds.

Thank you.

Andy Rutherford

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the life of Andy Rutherford, a constituent and friend who passed away recently at the age of 91.

Andy was born in Colborne, Ontario, on March 26th, 1922. He received his early education in a country school and attended high school in Colborne. He went on to complete teacher's college in Peterborough, then joined the air force in Toronto in 1942.

Andy was stationed at several airports during his pilot training. It was in MacDonald Airport in June 1943 where he met Anne Paul, and they were later married in '45. After his discharge at the end of the war in 1945, he and Anne stayed in Manitoba and made their home in Portage la Prairie.

Andy farmed for a few years and then took over the business of Ideal Moving and Storage, which he ran until he sold it in 1964. Andy then joined Monarch Life Insurance and worked there until his retirement in '88. Andy was a faithful member of Trinity United Church where he served many years on the board as well as teaching Sunday school.

Andy's many contributions to the community through his involvement in Children's Aid, Portage schools, the Herman Prior senior centre and the community handivan. Andy was also an active member of Portage Rotary for many years, and drove for both seniors service and Portage and district cancer care. Andy also—was also a founding member of the Portage and district foundation. Andy was a caring person and would always—was always ready to offer a helping hand to anyone in need.

In 1991, he was recognized as the Portage citizen of the year. Andy and Anne enjoyed many happy summers in the cottage at Delta Beach where he enjoyed sailing on Lake Manitoba. He and Anne enjoyed travelling and wintered in Florida and Texas for many years, and later in Victoria, BC.

Andy has contributed in many ways to his community during his lifetime, and I know he will be greatly missed.

World Consumer Rights Day

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker, on March 15, 1962, President John F. Kennedy addressed the American people, officially recognizing the issue of consumer rights for the first time in history. Since then, governments like ours continue to tackle this issue. The consumer movement now recognizes March 15th as the day to raise global awareness about consumer rights. This day is known as World Consumer Rights Day.

After speaking with many people in Tyndall Park, I know that consumer protection initiatives are key to keeping life affordable for Manitoba families. Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has made a significant commitment to consumer protection with our Let's Make a Better Deal. This five-year strategy will help make sure Manitobans are treated fairly and hold businesses accountable for unethical practices. We have introduced important legislation that supports and protects the interests of Manitoba consumers, citizens, business people, landlords and tenants. In Budget 2014, we announced new protections for consumers when they contract home repairs, buy or sell a home, or sign contracts for cable and Internet services.

Mr. Speaker, we want Manitobans to know that we are on their side in protecting their consumer rights, and we will continue to do so through the Let's Make a Better Deal five-year strategy. These initiatives are part of a Manitoba legacy we can be proud of on World Consumer Rights Day.

Thank you.

Eleanor Muir

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Learning to skate, to play hockey or to figure skate is a rite of passage for many children across Manitoba. In Russell, Eleanor Muir has taught countless children how to skate and has done so for well over 25 years.

Eleanor, who never shies away from a challenge or an opportunity to prove she just can do it, has also served as a referee for several Manitoba hockey leagues including the Manitoba AAA midget league. She's also taught referee clinics in the area and has also organized the referees for events at the Russell arena. In 2006, Eleanor was recognized by Sport Manitoba as a hockey official of the year.

Affectionately known—or, affectionately called Elea, she is known to the young and old at heart for encouraging young people to do their best, teaching

them how to take criticism and to enhance discipline within the sport of hockey. She also freely shares her warm and heartfelt hugs. Even when she is not on the ice, she will likely be found offering support to hockey teams and cheering them on.

I've known Eleanor for over three decades, as a fastball teammate and as a mom watching Cameron play hockey through his levels—or playing through his levels of hockey. I love the story of how Eleanor first approached Cameron on the ice at the face-off circle. She looked at him and said in a serious voice that he better smile and play fairly or she will tell his mother that he is not being respectful. Needless to say, Cameron was confused but he figured this lady had somehow been connected to his mother in years past. For years afterwards, Cameron enjoyed his chats at the blue line face-offs with Eleanor, and so did many of his teammates who have played in different leagues in different sports or sports arenas throughout the province, always having a funny tale to share.

A plaque with her name was recently placed over a dressing room in the Russell arena. It shares Eleanor's years of service to rink families and bears the following inscription: Having affected the life of a child, one stride at a time, I have succeeded—Eleanor Muir. It's volunteers like Eleanor that keep Manitoba—

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

That concludes members' statements.

*(14:30)

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

Mr. Speaker: Move on to orders of the day, government business and to resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation who has two minutes remaining.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that there's something remarkable happening in this province. When you look

around this province, we're seeing unprecedented growth, unprecedented growth in our economy, unprecedented growth in terms of our population.

And whether it's here in our Capital Region, right here in our capital city of Winnipeg, or whether it's in Morden or Steinbach or Winkler or Snow Lake, throughout this province there's a real sense of not only growth, but optimism. And what's driving that optimism is the fact that we, in Manitoba, have one of the most remarkable economic success stories, not only in Canada, but throughout the world. During a recent recession, Mr. Speaker, we not only didn't go into recession, we managed to come out of it ahead of other provinces and other jurisdictions. And how do we do that? By working in partnership with Manitobans, by investing in basic services like health and education and by investing in the future of this province, whether it be in terms of infrastructure or hydro development.

Mr. Speaker, I have that sense of optimism. Every member of our caucus has that sense of optimism and that was the bottom line with this budget. It was more than just a financial document; it was a statement of hope, it's a statement of determination, that we, in this province, have an opportunity to have, for the first time in generations, sustained and—economic growth with good paying jobs. And I want to stress that the way we're going to be able to accomplish that is by the kind of courage that's shown in this document, last year's budget. It means investing in infrastructure and we have a five-year, \$5.5-billion plan. And I know members opposite have difficulty with that. Their vision is to go back to the 1990s. Well, I want to put on the record that this government is driven by a forward approach. We are moving forward, not back. We don't want to go back to the 1990s. We're building hope and optimism throughout this province. That's why I'd urge every member of this House to support this progressive, forward-thinking document, a tremendous budget, a statement of hope in the future of this province.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, you know, it's always a privilege following the Minister for Infrastructure in this House, and I believe he did say that his government—that we didn't go through a recession in Manitoba over the last while when there—the global economy was going through a tough time. Well, then, that begs the question, why are we running the deficits? Why are they running the deficits in the province of Manitoba

that they are, if we didn't have and go through the tough economic times? They can't have it both ways.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) and what I believe was a very good delivery of the budget last Thursday. But, of course, I do have some concerns with the message that she delivered, but I think she did a very good job delivering it in this House. And so I want to congratulate her on that.

I also want to take this opportunity to put a few words of record—in—to put a few words on the record in support of the Leader of the Official Opposition's amendment to the budget introduced last Thursday by the Minister of Finance. But, before I do, I also want to take this opportunity to reflect on the last 15 years of this NDP government throne speeches. To me, there has been a common theme in each and every one of the throne speeches delivered over the last 15 years in this House. And I know I've only been here for 14 of those. So I know I did miss one there, but I did have a chance to go back and peruse that one, as well, and, Mr. Speaker, there is a common theme. And I'm wondering if anyone in the House would be able to guess what that common theme is in Manitoba? The theme of what this government has delivered in their Budget Address, sorry, not the Throne Speech but—*[interjection]*

The No. 1—and one of my colleagues just hit the nail on the head: broken promises. And I want to just go back and remind Manitobans and remind members opposite of what some of those broken promises are throughout the course of the last 15 years since they took government.

Does anyone remember the promise to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million? This was the very first promise that was made during the election campaign in 1999 and the very first promise broken by this NDP government when they came into office.

The premier said, and I quote, at the time, that our commitment is to end hallway medicine. We'll do whatever it takes to do it, is what he said at the time, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, members opposite were on the record at that time speaking to the budget address. They were speaking to the Throne Speech, and they promised—they made all these promises back then. And, of course, those—that promise was broken and we know that hallway medicine is alive and well in Manitoba. I've been into hospitals over the course of the last number of

years and I've seen people in hallways of those hospitals. So we know that they broke their promise to end hallway medicine, let alone in six months with \$15 million.

It's billions of dollars later, many, many years later, and the promise is—they're still breaking their promise that they made back in the 1999 election campaign, Mr. Speaker. But I remind members opposite, not only did they break their promise there, they went beyond just the hallway medicine. Hallway medicine then became highway medicine, and highway medicine, in fact, is still alive and well in Manitoba. And it's unfortunate, especially for those living in our rural communities who rely on the hospitals in those communities to deliver the services that they need, want and deserve in those communities.

But members opposite, members of this NDP government have shut those hospitals down and they've taken away the services to those people in rural Manitoba. And I know we were up in Swan River a few weeks ago, and we were speaking with many people, many folks—the great folks up in that area, Mr. Speaker, and one of the common themes, one of the concerns that they had was the fact that women who are pregnant are forced to go to Yorkton, Saskatchewan, to have their babies. It's not safe for them to deliver in their own home community. They are forced to go, not only to another community in Manitoba, but they are forced to go to another province to get the kind of services that they need, want and deserve in their own communities, and that was of grave concern to us.

And we know, and members on my side of the House had asked questions in question period concerning this—I believe it was the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat), in fact, who asked questions about a constituent up in that area who was forced to have her baby in a car on the way to Yorkton, Saskatchewan. Now, that is dangerous. It's dangerous medicine in Manitoba under this NDP government.

And so, again, a broken promise, but we went—they went even further than that, Mr. Speaker. They went further than trying to end hallway medicine. They went to highway medicine. Both of those still exist in the province of Manitoba, but now we're going on to taxicab medicine, and that's been the latest egregious approach to delivery of health-care services in this province. Now we have a government that is trying to blame taxicab drivers for not looking

after the patients that should be looked after in our health-care services, in our health-care system in this province. It is unfortunate that that is what is happening in Manitoba. It is of grave concern, certainly in these circumstances to people in the Winnipeg—in Winnipeg who rely on these services in the Grace hospital, in other hospitals in the city that are doing perhaps similar things. And so these are things—these are policies of this NDP government, and I think it's incredibly unfortunate that this is the approach that the NDP government wants to take.

So another broken promise, Mr. Speaker, over the years—of course it was the promise to keep the balanced budget legislation. Does anyone remember that? Does anyone remember that? Does anyone across the way remember that? Do you remember the promises that you made back in the various election campaigns that you would not—or that you would keep the balanced budget legislation? Well, they proceeded not only to change, they opened up, actually, the act—I think it was either six, seven or eight times since it was introduced and since they came into office, and each time they eroded the very nature and the—what that legislation was to do to protect people in Manitoba, to protect taxpayers in Manitoba from the tax-and-spend ways of this NDP government. But the NDP, no; they ran on it. As a matter of fact, they ran on it in 1999. It was another 1999 election campaign promise that they made, and they made it again later on.

* (14:40)

But, of course, what they did is they broke that promise to Manitobans. But not only did they break it once, they broke it six, seven or eight times each time they opened up that act and eroded the very nature of what that act was intended to do, which is to protect the Manitobans. So, again, another broken promise by this NDP government.

The list goes on of broken promises, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to just highlight a couple of more promises. There was a promise to make our communities safer. Yes, there was a promise back in 1999 to make our communities safer. There was a promise in the 2003 election to make our communities safer. In fact, there was an election promise in 2007 and 2011 to make our communities safer in Manitoba. Well, if they actually didn't break their promise, if they kept their promise after the 1999 election campaign to keep our communities safe then, they wouldn't have to re-announce it every election up until now. But, of course, the NDP, after

each and every election campaign, because they felt it's the right thing to do, we've got to say that we're going to keep our communities safe because that's what we have to do. We've, you know, we've got to get the votes from people, so we better just say something about justice in Manitoba, that we're going to keep our streets safe.

Well, unfortunately, they have broken that promise, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Winnipeg remains the murder and violent crime capital of Canada. Gangs are running rampant on the streets in Winnipeg and in other communities in Manitoba. We know that. We know that gangs are out recruiting in our schools. It's dangerous what's happening out there, and it's happening under the watch of this NDP government that promised, not once, not twice, not three times, but four times to make our communities safer, and they never followed through on that promise to Manitobans.

Another broken promise, of course, was that they—was that there would be no forced school division amalgamations. Does anyone remember that one? Back in the time, yes, no forced school division amalgamations. In fact, it's—the premier at the time said, and I quote: There will be no forced amalgamations, that is not the Manitoba way. That's what the premier said at the time, that the forcing of amalgamations in our communities is not the Manitoba way, and that's what the premier said at the time.

Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, we know that it was, in fact, I believe the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) at the time who was a minister at the time that forced the school divisions to amalgamate, and it was such a boondoggle at the time. He said, oh, we're going to save \$10 million to the taxpayer in Manitoba. Well, did they save \$10 million?

An Honourable Member: No, they did not. It cost \$10 million.

Mrs. Stefanson: No. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it cost the taxpayers of Manitoba \$10 million, a \$20-million difference for those members opposite, with their NDP math. But it was such a boondoggle that the minister, the member for Brandon East, was removed from Cabinet, and so then the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) took over at the time as the Minister of Education. So we went through Estimates at the time and we asked him, you know, questions on school board amalgamation, how is this really going to save \$10 million for people in the community? Well, of course, he couldn't answer

those questions or he stuck to his lines given to him by his 192 communicators. He stuck to his lines that, oh, it will save millions of dollars to taxpayers in Manitoba. Well, we know for a fact that it didn't. It cost them \$10 million.

But, Mr. Speaker, as if the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) didn't learn from the first time on forced amalgamation in this province, he decided that he would go about doing it again. But only this time they're going to attack municipalities in this province. So now—and now they say, oh, no, no, but it's going to save the taxpayers of Manitoba by amalgamating these municipalities. Well, you know, the premier—the former premier said, of course, at the time, that it's not the Manitoba way, to force amalgamations.

But we know that the Premier himself, the existing Premier (Mr. Selinger), okay, this Premier, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), Mr. Speaker, said, and I quote, past behaviour is indicative of future behaviour. So in other words, when they said that it was going to save \$10 million last time and it didn't happen, it should be indicative of whatever they think it's going to save on municipalities. It should be indicative of the fact that to tell members opposite there aren't going to be any savings there for municipalities and they are causing hardship for all people in those municipalities who they are forcing to amalgamate, and I think it's extremely unfortunate.

And I would have hoped that the member for Dawson Trail would have learned from the first amalgamation boondoggle in this province, but, unfortunately, he didn't, and now he's out of that portfolio and we have the former minister of Finance now, I believe. It's the former minister of Finance now who is responsible for amalgamations in this province, and he'll have to carry the torch and he'll have to deliver on that promise, and we will be waiting for him to deliver on that promise, I guess, in this province, Mr. Speaker, to show us what the savings are in this province.

But I think the granddaddy, if you will, of all broken promises that we've seen since this NDP government came into power was the promise made by this Premier, the member for St. Boniface, who promised before the last election that he would not raise taxes. And, Mr. Speaker, he said, it's nonsense. When we tried to challenge him on that he said it's nonsense. That it's ridiculous, I believe, was one of the words he used. He said that absolutely in no way

would the NDP raise their taxes. Well, what did he do and what did his government do? The first budget that they came into office, they expanded. They raised the taxes by expanding those that the PST would cover, those goods and services, and it hurt many Manitobans including those on fixed incomes, seniors in our province, including low-income Manitobans. It hit everybody in our households with insurance products, haircuts. There are all sorts of things that this—that affected Manitobans in a negative way because of the broken promise of this NDP Premier.

But it wasn't just the Premier that made that promise, Mr. Speaker, it was each and every individual that ran for the NDP in the last election that made that promise on the doorsteps. The member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) was there. She was knocking on doors in her community. She was making the promise at those doors that she would not raise taxes after the next election.

Well, not only did they expand the taxes, Mr. Speaker, but then, of course, they came in with a whopper of all broken promises, and that was the PST increase, the 14 per cent increase in the PST that they came up with last year. And, of course, each and every member opposite who ran on that in the last election broke their promise to each and every Manitoban who was looking up to them to make sure that they did the right thing in Manitoba. Well, we know they didn't do the right thing and they broke their promise to Manitobans.

But, as if that wasn't bad enough, Mr. Speaker, not only did they break their promise to Manitobans, but then they stripped them of their rights that they had under the watered-down balance—even the watered-down balanced budget legislation that still existed at that time. They opened it up and changed it again to strip away the rights of Manitobans to have a right to vote on that tax increase, because that was what the balanced budget legislation said at the time. But, of course, members opposite didn't care about that; they went through with it and they rammed it down the throats of Manitobans anyway.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's—I could seriously go on for days in this Legislature about all the promises broken by this NDP government in their last 15 years. But I want to say a few words in favour of the amendments to the budget put forward by our leader. He has 10 great reasons why this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans, and I want to touch on some of them.

Of course, No. 1, the budget fails to repeal the massive tax and fee increases imposed in Budget 2012 and Budget 2013, including the PST hike the government previously referred to as, quote, unquote, ridiculous, and promise never to impose. And that, of course, was the first one, and I've spoken on that. Of course, Manitobans are extremely upset about this. If members opposite had been listening, then they would have done the right thing and reversed their decision there, but, of course, they did not in this budget and we see that as a neglect on the priorities of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:50)

Secondly, they have been disrespectful of Manitobans by refusing to hold the legally required referendum before increasing the PST and going to court in 2014 to permanently remove the rights of Manitobans to vote on major tax increases. And this goes back to what I was just speaking about earlier, in the broken promises across the board by this NDP government. And, you know, this—I think this was the thing that really hit Manitobans the hardest because they—it's unbecoming of a government to come in and strip away the rights of people in the community that they—in the communities that they represent. It's unheard of, but, of course, the NDP, they don't really care about that. They'll strip away the rights of anybody if it suits their own political agenda, and we've seen that kind of behaviour from this NDP government. We've seen it and we know, as the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has said himself and in his quote, that past behaviour is indicative of future behaviour, we know that their past behaviour is to strip away the rights of Manitobans. We know that their past behaviour is to hike the taxes of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, and so we know what they're capable of, and we know—and perhaps it is—and this is the big question: Is it their hidden agenda to, in fact, raise the PST even further?

And I ask that question because members opposite like to hide behind the infrastructure development as a reason why they've raised the PST, but we know that they've cut. Again, past behaviour is indicative of future behaviour. They've underspent the budget on infrastructure the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, and now they expect Manitobans to believe that they're going to spend this money on infrastructure, that they're going to spend the PST money on infrastructure. So they've said that they've raised the PST to spend on infrastructure which they—says is going to grow our economy and create all these jobs. So, if the PST grows our—the increase

in the PST grows our economy and creates jobs in Manitoba, then what's going to stop them from raising the PST again? And that's what Manitobans have to be concerned about and have to be fearful of, of this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government also broke their promises to eliminate the structural deficit of nearly \$400 million created by years of government mismanagement and overspending, despite record federal transfers, historically low interest rates and record government revenues.

And we know, again, the Minister of Infrastructure just stood up and said that Manitoba never went through the rough economic times here in Manitoba. We never went through the recession here in Manitoba that was realized in other countries in the global economy, Mr. Speaker. We never realized that here.

So, if we didn't have the losses here, then why is this government continuing to run the kind of deficits they're running? Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker. It's because they can't get their spending under control, and that is the biggest problem. They're irresponsible with taxpayer dollars in this province.

So, the fourth area, Mr. Speaker, that the budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans, as brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition—I want to thank him again for his great speech the other day and for bringing forward this amendment, because I think it accurately reflects what Manitobans are saying. But members opposite don't like to listen to Manitobans, and so they refuse to listen to this today as well. Now, the budget fails to address the growing threat to services Manitobans count on, such as health and social supports, which are severely impacted by the more than \$32-billion provincial debt, a debt which was created by overspending, even with record federal transfers, historically low interest rates and record government revenues.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, if the government had not eroded and gut the balanced budget legislation that existed to them in 1999, that, by the way, they promised to keep and they never did. But, if they had kept with that existing balanced budget legislation, there was a provision in there to pay off—pay down the debt over 30 years. Well, we're more than halfway through right now. In fact, if we were to look at the government books, we should be looking in here—we should be looking in these government—the government budget papers, and in the area where it says government debt, we should see it, in fact,

half of what it was, because we're halfway through that—those 30 years. In fact, we're a little bit more, because the original balanced budget legislation was introduced in 1995, I believe. So we should be more than halfway there. But are we? No, as a matter of fact, since the NDP government came into office they have doubled the debt. They've gone in the wrong direction, and so that is what Manitobans should be concerned about and those are the facts that Manitobans are faced with.

Manitoba—or these—the government also neglected and broke their promise to seniors by failing to provide the promised tax relief that they made to them in the last election. They have neglect—*[interjection]*

Oh, stay tuned, the member opposite says. Well, how long do we have to stay tuned? How long? My goodness, it's been 15 years. Should we be staying tuned to when they're going to end hallway medicine? Should we be staying tuned to when they're going to bring back the balanced budget legislation? Stay tuned is what they say. Manitobans don't have time to stay tuned to this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, they have neglected vulnerable Manitobans by ignoring repeated calls from the official opposition and antipoverty coalitions to immediately raise the Employment and Income Assistance rental allowance rates to 75 per cent of the median market rents. And I will remind members opposite who like to say, oh, you did nothing on this in the 1990s—they've been in power for 15 years and they've done nothing. This hasn't even been looked at in 20 years; 15 of those were when this government was in power, and they've done nothing and they still do nothing. And members opposite say, stay tuned. Well, I guess we'll continue to stay tuned and we'll see if anything happens before the next election. We'll see if they'll keep any of their promises.

Mr. Speaker, they've also failed to relieve the income tax burden for low-income families. And they've ignored repeated calls from the official opposition and independent experts to review the government's \$25-billion Manitoba Hydro expansion gamble, which has already resulted in dramatic hydro rate increases for Manitoba families and will continue to impose dramatic hydro rate increases for generations to come. And I will say that I think it's unfortunate that this government is gambling with the future of generations to come in our province, and that's exactly what they're doing by trying to

rush through these hydro projects in Manitoba, not listening to the PUB, not listening to anybody around but their own political agenda. And that is extremely unfortunate because it will be left to our children and our grandchildren and their children in years to come to pay for this, the mess of this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, the second last great point brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition, this government has failed to encourage business confidence by stifling economic growth through excessive red tape and worsening the already uncompetitive tax environment by raising the PST. And I know that we've—I've met with many businesses across this province, so have my colleagues, and just since I took over with the Jobs and the Economy portfolio I've heard—one of the most important things that I've heard from business community leaders is the problem that they have with the red—with red tape in this province, the regulatory regime of this government. And that needs to change, and so I will be introducing legislation in this House where I believe is the right direction to go in dealing with red tape in this province.

And lastly, but not least, Mr. Speaker, they're continuing the government's isolationist trade policies by failing to act on the repeated calls of the official opposition, leading employers and industry groups to join the New West Partnership. And I think that it's unfortunate that members opposite—but I'll encourage members opposite, it's not too late. They—we will continue the debate on this budget amendment brought forward by our leader, the official Leader of the Opposition, and I will encourage members opposite to take a look at these amendments, because it's not too late for them to stand up in this House for their own constituents, to stand up for their neighbours and their friends, to stand up what's in the best interest of our province and to stand with us in these amendments brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister). And I encourage all members to stand in support of this in the House.

Thank you.

* (15:00)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): It's my great pleasure to stand in support of the budget. There are so many good things in this budget, so little time to speak about them, but I shall be brief.

I want to thank my colleagues for their rapt attention and I want to thank the member opposite for putting some words on the record, and acknowledge to her that I think that it was very classy of her to make note of the splendid delivery of the budget made by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard). Of course, we're going to quibble about its content, but not everybody—yes, the delivery, not everybody takes a moment to do that, and so I commend her for that.

Certainly, it is a great privilege to stand in the House, Mr. Speaker, to speak on the subject of this budget because, of course, not everyone has the opportunity to do that, and so I would like to express my gratitude to the constituents of Seine River for once again affording me this opportunity to speak about a budget that I believe is about them and is about what is important to them.

Certainly, in preparing this budget lots of listening went on, Mr. Speaker. I know I listened to very sage advice from my constituents in Seine River. I know my colleagues have done the same. Certainly, I had the great privilege of being involved in the infrastructure round-table consultation, which was very instructive. We learned from industry leaders, from elected officials, from community leaders alike that were very focused in their advice concerning developing an infrastructure plan that was about building core infrastructure and about increasing opportunities for our economy to thrive and grow.

It was about listening to visionaries among us, Mr. Speaker, those engaged in social enterprise. I had the great privilege of meeting with many individuals who've dedicated their lives to standing up for those living on the margins of society and those that are very actively engaged in ensuring those people that haven't always had a very smooth path, caused by circumstances of their own making in some cases, and, indeed, by circumstances that are not of their own making. And they had very sage advice to give about how this budget should be put together.

Indeed, I had the privilege of speaking with many advocates for those living in poverty, and, indeed, speaking with those with lived experience, Mr. Speaker. And their good advice was critical to developing this budget that not only has a vision for building our economy, but has a vision for bringing those individuals that have been disadvantaged when it comes to participation in our economy and in the

workforce, bringing them into the workforce with supports and with resources to enable them to pursue their dreams, and to have hope and to provide for their families.

Putting together a budget requires a lot of elbow grease, Mr. Speaker, coming to work every day, focusing your time and your energy in putting together a plan based on that advice that will work for Manitobans. And so, after doing this listening and after engaging in this work and bringing forward a budget, certainly, our Minister of Finance has done an exemplary job in doing so.

Bringing forward this budget, one would expect, I think, that the opposition, at minimum the leader thereof, might have, you know, aside from partisan politics, have the odd thoughtful thing to say, Mr. Speaker. And I have to say I was shocked when I listened to the speech. It was bereft of any commentary on specifics on the budget. I couldn't—it was a stream of consciousness grounded in—I don't honestly know what. It was about himself, which, you know, it was educational. I just didn't feel that was the time. I thought perhaps there could be some sort of meat on those bones to discuss the budget. Certainly, there were a list of amendments, prepared by staff, I presume, brought forward, but what I had to conclude based on the evidence was that the Leader of the Opposition actually doesn't know what the budget is about. And so I consider it a great privilege to be able to stand here and let him know.

So Budget 2014, very clearly, is all about creating more opportunities for our young people to build their futures here, and this goes all the way from building even better schools with smaller classes to funding universities and colleges, to providing more apprenticeships and training. It's a budget that's about building infrastructure to grow our economy, to create good jobs and put Manitoba on an even stronger, more competitive footing for the future. And, Mr. Speaker, I would let him know that this is a budget that's about making Manitoba an even better place for families, investing in front-line health care, not cutting; investing, continuing to invest in education and family services that all of our Manitobans count on.

Some of the most in demand, good paying jobs here in Manitoba are in the skilled trades, Mr. Speaker. We all know that, and we are working together in partnership with businesses to help them take on even more apprentices by what you can see clearly in this budget—creating a new bonus for

employers who take on apprentices for the very first time, rewarding employers that take on apprentices with an approved \$5,000 tax credit that will be even easier to access, to offer a new \$1,000 bursary to help apprentices themselves finish their final year of training. All of these initiatives right there in the budget, you know, seem to miss the attention of the Leader of the Opposition, and so I want to be able to take this opportunity to let him know.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that we want our kids to leave high school. I know I want my son, when he gets there, to leave high school with a really good sense of where he wants to go and how he can get there. And we want to ensure that our young Manitobans find their way into the job market, and we're going to work with our high schools and with our educational institutions to assist them in doing just that. This budget makes investments so that our students can understand all of their career options, so many of them right here in Manitoba that are so exciting, and we want them to be able to know how to get into the field that they choose.

We want them to know that they can get a jump-start on that career, Mr. Speaker, by earning more college or university credits while they're still in high school and, indeed, that they can complete a full year of apprenticeship training while they're still in high school. We want them to get the best possible bang for their buck and for their time. It doesn't matter if our young people decide they want to be a carpenter or a teacher, an engineer, a doctor, a nurse. It all starts—we hear it over and over again—with good schools. That's the key, and this budget hires 50 more teachers to assist in reducing class sizes, give students more of that one-on-one attention that they so deserve. It invests a million dollars to make sure that they have fundamental reading, writing and math skills. For those that may not have those, there's going to be an extra investment to help those students.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's also worthwhile to note that this budget bucks the trend across the nation where we see other provinces making the decision to cut their post-secondary institutions, to cut their colleges, their universities. We're increasing operating grants by 2.5 per cent for universities and 2 per cent for colleges, and it's worth noting that this is in stark contrast to what we saw happen the last time that the PCs had their hands on the wheel. And, indeed, the last time that this Leader of the Opposition sat at the Cabinet table, they cut or froze education budgets every single year that the current

Leader of the Opposition was at the Cabinet table: 1994, minus 2; 1995, minus 2.6; '96, zero—a banner year in their view; '97, minus 2, and I could go on. Colleges and universities during that same time, that no-growth '90s lack of vision, not caring about student time under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition. Colleges and universities, because of those cuts, tuition went up some 132 per cent. That's hard on a family, not to mention that the enrolment dropped by 8 per cent, which really is what happens when you jack up tuition by over a hundred per cent.

* (15:10)

This budget, Mr. Speaker, of course, launches a \$5.5-billion infrastructure investment to create thousands of good jobs, north of 58,000 of good jobs as validated by the Conference Board of Canada. It's going to keep our economy growing and ensure that these—our young people can build a future here in Manitoba. The infrastructure plan invests significantly more than the revenue raised by the 1 cent on the dollar, I would hasten to add, over and above the previous investment level. And, again, the Conference Board of Canada confirms that by building this core infrastructure in this plan we're going to see north of 58,000 good jobs and our economy will have a boost of over \$6 billion.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I hear nary a whisper mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition on the subject of a boost to our economy and good jobs, I have to wonder, was he listening? That would be my question. I'm not sure that he was; all evidence is to the contrary.

Now, we know also, Mr. Speaker, that Budget 2014 makes Manitoba an even better place for families by doing things like implementing better consumer protections on things like home renovations, for misleading cable, cell and Internet promotions. We know that this budget begins phasing out the education property tax for seniors and we also know that it completes our commitment to increase the basic personal tax exemption by a thousand dollars to benefit every taxpayer, but also to benefit families.

We know that investing an additional \$5.5 million into child care to create more spaces, Mr. Speaker, to upgrade and expand child-care centres and to improve training and jobs for child-care professionals, this is going to be really important for families, and I would say, in particular, this is going to be really important for women. This is not a small point. Making it easier to get a family

doctor by opening more QuickCare clinics, as the construction of one was announced today in St. Vital. We'll see this in Seven Oaks and a new access centre at the Grace Hospital. Again, these particular announcements, while they'll help all Manitobans, we know that these are the kinds of investments that will be particularly important to women, to women like me, women who are raising a family that need to have that daycare available so they can participate in the economy in the ways that they choose, ensuring that there's access to good health care so that we can care for our loved ones and our parents at the same time that we're managing daycare, at the same time that we're working. These are investments that are going to be particularly important for women.

And, again, as I was reflecting on the fact that the Leader of the Opposition had absolutely nothing of substance to say, I started to focus a little bit on this point. There are so many things in this budget that are going to have a very positive influence in the lives of women. I was taking some time to reflect on where the opposition stands on the issue of women and, you know, I remember, Mr. Speaker, that it was the Leader of the Opposition and the PCs that actually cut \$150 a month from social assistance, making life harder for families. It was this same individual and this party, the PCs, that clawed back the National Child Benefit taking millions away from low-income families. They cut funding for child-care centres when they had their hands on the wheel, \$4.3 million the first year that the Leader of the Opposition was in Cabinet last time, and massively increased fees for parents. They froze or cut education spending five times and, in fact, we heard over and over again they laid off 700 teachers.

Mr. Speaker, on that same theme, I would suggest that it's the Leader of the Opposition who has in the past tried to privatize home care, now advocates for two-tier, American-style health care. This will hurt all families, but, once again, I would say that it's going to disproportionately hurt women. The opposition leader, I learned in doing some of my research as I was searching for reasons why he would ignore the content of this budget—and I learned that the Leader of the Opposition was a government MP when they closed 12 Status of Women offices around the country, including the one in Winnipeg.

Interestingly, at that time they also eliminated the word equality from the department's mandate. Now, what's in a word, Mr. Speaker? That's probably what the members opposite would ask. I

would say that it is more than curious strange when you make a deliberate decision to not have the word equality listed in the title of your department. We know that the opposition leader has opposed same-sex marriage—a very antiquated view. He has opposed equal rights for gay and lesbian Manitobans, and he referred to this as a social experiment, which is not only hurtful but it is indeed not relevant to the Manitoba that I know, not relevant to the Manitobans that I know. And the Leader of the Opposition has opposed a woman's right to choose. So, again, when I look at how many of the things in this budget will be so important to the lives of women in our province and I juxtapose that with the fact that the Leader of the Opposition had nothing to say about what was in the budget and when I put that on top of the history of the Leader of the Opposition as an individual and the PC caucus in general, it starts to become extremely concerning about the kinds of things that they might consider doing should they ever get their hands on the wheel.

So I just think that Manitobans should take the time to reflect on that, because it is of great concern. So, Mr. Speaker, it becomes clear that we need to let Manitobans know what Budget 2014 is all about, because we can be certain at this juncture that the opposition, the leader and their members, don't have a whole lot to say on this subject.

Since I've become Minister of Jobs and the Economy, Mr. Speaker, which has been a really exciting opportunity, a very huge learning curve—I will concede that point at that outset—I've had a great opportunity to travel around to industry and business and learn a whole lot from those people that have dedicated their lives to driving the economy and building the economy here in Manitoba. When I travelled to visit Magellan, I went through the business with Mr. Boitson, Don Boitson, who, of course, was extremely excited about the investments that have made over time in training. And it was thrilling to see the classroom right at the site where students from Red River can go and can train on state-of-the-art equipment, can learn at the elbows and shoulder-to-shoulder with engineers and professionals that are working in the aerospace industry. And it was a brilliant example of how we can do training in partnership with industry that will excite our young Manitobans and have them put down their roots here.

It was very similar when I toured Boeing with Mr. Jensen, where we've invested over \$3 million over 10 years in training. And in partnership with

the industry we're seeing an expansion there, 150,000 square feet, 669 individuals to be trained, 100 net new—109 net new, and it's because we're working in partnership with industry. Mr. Jensen took me to the moonshine shop, which I will tell you was not I expected, and it was at that time that he showed a part of their factory floor where all the best engineers and all the young workers, the best and the brightest, would gather together to solve problems on the ground. If there was a tool that they needed for a very particular kind of activity that just hadn't been invented yet, at the moonshine shop they get together and they invent that tool. And it's ingenuity and engineering that's being copied across North America, and it's happening right here in Winnipeg, right here at Boeing. And, again, while I found the title of the shop to be misleading and perhaps unfair, I did find that the—what was going on in that shop was absolutely inspired.

*(15:20)

When I went to Motor Coach Industries and toured around with Mr. Couch and also at New Flyer with Mr. Soubry, I saw in action the partnership that the business and the front-line workers had in place to develop lean management and to ensure that the workers were invested in the transformative change and to ensure that that true partnership helped the business become more efficient, more competitive and state of the art. And it was absolutely exciting: 900 people working at Motor Coach and 1,100 at New Flyer going to work every single day and investing in driving the economy of Manitoba. It was thrilling.

When I went to visit the Canadian Tire data centre, Mr. Roman, the chief technology officer—took me inside their giant computer. It was a bit daunting—I'm not going to lie. I've never stood inside a giant computer before. But he, of course, is very interested in transforming retail as we know it in North America and, indeed, the world. And it's going to be all about data and be all about how there is interactive digital opportunities. And they're creating here, in partnership with the government of Manitoba, their cloud centre. And their recruitment efforts to have young, brilliant, computer-oriented, imaginative, innovative—some people would call them geeks, I think they're fantastic—that are coming to work for Canadian Tire in their environment they shall entitle the nucleus to ensure that they are transforming what it is that it means to be a Manitoban and a Winnipegger, in terms of the whole interactive digital ecosystem, it was thrilling.

And Mr. Roman said absolutely loud and clear, and I'll quote him, actually, because I hear guffaws from members opposite: Winnipeg's a special place. It has many benefits that we saw. We looked across Canada, we did a national search, and our conclusion was Winnipeg is the place to be. And he said that it had to do with our skilled workforce, the fact that our industry is so well connected to post-secondary institutions. He, of course, made mention of our low-cost green energy. He made mention of our flood protection, Mr. Speaker, and that the data processing investment tax credit was a huge influence on their decision to bring their industry and their nucleus here.

And, Mr. Speaker, I don't mind saying, though, because it is imprudent for me to pick favourites in terms of industries that I've visited, but, without a doubt, going to visit the young people that are engaged in interactive digital media was life changing. Certainly, when I was getting ready for work that day and I told my son that I was going to visit industries in Manitoba where they make computer games, he started packing his lunch kit and figured he'd just come to work with me that day, because that's what he wants to do. I—you know, he didn't mention Shakespeare or anything like that, I'm sad to say, but he was all aflutter about the idea that a business like Complex Games, the CEO of which is Noah Decter-Jackson, you know, making these award-winning mobile gaming apps, this was something that was thrilling. Mommy, how do I make the path so that I can do that for a living?

And we know that Complex Games came out of The Eureka Project, a really important business incubator here in Manitoba. They started off with two employees; they've got 40 employees today that are excited about coming to work every day and doing things with their computers in terms of the artistry and the complexity—well, I guess it's in a name—the Complex Games—that they're creating. It's breathtaking to see. They are anticipated to be up to 80 employees within the next two years. They're doing contracts with Nickelodeon, Disney, Hasbro, and it's thrilling to see.

Later that day, I met with Meghan Athavale from PO-MO—promising, up and coming, brilliant—working on her immersive, audience-controlled digital media environment, which is a really complicated way to say they've got cool stuff they project onto the floor. You can play soccer or do all kinds of things on a field with a ball and nets with no actual field being there. It's all projected. They've

invented the first interactive projector, Lumo, that will go worldwide, Mr. Speaker, and that's happening right here in Manitoba. And all of them have said, including Tactica, another brilliant Manitoba company that's got contracts with Rogers and Oprah, building apps and games for them. They've all said that the Manitoba Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit has been an enormous factor in growing their business and keeping their business here.

So, Mr. Speaker, I absolutely have so much more to learn, but what I have learned from the industry and the business that I've met with to date doesn't bear any resemblance whatsoever to the doom and the gloom and the negativity that I hear from members opposite every single day.

The No. 1 thing that these businesses talk to me about is investing in more skilled workers. That's what they want, more skilled workers, and they applaud the investments that we're making in bringing more skilled workers to the workforce, which, Mr. Speaker, is the centrepiece of this budget, which the Leader of the Opposition didn't mention. Quelle surprise.

So what I want to say to Manitobans because I'm reasonably sure I cannot count on the Leader of the Opposition to do that—I can't count members of the opposition to do that in the fog of negativity that seems to waft from across there every single day. But when I talk to businesses in Manitoba, I'm talking to them about their expansion. I'm talking to them about the growth in their business and their industry. I'm talking to them about more jobs coming to the fore, not less. I'm talking to them about how to work together and ensure that we have incentives like the digital media interactive tax credit, like the commercialization for business and like our new innovation strategy, also in the budget—not mentioned by the members opposite—the ways that we can work together to grow and build our industry, to nurture these young people that are excited about being here and that are thrilled about what Manitoba has to offer.

And they are going to the world, Mr. Speaker. They've worked so hard; now the world is coming to them. They're right here in Manitoba. They're excited. They're thriving. This is what this budget wants to support, so I wholeheartedly support this budget. I reject the negativity of the members opposite and I'm going to keep working every single day so that our young people have a place to grow

and thrive and have a really great life right here in Manitoba.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today for my inaugural budget speech in the Manitoba Legislature. I understand the tradition for one's first speech is a certain degree of latitude. So may I share a bit about myself and the constituency?

I need to start by thanking the No. 1 person in my life: my lovely wife. I remember when my predecessor, Mavis Taillieu, called me on—in February 11th to advise that she was retiring from politics. My wife and I had a very frank conversation about the challenges ahead of us and the impact they would have on our three young children, Jack, Kara and Tess. The biggest, of course, challenge, obviously, in the life of any elected official is that of the unknown. However, regardless of the outcome, we knew the only regret we would have is not going for it.

Of course, at the time, after securing the nomination, I never imagined, and I believe the editorial the Free Press called it the passive-aggressive nature of our Premier (Mr. Selinger) in delaying the call of the Morris by-election.

The Morris by-election actually has three unique distinctions. Firstly, it was the longest vacancy in Manitoba's history, 360 days from vacancy to Elections Manitoba's confirmation of the results, three times as long as the average of any by-election called since year 2000. Secondly, it was the coldest by-election in Manitoba's history. Those first few weeks averaged probably -50 with the wind chill and I was door knocking in some godawful weather, Mr. Speaker. I was fortunate though that of the five candidates running, I, along with the Independent from Morris, actually lived in the riding, as opposed to having to drive in from the city of Winnipeg. And I remember one reporter asked me how the weather was affecting my election strategy. I noted that it really hadn't, that instead of wearing a ball cap and sandals as I had thought I would be, I was simply wearing Sorels and a balaclava, but it was all still about knocking on doors and connecting with people.

*(15:30)

Finally, it was the only time an election in Manitoba's history covered two calendar years, having been called in 2013 in the middle of the

Christmas holidays and being held in 2014. To be honest, Mr. Speaker, I'm left with the distinct impression but that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was less than anxious to have me join the Manitoba Legislature.

Despite those challenges I was very fortunate to have a hearty band of volunteers who generously gave of their time. My campaign co-chairs Allen and Paul put in a tremendous amount of hours in very late night meetings as we thought about where to go, what to do and how to adjust to unfortunate weather patterns that would suddenly arise. My finance chairs, James and Ed, pounded the pavement, made phone calls, and raised the money that we all know is very necessary to run a campaign. Glen and Timo, two retired individuals who spent a great deal of their days with me making sure that, you know, not only do you have company travelling those, some of those 5,000 kilometres I put on my vehicle during the course of that month, but who helped me knock on those doors during those daytime hours. Derek for constructing the many election signs, a few which we were able to retrieve and a few more that I think are probably somewhere in Kenora, and Joe for helping putting—put them up, and as well as Shirley for making countless, countless phone calls.

Many of my colleagues also joined me to engage the voters of Morris. People from Niverville to Sanford, to Lowe Farm to Elie, gave of their time when and where they could, knocking on doors, dropping brochures and making calls. And I cannot name them all, Mr. Speaker, but I want them all to know that their contribution was appreciated.

And speaking of contribution, I must formally acknowledge and thank my opponents: Jeremy Barber, Dean Harder, Alain Landry and Ray Shaw. Democracy is ultimately about choice. In their willingness to allow their names to stand as representatives of their political parties or, in the case of Mr. Shaw, as an independent, ensured that the voters of Morris did in fact have a choice.

Mr. Speaker, a bit about myself. I'm a military kid, born overseas and made the formal decision to make Canada my home. My father proudly served in Canada's Armed Forces, and at the too young of age of 40, passed away while in uniform. My mother, who finished school after grade 9, suddenly found herself with four children and seasonal employment. Due to a disability she was unable to have a driver's licence and had to walk five kilometres each way every day to work no matter the weather. To say that

life was a challenge would be an understatement. Puffed wheat and powdered milk were regularly found on our breakfast table. My mother was unable to afford to replace my rubber boots for me in the spring, and would have me wear old bread bags as a liner to keep my feet dry. My mother faced additional challenges, specifically those around mental health. I can still recall the winter when I was 16 and lived alone in our trailer when she voluntarily admitted herself to BMHC for treatment for a few months. So to say issues involving persons with disabilities and mental health challenges were very personal would be accurate.

I had the good fortune, Mr. Speaker, to attend Brandon University, and while my mother passed before she could see me graduate, she left me life lessons, the most important of which are that things are only impossible until they are not. To help pay for university I had the good fortune to work as a respite worker at an open custody home for young offenders coming out of Agassiz youth detention facility as well as community youth corrections as a probation officer.

My lasting debt to Brandon University—and I should note that my, all my university student loans have been fully paid off long ago, because I do recognize that we have to live within our means—my lasting debt, though, to Brandon University actually goes to political studies chair Meir Serfaty, Meir, who recommended I apply to the Manitoba Legislative Internship Program, and so began my path that landed me here today. I was fortunate enough to work in a variety of roles for the next nine years, learning a great deal about the political system and about the inner workings of the Manitoba Legislature.

From there I jumped at the chance to run a well-respected small business organization called the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—an organization, I should note, that the NDP vowed to put out of business—and I learned first-hand the challenges faced by those entrepreneurs who have risked much to see their dreams realized. From CFIB I had the chance to return to my roots and run Reaching E-Quality Employment Services, an organization, a not-for-profit who works to connect persons with disabilities with employment. It was here I witnessed the impact of the NDP's red tape and failed fiscal policies as we endured new costs as the PST expanded to insurance and then increased to 8 per cent, while at the same time dealing with

funding cut after funding cut after funding cut, year after year after year.

Last week, the Finance Minister continued the tradition set by her predecessor, that she finds democracy to be a bit of an inconvenience. Despite being elected on a core commitment, and I quote, keep balanced budget legislation, today's NDP—and actually I should drop the today's, because I notice today's NDP have actually dropped the today from the moniker of their new attack ads—have consistently shown their disdain for any of its accountability provisions. Whether it was scrapping repayment provisions, eliminating consequences for Cabinet ministers who failed to balance budgets, the NDP have done everything in their power to water down legislation that was once seen as a model in Canada. However, never has this disdain for accountability been more apparent than last year's decision to illegally hike the PST to 8 per cent on July 1st while waiving the referendum provision as mandated by law. But, to be honest, Mr. Speaker, we should have seen this coming when the NDP removed the term, quote, taxpayer protection, from the title of the balanced budget legislation, because protecting taxpayers is the least of their priorities.

The law on this issue, Mr. Speaker, was pretty clear. Section 10(1): The government shall not present a bill to increase the rate of any tax, for example, the PST, unless the government first puts the question of the advisability proceeding with such a bill to the voters in a referendum. There's not a lot of wiggle room in terms on understanding, Mr. Speaker. It's down under the header tax referendum requirement.

After years of breaking the spirit of the referendum provisions by expanding the PST on multiple occasions to legal services, electrical services, insurance, as opposed to outright increasing it or allowing bracket creep to eat into taxpayers' wallets, the NDP have given up all pretense of fiscal responsibility and grabbed onto Manitoba taxpayers' wallets with both hands.

The NDP framed their 2014 budget as steady growth, good jobs. The budget is more focused on steady lies, high taxes. Increasing a family's tax burden by an estimated \$1,600 annually every year for the next decade is not offset, as the Minister of Finance tried to suggest last year, with a two hundred and five—\$250 increase in the basic personal exemption, which will, at most, reduce one's income tax by \$27. In fact, according to the provincial

budget, the NDP's own document, a middle-income family of five pays more—more—provincial income tax this year than they did in 2012. Hardly the competitive environment that they speak of, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, this is the same NDP that describes a tax cut as, quote, robbing the provincial Treasury. Politics should be about convictions, about believing what you say and, more importantly, in what you do. If increasing the PST to 8 per cent is the right choice, then instead of forcing taxpayers to accept it through your electoral muscle and change legislation in the middle of the night, convince us, convince Manitobans, the taxpayers.

Of course, our collective calls for a referendum were ignored and we were told that it's too expensive to hold a referendum during these uncertain economic times, that it's for infrastructure, aka mom's apple pie, and it's time-limited and will automatically be reduced in 10 years, also known as trust us. The same NDP government that lied about bringing in the increased PST is now asking us to trust them, that they'll actually decrease the PST.

The other part of the budget story goes to the NDP's unwillingness to live within its means. As previously noted, they are now on their eighth consecutive deficit budget without any real plan to address the long-term structural implications this has on our future, and, indeed, current ability to protect Manitobans.

When you put forward the suggestion to the NDP that they need to control spending, they invariably start asking, what would you cut? However, the real question is not what would I cut to bring balance to the budget but what they have cut because they won't.

*(15:40)

Just last year, Mr. Speaker, we spent \$839 million in debt-servicing costs—that's just debt servicing, that's just interest payments, not principal payments—just to stay afloat. That's an increase of almost \$33 million over last year, \$75-million increase over two years ago. So the question is what programs and services, other than not-for-profits like Reaching E-Quality Employment Services, were cut to fund this cost, this additional \$75 million that the government had to find in the last two years to pay the interest costs? How much of this tax hike will be diverted from promised flood protection, new schools, better health care, municipal roads and

highways that it is supposed to fund, because interest rates rose, costing us millions of dollars?

I listened carefully to the member of Thompson's comments. As the most senior member in this Chamber, having been elected when I was still in grade school, I thought surely he would show me how a budget response is to be crafted. Apparently, the purpose of a response is to talk about a government that got elected 26 years ago. So I thought, why 26? Why not 27? Should I stand today, Mr. Speaker, and talk about the massive, posted deficits, the introduction of the payroll tax, the not one but two tax hikes to the PST, the funds lost in the sands of Saudi Arabia thanks to the MTX scandal and the crushing increase to Autopac rates? I could, but, realistically, I was in high school then and more concerned about how to duck physics and get to 7-Eleven for a Slurpee.

Instead, I thought I would focus on the reality we all face on this side of the House and recognize that are paramount, that we live in a competitive and changing world and that people have choice, choice in terms of where they live and invest. I will focus on six numbers. The first number, Mr. Speaker, \$9,143: Manitoba's basic personal exemption, the amount of money that a individual in Manitoba can earn before the Province says it's time to start ponying up, the lowest basic personal exemption in all of western Canada. In fact, our neighbour, Saskatchewan, next door, their basic personal exemption: \$15,378, 70 per cent higher than Manitoba. Saskatchewan increased their basic personal exemption in one fell swoop by \$4,000, and with that \$4,000 they took 80,000 low-income earners off the tax rolls, 80,000. In Manitoba, we raise it one or two hundred dollars, and the government seems to be surprised about its lack of impact. The former minister of Finance, when challenged by the leader of opposition to increase the basic personal exemption by \$2,000 and truly help people on low and fixed income, responded that such action would, quote, rob the provincial Treasury. When governments start to view reducing the tax burden on individuals, on low-income individuals as robbing their personal treasury, then they have lost sight of the fact that it is our money, taxpayer money, not the NDP's.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, to explain the gap that's grown between ourselves and Saskatchewan is the issue of indexation, or the lack of indexation in Manitoba. Manitoba is one of the last jurisdictions in this entire country that does not index its tax system

to inflation, a policy that the former minister Tim Sale actually described as pickpocketing, and then, despite all this time in office, have yet to do anything on it. The NDP in Saskatchewan, when they began the process of indexing the tax system in Saskatchewan to inflation, described it as the single greatest policy that a government could do to help not just low-income individuals, but individuals on fixed incomes.

The second number, Mr. Speaker, is 360,295. In 2001 the BC government counted and publicly reported on the number of regulatory requirements imposed on citizens and businesses. Also, they committed to a one-third reduction in the number of requirements by 2004. In 2001 the baseline count was 360,000 and change, and by 2004 they had surpassed their initial goal, reducing the number of requirements by over 36 per cent. Today they have reduced their requirements by almost 43 per cent. This was achieved with a regulatory cap known as net-zero-increase policy. This places a limit to the number of regulatory requirements that can be imposed. Under this policy there can be no overall increase in the number of regulatory requirements until 2015. Where a new regulatory requirement is introduced, an existing requirement must be eliminated.

Red tape reduction streamlines and simplifies processes to make it easier and faster to deal with government. Reducing red tape benefits everyone. For citizens it means fast, easy access to services, saving you time which can be spent with friends and family. For businesses it means simplified processes, saving you time and money that can be reinvested in the growth of your business.

We must recognize the burden that unnecessary red tape places on our businesses and citizens. We must understand that red tape can cause unnecessary confusion and increases the cost and time of doing business or accessing government services.

So how does this translate to Manitoba? Mr. Speaker, the short answer is: I don't know. I can tell you that, based on current research by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the estimated cost of complying with regulations in the province of Manitoba is approximately \$977 million annually. Only 8 per cent of small and medium-sized enterprises in Manitoba believe that the NDP even consider how red tape will impact businesses, the worst rate in Canada. So, if we are looking for a low-cost policy that will help create the economy we

are all striving for, we need to look no further than red tape reduction.

The next number, Mr. Speaker, is 32. Thirty-two years ago, the NDP of the day introduced the health and post-secondary education tax levy, or payroll tax. For businesses both large and small, this is one anniversary they would rather forget, because the payroll tax is essentially a tax on success. Once your business grows to a certain point, \$1.25 million in payroll, the provincial government decrees that you must be financially penalized. Despite the platitudes from elected officials about growing the economy, expanding local Manitoba businesses and encouraging the hiring of employees, instead of saying thank you to businesses, owners get a letter from government that says: Balance due.

In 1982, the NDP government indicated it did not have the necessary revenues to maintain and improve health and education because of the provincial deficit and cutbacks to federal transfer payments. Sounds familiar. Faced with this, the government actually initially increased—initially considered increasing the provincial sales tax, but felt that an increase was, quote, regressive and unfair. Ironically, this same government would then turn around in subsequent years and increase the sales tax on two separate occasions from 5 to 6, from 6 to 7 per cent. The NDP's main defence on the payroll tax is: Where would you find the estimated \$325 million that the tax generates?

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this potentially valid question crumbles when properly examined. There are four groups that contribute to Manitoba's payroll tax: companies with payrolls in excess of 1 and a quarter million dollars, the federal government, municipal governments and provincial government entities such as school divisions and health entities. For municipal governments and provincial government entities, the payroll tax is recovered through provincial grants, so the Province is really not getting any new money. That leaves the federal government and businesses with payrolls over 1 and a quarter million dollars as the only two real contributors of the payroll tax.

Surprisingly, the Province won't even provide basic information to help determine how much of the payroll tax is actually new money, as opposed to recycled provincial money that they are collecting and refunding. Even when asked through a freedom of information request, the Province responded that

that information would, quote, unduly harm or prejudice policy decisions.

Despite the government's unwillingness to share the revenue details of the payroll tax, we recognize that its elimination would pose a challenge. Instead, we could take one of three courses, Mr. Speaker: we could reduce the rates—the last times the rates have been reduced was under a PC government in 1999; we could implement a deductible to fully exempt the first 1 and a quarter million dollars, as has occurred with the corporation capital tax; or we could increase the exemption that was last increased in 2007.

I was recently speaking with the owner of a large clothing manufacturer in Winnipeg who commented, and I quote, if I give my employees a hundred thousand dollar collective raise, it ends up costing me an extra \$4,300 on that. No wonder Manitoba ranks close to last in weekly economic growth.

* (15:50)

The next number—872. Mr. Speaker, \$872 million is the estimated cost of servicing our multi-billion-dollar debt; \$18.6 billion is our summary net debt currently, up almost \$7 billion since 2009. This is \$2.4 million each and every day, 2.4 million taxpayer dollars not going to repay debt, not going to health, not going to highways, not going to higher education, but instead merely servicing the interest payments on that debt. That's more than the budget for Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, more than the budget for Infrastructure and Transportation, more than the budget for Conservation and Water Stewardship. In fact, it is more than this government will spend on every single department excluding Health, Education and Family Services.

Posting successive deficit budgets, the most recent \$357 million for the current fiscal year, only add to that problem. The truly tragic component of our current debt servicing is that it remains manageable, and I use that word loosely, Mr. Speaker, because it is only manageable not because of the fiscal policies of the NDP government, because of low interest rates. According to the Department of Finance, a 1 per cent increase in interest rates would add \$20 million just to the cost of servicing our debt. That's 20 more million dollars that this government will have to come up with and divert again from health, highways and higher education, to be lost on paying interest payments.

Mr. Speaker, another number, 56,000—this is the number as reported by the Province's own Economic and Fiscal Analysis Branch of the net loss of Manitobans to other provinces over the last 14 years through interprovincial migration. That is essentially my hometown of Brandon getting up and vacating. In the last 12 months alone, again, according to the NDP's own Department of Finance we have posted a net loss of 4,221 individuals. That's 4,221 individuals that simply said we're tired, goodbye, shut out the lights. We are the only western province to post a net loss year after year after year.

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, stopped the bleeding in 2007 and, in fact, has been a net annual gainer each and every year since. Why is this an issue? According to a recent TD economics report, quote, compared to the population they come from and go to, larger shares of interprovincial migrants have post-secondary education, are young and are found at the higher end of the economic spectrum. An outflow of higher-income individuals can seriously erode a government's tax base, end of quote.

The final number, \$67,000—Mr. Speaker, \$67,000 is what the NDP consider the amount of money an individual Manitoban can earn before they're considered a high-income earner. Once you earn \$67,000 in the province of Manitoba, you are considered among the richest of Manitobans and you therefore must pay the highest income tax rate. Now, of course I went back as I researched this and I thought, well, that can't be right, my—the \$67,000 number has to be wrong. I remember a five-year plan launched in 2007 to increase that and that today, actually, that rate should be \$70,000. But like many of the government's plans, that five-year plan apparently is stalled on the side of the road.

So how does Saskatchewan compare in terms of their high income—what they would consider a high-income earner over there in Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, \$123,692—almost double ours.

So, in other words, in Manitoba, \$67,000 and you're considered among the highest income earners. In Saskatchewan, \$123,000 before they would consider you the highest income earner and have to pay the highest tax level that they have, which, by the way, is also lower than our highest rate. Of course, this is the same province, Saskatchewan, that the NDP vowed we could not afford to fall behind, or at least when it came to the introduction of statutory holidays, but apparently nothing else.

I'm advising this Chamber that I cannot support the NDP's 2014 budget for their repeated failures as noted by my colleagues and leader. As noted, they continue to fail to repeal their massive tax hike as imposed in Budget 2012 with their PST increase that they called, quote, ridiculous. They continue to disrespect Manitobans by refusing to hold a publicly required referendum. They've broken their promise to end their structural deficit and actually balance the books in this very budget. They failed to address the growing threat to services that their fiscal—their deficit financing has placed services, front-line services that I, myself, have seen and been part of. They broke their promises to seniors by failing to provide promised tax relief, and they continue to neglect Manitoba's most vulnerable by refusing to address bracket creep, but, more importantly, to immediately raise the Employment and Income Assistance rental allowances to 75 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, for this and many, many other reasons, I, the MLA for Morris, reject the NDP's fiscal policy as laid out in their 2014-15 document and look forward to the day, hopefully in two short years, where we're able to offer Manitobans a true document, a document that moves us from mediocrity, that understands the fiscal realities that we have, that realizes that diverting much needed taxpayer dollars to interest payments is not a sensible financial plan.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I conclude my comment, and I thank you for your time.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I'm honoured to get up today to give my speech to the budget and my unqualified, uncategorical support for Budget 2014. It's a focused plan to grow our economy and create jobs, provides even more opportunities for our kids to train, work and stand in Manitoba.

And I want to begin by welcoming the new member from Morris and the new member from Arthur-Virden into the Chamber. As a relatively new member of the House, I can tell them that it's a great honour to work in this building, to debate public policy every day, to make sure that we're out working on behalf of all Manitobans, and I make no distinction on any side of the House when it comes to who's out there working for their constituents because I believe that we're all doing so.

I want to say just quickly on the member from Morris's budget speech that he talked a lot about taxes. He has a taxation fixation, seemingly, and yet

not once during that whole course of the speech did he mention health care. Isn't that why we come to govern here, is to make sure that all Manitobans have access to health care?

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And not once during his maiden speech to the House—and I have great respect for that—did he mention education, not a word about education for our young people in Manitoba, not a word about education for those in the post-secondary world either in colleges or university—[*interjection*]

Yes, not a word about that welding shop that we opened in Morris, says my predecessor, the vibrant, the visionary member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan). Not a word did he mention in the course of that speech about infrastructure or investing in infrastructure. That—in fact, that speedway from Winnipeg to Morris that will be repaved, renewed, ensuring that economic growth and development happens in our province, and not a word about infrastructure. Not a word about health care, not a word about education, not a word about infrastructure, and then, not surprisingly from that side of the House, not a word about child care, nope, not a word about child care, not going to talk about that. No, no, not going to mention that our kids need that kind of early childhood care ensure—to ensure that families grow and prosper in this province. In fact, outside of the taxation fixation of the member from Morris there was actually nothing of substance. I hope he didn't go on to the doorstep in -40 and have somebody open their door and give that speech. My gosh, it would have let all the warm air out and—but increasingly hotter air in, to be honest with you.

* (16:00)

But it speaks—[*interjection*] My friend from Brandon East calls them the one-trick pony party, which is giving them a little too much credit, because the fact of the matter is, I think, that they really intend, if they were ever, ever to govern this province, and God forbid that we ever get to that point, but they intend to do absolutely nothing, squat, nada. They're not going to do one thing to increase the well-being of Manitobans from north to south, from east to west. And that's a crying shame because, in fact, we come here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we come here to govern on behalf of the people of Manitoba. And on this side of the House I'm proud to say that we govern for all the people of Manitoba, all the time, not just for the privileged few.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to say that I'm honoured to be the MLA from Fort Garry-Riverview and honoured to have that opportunity to come here and represent them here in the Legislature. Each day that I'm in my community I recognize that it is a progressive community that cares not only about themselves but they care about their neighbour and they care about their neighbour's neighbour. So they want to be sure that we're investing in health care. They want to be sure that we're investing in education. But, most importantly, they want to be sure that their—we're investing in the well-being of our province, to make sure that our children have good jobs and stay and live here, right here in Manitoba. And that's exactly what Budget 2014 does.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my constituents want government to be activist. They don't want government to come here day after day and do nothing, like the opposition would do, to have no plan. They want us to have a plan. They want us to be activist. They want us to be engaged. And that's why Budget 2014 makes a point of investing in the future of Manitoba. And the Conference Board of Canada is very clear about our plan. It says we'll boost Manitoba's economy by \$6.3 billion. That's activist government. That's engaged government that's doing the right thing.

But more than that, it says that this Budget 2014, according to the Conference Board of Canada, will boost exports by \$5.4 billion. That's very impressive. That's how you build a future for the young people of Manitoba. And more than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Budget 2014 will boost retail sales in this province by \$1.4 billion, so that small businesses, those businesses that create employment for our youth, will be thriving in an economic environment that puts the well-being of Manitobans ahead of the chosen few that the Tories represent here in this province.

Now, I want to say also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, as the Minister of Education, I'm honoured and privileged to be in that role. As I've said many times before, I'm getting to build on an incredibly solid foundation provided by my predecessors, the—from Brandon East or from Gimli or from Dawson Trail or, most importantly to me, my sister from St. Vital, who continues to offer me so much great support. She's a mentor. She's a colleague. Most importantly, she's my friend, and she's a visionary who spend her—put her career on the line for the well-being of all of Manitoba's children through Bill 18.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the chance to offer my first school funding announcement at the end of January. And I'm proud to say that we increased funding for schools by over \$24 million this year, bringing our total to over \$470 million for—since we were first elected into government. We continue to invest in classrooms, in the well-being of our children. And I know, because of the taxation fixation on the other side of the House, they would never invest in education. *[interjection]* No, they, really, as my friend from Selkirk says, they never cut a tax. And yet—and yet—the one inalienable fact that we can hardly question, because it is an inalienable fact, is that Manitobans today pay less in income taxes and sales taxes and property taxes than they did when these guys across the hall—across the floor were in government all those years ago, by the tune of about one point two or three billion dollars. Manitobans paid less than they did, than these fellows who are the masters of taxation fixation.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we not only increased school funding again this year by the rate of economic growth or more, as we have since we were first elected and came into office, but we've also invested a billion dollars in capital improvements to our schools. We've built new schools in this province in a way that the opposition would never contemplate doing. In fact, it doesn't even—not even something they would do.

And so, I have the chance not so long ago to be in Morden-Winkler with my friend from Morden-Winkler, and there we stood shoulder to shoulder in a state-of-the-art school that—which you would be so proud of, and we basked in the glow of a fantastic new school that his community wanted and that we, in partnership, delivered on, because that's what we do on this side of the House. And, again, that's thanks to my friend from St. Vital who made that school happen, and really there hasn't been considerably enough thanks from our friend from Morden-Winkler.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's also true that, through our class-size initiative, we have made classes smaller so that our students and our children get some of that most basic one-on-one time with a teacher in order to improve their own educational performance, in order to improve their success as a student. And as a result of that incredible initiative, we've hired 213 more teachers than we had in the past and we've made sure that young people are positioned to learn and to grow and to develop, and evolve so that they can have the kind of future that

all parents—and I'm a parent myself—all parents desire for their children.

As I said earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also passed our anti-bullying legislation last year. It protects all 'manitoba' students. All children have safe and secure places, and again this is a legacy from the member from St. Vital that provides safe and secure students—places for every student to be themselves, to know who they are and to grow and develop and to have good jobs, and a good life here in Manitoba, no matter who they are or who they want to be. That's the kind of government we are.

And I have to remind the House that when we put Bill 18 on the floor last year and we debated it and we had public committee hearings, the only folks who stood in opposition to making sure that our schools were safe and secure for all our children were the folks across the hall, the Tories. I personally wouldn't be able to live with myself, to vote against that kind of bill. How they can go home every day thinking about their opposition to that is really quite shocking for me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've done other things in education that I think we can very proud of. We passed legislation to keep kids in school until they're 18. We've developed a new parent-friendly, plain-language report card that makes it easier for parents to help their kids learn. We've established common in-service days within school divisions to help families co-ordinate their busy schedules, because, after all, we're a practical government as well as a visionary government. And, as I said earlier, we've made upgrades to science labs and to shop classes and to gymnasiums to make sure that kids today have the kind of tools, resources, facilities they need to become successful adults in the 21st century.

* (16:10)

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that occurred during the course of my appointment, a very fortunate and very privileged appointment to Cabinet, was for the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to take Education and Advanced Education and put them together into one department so that we can think seriously about the continuum of education from kindergarten to careers, and make sure that we can connect those binary points all the way along the system, in order to ensure that our kids get a quality education, that they have those most basic skills, that they have skills training in order to get a good job, and that they understand their career pathways going

forward so that they can stay here in Manitoba, raise a family and live happy and productive lives.

I'm proud to say that on the post-secondary side of our department we increased funding to universities by 2.5 per cent, and we increased funding to colleges by 2 per cent. And while every government across the land retrenches, retracts, cuts, we don't do that on this side of the House. We keep investing in education, whether it's on the K-to-12 side or whether it's on the colleges and university side because we know, on this side of the House, that an education is the basis of a future happy and productive life.

And I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I've had the chance to meet with our presidents of all of our institutions, of our colleges and our universities, and we know that we're working together to ensure that our students have an accessible, affordable and quality education.

I think it's worth pointing out that we have among the lowest tuition rates in the country, something that we can be extraordinarily proud of. I think it's important to point out that enrolment at our colleges and universities have, as a result, increased by 44 per cent since 1999. More important than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or as important as that, in order to provide the supports that students need, we provided \$240 million in grants and scholarships and bursaries.

We have the tuition rebate program that 'prubrides' over \$90 million to students to stay and work in Manitoba through the 60 per cent tuition rebate. I can't think of a more progressive policy in our arsenal than the tuition rebate, which not only provides affordable tuition on the one hand, but provides a rebate on the other and keeps young people living right here in Manitoba, which is what we want.

When we came into office the statistics around the post-secondary sector while these folks were in government were simply startling and shocking, and something—a legacy to be, frankly, quite ashamed of. Tuition fees skyrocketed during the '90s by 132 per cent. Can you believe that? Can you believe that? Tuition fees skyrocketed during the '90s by 132 per cent. And so you know what happened? As a result, enrolment in universities and colleges decreased by 8 per cent from 1993 to 1999.

The truth of the matter is that when they were in government and when the Leader of the Opposition was standing—sitting at the Cabinet table, perhaps

he was standing but I think he was probably sitting. Maybe he was standing because he's always quick to bolt when things get tough. But when he was sitting at the Cabinet table, tuition fees were skyrocketing, investments in colleges and universities were going down and students were leaving the system as quickly as they could because in the '90s, post-secondary education was unaffordable and 'unaccessible.' That's the Tory legacy of the '90s, and that's why we talk about it; that's why we remind Manitobans what kind of a government they were, lo, those many years ago, and how they haven't changed one bit. A zebra in the '90s is still a zebra in 2014. They don't change their stripes. It will be the same thing.

Education will not be affordable for Manitobans. Education will not be accessible for our students, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Education—there will be no education in small class sizes initiatives. There will be no investment in capital improvements for new schools, new gyms, new shops, new science labs. In fact, none of those things will happen, and the result will be the people of Manitoba will once again be victims of their own government just like they were in the 1990s. We've worked over the past number of years to make things right in Manitoba, and we will continue, and that's what Budget 2014 most certainly does.

I want to reiterate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that our government's commitment to add 75,000 workers to the labour force by 2020 starts with ensuring that every child can get a quality education and training opportunities. That's the heart and the soul of Budget 2014. I'm honoured to be the MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview. I'm honoured to be the Minister of Education. I'm honoured to sit in this caucus with this progressive group of women and men. I'm honoured to be among and a part of the most progressive government in Canada, bar none. We're builders, and we're going to continue to build this province, not only in the next couple of years but through the next election and on into a fifth term. You can count on that.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, honourable members, friends, colleagues and distinguished guests in the gallery, if there's any. It's my honour to be standing here in front of the House today to make comments on record regarding the 2014 budget.

First, however, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and also thank my

supporters. About six months ago, I wasn't even considered in politics, but this opportunity came to me and I really enjoyed having this opportunity to run, and I had a lot of fun and I had a very good journey.

I would like to first begin to thank my wife, Michelle, my son, Aidan, my daughter, Jillian, and the support they've given me through the process that I sought the nomination of the PC Party, the candidate of the PC Party in the constituency of Arthur-Virden, and the by-election that I ran this past winter, which was, again, like Shannon said, it was very cold. Also, I would like to sincerely thank my mother, Janet Piwniuk, and Fred Piwniuk, my father, who were continue my inspiration involved in running for politics. I just wish to—I wish that to serve the residents of Manitoba like in the 'contichence' of Virden—Arthur-Virden just like the same dedication and thoughtfulness and the commitment and manner that my mom and my father served and my brothers and myself throughout my childhood. My family has been supportive in my new role as MLA, and they certainly understand that I will always from home—I'll be always away from home for many 'pixperient' periods of time.

There's so many people I want to thank. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge as many as I can.

A special thanks goes out to my co-managers Kathy Batho and Rick Plaisier during my election campaign; I also wanted to thank Penny Jones, my co-managing of my nomination race; I want to thank my—Ross Tycoles, of being my political coach; Bev McArthur for managing my campaign office during my election and organizing my volunteers; speech coach, my father—Father Don Bernhad; Kayla Marten, who served as my 'ovicial' agent; Shawna Smith and Denisha Smith, who were in charge of my social media; and Josh Kitto, who created my website; Shelby Rampton, who was in charge of my scrutineers.

I'd also like to thank my community captains, Ivan Strain in Boissevain; Gary Williams in Waskada; Garry Syrrus, Melita; Deb McMechan in Pierson; Claude Martin in Hartney; and Leigh Smith in Oak Lake and Kenton; Ross Tycoles in Reston; Penny Jones in Miniota; and Wayne Mathison and Larry Oakden in Hamiota.

* (16:20)

My team members, Carla McLean, Evelyne Jorgensen, Connie Hay, Jeff Ross, Angela Hartley,

Doris Forster, Marlene Lowe, Rhonda Russell, Frank VandenHook, Bob Cochrane, Bob Chalmers, Brad Henderson, Helen Plett, Evelyne Potter, Lynn Rookes, June Reimer, my wife, who did a lot of work for me too, Harley McCormick, Craig Russell and Brent Patmore.

I also want to extend a gratitude of Kevin Tuthill, who gave Arthur-Virden a great PC nomination race; Cheryl Porter, who had guidance during the by-election race; and of course, I can't forget the previous Arthur-Virden MLAs, Larry Maguire and Jim Downey. They're going to be large shoes to fill.

Of course, gratitude also—grateful to the constituents of Arthur-Virden for overwhelming supporting and their coming out on a cold January day to cast their vote. It's a tremendous honour to be served—the people of Arthur-Virden.

I also want to thank my opponents, Bob Senff of the NDP, Floyd Buhler of the Liberal Party, and Kate Snow of the Green Party, for my opponents who gave a good race.

Arthur-Virden is a dynamic place. The oil industry plays a big part of the economy in the riding. Arthur-Virden produces the most of—almost all oil in the province, helping to contribute to the economy and benefits of Manitobans. We also have a large agricultural industry as well. The people of Arthur-Virden are hard-working, industrious, and proud to be Manitobans.

And we all know the great province could be more prosperous if we could have a government that would—kept more money on the kitchen table rather than taking money—taking—put—spending the money at the Cabinet table. This is a message that my constituents said loud and clear at the last election, and I am honoured to be elected with the largest percentage of popular vote in Arthur-Virden since the constituency was created in 1990 election. However, I could not have done it without the great team, and they worked extremely hard throughout my nomination and election.

And now a little more about myself before I discuss the 2014 Budget. I was born in March 30th, 1967 in Russell, Manitoba. I grew up, along with brothers and my—of our family, located 30 kilometres north of Russell between the villages of Dropmore and Shellmouth in the Asessippi valley. Actually, a lot of the rocks that were on Shellmouth Dam were from my father's farm. We can grow rocks pretty good. Our family ran a dairy farm and later a

beef operation. The family always kept horses, and we were active participants in community trail rides organized by my father.

My parents were both first-generation Canadians. My paternal grandparents came from western Ukraine, close to the Polish border, and my maternal grandparents both came from Yorkshire, England.

As a proud Ukrainian-Canadian, my heart goes out to those currently struggling for democracy in Ukraine. Democracy is an institution, and the principle is worth fighting for. And I am proud to be a representative here in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, participating in the democratic process.

During the 1980s, with high interest rates and severe drought, many farm families had serious financial troubles. Unfortunately, we were one of those families. My parents had to sell—had a choice of selling the dairy cows so that we can have—save our family farm.

Financial events like this truly shape a person, and that's how I became interested in financial issues at an early age. During that time, I looked up to Ronald Reagan and Brian Mulroney, who tirelessly gave hope, optimism to farm families, even though my dad was a NDP supporter. I was the Alex P. Keaton of our family. I was always Conservative. I would like to add, however, before his passing, he did become a PC supporter, and I only wish he was here today to experience my moment here.

I attended Goose Lake High School in Roblin, Manitoba, and graduated in 1985. Upon graduating, I went to Red River College in Winnipeg to receive my diploma in business accounting. After graduating from Red River College, I was recruited by Investors Group to work in the firm's accounting department at a corporate headquarters in Winnipeg. Within two and a half years I was promoted to a role as the seniors pension fund accountant and pursuing my certified financial planning certification designation.

Despite the success, I left the position at Investors Group in 1990 to travel abroad to Australia, New Zealand, Fiji Islands. Upon returning, I decided to change career paths, pursuing a future in—as a financial planner.

In 1994 I moved to Virden, Manitoba, to become the business partner at a local insurance agency and develop an investment and estate planning division. This time I have—this might not have happened if it wasn't for a generous and one amazing person who

believed in me. So much so, in fact, that she took a risk of co-signing my business loan for myself, putting up her house as collateral. That woman was my future mother-in-law, Merline Jerrard. That same year, I married her daughter, Michelle, and we had a business. We were business owners before we actually even had a house. In that same year, we bought our house.

Just a story about my mother-in-law, she came from Canada–Jamaica in 1959 as a domestic helper, who was valuing the pursuit of education and pursuit for a career path as an LPN. My wife's family always said that she could stretch a nickel into a dollar. Even though she was 85 years old and had a stroke, she was determined to come down to the Legislative Building to be the witness at my swearing-in ceremony.

In 1996, I obtained my certified financial planning designation, the first of several designations I would acquire, including the Canadian initiative of elder planning studies, an elderly planning counsellor, and the investment industry Canada branch manager designation.

In 2000 Michelle and I welcomed our first son, Aidan, and a mere 17 months later we welcomed our daughter, Jillian, in 2002.

Over the years, I've been an active member in the community in Arthur-Virden region in serving as chair as the Virden Employment Skills Centre, member of the treasury of the Virden Kinsmen Club, the president of Virden-Wallace Economic Development Corporation, member of the Wallace District Fire Department, and treasurer of the Virden Kin Place Life Lease Project, and the treasurer of the St. Mary's Anglican Church new hall and building committees.

As a critic, I'm fortunate to preside over the multiculturalism file, and that is why I began my speech discussing my family history. Manitoba is amazing cultural hub and Manitoba's a province that benefits immensely from the Provincial Nominee Program. In fact, just recently, the Provincial Nominee Program celebrated its 15th anniversary, and credits should be given to where credit is deserved. Thus, all members of Manitoba—all Manitobans and members here owe my colleague the member of River East a huge debt of gratitude as she was the defining member of the Filmon government to create this program.

Manitoba's home to a very sizable First Nation and Metis population, and one of the most sizable Mennonite populations in the world. Manitoba boasts the largest population of francophone Canadians outside of Quebec and is one important hub for many other culture communities. In fact, Manitoba's an internationally recognized the hub of those of Ukrainian ancestry. Gimli is one of the home to the largest community of Icelandic people outside of Iceland. Winnipeg alone reflects over a hundred languages and nationalities and is known as the cultural cradle of Canada—in fact, the cultural diversity in such a defining principle of the great of this province. In 2010, Winnipeg's awarded the title of the Cultural Capital of Canada.

Manitoba's home of cultural festivals. Many of these events are nationally recognized across Canada and some of even internationally recognized. These many festivals range from scope of music, dance, sports and visual arts. However, they shared one thing common, cultural recognition and cultural preservation.

Through—by through no means of 'exaultive' list, Manitoba has home to various music festivals: the Manitoba trappers' festival, the Festival du Voyageur, the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, the Manitoba Highland Gathering, the Asham Stompers festival, the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba and the National Ukrainian Festival.

Also, there is Folklorama, and it's Manitoba's shining culture star. This Folklorama celebrated its 44th anniversary. Folklorama consists of 46 pavilions and attracts over 400,000 guests annually. Furthermore, Manitoba's home to exciting initiatives and attractions concerning cultural diversity.

Manitoba has one—diverse cultural publications which works to honour Manitoba's diversity and is proud to be the home of the APTN. Additionally, Manitoba's home to many world-renowned attractions such as the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Manitoba Theatre Centre and the Manitoba museum of human rights, which is going to be opening sometime in this year.

The cultural attractions help further increase the diversity of the province through tourism and social and economic benefits of all Manitobans. It is clear that Manitoba's a vibrant province who embraces all aspects of cultural diversity. Through the festivals, attractions and institutions and

individuals, cross-cultural recognition, preservation, learning and sharing, we are all alive and well.

We all are proud home of prolific writers such as Margaret Lawrence and Carol Shields. We are proud home to amazing artists, singers such as—comedians such as Fred Penner, Chantal Kreviazuk, and Burton Cummings, just to name a few.

* (16:30)

Furthermore, we, as Progressive Conservatives, designed and implemented a Provincial Nominee Program with the intent to the goal to grow the province's immigration platform to foster a rich economic and cultural environment in Canada.

Furthermore, we introduced the multicultural act in 1992 and it included citizenship as a defining feature of a department. It is clear that members of this side of the House define strengths of our people in our natural landscape and our acceptance to religious and cultural differences—diversities.

Now, the issue at hand is the 2014 provincial budget. It is apparent that my first speech is about—it's appropriate that my first speech is about the provincial budget. I have been developing budgets for 22 years in a business in excess of a million dollar gross income, along with developing 10-year business plans. I've also been experienced creating financial business plans for my clients and budgets are not been new to me. I have proven to be a successful businessman and I have developed strong business experiences in the private sector.

What is apparent to me, however, is that the same cannot be said about this NDP government. The budget is about saving face of a tired and self-centering government that attempted to deceive Manitobans for a variety of things. This government has failed to keep its word on tax increases, infrastructure commitments and tax breaks for farmers and seniors, and this is unacceptable.

This budget continues to put the services Manitobans count on at risk. The growing debt under the NDP and the debt that is created through the overspending, even with record federal transfer payments, historically low interest rates and record government revenues is putting health care, education and services at risk.

Manitoba deserves a better government that's willing to consult with the public and actually listen. By this I mean engage the public before decisions are made so that it will affect their livelihoods for years

to come. At a minimum, at least show up to the public hearings, unlike this current Premier (Mr. Selinger).

The arrogance and the lack of respect and the lack of integrity shows in the actions of members opposite is shameful, and Manitobans are left with shouldering the burden of NDP spending addictions through high taxes and fees. Thus, it is clear that Manitoba should extremely be proud of the diverse history and multicultural nature, but should be wary of the NDP government. And they have the—they have lost all credibility and sold out their integrity for 1 per cent.

I want to thank all honourable members, especially my colleagues on this side of the House and our Leader of the Opposition and all the constituents of Arthur-Virden, by putting their faith in me as their democratic representative. I look forward in serving the people of friendly Manitoba to my best abilities and settling into my new role.

Thank you.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): It is, as always, an honour to be in this Chamber getting up to speak on behalf of Burrows, standing, of course, in support of our budget. I would like to thank, first of all, all of those who did so much work creating this budget. So, to the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), and really our entire caucus who put forward so many excellent ideas, I'm proud to be in the House with you.

I find that one of the things that I've been most amazed by is the—how humble the people are who do all this work, how humble our Premier is, our ministers are. And so I just wanted to let the Leader of the Opposition know that I don't think he has to worry about any of the people on this side of the House being those credit grabbers that he spoke of, because we don't have any over on our side.

I had been planning to compare and analyze the differences between our plan and that which the Leader of the Opposition presented in his speech on Friday, but I looked, I read it over several times, and I couldn't find a plan. It wasn't in there anywhere. But, luckily, we have him on record in other places, so I'm going to be okay. So that kind of was a big relief to me because I thought: What am I going to, you know, be putting in there on that side?

So he has put it, his plan, on record here in the House other times previously and on radio and in the Sun, even on April 18th in an article there where he

spoke about the planned layoffs that he has in order to balance the budget. So later I will be able to bring some of those things in.

You know, I remember a time—and I'm a bit embarrassed to admit this—many years ago, when I could've been accounted amongst those people who didn't understand the difference between governments and their philosophies and especially how those philosophies play into our real life and affect us on a day-to-day basis. I didn't get it. I really didn't get it. I was busy. I was working. I was taking care of, you know, my family, and I really didn't understand. So I absolutely get it when I run into someone like that now, because every once in a while you'll run into somebody who says, you know, it just doesn't make any difference; they're all the same.

Well, it took me until the Filmon-Pallister government to discover that that was just not so. No, it was then that I found out the devastation that a government can cause, especially for those not in the top income bracket. The comparison to the current recession that we've been going through since 2008 and the '90s, when Filmon and Pallister were running the government, is a pretty fair comparison. The difference, I think, is that in the '90s, everyone knew there was a recession. Everyone in the population was aware that times were exceedingly difficult. And we knew that because we were seeing cuts. We knew it because a thousand nurses were fired and 700 teachers lost their jobs, and we were threatened with the privatization of Home Care. We knew it because we saw medical spaces for doctors to be trained cut. We knew it because our children were leaving the province. We knew it because there was fruit flies in the operating rooms. We knew it because of Filmon Fridays, and we knew it because of the absence of cranes in the skies of Manitoba.

We knew it from the strong smell of mothballs in the air as the Tories busily packed away key projects for Manitoba's future, like Limestone and Conawapa. We knew it because Manitoba's economy was at half what it is today. Yes, in spite of only recently coming out of a recession, we have doubled it. You know—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Wight: Uh-huh. Back then, small businesses were paying, what was it? Somebody help me. Was it 9 per cent corporation tax—8, 9, something like that? What are they paying now?

Some Honourable Members: Zero.

Ms. Wight: Zero. Yes, they're paying zero under our government. But back then, we knew it because, you know what? We watched MTS disappear like the pixies at dawn to the friends of government for a small percentage of its value. And decent rates on telephone services were never seen again.

We knew it because the minimum wage never moved. We knew it because we attended the funerals of the Foster Parents Association, our friendship centres and, of course, our beloved Jets. The \$539 million in personal income taxes and the \$352 million in property taxes that families and individuals now save in tax cuts were not even a twinkle in the eye of anyone on the opposition's side.

The attack on workers was clear by the regressive changes to The Labour Relations Act. Human rights legislation and consumer protection legislation were sadly absent. It would only be later that the Tories would able—be able to vote against those on a consistent basis.

*(16:40)

There was no MTS Centre. There was no football stadium. There was no vision for an inland port to secure our future. School enrolments were going down. Do you remember the opening to *A Tale of Two Cities*? "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Well, that does not apply here. It was just the worst of times; yes, in the Filmon-Pallister years. It wouldn't have even been so bad if the government of the day had followed the doctor's Hippocratic oath of first do no harm. But, no, the policies of the Filmon-Pallister combo actively contributed to the recession and to the harm it caused to Manitobans.

You may wonder why it's still relevant today and I could just go on the member from Tuxedo's comment that past behaviour is indicative of future behaviour—could just go with that—but you know what? I don't have to because the Leader of the Opposition has been very clear about what he's going to do since he came back to the Leg. The very same policies he instituted then will be coming back and, with it, the death of our economy: \$550 million in cuts to front-line services, two-tier health-care system that he said Manitobans want. Yes, so if they were going to do a significant infrastructure plan like we have unveiled and which needs to be done, it would come with \$550 million of cuts out of

front-line services to Manitoba, because there is no other way. Money is just not growing on trees; it has to come from somewhere.

So today I'm particularly proud to be in a government that has consistently made a different choice throughout the recession that began in 2008. I am proud because I get to be part of a government where everyone in it is sincerely dedicated to making things better for all Manitobans, and we're not following the failed policies of the '90s, which Mr. Pallister has been clear that he would follow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I just want to advise the member opposite—or the member speaking that making reference to members in the Legislature, we refer to their positions or their constituencies. A reference to a Filmon-Pallister cabal is not in order, so just advice for the member. Thank you.

Ms. Wight: Some places are really beginning to see the light on what Manitoba is doing, not investing but cutting results in people not working. I don't think there is anything much more disheartening than family caregivers knowing we cannot fulfill that role of taking care of our children.

An interesting article that highlights the differences made by a government that invests rather than slashes was done by the New York Times comparing, interestingly, Wisconsin and Minnesota, and members opposite might be interested in just doing a little bit of a search on that. It shows that Minnesota, who followed a path a little bit more similar to Manitobans' is beating the recession back, while Wisconsin, following the same type of suggestions as our Leader of the Opposition, slashing and cutting and mothballing projects, is paying for it with a downturned economy.

Many governments cut and slashed, just as our Leader of the Opposition wishes to do, but their growth and their weathering of the recession storm has been nowhere near what Manitoba's has been. It's funny, but it's somehow in your own hometown that's the one place where something good you do is not recognized, and that's kind of how it's been. If we go elsewhere, everybody's amazed by what Manitoba has done. They're excited outside of Manitoba at how incredible we've weathered this recession. It is actually kind of only here in this House where we hear a little bit opposite story.

As the old poem goes: Two roads diverged on budget day / And we, we took the one less travelled by / And that has made all the difference.

Okay, well, I might've changed that quote a wee bit. I'm not sure that Robert Frost was actually talking about the budget. But making choices to invest and build in Manitoba has and will continue to make all the difference to what happens in our province. While other places all over the world lost jobs, Manitoba did not and it will not. In fact, we have the highest number of Manitobans working ever in the history of the province during a recession because we took a different road. We will invest billions of dollars in our infrastructure and those investments will result in our children having a future that is secure and that provides jobs for them. In fact, as the Conference Board of Canada has said, these investments will result in approximately \$6.3-billion boost to our economy; 58,900 jobs over the next five years will come to Manitoba. Our retailers will see a \$1.4-billion boost to retail sales. Our Finance Minister mentioned this, but I really want to stress it; for every \$1 invested in Manitoba, the return to Manitobans is \$1.16. A great return on investment and the kind of deal that every Manitoban, except maybe the 19 on my right, want to see.

Manitoba Heavy Construction called it a history-making infrastructure investment. So we won't be smelling mothballs in Manitoba as we did in the 1990s; we will be smelling asphalt. I never knew I could be so excited about infrastructure and asphalt, but it's a great thing. It really is a great thing for Manitoba, and it's no wonder that the Leader of the Opposition didn't mention it in his speech. I can understand why not, because how do you diss that?

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

As the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) mentioned the other day, we in this province love a good deal, and the other day I was at a meeting where the men were talking about their ties. That often happens here—the expensive ties that they're wearing, and one of them said, you know what, they just don't realize that the most loved designer in Manitoba is Joe Fresh. We're frugal and we're proud of it. We search out great deals and maybe that's why we live here, because Manitoba gives us one. We are the most affordable province in which to live. Our home heating, electricity and auto costs are guaranteed to be the lowest package of those costs in the country. We're so sure of that that we legislated it.

When you compare Manitoba's tax and basic household costs to the national average, you discover

that an average Manitoban family pays \$5,418 less than the national average of \$31,578. We have the second lowest level of provincial taxes on fuel in the country. We have the third lowest provincial sales tax rate in the country and a lot of people don't realize how much they have gone down since we came into government. Just as one example, since you asked: an average Manitoban family with two children where one spouse earns \$46,000 a year and the other \$30,000—the tax relief introduced since the '90s is \$3,800 in 2014. In 2014, our seniors are also going to begin to benefit from the start of the elimination of the education property tax by senior homeowners. The rebate they can apply for this year will be \$235, which will remove another 7,200 seniors off the education property tax roll.

Now some people have questioned that maybe the removal of this from all homeowners even those with, I don't know, say, \$2-million homes would be happy if the government explored how to target the credit so that those people are not fully exempt. So I'm sure that the rich of Manitoba will be happy to contribute to the well-being of all. I think this same reason of loving a good deal will make the idea of a Lean Council announced in Budget 2014 a favourite where government departments are going to identify ways to make everything work more efficiently by getting rid of any duplication or redundancies. And that is the kind of thing Manitobans love.

* (16:50)

Because we took a different road, I can say how proud I am to be part of a government that desires all Manitobans to reach their potential, and I'm so grateful to see the changes to EIA. Manitoba rent assist will not only increase with a goal to reaching 75 per cent of median rent, but will move with that person when they get a job. This rent and income-tested application-based program will support people so they can successfully move from social assistance into training and jobs. We believe there's a tremendous potential here that we can help tap for Manitoba, and we want everyone who can have the skills necessary to work and succeed.

And I particularly love that it will also extend to low-income Manitobans who are working so hard to support their families. It will be simpler; it will be portable. An EIA participants with private rental expenses are going to automatically receive the maximum value of this new benefit.

Because we took a different road, Mr. Speaker, we launched Manitoba Works. We're going to

provide training to our most vulnerable. We want to help all Manitobans, as I said, reach their potential.

You know what, Mr. Speaker, unlike some governments, we don't believe there's certain people that should just stay on the sidelines and shouldn't be given that chance to train and get skills. We believe that all Manitobans can do that. And Manitoba Works is a new program, working with community agencies to provide essential skills training and work experience to people who face the barriers to a good job. It's in stark contrast to choices made by a federal government to fund only training programs that help people who already had jobs, and I'm proud that we are not in that category.

Because we believe in good nutrition for all Manitobans, we have been at work for many years creating more gardens. I think there's like 900 or something now up north, is that correct? I don't know what there were before, maybe nine; went from nine to 900, I'm not sure of the—of exact numbers on that. Many other food initiatives.

And I am so excited this year that we're going to work to bring the price of milk into reach for all parents in Manitoba. If you weren't aware, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure you are, milk prices up north are exorbitant, sometimes as high as \$20 for four litres, and as result parents are unable to provide the proper nutrition to their children, and as a parent I find that heartbreaking. I worked, I know, with many teens who came from the North who had extreme dental decay at the age of 14 or 15. I believe we had been hoping that perhaps that would have been done by federal government, but I don't know, that doesn't seem to be happening. So I'm very proud to be part of a government who wants to see those milk mustaches on every child in Manitoba.

I'm also very excited that we're putting \$450,000, additional dollars, in the child nutrition programming in low-income schools, I see that as brain food, Mr. Speaker. You can't concentrate and learn when you're hungry or undernourished, and it's an important investment in our youth.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also so glad to see a further commitment to affordable and social housing in Manitoba. We know that there is no escape from poverty without this. You cannot pull off studying, or attending class, or going daily to a job without a safe place to live. We have been steadily increasing the supply with 1,500 units of affordable housing and 1,500 units of social housing begun in 2009. And we

will increase that by a further 500 new social housing units and 500 new affordable housing units in partnership with non-profit and private sector. And we would love to see our federal government come to the table on this and create national housing program.

I wonder, I don't know, but I wonder how many of those got built in the '90s, I don't know if there's someone in the House who might be able to shout out the answer. I'm guessing not a lot of affordable social housing occurred. No? *[interjection]*

How much?

An Honourable Member: Zero.

Ms. Wight: Zero. There was zero. Okay. So, to further increase these needed units, we've announced new financial incentives, the Rental Housing Construction Tax Credit, and it's going to give a tax credit of up to 8 per cent of capital construction costs.

So heading down a different path has resulted in thousands of child-care spaces since we came into government. I would like to thank the MLA from St. James for all the hard work she did consulting with stakeholders; it has resulted in our government announcing in this budget a new multi-year child-care plan. We cannot get people working and off EIA without providing a safe place for their children. And, again, we would like to see the federal government showing us, at the table, on that child-care plan.

We'd also like to thank the Minister of the City of Winnipeg and Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief) for his incredible work supporting early childhood development. All around the world, everywhere I see lately, I'm hearing about the potential to improve the future by improving the now of our littlest people. Our government is investing \$500,000 which will be matched by \$500,000 from McConnell foundation to create the Early Childhood Development Innovation Fund.

Did we have that in the '90s? *[interjection]* No. No, there was nothing like that in the '90s? Just asking.

First initiative of which will be the Winnipeg Boldness Project focusing on innovative early childhood initiatives for low-income children and families in Point Douglas. And I'm looking forward to that, you know, moving over a bit, after they finish that pilot.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that there are just too many good things in this budget for me to possibly cover in this little bit of time. The gateway to apprenticeship which is funding for new initiatives in partnership with industry and labour is going to be key to developing the skills and the trades for youth and underemployed populations. As Lynne Fernandez and Molly McCracken—I love that lady's name, Molly McCracken, isn't that wonderful?—noted, by substantially raising EIA shelter rates and increasing child-care spaces, new apprenticeship programs and support to social enterprises, the Province is taking action to provide marginalized people with the assistance low-income people need to overcome barriers to education and employment; and those things are close to my heart.

Because we chose to take another road, education investment was increased again last year, as it has been for every year since we have been in government and why is that? Well, Mr. Speaker, it's because it's a fundamental belief that we hold. If you are not investing in education, then you are by default investing in crime and poverty. Post-secondary education is affordable here. Sixty per cent is returned to the graduate through tax incentives if you live in Manitoba. We note, they voted against it. How can that be? We know we need an educated, skilled workforce in order to continue to see our province grow. We want that for our kids and our grandkids, and we have many people who came

here from other countries where their main goal was to make sure that their children had life better than they did. And our government wants to do everything possible to see those dreams come true.

Because we chose another road, health care continues to be a priority for our government. There's no health surcharges in other provinces. There will continue to be access centres and QuickCare clinics coming online to increase accessibility for all Manitobans. Free cancer care drugs will continue to be provided and home care will not be privatized. We will continue to increase the numbers of doctors and nurses and nurse practitioners and paramedics, health-care aids. You know, I started off talking about a difference in philosophy that in my younger days I didn't know existed. Well, recently I watched a Bill Maher piece on billionaires who felt victimized by the 99 per cent. I would quote him completely, but I really can't in this House, say everything that Bill Maher said. But these guys believe that they are so—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) will have four minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 11, 2014

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