

**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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
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
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LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
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WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 17, 2014

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

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

Good afternoon, colleagues and visitors. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**Mr. Speaker:** Introduction of bills?

### PETITIONS

#### Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Effects on Manitoba Economy

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

The background of the petition is as follows:

(1) The Premier of Manitoba is on record calling the idea of a hike in the PST ridiculous.

(2) Economists calculate that the PST hike has cost the average Manitoba family \$437 more in taxes after only six months.

(3) Seventy-five per cent of small businesses in Manitoba agree that provincial taxes are discouraging them from growing their businesses.

(4) The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association estimates that a 1 per cent increase in the PST will result in a loss to the economy of \$42 million and threaten hundreds of jobs in that sector.

(5) Partly due to the PST, overall taxes on new investment in Manitoba recently stood at 26.3 per cent whereas the Alberta rate was 16.2 per cent and the Ontario rate was 17.9 per cent, according to the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce.

(6) The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce are concerned that the PST hike will make an already

uncompetitive tax framework even more unattractive to job creators in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And (2) to urge the provincial government to restore the right of Manitobans to reject or approve any increases to the PST through a referendum.

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):** 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 the primary-care centre have had no doctor available on weekends and holidays for many months, jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of those in the northeast 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 G. Gregiems, I. Mazur and L. Iam 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. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the report of the Manitoba Law Reform Commission entitled Contributory Fault: The Tortfeasors and Contributory Negligence Act.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further tabling of reports?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Department of Finance, 2014-2015 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none, we'll move on to ministerial statements?

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today members of the Canadian federation students Manitoba office and the Brandon University Students' Union, including Bilan Arte, Matthew May, Greg Monias and Carissa Taylor, who are the guests of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Keeyask Hydro Dam Proposal Approval Process

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, this Keeyask hydroelectric proposal, Mr. Speaker, is supposed to be just a proposal, yet the government has already either spent or contracted over \$3 billion, and yet the thing isn't even approved yet. So that demonstrates a pretty

high level of arrogance, even for this government, and makes the process itself appear to be something of a sham or a rubber stamp.

Now, what sense does it make to treat—even though these are political appointees on the panel—to treat them like mannequins or bobble-head dolls? It is not respectful. Why have an approval process just for show?

So I have to ask the Premier, and I hope he'll give me a straightforward answer for a change: Who gave this government permission?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, it's the Leader of the Opposition that has taken the most rigid position. He has said don't build hydro for export. He said don't build hydro. He's said that natural gas is the way to go, which means jobs outside of Manitoba, less jobs inside of Manitoba and higher rates according to all the scenarios.

Mr. Speaker, the member may not have noticed it, but it was just this weekend in the Toronto Star, and I'll table three copies today for the House, the natural gas prices are proposed to go up 40 per cent in Ontario, and I'll make that available to you.

**Mr. Pallister:** Okay, well, of course, our position continues to be, despite the misrepresentation of the member for St. Boniface, that this deserves the time necessary to get it right, because we get one chance to get it right.

But the way to get it right is not to make the process a sham. It's not—it's a \$20-million sham, Mr. Speaker. It's deceit. It's a trick. It's an illusion. The whole process is a sham, and this government is paying disrespect to the committee of its own appointment.

\* (13:40)

Just like the position, the political decision to run the bipole line down the west side, the government is ignoring Manitobans' views and the views of experts. The Premier has his opinion, and that's all that matters. If he wants to hear your opinion, he's going to give it to you; that appears to be the case.

So I'll ask the Premier again: They've already spent or contracted over \$3 billion for a proposal that hasn't been approved yet. Who gave the government permission to do that?

**Mr. Selinger:** As I said earlier, on what basis does the Leader of Opposition say that there shouldn't be any hydro built for exports when he

knows he opposed—he opposed—building Limestone, \$1.6 billion, that has generated \$6 billion in revenue? Last week his critic jumped up and took credit for building it, three times. The evidence—[interjection] But that—it makes my point. Before it's built, they oppose it every step of the way. When it's built, they take credit for it.

The Leader of the Opposition, the member from Fort Whyte, fools nobody.

**Mr. Pallister:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the Premier ignores the question itself, and the question's one of respect, respect for the process, respect for the Public Utilities Board and the political appointees who it is comprised of, respect for Manitobans.

Why does the PUB even exist if the government's going to go ahead and make decisions in advance of what the PUB says? Why even bother? Why go through the optical illusion of pretending you're listening when you're not? Why does the Premier do that? This is a billions of dollars spent on the Keeyask project prior to approval, with a predetermined outcome, and this is disrespectful.

This is a massive decision. It's an irreversible decision. It means a doubling of Manitoba Hydro rates for Manitobans, and Manitobans don't even get a say in the process. Thirty-seven NDP—36 NDP MLAs get a say. The Premier is saying he'll spend millions of dollars to put on a phony consultation and all it does is prove he is not listening.

Who gave the Premier permission to spend this enormous amount of money without listening to Manitobans, without respecting the process that is there to protect their best interests?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, if that—if those quotes and those questions sound very familiar, I would like him—take him back to 1985 when the leader of the Conservative opposition party said, and it sounds very similar, he said borrowing two or three billion and building a dam two or more years before we need it will create some jobs for a while and it will also increase our power rates dramatically and we will all pay that price. The jobs will last for five years; the debts will last forever.

What happened? Limestone was built for \$1.6 billion, profits were \$6 billion, the members now take credit for it, and our hydro rates are lower today, Mr. Speaker, adjusted for inflation, when the Leader of the Opposition was in office. When he was in office, hydro rates were higher than they are today.

He opposes it; he wants to build natural gas, ship jobs to Alberta and Saskatchewan. We want jobs here, we want lower rates here, and we want prosperity here. He doesn't.

### **Manitoba Hydro Construction Costs PUB Recommendations**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** This First Minister might as well go back to 1985 to the Schreyer days, who's also totally opposed to this, Mr. Speaker.

Ratepayers find it shameful. While a hugely expensive and respected NFAT is under way, this NDP government plows ahead with a plan full of shots by experts, spending willy-nilly, a plan to put Manitoba ratepayers at risk and padding the spendP pockets.

Mr. Speaker, we heard last week that the Winnipeg Free Press costs usually double from the estimated cost to build a dam. This spendP government is about spending ratepayers' money.

What is the cost today to build Keeyask?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** Well, we know that based on our growing population, we know that based on our growing economy, Mr. Speaker, we know that we'll run out of power within the decade if we don't do anything. We need to build new generation stations that'll keep our rates the lowest on the continent, that'll keep Manitobans working rather than—rather than taking on natural gas decisions, which will put Albertans to work.

On the weekend I had the opportunity of hearing the Leader of the Opposition give the same old rhetoric, same old, same old, as they did in the '70s and the '80s and the '90s, Mr. Speaker. The same old message was don't build hydro. That's what the member opposite said very clearly. He agrees with Harry Enns, who criticized the building of Limestone back in the 1980s, and they try to pretend they're onside now.

Well, Manitoba is better off building dams—

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

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. We want to listen to the PUB. We want to listen to the experts. This is a government that wants to plow ahead with no respect for what ratepayers have to say. Shame on this government.

Oxford University studied 245 dam projects in 65 countries to find the average cost over budget was an additional 96 per cent. Using the minister's own numbers for Keeyask will be \$13 billion; Conawapa will be \$21.4 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why is this NDP government not wanting to listen to the PUB, not wanting to listen to the experts? Shame on this government.

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, they tell us we should listen to the PUB. On the other hand, the Leader of the Opposition badmouths the PUB. I would suggest he should pick a story and stick to it.

It's very clear that we should continue building northern dams instead of building natural gas plants that no one wants. Mr. Speaker, why would we do that? Well, let's take a look at it.

On the one hand, let's take a look at rates. What's the difference between gas and hydro? Well, gas prices are extremely volatile. As you've seen in Ontario, Enbridge has foisted upon Ontario families a 40 per cent increase of natural gas prices. What about hydro, on the other hand? Manitoba has the lowest average rates compared to every other jurisdiction in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker—

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

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, the spenDP is all about pushing whatever it wants through, regardless of what the PUB hears from experts. This NDP government has no authority to do what it is doing, but they have already spent billions of dollars without approval from the PUB.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Is the PUB just a sham, or does this NDP really care about what experts say, cost overruns, debt cost? Does this government listen to ratepayers, yes or no?

**Mr. Struthers:** Mr. Speaker, as we speak, Manitoba Hydro is before an NFAT which is looking at all of the alternatives, and they put 15 options on the table and they're looking at it thoroughly.

The only people who aren't willing to look at this thoroughly are the members opposite, whose only alternative is to delay these projects, cancel these projects and then privatize the corporation. That's the one alternative that members opposite have, and it's not a good alternative for Manitoba families.

I will table for members opposite a chart that shows clearly—very clearly—the 10 best prices in terms of electricity. Manitoba is the best right through to No. 10, including 11 and 12, which is Minnesota and Wisconsin, the people we're doing deals with, Mr. Speaker.

Let the members opposite take a look at those figures and then try to say something opposite to that.

### **Interest Rate Increase Debt Servicing Costs**

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, this spenDP government has doubled Manitoba's debt. They've increased the debt by \$10 billion in just five years.

And the 2014 budget shows that, as a result of this government's spending addiction, as a result of their inability to manage their spending, debt servicing costs will increase by \$36 million this year. That's just what they project, and they have, of course, missed their projections with frightening regularity. But Manitobans are concerned because, as bad as this is, this only applies if interest rates don't rise.

I ask the minister: What if interest rates rise? What would be the net effect on debt payment—debt servicing costs of a 1 per cent increase in interest rates?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** Of course, I think any person is concerned about debt in their own lives. Any person in this government would be concerned about debt. We want to make sure that the debt is both manageable and affordable.

And so when you look at debt as a percentage of the GDP, the debt as a percentage of the GDP, a percentage of the economy, is lower today than it was when we came to government in 1999. The debt today as a percentage of the economy is lower today than it was when the Leader of the Opposition was sitting around the Cabinet table.

\* (13:50)

And the cost to service that debt, the affordability of the debt, is half, 6 cents on the dollar versus 13 cents on the dollar when we came into government.

And that debt is responsible for building things in Manitoba, and it's enabled us to protect core services even in a time of recession.

**Mr. Friesen:** It's quite something when the Finance Minister won't even acknowledge that interest rates were like three times what they were then.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, the minister doesn't indicate what the effect would really be of rising interest rates, and surely she must understand and acknowledge that her government's record of overspending has not only serious implications but compounding implications if interest rates were to rise.

Matter of fact, just last week, Hydro president Scott Thomson was speculating in the media exactly on that, the implications of rising interest rates.

Mr. Speaker, the spenDP has allocated \$872 million to service debt, up sharply from the year before.

I ask the minister again: What would be the effect on debt servicing costs of a 1 per cent increase in interest rates?

**Ms. Howard:** And when you look around the country, the debt here as a percentage of GDP in Manitoba is lower than it is for the federal government. It's fourth lowest when it is—than it is around the country.

So, of course, debt is a concern. That is one of the reasons we have made half a billion dollars in debt payments, even since the recession, contrary to the advice we were given last week that we shouldn't be making those debt payments.

But, yes, Mr. Speaker, we have incurred debt because we are building, because that is the path to economic growth, because we didn't make the decision that was made by the government—by the opposition members when they were in government. When they were hit with a difficult time, they decided to freeze all building in Health. They decided to stop building hospitals. They cancelled personal-care-home projects.

We've decided to continue on. That's added to the debt, but the debt today is more manageable and more affordable—

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

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Speaker, only this spenDP government could crow about a half billion dollars in debt payments while they double Manitoba's debt past \$30 billion.

Mr. Speaker, debt servicing costs of this spenDP are up \$75 million in just two years. As a matter of fact, at \$75 million, the increase alone exceeds the entire budgetary allocation for Children and Youth Opportunities. Our debt servicing costs are double Saskatchewan; they are 10 times Alberta. She is not in control of core government expenditures that are up \$31 million over budget again this year.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that the skyrocketing \$850 million that they are using to service debt could be better spent on protecting front-line services that Manitobans depend on, services that are threatened by their debt and deficits and blame placing and excuse making?

**Ms. Howard:** I thought nothing could match them changing their position on the PUB between the first question and the second question, but my critic just changed his position within one question, which is a bit dizzying to me, frankly. In one respect, we should be protecting front-line services, which we are; in another respect, we shouldn't be spending money in Family Services and Justice to protect those front-line services.

So we are on a path to reduce the deficit responsibly, protecting front-line services, investing in a growing economy, creating jobs, building our infrastructure. That is the path we are on. Those are the priorities of Manitobans. That is the right path.

#### **School Division Funding Elimination of Positions**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, the new Minister of Education has said time and time again that school boards have the funding they need and that they would not have to raise taxes.

Well, the school boards in Manitoba met late last week. These are hard-working community members who deal with ratepayers on a daily basis. They do not agree with this new Education Minister.

The NDP has fired 11 teachers so far with the potential for more to come.

Mr. Speaker, who are the next teachers to be fired?

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** I thank the new critic across the floor for his question. I have no doubt that he'll do better than his predecessor, who, admittedly, set the bowl-bar kind of low.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member that we have increased funding to schools by the rate of economic growth or better since we were first elected. That results in over \$24 million more into the education system and for schools this year. That translates into a total of over \$470 million more since we were elected, and a total overall of \$1.2 billion.

On this side of the House we believe that we have financed the education system very, very well. If the member across the way believes that we should add more funding—

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** New Education Minister, old blame spenDP policies.

Mr. Speaker, here is what the new minister had to say about the school board's decision in today's Free Press, and I quote: "Do I think they could have held down taxes across the board? Yes, I certainly do. I am concerned—I believe the school system is well funded to date." End quote.

Eighteen out of 37 school divisions in this province received no increase in funding. The new minister believes that school divisions have enough funding, but school divisions have had to raise taxes across the board.

How many more teachers will this new Minister of Education fire because he believes that school divisions have enough money?

**Mr. Allum:** Again, I thank the member for the question.

We've done two things. We—on the one hand, we have ensured increased funding to schools every single year, but we've also managed to keep property taxes low. In fact, since 2000 all other provinces saw double-digit property tax increases: 31 per cent more in Saskatchewan, 47 per cent more in Alberta—or Ontario, excuse me—66 per cent more in Alberta.

Our investments so far ensure that school divisions can invest in children and in classrooms. We expect them to find administrative savings, school divisions, that is, so that resources can go into classrooms, not into boardrooms.

**Mr. Ewasko:** The new minister's blaming school divisions, but this is his government's MO: force Manitobans to do less—to do more with less, the lowest increase to school divisions in the last five

years while the spenDP government has had the biggest tax-grab increase in a quarter of a century.

The question is clear and it is simple: How many more teachers is on the chopping block of this new Minister of Education?

**Mr. Allum:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not so sure what the lowest increase actually means, but what it actually says to me is that we keep increasing funding to schools year over year over year.

And, Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition was at the Cabinet table, they cut funding to Education by 2 per cent in 1993-94, by 2.6 per cent in '94-95, frozen in '95-96, cut again in—by 2 per cent in '96-97 and frozen again at '97-98.

The difference between our side and their side cannot be clearer. We invest in children. We invest in classrooms. We invest in the future of education. They cut and they cut and they cut.

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

#### **1st Street Bridge Reconstruction Announcement**

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Well, another supposed history lesson, but those 11 teachers are interested in what's happening today, not what happened then.

Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was on another dog-and-pony show making several promises. Manitobans know that NDP promises only highlight NDP failures.

The Premier announced the urgent surprise reconstruction of the 1st Street bridge in Brandon. The mayor didn't know. The MLA for Brandon East didn't know. The federal government didn't know. How arrogant.

Is this just another further confirmation of how little respect the NDP has for municipal politicians and potential partners?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Mr. Speaker, last week our Premier and the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) announced \$80 million worth of work in Brandon and surrounding area. That's \$80 million worth of respect.

\* (14:00)

**Mr. Helwer:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP has underspent on infrastructure by \$1.9 billion over the last four

years. When you don't maintain infrastructure, you get more expensive urgent repairs. Emergency repairs on the 1st Street bridge will push back other projects and may make them miss federal funding. Another day, another failed NDP promise.

How can Manitobans believe anything promised by this NDP government?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the member opposite, I know, has got to be—he takes negativity to an absolute unheard-of level.

I'd like to—first of all, by the way, I'd like to table copies of Victoria Avenue before and Victoria Avenue after the work this year. And I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, that last week the member opposite made some comment about it not lasting a year or two. I want to say that the hard-working staff of MIT, the contract engineers and the contractors that did that work deserve a lot of respect from that—this House, and that member should apologize for them, because that work is an investment in the future of Brandon.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Just a short time ago, in fact, late last week, I asked honourable members to refrain from pounding on their desks, especially during question period time, and I'm asking once again for the co-operation of honourable members not to bang on their desktops. It creates problems for us in the folks that have to monitor our sound system for the Chamber, so I'm asking for your co-operation.

Now, the honourable member for Brandon West.

#### **Tax and Fee Increases Infrastructure Spending Record**

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Well, instead of partaking a virtual tour, I'd invite the minister to come on a real tour and see the cracks that are in that asphalt that is less than eight months old.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have failed on infrastructure. Not one dime of gas tax increase, not one dime of PST increase, not one dime of the federal—of the vehicle registration fee has gone into core infrastructure. They promise and they fail, and now urgent repairs are needed for endangered bridges and roads.

How can Manitobans believe anything that this NDP government promises?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I

mentioned the \$80 million that's going into the Brandon area. And, of course, we know tomorrow the member for Brandon West is going to get up and vote against every single cent of that.

But I want to put on the record that the work we're doing with our bridges, Mr. Speaker, really shows the degree to which we are planning ahead. We put in place inspections throughout the province, and whether it comes from floods or whether it comes from wear and tear, this is a bridge that was built originally in 1972. We know the next step is to have the capital budget to put in place. That's why we announced a five-year, \$5.5-billion plan.

But, Mr. Speaker, on this side I know I'm preaching to the converted, but we know tomorrow the member opposite and all members 'oppit' are going to vote against us, so anything the member says about infrastructure has no credence at all. They talk infrastructure in question period; they vote against it—

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

#### **STARS Contract Tendering Process Dispatch Numbers**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, prior to the last election, the NDP were so anxious to have a campaign prop that they ignored the due diligence process and rushed into a contract with STARS without tendering the contract. It was a hundred-million-dollar contract. The Auditor General was so concerned about that that she's done a review on that, and her report will be coming out on Wednesday.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health (Ms. Selby) to tell Manitobans: What kind of problems have they experienced because they didn't tender this hundred-million-dollar contract, thus shutting down transparency?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Acting Minister of Health):** I thank the member for the question.

We know that the subject of STARS has been one of much debate of late. The member and I have had a number of conversations in this regard in Committee of Supply, upwards of about 10 hours, I think, and I can say to the member today the same thing that I said to her then.

We had an opportunity to work with STARS during the 2009 flood; the service was exemplary. They returned in 2011; the service was exemplary.

We had an opportunity at that time to engage in a contract with them. Twenty-five years' experience, Mr. Speaker, continuity of service. We chose to maintain that continuity of service rather than waiting upwards of two years to have a helicopter ambulance in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The NDP rushed to get STARS in place before the last election so that they could have a picture of the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the shiny red helicopter on the NDP party website. In order to do that, they did not tender the contract, and it is also questionable how much homework they actually did.

Mr. Speaker, in 2013 STARS was dispatched in Saskatchewan 821 times, and in Manitoba it was dispatched only 235 times. That's quite a difference.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health (Ms. Selby) to explain why STARS has flown so little in Manitoba.

**Ms. Oswald:** First of all, we did have a lengthy discussion about this over the course of two years in Estimates.

I'll reiterate for the member that we had experience with STARS in 2009, 2011, exemplary life-saving service. We made a conscious decision at that time to not interrupt the service that they were providing, to contract with them. We knew Saskatchewan was endeavouring to do the same thing at the same time.

And, Mr. Speaker, on the subject of choosing STARS as a campaign prop, I would note, as I did for the member back then, that on the Tory election materials there was a jaunty picture of their former leader right next to a helicopter.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, we've also seen three critical incidents in the last while, so it really does beg some questions about what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, according to Dr. Wheeler, because of the small number of flights, each flight on average costs about \$55,000. I expect the auditor's report is going to have more to say on that on Wednesday.

Before signing the sole-source contract, I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us: What did the NDP know about the number of times STARS would be needed on a yearly basis? What homework did they do, or were they so desperate to use their shiny red helicopter in the campaign that they didn't do any homework?

**Ms. Oswald:** That's simply not true. There was a lot of analysis done in partnership with STARS, with Dr. Powell, who was the 'CEow' at the—CEO at the time. There was plenty of work done to decide whether or not we should have an interruption of 18 months to two years before another helicopter could be put as an air ambulance. We chose the continuity of service.

We absolutely know that critical incidents are investigated in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, because we introduced the legislation that requires critical incident reviews. We didn't follow the path of members opposite and sweep medical error under the rug like they did with the cardiac pediatric deaths. We learned from that. We review critical incidences here and, in fact, I might remind the member that I believe they voted for that legislation unanimously.

### Surface Water Management Strategy Government Priority

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the implementation of a surface water management strategy or a plan to reduce future flooding and to reduce pollution of Lake Winnipeg and other Manitoba lakes remains a top priority for men in—many Manitobans, but clearly not for this government.

In more than 14 years as a government, this Premier and his team have yet to produce a surface water management plan. Most recently, two years ago it was promised for spring 2013. A year later, with no mention in the Throne Speech or the budget, it appears to have vanished into thin air.

I ask the Premier: Is this NDP government just extremely tardy, or does it not consider a surface water management plan a priority?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, coming out of the 2011 flood there were many decisions that were made to prevent that disaster occurring again.

First and foremost was to put long-term protection in place for the people of Brandon, the Assiniboine valley, Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin and all around those areas. We wanted to make sure that they could be protected in the future. And the member will note that we have proceeded with very significant infrastructure investments in all of those areas, including the emergency channel, including putting \$100 million aside this spring for the permanent rebuilding of those communities to ensure that they won't go through what they went

through in 2011. We await the federal government's full participation in that project as we protect those communities.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we brought in very rigorous controls on our legislation to ensure that phosphorus does not flow into our freshwater lakes, and I'll comment more on that in my next response.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, the ongoing theme of mismanagement and poor planning by this NDP government persists with delays for such critical plans. On the government's website it says a final strategy is planned for completion by spring 2013, but a year later we still don't have it.

\* (14:10)

This government doesn't know where it's going, doesn't know how to get things done. You know, perhaps it's difficult to budget appropriately when you don't know what your surface water management plan is. But you know, Mr. Speaker, this is Manitoba; it's not news we have floods.

Where is the Premier's surface water management plan, and when is he going to deliver it?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the measures we put in place have seen a reduction of between 21 and 46 per cent in phosphorus concentrations in the south and north basins of Lake Winnipeg between 2005 and '13.

We're doing things every single day with our infrastructure investments to better manage phosphorus on the land and to ensure that land drainage is properly done. More money in sewer and water, more money in training of people that run water facilities, more money to reduce phosphorus concentrations on the land and where they drain and very significant investment in wetland restoration, both in Lake Manitoba and in other wetlands all around Manitoba, these are all elements of a surface water strategy which will come together.

But the member should be under no illusion. We're not waiting for the grand strategy. We're investing and taking legislative measures every single day to reduce drainage off the land to protect our lakes and streams in Manitoba.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, we have just heard from this Premier he's not waiting for a plan, he's just going willy-nilly all over the place without knowing where he's going.

We got a vague interim report on what was heard during consultations in November 2012. The delivery of a surface water management plan was promised for spring of 2013.

You know, after two by-elections where it was one of the hottest topics on the doorstep for people who were actually in Morris and Arthur-Virden, the NDP were clearly not listening. Some people are still waiting. Many have just given up on this government.

When will the Premier release the surface water management plan and what funds are actually being budgeted for it?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous question, over a billion dollars has been leveraged for investments in clean water, clean sewer in Manitoba. And there has already been reported reductions of 21 to 46 per cent in concentrations of phosphorus in the south and north basins of Lake Winnipeg between 2005 and 2016.

The member will also know that there's a lake-friendly alliance which has been brought together in Manitoba. Environmental groups, community organizations, industry groups, farm groups, they've all come together and they're working together on how to reduce phosphorus drainage off the land.

And we are pursuing a lake-friendly 'acclord' with all the jurisdictions around us: North Dakota, Minnesota, Saskatchewan, northwest Ontario. All of these jurisdictions have water that comes into Manitoba, and we're going to work with them to reduce the kinds of nutrients, the kinds of chemicals, the kinds of phosphorus that we see in our waterways. And they're already co-operating with us.

So the member needs to know we have invested, and he's voted against it. We've brought legislation in, and he's voted against it. We've made a difference working with people, and he has not co-operated with us. We will continue to protect fresh water in Manitoba, and I only hope in the future he will vote for those measures in the—

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

### Grain Transportation Backlog Provincial Update

**Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East):** Mr. Speaker—  
[interjection]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for Brandon East has the floor.

**Mr. Caldwell:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to represent the Wheat City of Canada. And in western Manitoba, agriculture is indeed king.

After last year's bumper crops throughout the Prairies, producers are struggling with getting their grain to market. I know our government is very concentrated on ensuring that Manitoba producers have the best opportunity possible to—*[interjection]* Mr. Speaker, members opposite are laughing about producers getting their grain to market. It's a—it's shameful. Members opposite may think it quite funny that producers are having a difficult time getting their grain to market. We're working to ensure that that problem is solved.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Agriculture Minister if he could update the House on what we're doing to ensure that producers get their grain to market.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development):** I'd like to thank the member from Brandon East to bringing the question forward.

Being a producer for 35 years of my life, and to hear the opposition heckling a very important question that's being brought forward, it is truly a lack of respect for the economy of the province of Manitoba for the agriculture producers.

When you have producers that probably had the best bumper crop in the entire lives of agriculture, their crop production in the province of Manitoba 30 per cent greater than ever before, probably record prices, today, unfortunately, the vision has never been set more 'devastating' for the producers of they have challenges of moving their grain.

But I want to share some important information with the members if they choose to listen—if they choose to listen—to the important—of what we've done as a government. The Premier (Mr. Selinger)—

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

The honourable member for Agassiz has the floor.

#### **PST Increase Impact on Families**

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** Mr. Speaker, the spenDP increased the PST on backpacks, sports

equipment, sports footwear, mouthguards, safety helmets for sports and recreation. We want our children to be active and involved.

Why would the spenDP raise the PST on those items? Do they not realize that they are making it more costly for children to be involved in sports, or do they simply not care?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** I want to thank the member for the question.

Of course, that's a concern for all of us, that young people can have a healthy lifestyle, can get active in sports and recreation. But we want that for all families.

And last week I know the member had a similar question and I took that opportunity to remind him of what their policy was with some of the most vulnerable families in our province. They took every dollar that those families got through the National Child Benefit and they clawed every dollar of that back from their social assistance payments.

And when we became government, we restored that. Those families were better off because we restored that benefit to them so that they, like all families, could see their kids participate in sports and recreation.

That's the difference between us, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Briese:** Mr. Speaker, they restored the benefit and then pulled back—pulled it all back in extra taxes.

The spenDP also placed 14 per cent PST increases on items such as exercise books, scribblers, notebooks, binders and covers and loose-leaf sheets, all of which are needed school supplies for children.

The spenDP promised before the last election not to raise the PST. They broke their promise.

Will the NDP do the right thing, cancel their 14 per cent PST increase and end their attack on the finances of Manitoba's young families?

**Ms. Howard:** You know, I recall a day in this House when every member opposite stood up demanding infrastructure investment in their constituencies. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? They've spent every day since asking us to cancel that investment, and that's what we hear from them today.

We have put forth in this budget a plan to grow this economy, to make key strategic infrastructure investments now, to invest in skills training so that our kids and future generations can get good jobs,

can work here, can build a life here. That is the investment that we have committed to make.

The members opposite, they can vote against that investment. They can continue to ask us to cancel those projects which they said were unnecessary. That can be their position.

I believe the path that we have set upon with this budget is the path to more prosperity for more families in which no one is left behind.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I'm asking for leave to allow the Minister of Agriculture—we asked a question a week or two ago about an important issue. We finally got the government onside to ask a question about transportation for those who've had bumper crops.

Well, he didn't—he couldn't answer the question a week ago. It took him more than 40 seconds now, but we're willing to give him another 40 seconds to answer the question, and I just hope it's more than they formed a committee or something like that. But we'll give him 40 seconds.

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader):** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a shame that members opposite found the plight of western farmers trying to get their grain to market so funny that they thought it appropriate to laugh during the question being asked by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) and the answer being given.

If they do truly take the issue seriously, they'll have an opportunity in tomorrow's question period.

**Mr. Speaker:** So I take it, then, that leave has been denied to extend it?

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** I hear a no.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** So oral questions time has expired.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. It's now—*[interjection]* Order, please. Order, please.

It is time for members' statements.

\* (14:20)

#### Syrian Revolution

**Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul):** Yesterday I attended an event hosted by the Syrian Assembly of Manitoba to commemorate the three-year anniversary of the Syrian revolution. The event was entitled The Third Anniversary of the Syrian Revolution: The Cost of Freedom and Dignity.

Under the leadership of Dr. Khaled Al-Taweel, the group's executive director of the Syrian Assembly of Manitoba put on an informative and well-orchestrated event. They were able to book David Johnson, the president and CEO of the Syrian Support Group in Washington, D.C., as the keynote speaker. Mr. Johnson gave a thoughtful and passionate speech on the happenings in Syria and some of the things that must be done going forward.

Unrest in Syria began March 15th, 2011, and by April of 2011, widespread mass protests began to percolate throughout the country. In April of 2011, the Syrian Army was deployed to try and quell the protests. Across the country, protesters were fired upon. In July of 2011, after over 3,000 civilians were killed by the Assad regime. The Free Syrian Army was formed in opposition to the Assad-led Syrian Army.

After years of fighting, the casualty toll by September of 2013 had already reached 120,000. In August of 2013, the Assad regime used chemical weapons in an airstrike over Al Ghutah, killing thousands.

More than four million Syrians have been displaced and over three million Syrians have fled the country as political refugees. Millions have been left in dire living conditions with shortage of both food and water.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party, I would like to commend the Syrian Assembly of Manitoba for their excellent work on bringing attention to this important issue. Our party believes in a peaceful, strong democratic government and hope that Syria achieves nothing short of this.

Let us be mindful that the western inaction in Syria has given us the problems now faced in Ukraine. Western inaction in Ukraine might give us an even greater problem in another area of the world.

When good men and women stay silent, those with evil intentions win. Let's not be silent.

Thank you for this opportunity to present this.

**Mothers Against Drunk Driving:  
Smashed Launch**

**Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows):** Mr. Speaker, last week I attended the Manitoba launch of Mothers Against Drunk Driving's new School Assembly Program titled Smashed. The video aims to get young people thinking about the dangers of impaired driving and the need to take precautions to protect themselves. Most importantly, it reinforces the fact that every single one of the deaths and injuries caused by impaired driving is entirely preventable.

The video depicts a fictional account of friends who ditch a school dance in favour of a house party and where one terrible decision causes a lifetime of grief and guilt. The dramatization is followed by the heart-wrenching stories of three victims of impaired driving crashes.

The video left a haunting silence in the room. I looked around at students, staff and guests, tears filling many of their eyes, and knew that all of us were leaving that assembly with a greater appreciation for our own responsibility to stop impaired driving.

I was sitting with Wayne and Melody Bodnarchuk, who join me in the gallery today. Melody is president of MADD Winnipeg Chapter, and their son was killed by a drunk driver in 2010. They had a button on their lapels with their son's picture in it.

Mr. Speaker, this experience had a profound impact on me. I have a teenage daughter. First thing I did when I left the assembly was text her: call mom, don't drink and drive. But how do you defend yourself from being hit by a drunk driver? That requires a cultural shift in beliefs and attitudes.

There are so many people I want to thank for bringing this powerful video to thousands of Manitoba students. I want to thank MADD, Melany and Wayne, for their incredible activism, the generous sponsors who made the video possible, MPI for bringing the presentation to 109 Manitoba schools, and finally I wanted to thank the victims and families for sharing their deeply personal stories. By talking about this issue and the lives it has destroyed, we can make our roads safer.

Thank you.

**West Park Manor: Touch Quilts**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to acknowledge a wonderful presentation I was invited to participate in. On February 10th, the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba chose to donate their annual batch of touch quilts to all the residents of West Park Manor Personal Care Home. The Alzheimer's touch quilts are made by a dedicated group of volunteers from 36 six-inch squares of assorted textured fabrics.

Mr. Speaker, these quilts were all expertly crafted and absolutely beautiful but, more importantly, the sensory stimulation that the quilts provide has been proven to increase happiness, relaxation, attentiveness and communication in persons with dementia.

I was inspired to see the appreciation of the residents and staff at West Park Manor, to the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba for this donation and to the recognition given to the caring and tireless volunteers who make this project happen every year.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of this House to join me in thanking the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba, their volunteers, as well as the amazing staff of West Park Manor for their dedication to facilitating quality care and compassion to their residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Volunteering in Tyndall Park**

**Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park):** Mr. Speaker, volunteering is an important part of our communities. Whether people volunteer their time or their money, it is an unselfish act. When people take part in selfless activities, in the end it helps not only one organization or community, but Manitoba as a whole.

People in Tyndall Park are key examples of how generous Manitobans are as a whole. I personally know that many of the events held at the Tyndall Park Community Centre are run by volunteers, and the people who give their time and energy to be on their board of directors are also volunteers.

At the Weston Community Centre, volunteers run free chess games every Friday and also free boxing workouts for youth three times a week. Both of these activities are available simply because people from the neighbourhood wanted to use their talents to give back to their community.

Mr. Speaker, studies show that people who volunteer live longer and happier lives than those who do not. What makes this even more interesting is that people who volunteer for the sole purpose of helping others have a greater life expectancy than people who volunteer for self-serving reasons.

Helping others promotes a greater sense of self-worth and belonging in the community. The people in Tyndall Park who donate their time and talents for others are an example for me and for all of us, and I applaud them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Winnipeg Downtown Core Revitalization**

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg's downtown is thriving. Since 2005, more than \$2 billion in investments and 111 new projects have been creating good jobs in our city. Downtown growth will not only create jobs around Winnipeg but will also increase real estate values and encourage new business. About 15,800 people now live in downtown, with another 69,000 people who work, shop and eat there during the week.

Mr. Speaker, we are starting to see many new apartments and businesses build downtown, while houses are being renovated and given a new coat of paint. Growth of this rate is important to supporting industry in St. Boniface Industrial Park who rely on local demand. A growing construction industry means more jobs for Winnipeggers, including for manufacturing businesses such as Kitchen Craft Cabinetry in Radisson.

Mr. Speaker, this is exact opposite to the real estate collapse in the 1980s and 1990s under the previous government. During that time, the people moved to suburbs en masse and never came back—wrecking havoc on downtown business, property values and its sense of community. Our government is working hard to do this—that it does not happen again.

Mr. Speaker, most recently Downtown BIZ reported—reports showed that every year there are four million visitors to the—at the Forks, 1.5 million visits to Millennium Library and one million visits to MTS Centre. The return of the Winnipeg Jets was a particularly exciting development. Since 1999, attractions such as these are signalling the developers that people are confident Winnipeg is booming.

Mr. Speaker, with this optimism and our investment for the future, the sky is the limit for economic growth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** That concludes members' statements.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

#### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

#### **BUDGET DEBATE**

#### **(Seventh Day of Debate)**

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll now move on to orders of the day and 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 proposed amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, who has five minutes remaining.

\* (14:30)

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the message is broken promises by this NDP government in the 2011 election. But not only the NDP government, but we're also talking about 57 NDP candidates that went door to door on a few very important promises which, to date, they have not fulfilled.

The first one was no new taxes, and as we know, due to the PST increase of 14 per cent, they are now—this NDP government is now hauling in a half a billion dollars in extra revenue right into their general revenue, which they seem to be blowing one way or another.

The other one, Mr. Speaker, is the education tax off of seniors. To date, once again, that promise has not been fulfilled.

And then, or course, the big one is the balanced budget. They have not—they promised to balance the books by 2014. To date, once again, we're well into the hundreds of millions of dollars in debt, and all that's doing is increasing the debt that is going to be bestowed upon our youth, our students, our kids, our grandkids, for many, many generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, in the final few minutes that I have to speak on the amendment which our leader of the Progressive Conservatives brought forward, the member from Fort Whyte, I just wanted to mention a couple points. Now, Manitoba had placed second last

of all provinces, and just mere few points from being dead last on the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program testing of mathematics in 2010. Science and reading are not far behind. The—it also shows that we are placing eighth and ninth respectively in reading and science. We are a bottom-of-the-barrel government leading a fantastic province of Manitoba and, again, in the dying days of the NDP government, a mere two years away from the next election, which, again, I can hardly wait for, we are definitely needing some change, and a lot of Manitobans are hoping for that change as well.

What I don't quite understand, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that, as this government has doubled the debt, they have taken about \$1,600 out of the pockets of Manitoba families with the increase in the PST and the expansion of the fees. They've also taking—they're also taking \$5,000 a member in the vote tax. All these numbers add up and could definitely help to make a better province for our young people. And what I don't understand is why this government of the day would choose to do this to our kids, our grandkids, our great-grandkids and all other Manitobans in this wonderful province of ours.

So, today, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks and I just put on the record that I am going to be voting in favour of the amendment brought forward by our leader, the member from Fort Whyte, and I will be voting against the 2014 budget which was brought forward by the Finance Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time.

**Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East):** Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure and a privilege to stand today to put a few words on the record with regard to the budget.

And I'm—how do I phrase this?—I was struck by the Leader of the Opposition's remarks that are reflected in the March 17th Hansard. I've sat here for 14 years and I've never seen a more rambling, incoherent response to the budget from a member in this House, let alone a leader of a party.

And I'd like to invite Manitobans to take a look at the Hansard, March 7th, 2014, just to get a glimpse into the way that the mind works for the member who is the Leader of the Opposition because it is a very non-linear, incoherent, rambling sort of diatribe. I've never seen a response to the budget by a member in this House that is more incoherent than the one that we heard from the Leader of the Opposition last week.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to touch upon a few gems for Brandon and western Manitoba that our government has been responsible for supporting over the—not only in this budget, but over the last number of budgets. And, I'll just—I'll go through them a little ways to illustrate the degree of investment that is taking place in Brandon and western Manitoba over the last 14 years. And, in fact, the investment that has taken place in Brandon and western Manitoba is an historic level of investment. It's the greatest level of investment in the province's history.

And as we're joined by friends from the Canadian Federation of Students here today, I'll—I'd like to start with some post-secondary investments. At Assiniboine Community College, we have embarked upon a historic shift in the community college—Assiniboine Community College—from Brandon's east end campus, which is a very small campus more akin to a city's high school, to a relocation of that campus on the historic North Hill former campus of the Brandon Mental Health Centre, Mr. Speaker. We've invested approaching \$100 million in that investment in Assiniboine Community College, with the building and construction of the Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology, which has been up and running for a few years now.

The Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts which was built about eight years ago, it was—started functioning. Those two investments, Mr. Speaker, completely transformed two massive historical buildings on the North Hill campus. We'd still have work to do there but this is a government that's committed to building ACC and creating, for Brandon and western Manitoba, a legacy project for young people for decades into the future and providing employers with a world-class trades and technology hub at Assiniboine Community College on Brandon's North Hill campus.

Moving from the Assiniboine Community College, I'll—we'll go down to Brandon University, where we built the health studies building. That was the first investment that we made on that campus, quickly followed by the reconfiguration of the power plant which was needed to fulfill our ambitions to further build on Brandon University's campus with the recent opening of the Healthy Living Centre, a \$22-million project that was recently opened. I had the privilege of being in attendance with my friend, Larry Maguire, the MP for Brandon-Souris, along with Her Worship Mayor Shari Decter Hirst and

President Deborah Poff, to officially open that Healthy Living Centre, about two weeks ago, Mr. Speaker.

So the investment combined between Brandon University and Assiniboine Community College in the last decade is approximately \$150 million, Mr. Speaker, again, the largest investment in post-secondary infrastructure in my community's history. We have ambitions to move forward with that and we will move forward with that because we as a government see education as the foundation of economic growth and economic development in our province. And, I'm very, very proud to be part of a government that believes in investing in post-secondary education in Brandon, in post-secondary education in the city of Winnipeg and post-secondary education in communities throughout the province: Dauphin, Flin Flon, The Pas, Thompson, city of Winnipeg, the city of Brandon and other, ancillary, campuses and operations throughout the province. We are, in fact, Manitoba's education government.

Mr. Speaker, I'll move from the post-secondary investments to our health-care investments in Brandon. And I had the good fortune to be a city councillor but the misfortune of being a city councillor when members opposite held power during the 1990s when, for 11 years running, we had our expectations raised and then dashed in western Manitoba for the redevelopment of the Brandon Regional Health Centre. We were functioning, quite literally, with a 1950s- and '60s-era hospital in Brandon when our government was elected to office.

Our first investment in Brandon, was the complete redevelopment of the Brandon Regional Health Centre, which took place over the course of the three years, from 2000, 2001, 2002—excuse me, Mr. Speaker—the redevelopment of that hospital into a world-class facility that now serves an area of 200,000 people with a world-class health facility with world-class neonatal units, with world-class surgical suites.

\*(14:40)

And not only was that multi-million-dollar investment important for turning around the cynicism that members opposite—it's so strongly engendered in people from—in western Manitoba—we turned around that cynicism from being disappointed year after year for an entire decade, to building and investing in the Brandon Regional Health Centre, the complete transformation of that centre.

And not only was that initiative undertaken and successfully completed, but almost every single year since then, Mr. Speaker, we've been investing heavily in health-care infrastructure in Brandon with the redevelopment of the Westman Laboratory, the redevelopment or the development of the health access centre in downtown Brandon, and most significantly of all, I think, for those whose lives have been affected by cancer, which all of us at one time or another in our lives will experience if we haven't already, the development of the Westman cancer treatment centre, which has made a huge difference to people in western Manitoba, to families in western Manitoba, to patients in western Manitoba, that has—which changed the reality of having to drive to Winnipeg, undergo cancer treatment in Winnipeg, drive back to Brandon or have a hotel room in Winnipeg for days, sometimes weeks. The huge cost financially, the huge cost physically that was removed from people from western Manitoba when we built that cancer treatment centre has been probably the most noteworthy investment that we've made as a government in western Manitoba.

And I'm very, very proud that our government saw fit to create a cancer centre of that magnitude. We had visitors from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester coming up to see the cancer treatment centre in Brandon, Mr. Speaker, so we know we're firing on all cylinders and we know that we are leading, in fact, in North America in terms of cancer treatment in this province and recently with the cancer treatment centre in Brandon in our home—in my home community of western Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, at Brandon University, Assiniboine Community College and the Brandon Regional Health Centre, we're approaching a quarter of a billion dollars' worth of investment in those two sectors alone. The largest investment in provincial history in those two sectors has been under the watch of this government, and I'm very, very proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also—I also—because it's important to note, every single penny of that investment has been opposed by members opposite—every single penny—and I think that speaks volumes of the cynicism that carried forth from the Filmon government in which the Leader of the Opposition—the current Leader of the Opposition was a major player—a major player—sitting around that Cabinet table, cancelling the Brandon Regional Health Centre expansion year after year for the time that he was in office with the former Conservative government. We

know, in Brandon, who the friend of our city is, and it isn't the member who is the Leader of the Opposition right now. In fact, that individual was part and parcel responsible for the cynicism that western Manitobans felt for government during those long, dark years of the 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also reference investment in infrastructure, because this is a very important item of discussion this year. We've got a \$5.5-billion infrastructure renewal plan that was announced as part of this year's budget rollout, the largest investment in infrastructure in provincial history. You're going to hear that a lot from this government. We are a government, in fact, that is a historical government in terms of investing and building this province. That \$5.5 billion in infrastructure investment will transform my community in terms of the access bridges from the Trans-Canada Highway into Brandon, in terms of flood protection, in terms of the resurfacing of provincial roads of responsibility in the city of Brandon. And I want to thank my colleagues who so thoughtfully have included \$80 million—the announcement that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and I made in Brandon last week—\$80 million, it was announced, out of that tranche of infrastructure investment for municipal infrastructure alone, this is going to be a transformative for Brandon and the infrastructure in Brandon.

So, Mr. Speaker, infrastructure, health care, post-secondary education—those touch upon major areas of investment that the Province has undertaken in Brandon, but it really doesn't speak to the depth of investment in Brandon which occurs when we invest in child-care centres. When we invest in daycare, child care, this budget will increase support for more spaces, more child-care spaces in Brandon as well as increase wages for early childhood educators and those who work with our most valuable resource, our children.

Since coming to office, we've created 150 new child-care centres in this province, every single one of them voted against by members opposite. We've increased wages for child-care workers, again, opposed by members of opposite. We've increased spaces for child care opposed by members opposite. Everything we've done in government for 14 years has been opposed. Every penny of investment has been opposed by the members opposite, and I think that speaks volumes to—*[interjection]* Sorry, I was distracted by my friend, the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar)—speaks volumes in terms of who represents

the best interests of Manitoba. I know, speaking from the government side of the House, with the historic investments in education, historic investments in health care, historic investments in infrastructure, it is indeed this government that represents the best interests of Manitoba and it is indeed this government that is working to build this province and build a future for families in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also provided pretty significant support to apprenticeship opportunities in this province. We've added a \$5,000 tax credit to expand apprenticeship opportunities, as well as \$1,000 for students undertaking apprenticeship programs. We are making progress on eliminating the seniors property tax that was a commitment in our last election campaign. That's a major investment supporting seniors. When we came to office, the tax credit available to Manitobans was \$250. Today it's over \$1,000. Every single penny of that, opposed by members opposite again. There's a theme here. One government that's—one party that seeks to build the province and the other party that seeks to tear it back down.

Mr. Speaker, I'm often commented on by some of my friends in the Conservative Party about, you know, my comments about members voting against every single penny because, you know, people expect oppositions to vote against budgets. You know—but budgets provide the resources to build health care and to build education and to build infrastructure. Governments don't always vote against budgets. When budgets are good, they should be supported. That shows integrity. That shows a willingness to work across party lines. That shows a determination to build our province, not be playing petty partisan politics.

It's been brought to mind, and I think it's worth referencing, that in the last budget that was put forward before the Tory government fell, Mr. Speaker, our government voted for the budget because the budget supported Manitobans, and the budget was the best budget in 11 years of cutting health care and cutting to post-secondary education, of cutting infrastructure, of sowing cynicism in announcing and then withdrawing from, and then announcing and withdrawing from, and announcing and withdrawing from the development of the Brandon Regional Health Centre. The last budget that the members opposite, when they held the reins of power in this province, was a pretty good budget, and our party, our government, our party was proud to vote for that budget and support that investment—

**An Honourable Member:** Two budgets.

**Mr. Caldwell:** And my colleague says we voted for a couple of budgets. So it does show and puts the lie to the assertion that, well, you know, we just have to vote against the budget because we're the opposition.

Well, no, you don't. If it's a good budget, it's a good budget, and this is a good budget. It's \$5.5 billion in infrastructure improvements, Mr. Speaker, continued investment in our seniors, continued investment in our health-care system, continued investment in our post-secondary system, continued investment in neighbourhoods, affordable housing and child care and daycare. This is a solid, good budget that supports families and builds our province, and we would have, in opposition, voted for this budget. It's a good budget. It supports Manitobans.

\* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite sow cynicism. We vote against budgets because it's our job, you know, we're the opposition. Well, you know what? That's not what in reality is happening here. What's happening in reality is a tea party group over here, a hard-right, Republican-style government led by a hard-right, Republican-style Reform Party, Alliance party, Conservative Party. Whatever the party, on the hard right was in favour of the day. The member that leads the Tory opposition today in this House was part of and central to, and then when he was rejected for being too hard right for even Stephen Harper and rejected from Cabinet, he quit—he quit. He took his ball and he went home. That's the calibre of leadership that the Conservative Party in Manitoba brings to the table today, a Tea Party, hard-right, Republican-style, mean-spirited, wizenly party.

And I know that they have trouble in their caucus right now, Mr. Speaker. I know that there's divisions in their caucus. I know some of the red Tories in the caucus are not happy with the road that the Leader of the Opposition has taken them down, that hard-right, Republican Tea Party. Let's beat up immigrants. Let's beat up the poor. Let's beat up Manitobans. Let's oppose every single investment in health care. Let's oppose every single investment in education. Let's oppose every single penny that the Province of Manitoba is investing in to build this province. That's the sort of party that the Leader of the Opposition is now leading in this province.

And I think it's going to be becoming increasingly apparent over the next couple of years as we head into 2016 exactly how hard right the party led by the current Leader of the Opposition, the man that sat around the Cabinet table when seven times the Brandon Regional Health Centre was cancelled, the man that sat around the table when the child tax credit, the tax benefit, literally taking food out of the mouths of babies, was cut—clawed back by the previous Conservative government.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are government that believes in investing in this province. We are a government that believes in being optimistic about the future of this province. We are a government that believes in supporting our communities and building our communities, building strong communities, building strong families. The members opposite are a party that seek to thwart that sort of building of this province, and they do it in the harshest terms possible.

And, again, I will remind the members opposite, this government, this party that I'm proud to belong to supported budgets when it made sense, supported budgets in this province that were going to build this province. We supported investment in this province when members opposite sought to actually build this province, way back when they were still supporting this province. So the—I want to put a lie to—put an exclamation mark to the lie that opposition governments just vote against the budget, a holus-bolus as a matter of course. That is in fact not true. When a budget is good, it is incumbent upon all of us in the House of whatever party to support it and support investment in Manitoba. We know that the members opposite have already said, before the debate's over, they're not supporting the budget.

You know, Mr. Speaker, before the budget, for weeks we heard about—you know, the crocodile tears that were shed by the Leader of the Opposition around bringing rents—rent assistance up to 75 per cent of market value. A cornerstone of this budget, the Rent Assist program, will provide for those on assistance who are struggling to meet their rent and to feed themselves and to maintain their families. We are, in this budget, beginning the process of bringing rent assistance to 75 per cent—or 75 per cent of median market rates, exactly what the member—the Leader of the Opposition was—made his primary feature of his opposite—or of his lean—coming into this budget—the primary feature of his suggestions or encouragement for our government.

We're doing it, yet they're still going to vote against this budget.

So, you know, we have on the one hand a party that will support budgets when they're good for Manitoba because we're here for Manitoba and another group that puts partisan interests and the hardest right, the hardest Tea Party—[interjection] I'm speechless—I am speechless.

You know, we're confronted in this province right now, Mr. Speaker, with two clear alternatives: one group that's building this province and one group that seeks to drag this province down.

Thank you.

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods):** I want to thank my colleagues for their support here today, as well, in the House, Mr. Speaker, and I do want to offer everyone a happy St. Patrick's Day, March 17th. For those of Irish descent, it's certainly a great day, so enjoy whatever festivities you want to partake and in—on St. Patrick's Day.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to acknowledge our two new members. I want to welcome them to the Chamber, the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) and the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk). Clearly these new members will have some big shoes to fill, but I'm sure they will be more than capable as time moves forward.

I just had a quick visit last week with the Attorney General (Mr. Swan), and he reminded me of our 10th anniversary coming up in the Chamber here, actually, later in June. And the new members, you will find your time here goes by very, very quickly, and it's hard to imagine that I've been here almost 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, over the 10 years I've seen a lot of NDP budgets, and the—and I can tell the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) that, yes, we are cynical. We've seen a lot of budgets over the years and we have not seen one budget yet where the NDP was able to live within their budget allocation. And I think that's why we are cynical, because they have not proven, in any one of those years, that they have actually been able to spend within their own budget.

If we were to find a budget that we would like, that we could live with, you know, we'd certainly look at voting in favour of their budget, but we haven't seen that at this point in time, Mr. Speaker. And I think if the members opposite would have a look at the amendment that has been put forward by

the Leader of the Opposition, they will find a number of flaws in this particular budget going forward.

And I hope they would do—would actually spend a bit of time in terms of their thought process before the vote next—this week—I guess it'll be this week, probably tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, before the vote, so they can understand where we're coming from and the holes that we've picked in this particular budget.

I do believe this is a budget which could be considered a budget of integrity or not integrity, depending on how you look at it, and clearly we see the discussion already framing up for the next election. Clearly the NDP are trying to position themselves prior to the election and to the vote. They are certainly campaigning on the fear factor. There's no doubt that will be something that we will hear about more and more. Their reference to the 1990s comes on and on every day, Mr. Speaker, and we know that's their campaign, and that will be on the campaign of fear.

And clearly the NDP have shown they will not be living within the scope of the budget. They haven't done so for 14 years now, Mr. Speaker, so Manitobans will probably recognize the fact that they've been misled in the past. And I go back to the previous election where the NDP promised that they weren't going to increase the provincial sales tax. The first year in they broadened the provincial sales tax on a lot of goods and services, and that wasn't enough. They didn't take enough money out of taxpayers' pockets to balance the budget then, they had to have another look at how they were going to try and balance the budget the following year. To do that they increased the provincial sales tax by another one point, and unfortunately they couldn't yet balance the budget.

So here we are in the next budget, Mr. Speaker. This year's budget they propose to spend \$12.3 billion, the largest expense we've seen in a provincial budget ever. On the revenue side, even with the host of new taxes, they propose to take in \$11.9 billion.

Mr. Speaker, this, even by their numbers say that we will have a budget deficit of \$324 million this fiscal year coming up, and we know their track record on living within what they budget, and it's not good.

So those are the kind of points that I think have to be brought to bear, Mr. Speaker. We know the NDP always have excuses. It's never their fault when

they can't balance the budget. Now, it can be the opposition's fault and it can be municipal governments' fault and it can be the government of the 1990s, or it could be the federal government's fault, but it's never, ever the NDP's fault.

\*(15:00)

Now, Mr. Speaker, in reviewing some of the press on the budget, it was interesting to see a lot of the press, and I happened to pick up an article that was written by Graham Lane. Now, many people would know Graham Lane, who is the former chair of the Public Utilities Board, and obviously the Public Utilities Board is coming through an interesting point in time right now.

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

But the article in the Free Press that Mr. Lane wrote I think really summed up the situation here in Manitoba. And I want to quote for you what he said: If you'd hoped for a balanced budget or a serious break on your taxes in the March 6th budget, you were disappointed. As to the budget itself, the government's increasingly-increasing reliance on Crown corporations to pay its bills, along with its methods of reporting and accounting, provide an illusion of increased expenditure control.

An illusion of expenditure control—and I know the NDP would like us to believe that they are going to now for some reason manage within their ability to control their spending. But, again, history would say that is just an illusion. We know the provincial government spending between 1999 and 2012 increased by an astonishing 86 per cent ahead of inflation and population growth. The government has a problem keeping up with revenue, in terms of versus what they're spending each and every year, and that's why we've got ourselves into the situation we're in.

And Mr. Lane goes in and talks about, you know, some of the whole ideas behind why they're borrowing more money all the time, each and every year. And now we know the provincial debt is going to surpass \$32 billion—\$32 billion—and this is a huge amount of money.

And just to give you some idea where we've come from since 1999, the NDP have increased the provincial debt by \$14 billion, \$10 billion alone under this current Premier (Mr. Selinger). Ten billion dollars just in the last few years under this new Premier, and what does that mean? What does that

mean to the average Manitoban, and what does that mean to the provincial budget?

It means an increase in our debt-service cost, and we see the debt-service cross growing each and every year. This year, the budget says it's \$872 million, \$872 million that cannot be used for any other front-line services. So until we recognize that we have got a spending and a borrowing problem, how are we going to turn that trend around? And there is nothing in this budget indicating how the government is going to turn that around. That is the interesting part.

I know a few years ago, the government proposed some solutions to their issue of trying to spend more than they are taking in. They actually laid out a five-year plan. Well, that fell off the rails just about right after they announced that budget, so now they've chose to completely ignore any thought of a five-year plan, in terms of their budget allocations, and it certainly is alarming.

Now we know they've been asking Manitobans to dig deep in their pockets to help finance the government. Manitobans, of course, have no other recourse but we have to pay the taxman, and the NDP are certainly there to take the money out of our pockets.

I hope the members will take some time and have a look at the budget documents. And I'm going to, just for interest's sake, take them to page B9, budget and budget papers, where they talk about certainly the change in the net debt. And net debt—I know they like to use that figure—it is now going to be \$18.6 billion, certainly a change in—of \$1.3 billion this year alone. And, if you refer to the page previous, page B8, that's where it talks about borrowing requirements and the amount of money that the NDP are going to borrow, and it's quite astonishing where there's going to be some \$2.4 billion of refinancing. There's about another \$1.4 billion of new borrowings. So clearly the—we're looking at a new—an increase in borrowing of about \$2.4 billion for this calendar—this fiscal year. So, certainly, the debt is growing at an alarming rate.

The other thing that should be noted is the rainy day fund, the fiscal stabilization account. The NDP have certainly raided that account. They're proposing to take another \$55 million out of that account, and that will leave a balance at the end of this year of only \$220 million. And just to reflect on that, back in 2008-2009 the rainy day account was \$864 million. So there's been a very substantial withdraw from the

rainy day fund and I know that's certainly a cause for concern when you look at the rainy day fund.

I do want to talk a little bit about Manitoba Hydro and certainly the implications Manitoba Hydro has on the budget. We know just in the past week we've had some more details released about the construction costs of Keeyask and Conawapa, some of the increases there. I know there's—looking at an additional \$400-million increase in capital cost on Keeyask and another \$600-million increase in Conawapa in terms of the capital investments. We're looking at a, you know, probably a \$30-billion investment in terms of infrastructure with those two dams and the Bipole III line, a huge capital cost of which most of that money will have to be borrowed by Manitobans. And, clearly, we hope that the Public Utilities Board will have a serious look at what options might be provided. Clearly, Manitobans and Manitoba taxpayers are hoping that the NDP will give this due diligence to make sure that we're doing the right thing, because we only have one opportunity to get this right. And these are the largest capital investment projects this project—this government—pardon me, this Province has looked at. So it's very important that we get this right and look at all the options before us.

I know—I think—at least—I think what the NDP are looking for when they look at Manitoba Hydro is an opportunity to generate some extra income, some extra revenue. And I know they've certainly enhanced the water rental rates they charge Manitoba Hydro. I think they're looking at taking in \$125 million as a surcharge to Manitoba Hydro this year for their water rental rates, and that figure has grown certainly dramatically since the NDP have been in office. And the other thing they are doing is they're charging Manitoba Hydro a debt guarantee factor, and it amounts to a considerable amount of money into the hundreds of millions of dollars each and every year as well. So those are substantial income for the province of Manitoba. So I'm sure if they're looking down the road, they're thinking if we add more dams to the system, we can then charge a higher water rental rate. And if Manitoba Hydro are going to be borrowing more money, well, we can charge them a higher premium on the money that we're guaranteeing to repay. So it's about—it's an evil way of looking at things, but I think it might be something the NDP are looking at in terms of revenue. If they can generate revenue out of Manitoba Hydro to help balance their budget, I'm sure that's what they're looking at.

The down side of that, of course, is Manitoba Hydro ratepayers have to pay the bills, that we will be paying the brunt of money to Manitoba Hydro for the services they provide. And hopefully the NDP will be up front with Manitobans in terms of the capital costs of those projects versus what will be the net sales into the US, and we're certainly eager to see what those are and hopefully the PUB will uncover the details of those financial statements.

Now we're also finding out that Manitoba Hydro—it's really NDP, actually, under their guise—are going to be involved in capital costs of a hydro line into the United States, something that we've never done before. But we're going to be financing a high percentage of that particular infrastructure with only a 49 per cent ownership in that structure. So it's an interesting path the NDP have taken us down in terms of that new way of doing business.

\*(15:10)

Now I want to touch briefly on infrastructure. Clearly, most Manitobans recognize there's the need for improved infrastructure in and around the province and it's certainly an important aspect of it. The NDP have released their new five-year plan just recently. I believe it's a 5-and-a-half-billion-dollar plan. And I guess what happened over the course of the weekend, we find out that there's a major bridge on 1st Street in Brandon, which is a—actually a provincial road, that now has to be repaired, and that repair will come at a very substantial cost.

So here we are, we have a government that just released a five-year plan which is going to have to be rewritten just two weeks later. And obviously that major piece of infrastructure will have a significant bearing on what other money can be allocated to their particular budget that they just rolled out. It's very unfortunate that they weren't upfront with Manitobans and certainly the people of Brandon, the people of western Manitoba and the federal government, that this particular bridge was in such a disrepair. So certainly we will look forward to see what the new five-year plan will look for, and I expect, hopefully, the Minister of Infrastructure will roll out the new revised five-year plan in the very near future.

I think Manitobans can be a little skeptical about this five-year plan, because over the last few years they've left \$1.9 billion on the table in terms of their infrastructure spending. So they do one thing, but the reality is—pardon me, they say one thing, but the reality is they do another, and that's very critical. In

the last four years they underspent their budget by 27 per cent, so there's certainly a new-found thoughts and awareness on infrastructure from the NDP, but the reality is they haven't proven that with their track record in the past.

Mr. Speaker, just a word on rural Manitoba. Certainly, the area that I represent, Spruce Woods, has a significant—agriculture has a significant impact on the economy of that area. And there was very little mention in the budget about rural initiatives and rural development, and I think there's a tremendous opportunity for the province there to generate additional revenue by value added and by providing opportunities, allow businesses to expand, certainly, in rural Manitoba. And I hope that the minister responsible for that will have a hard look at terms of what we can do to create those opportunities and how his department can work with us to enhance opportunities for all Manitobans, and in turn this would generate revenue for the province as well. And we're certainly looking forward to putting forward ideas that will help people in rural Manitoba.

I know the government talked about—quite a bit about jobs and the economy and trying to get more people hired. Unfortunately we didn't see too much in terms of actually new training seats, and I was hoping there could have been some more seats opened up at Assiniboine Community College, perhaps Red River. Certainly there was—there's talk about it, but nothing that I've seen concrete to actually get kids trained to get into the market there. I know there was some talk about money going back to employers on this regard, but no new money that I've heard for opening up new seats to get kids in the classroom and get them trained.

So it might be an interesting conversation that we have with the business community in terms of how we best get students trained into the service so they are ready for the workforce. And I think that's important that we have an open and honest dialogue about how we get that done.

So I know the—there's been a budget amendment here put forward by the opposition that certainly lays out our concerns and some of the issues that are lacking in this particular budget. I hope members opposite will take a look at the options there that we're putting forward and, as a result, that we can't vote for this particular budget.

And with that I thank you for the opportunity and look forward to a future debate on this before the vote tomorrow.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I want to begin on commenting—in commenting on the member for Brandon East's (Mr. Caldwell) remarks, where he had talked about the predictability of the Conservatives and, I guess, confirmed by the most recent speaker, that they plan to vote against the budget regardless. As a matter of fact, if you read their nonsensical amendments—and, by the way, we're supposed to be speaking to these nonsensical amendments; I didn't even hear the last speaker address these amendments—you see that they will fall into that predictable pattern of voting against the budget.

But there have been precedents on the other side. Back in—I'm sure there's many others too, but in 1973, the Schreyer government introduced the budget, and, in fact, Sid Spivak and the Conservative caucus voted in favour of that budget. And when we were in minority situation with Gary Filmon, I believe we voted for two—not one, but two—of their budgets from 1970-'98—yes, sorry, '88 to 1990. So there are precedents there, and when the opposition would be well advised to take a look at a budget if a budget has got a lot of good in it and, you know, merits support, that's what they should be doing. They shouldn't be just hamstrung into their old, tried-and-true methods here.

Now let's take a look at what they're proposing here in their amendment. I mean, most of it makes very little sense, but No. 9 is the most nonsensical of all. They're talking about business confidence and about economic growth, and I heard a speech the other day about red tape. I can't believe what I was hearing here. You know, the members should understand that this NDP government has reduced the small-business corporate income tax to zero, and in case they don't know, zero is as low as you can go, so I don't know why they don't recognize that. They don't recognize the fact that the unemployment rate is, you know, third lowest in the country, which means the employment rate is very high. Maybe they don't understand that.

They talk about red tape, and I—you know, I think back to when the Leader of the Opposition first came to this House, and he was sitting in the back seat, and he was talking about red tape. And he, as minister, claimed to have cut—at least on his website anyway—I think 3,000 pages of red tape. And, you know, we've not been able to find a single regulation, a single bit of red tape, that he says he's cut.

And, you know, what does all this red tape mean? For example, a business has to file, you know, its corporate taxes every month. It has to file its payroll deductions every month. You know, just how much of this red tape does he think he can reduce?

I mean, what we've done, as a government, what the federal government has done, in case he hasn't noticed, is we brought these programs online. I mean, if I could give them some advice, all he has to do was actually just register and he can pay his PST every month in a matter of one or two minutes. Doesn't really have to fill out any paper at all. He can pay his payroll deductions online in just a few minutes. He can pay his corporate tax, which, by the way, is federal-federal Conservative tax-online. So what is the big problem here?

I mean, what did he expect, the government's going to go out and fill out these tax returns for the business? Is that what he wants, you know, hire some civil servants to go and personally knock on the doors of his buddies and fill out their corporate taxes for them and send them in? I mean, I don't know how much more simpler we can make it.

And when they talk about reducing red tape and business regulations, they have to understand and they should tell us, what regulations do they want to reduce, because most of the regulations that are there are there for health and safety issues. What-do they want to reduce those?

You know, now let's look at the red tape that the mayor wanted to eliminate. Where has that got us? He said he was going to approve-when he became mayor, he was going to approve the permits that much quicker. Well, let's suppose for a moment that the City has cut some red tape. Well, let's look at the results. They're building buildings on land they don't own, you know.

\* (15:20)

I mean, that's the end result of where these people are going to end up, because, you know, where they're headed is that the whole theory here is, you know, unfettered, unbridled free enterprise, the old trickle-down economics. If you just take away all the rules, all these business people are going to operate totally ethically, and they're going to do their calculations and they're going to remit what they should. So to follow them through to their logical extension, you'd, like, eliminate Revenue Canada completely. You know, just have a voluntary system and the business could just voluntarily send in

whatever they felt like sending in. I mean, that's the ultimate extension of where these guys want to go.

Now, you know, so I notice the Leader of the Opposition looked more dazed and confused than usual on TV after the budget. I mean, he looked kind of punch drunk. I think he was waiting, you know-expectation that somehow he was going to have a easier ride like he did last year, and he just, like, walked into it this year and he looked pretty bad. I-kind of reminded me of an old threshing machine, you know, they fire these old machines up at the country fairs and a lot of sputtering. But he's certainly losing some ground over last year, I would say.

So-but I expect we're going to be hearing this whole argument again about the red tape, reducing red tape-that's a, you know, just sort of a normal speech from these people.

But there's a lot of good things in this budget and that's why I suggest the members maybe reconsider their vote here. You know, they can vote for their amendment and then when they lose their amendment, guess what, they could surprise us all and support the budget as a good choice. For example, we are proposing \$5.5-billion infrastructure plan to invest in roads, highways, bridges, and flood protection. You know, these Conservatives are a real hoot. They will sometimes, even in the same question period, demand more spending on their favourite bridge or their favourite road that they want to build and then turn around in two or three questions later they did-demanding that we balance the budget yesterday, that we cut-we should be cutting fat and waste and so on.

And-but they don't really-aren't in a position to be able to identify waste in the past. What's their historical record? What do they do? They just do a cut. They just say, okay, you know, 10 per cent cut in the teachers, 10 per cent cut in the nurses. Let's just fire a whole bunch. They don't actually do the proper examination to decide-to determine where this waste is.

So I-you know, I know why they're depressed over there. I mean, the fact of the matter is that they, you know, they think that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is, like, laying awake at night coming up with ways to embarrass them. But the fact of the matter is that, you know, where-the reason they are so down right now is because of all these things that we've done that they would like to do. And rather than standing up and saying, well, good job, to the government-

*[interjection]* You know, they—well, they're just ignoring it. We're not hearing anything from them.

But let's look at the—look at the things that they've done. We've rejected all their short term or their cuts that they're going to make, across-the-board cuts, but what have we done? We've actually reduced the civil service without layoffs. We've laid off—we've reduced by 370 positions, that's more than halfway now to our goal of 600. Where—why aren't they talking about this? That's one of the things that they talk about when they're talking to the folks back home. Oh, the bloated civil service, we got to reduce the civil service. Well, we just did reduce the civil service. Where is the—where's the recognition of that?

Merging the liquor and the lotteries corporation, they talk about streamlining the government, more efficient government, right? Well, that's what we're doing. But where's the recognition? We've cut the regional health authorities from 13 to five. They're the people that set up the regional health authorities in the first place and we—they're the ones that set up the original 13. We've cut it to five. Why aren't they talking about that? There's a reason to come and vote for the budget just on that alone.

Amalgamating municipalities from 48 to 23. That's streamlining; that's efficiency. They should like that. We've frozen or reduced the budgets of nine departments. They've extended corporate spending cap to the RHAs. I haven't heard them mention that. They've limited core government spending—we've limited to 2 per cent and we've created a new lean council. They should love that. Oh yes, I've been listening to them for almost, just a couple of weeks shy, I believe, of 28 years. Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) could do the calculation.

But the president of StandardAero is going to give us advice on how to deliver excellent public services for the best value. They should be out there trumpeting that, as something that they like that we are doing. And you know, if you look back to the Filmon years, there were occasions when we did compliment them when they did something right. We not only complimented, we actually voted with them. You know, so, like, let's get with the program, guys; you've been out of power now for how many years and you're going to just keep extending this. You know, I think it's—like, it's a long time.

So I did want to deal with some issues in my constituency that are very important to the residents

of the constituency in northeast Winnipeg. And, you know, one of them certainly is the CPP issue, the provincial government has been working on this issue with the previous Finance minister, trying to some action out of the other provinces and the federal government. And our problem is, you know, it's like a Rubik's Cube—we get one government that's a friendly and then, all of a sudden, they lose an election and now we get the hostile and, you know, so you think that this is never going to actually happen.

But, you know, it almost did happen. Back in 2010, there was a very brief period where the NDP at the time had a tentative agreement with the Conservatives to keep them in power for another year, with the view that we were going to—there's some debate as to whether or not it was doubling the CPP or increasing it by, you know, 20 or 30 per cent, but nevertheless that didn't happen. But that would have been the, I think, the catalyst for forcing the provinces on side.

But it's not something we should give up on because I know that it's very popular out there with the public and so they are interested in increasing the CPP and they certainly are not happy with the reduction in the—or the changing the age to collect, from 65 to 67. And, you know, I—when I have to remind them that, you know, what could happen after the next go around here is that it might go up even more, it might—this may be just like a step to age 70, which I think other jurisdictions, maybe the United States, is certainly looked at or talked about.

*[interjection]*

So, you know, when you start dealing—yes, the member for Kildonan is right; the sooner you deal with the cabal of the Conservatives, like, God knows what can happen if they really get carried away and if they get a—you know, have a big majority.

Another issue that's a big concern in the northeast is the Plessis Road underpass—that was a project that's funded by all three levels of government and, predictably, it's kind of fallen off the rails a bit lately, but had the city proceeded and built a bypass road, which we suggested at the time—and certainly was contemplated in the plan—they could have built the bypass road in short order in a couple of months for half a million dollars, to RTAC standards, by the way, so trucks could get through there. It wouldn't matter when they finished this project. And the reality is now we're finding out that, predictably, the city, you know, is \$3 million over

budget already and they haven't really even done anything yet; \$3 million over budget and the whole thing has been put off for another year for completion.

So, I mean, I don't know that they're showing a lot of foresight there when they could have built this road, like, before they started the whole project. They could still do it now. But nevertheless, that's just a—you know, a project that has to be done; we support it, we promoted it first and we want to see it through.

And people in my constituency are very, very concerned about the whole—the—what's happening with the post office. I mean, you know, the members opposite, you know, they want to support small business. Well, let me tell them that it's the small business people that are phoning my office. They want to know where the Tories are. You know, where are these guys? Their people are running—some of them vote for the Conservatives, of course—are running small businesses and they say, well, it's—these guys are out of control; they want to eliminate my mail service.

So we know the cuts are not necessary. They're not wanted. They're going to have a huge impact, especially in the rural areas for the Conservatives and small businesses.

\* (15:30)

People don't recognize this, but the Canada Post has been profitable. Well, I have to ask the members, in the last 18 years, do you members understand and know that the Canada Post has been profitable for 17 out of the 18 years? That isn't the propaganda that's put out there by the post office. They suggest they're losing money every year, but the truth is they've made—been—made profitable for 17 out of 18 years.

The price for individual stamps going up 59 per cent. So here they're cutting back, increasing the price of stamps and, of course, they're asking people to choose between piles of junk mail in front of their homes or a long walk to find the mailboxes. And when they could be doing things like they have done in France, Switzerland and Italy where they've expanded into profitable like areas like postal banking, but they don't show that foresight here in Canada. So that's an issue that is of major concern, and the members know that. The members are getting feedback. They know that those little signs are popping up everywhere in their constituencies and people are concerned about it.

And another issue that our residents are certainly telling me about, I'm hearing about it every day, are the immigration changes where people now have to reside for four years out of six rather than three years out of four. The fees have gone up. You know, it's small consolation that it's lower than England and it's lower than the United States. The fact of the matter is it's a big increase to be going from, you know, 100 to 400.

It's, you know—and language tests. They have now been extended. They used to be from 18 to 64, now it's from 14 to 64, but is—what's cheating people off the most is that they can't use an interpreter any more, you know. So that's certainly an issue. So these are issues that are percolating out there, and, you know, I don't know where the members think that—where this—all the opposition is. I'm not getting a lot of opposition to the provincial government, to be honest with you. As a matter of fact, people are quite happy, because, you know, fundamentally, they know that their provincial government is on their side.

You know, they may be a little irritated because they get poked once in a while on certain issue, but you know when the chips are down, they understand several things: (1) they know they're working. You know, I mean, any time I talk to somebody who's got a question about what we're doing down here, I say to them, well, sir or ma'am, you're working. Your spouse is working. Your kids are working. And, matter of fact, they're, like, working two and three jobs. There's all kinds of employed people out there.

You've got health care. If something happens to you, you go down, you don't have to worry about—in the United States, about paying for your health care. You just go down and get the service that you need. And you know something, at the end of the day they are going to stick with the people they know and have confidence in over the members opposite, because the fact of the matter is that you don't want a new group of people stumbling around in the shop like a bull in the china shop, breaking all—breaking the furniture and, you know, destroying your house. And that's what's going to happen if those—if you—you know, those members get keys to the house. So I don't think people are going to want that.

And, also, you know that we are certainly aware of the situation in the Ukraine and its potential to worsen, and it's likely to take some restraint and negotiation on all sides, you know, to take a deep breath and back off and try to resolve this political

crisis in the region. We've seen all too many times, you know, situations develop, you know, incrementally start off sort of kind of innocently, and the next thing you know, you're into armed conflict. And a matter of fact, President Obama today responded with sanctions against many of the senior Putin supporters, freezing their assets in the United States, which, you know, might hit the regime where it hurts the most, you know. When you start freezing people's assets, that could pull their support for the leadership. So we are certainly very concerned about the situation over there.

And the member opposite wanted to talk about hydro, and you know, I don't get it. The Conservatives, you know, I've been reading some books lately about past history here, and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and I—member from Kildonan and I are on the same wavelength on some of these. But, you know, I read about the Conservatives' record on hydro and, you know, everything I see today is all there. You know, what's the old Rolling Stones song? Through the Past, Darkly, right?

You know, all the issues of 19—in the 1970s are right here today. You know, they were jumping on the issue in the past with the flooding of southern Indian Lake and all these other issues basically in an effort to stop the construction. That's what it all boiled down to. And at—finally, at the end of the day it took the premier of the day, I believe, to come into this House with a—with something like 50 studies, you know, and pile them all up. There were so many of them that they actually fell off his desk—to impress upon these people that there's a time, you know, to stop the discussions and proceed with the projects. Because basically that's just, you know, sabotage to try to basically misrepresent the realities out there and scare people into thinking that somehow, you know, we're providing power to people below cost, and our rates are going to go up and we've got to go with a gas-fired, you know, generators and stuff like that.

And, I mean, the reality is that our record in hydro, you know, has been amazing, when you consider that we built Limestone for under budget. It's produced huge profits over the years. And all you have to do is go back—you know, we should give them—member for Kildonan—we should send them copies of some of these things. It was, you know, it their former Premier Duff Roblin who brought in a 5 per cent sales tax, you know, 5 per cent sales tax. But, you know, he was a activist premier. He was

totally the opposite of Sterling Lyon. And Duff Roblin, when he was here for the period he was here, did a lot of really good things, and one of them was building the floodway. But to build the floodway he recognized that he had to bring in a 5 per cent sales tax to do it, and he took a lot of hit for that. But the reality is that he also built the power plant, right? He also built that, and that's the last time, the very last time the Conservatives have initiated and built anything in this province in the area of hydro.

So I know I could go on for a lot longer, but I know there are many other members in my caucus here who want to speak, and I'm sure there's some members opposite, too, who would like to get in on the debate. So thank you very much.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** I certainly appreciate the history lesson that the member from Elmwood brings. I'm always reminded to ask him how his federal pension is doing, but I'm sure he'll bring that up for us too.

But, before I get started I would like to certainly welcome our two new colleagues, the member for Morris (Mr. Martin), the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk). And during that wonderful frigid by-election campaigns I did some travelling with both of them, visiting with the agricultural community and listening to the agricultural community, their issues, their—that they had, and it was certainly interesting.

In my constituency and in most rural constituencies, there is a rather large Hutterite brethren community, and certainly in Morris there is, and I remember visiting with a number of the Hutterites. They're just such gracious people to visit with. They—on one hand they have very strict religious beliefs, but on—and on the other hand they are very, very innovative people and they're very worldly in their knowledge and in their business dealings.

\* (15:40)

And, of course, the combination of their faith and their innovation, integrity comes up often, and it's difficult for the Hutterites to express their frustration about this government because they don't wish to speak ill of anyone, but it's that lack of integrity within this government, saying one thing, doing something else. The increase—the expansion of the provincial sales tax, the increase in the rate of the provincial sales tax—has hit the colonies very hard.

They are very industrious people, and they are paying a huge price to this government.

They also—most colonies tend to farm a great deal of land, too, and they are hit very hard with this cap on the farmland education tax, this \$5,000 cap imposed by this government, as it does a lot of the farming community. Most of the farming community is hit very hard with this. This is another tax on the farming community that this government imposes because they have no fiscal responsibility. They are unable to stop their chronic spending. They have an addiction to spending, and that's certainly reflected in the taxes that we have.

As I visit with—even within my constituency and we talk about issues affecting my constituency, I was talking to some municipal leaders here shortly—a while ago, and they were explaining—they were doing, in their budget process for the municipality, and their recreation centre came up, and their largest costs increased. They're going to have to increase the budget to the recreation centre because of insurance costs, which is PST related—the PST expanded onto insurance costs—and, again, then with the increase in the sales tax. That was one place that their budget was being really affected in the community centre. And the other place was by the hydro costs, and the hydro costs are huge within a community centre. And this is where they are being hurt, and they had to increase the budget to the recreation centre, and these are direct taxes on—that the municipality has to pick up and, in turn, they have to increase taxes on their constituents within the municipality.

And this goes all over the province. This is the same whether it's urban, rural; all community centres are feeling this. And the maintenance of community centres, the equipment they have to buy, the upgrades that they have to do, are all PST—the PST that they're paying on this is certainly affecting them.

So there's many issues that this budget failed to address, and at the same time, I get calls—we all get calls to our constituency office from our constituents, and last week an elderly lady from Notre Dame de Lourdes phoned my office and she was—I'm not sure whether she was watching television or whether she had read it in her local newspaper, the budget promise to give the education credit to seniors on their houses. And when she phoned she said, so when is this going to happen? So now I have to explain to this wonderful, elderly resident of mine, who owns her own house, that while first of all this is a broken promise—they promised us in 2011 and

they broke that—now they have repromised it again for some time in the future.

And, you know, it's difficult to—she's a non-political person. Like, she doesn't follow politics closely. And to explain the lack of morals, the lack of ethics, of this government that they would do this, it was—she was disappointed to hear this, to say the least. And so, when you see this, you know, you see this budget, this ever-expanding budget that they continue to run deficits, they're now predicting a deficit of some \$378 million. The debt servicing costs \$872 million. That 872 dollars is more than the Agriculture and the MIT departments put together. That's just in interest costs. And, again, the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) was asking today the what-if scenarios, and it's not what if, it's when interest rates rise, because interest rates are—have been rock bottom for a long time. Some day they will rise, and the cost to Manitobans is going to be huge.

But I was—I think we all enjoy question period and the thrusts and the back and forth and—but today was really classic. The member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) gets up to ask a question and I—on agriculture, and that was great. The Minister of Agriculture gets up to give the answer and he runs out of time before he gets to the answer. We even asked for leave so he could have more time to give the answer, but they rejected the leave. So—and what the—I can tell you what the Minister of Agriculture was so pleased to announce, was there's another committee has been struck. Another committee has been struck to four ministers who ultimately know everything about grain transportation, that would include the Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Ms. Oswald), and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton). I know from his long handling of grain that he'll be—certainly have a lot to put into that, the Minister of Agriculture.

But they missed, literally missed the rail here because this train has already moved. A week and a half ago the federal government in consultation with agriculture groups across Canada—across western Canada—the federal government has moved to impose sanctions, fines on the railway companies, has imposed targets and it has imposed fines if they don't meet those targets for grain transportation. So what is this committee going to do now of these four illustrious ministers here? They've already missed the party. If they were really interested in helping the Manitoba agricultural community move grain, perhaps we could've had the agricultural all-party committee meet in consultation with groups like

Keystone Agriculture Producers back last fall when we knew that this was going to be a problem. And it—of course, it's been even—become more acute as we've had an extremely cold winter. But that was—apparently this government is not interested in answers.

After the Minister of Agriculture failed to give his answer today in question period because he ran out of time because he didn't—I guess maybe he thought he was going to get a supplemental or something. Then they run out to the press out in the hallway and try to sell this idea of these four illustrious ministers are going to solve all the grain transportation problems in Manitoba.

So it is just typical of this government that they have no vision, no understanding of basic problems that are affecting Manitobans. They think with a press release that they can solve all this. A press release—and I'm sure that they will repeat the press releases a number of times because that seems to be their modicum of operation here is just to keep repeating a story. And with the—it's sort of something about throwing something against the wall and hoping it'll stick eventually, and I guess that's what they're trying to do with this. But, unfortunately, they've forgotten about Manitobans in this, and it's all about their own interests now.

This budget that was presented is about more spending, more promises to be broken. It's not about results. It—they can't run on results because there hasn't been any results for years and years and years. So they're—they've forgotten about that.

When they—so this amendment that the leader—our leader introduced, it actually addresses many of the deficiencies that are in this budget, and you couldn't have an amendment long enough to address all the deficiencies, but he touched on the high—this amendment touches on the highlights of them. And, of course, first of all it's the failing to repeal the massive tax and fee increases, the widening of the PST, the increase of the PST illegally. And yet this government has—the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) own words before the last election was—when he was asked directly if he would raise the sales tax, and he said, nonsense, that was ridiculous, and yet we see that it happened. So the lack of credibility comes through again.

\* (15:50)

They refused to hold the legally required referendum. So now, when it's been taken to court—

the NDP government is in court defending their right to increase taxes illegally, and they're defending their right to take away the right of Manitobans to vote. And that's what they are using taxpayers' money for, is to defend their right to take away the rights of Manitobans.

This is—the broken promises just continue. They can—they have underspent their infrastructure budget year over year, to the tune of something like 27 per cent of their budget that hasn't been spent. It says right in this budget document, that this is—which we have called now the \$71-million pothole; \$71 million disappeared and didn't—has not showed up. It was supposed to be for infrastructure renewal but it has now disappeared in the general revenues. So where did it go? They refuse to address where this money has gone.

The health and social supports that are just impacted every day by the debt, by the interest payments—873—\$872 million in interest payments that is now—that money has to be deferred away from health and social services because—and education—because interest payments come first. And yet this doesn't seem to bother—and then on top of that, they take the vote tax. They're—as if they're—as if we're not taxed enough, this government—the NDP, in the year 2012, took \$195,167.36 from Manitobans to themselves; \$5,274.79 to each NDP MLA, including the now independent MLA, which we can only assume that money went into the NDP coffers.

So, somehow, rather than going and talking to people and asking them what they would like—what they expect from government, they're now saying we're entitled to our \$5,000 a year. Every year they will take \$5,000 from each and every—for each and every one of these MLAs, rather than going out and asking for support from Manitobans. I think maybe they're afraid to go and ask for support because they know what the answer will be.

There's a vague reference within this budget about addressing the Employment and Income Assistance rental allowance. We have been calling for quite a while now for the 75 per cent—to meet 75 per cent median market levels. Now they are saying that, well, over the next four years, we'll get there. This will be another broken promise by this government because they are putting themselves ahead of everyone else. They have no interest except themselves, and it's a lack of integrity. It's the self-administration—they just want to look after themselves on this.

The Manitoba Hydro is destined to end up in shambles under this government. The minister sits there and he laughs about this. He laughs at \$34 billion of Manitoba's money being borrowed. He thinks it's funny that to go out and borrow \$34 billion, to double Manitoba customers' rate—because we will have to pick up the cost of this. It's not going to be picked up. It's by—it's the—and I really fail to understand the Americanization of Manitoba Hydro. For a government that's so fundamentally opposed to the US, now they want to deliver power—subsidize the power being delivered into the United States so that, you know—and apparently they seem to find this quite humorous, that Manitobans will have to pick this up. And it's unfortunate. It's just another sign of their arrogance and of their total misunderstanding of the energy market, of today's energy market, and a complete failure to understand.

The PUB process is a sham. They've put their own people in there to give them the decision that they want, and yet they're not even waiting for that decision. They've already spent \$3 billion on Keeyask, hasn't even got approval yet. So why do you bother on this?

The arrogance continues. The minister that thinks hydro is so funny, now is the heavy hand now to make sure that the forced amalgamations go through. This is going to be—you know, the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) was the engineer behind this train last year, and it's—the easy part for the municipalities was to decide the name and where they—how it's going to function. The hard part comes after the elections this fall, because it is going to be extremely difficult for many of these municipalities to streamline their bylaws, to figure out where they—how they are going to operate, and it's tearing communities apart. It's unfortunate that they've taken such a heavy-handed approach to this, and it's going to tear apart the very fabric of some communities.

And this is all due to the arrogance and—of this government, because they just—they really don't care about Manitobans anymore. It's all about their own agenda, and that's unfortunate that—and then when they say that we can't support—they complain that we don't support a budget like this, it's—this is a budget that takes money off of the kitchen table, puts it on a Cabinet table, because those ministers—those NDPers across the way feel that they're entitled to their entitlements. And it's all about taking money from everyone else and so that they can spend it. Whether it's vote tax, whether it's higher taxes, they will take

money from anybody. There is no shame in this government in how they will tax anybody.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

And this budget is actually—really, what it is is just a book of broken promises and 'self-ingratuation', and that's where it comes through.

And, obviously, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans don't support this type of tax increase. They are feeling the pinch. Whether it's families, whether it's seniors, whether it's farmers, it doesn't matter who it is, everybody has to pay for this, and it's going to create real hardship for Manitobans to be able to pick up the tax bill under this government.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I would be very proud—I am very proud to say that I cannot support this budget. I do support the amendment, and I would really hope that the government would take a hard look at their spending addiction and seek some help.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to share the joy many Manitobans have expressed for the budget which my colleague the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) brought to this Chamber on March 6th. I thank the minister and all those who collaborated with her in this process. Those long hours of consultations with Manitobans, guided by an ardent desire by our government to serve all Manitobans, have led us to this budget.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2014 will continue our government's past efforts to chart a course towards prosperity, equality, opportunity and build a peaceful, fulfilling and prosperous life for Manitobans from all four directions.

Mr. Speaker, after budget day I had the opportunity to do some door knocking to several Logan constituents' homes. Likewise, I have met with officials and members of several multicultural organizations. As I speak, there is a long list of upcoming meetings with multicultural organizations already set up. I do constituent visits inside apartment buildings at this time of the year, and door knock on homes when the weather is warm.

\* (16:00)

I was heartened to hear constituents' positive comments about the budget, even without my mentioning this topic. I have also received positive

comments on Facebook as well as from folks I have met in many community events I have attended. Mr. Speaker, to hear many, many people indicate their approval for this budget, even from some who were critical of the government, is truly inspiring and heartwarming.

These are a validation of the course of action taken by our governments to address the many issues that matter most to Manitobans. Mr. Speaker, the only folks that have expressed wholehearted disagreement to Budget 2014 are my colleagues across the way. We understand that's the official opposition; they have to be critical of government. Theirs is a noble task as it puts the government in check and that is good for democracy and to all Manitobans. But, when programs brought forward will be good for Manitobans, why will they withhold support or recognition? What is there to oppose when Budget 2014 has a focused plan to grow our economy and create good jobs? Why are they against more opportunities for our kids to settle and build their future in Manitoba? What is wrong in investing in better roads, flood protection and clean water? What is objectionable in keeping life affordable for families, working towards a more efficient government by finding administrative savings to invest in front lines and in services and in restoring balanced budgets responsibly with no cuts to services families count on?

Mr. Speaker, I think the assessment made by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives was fair and right on the money. And I quote: Manitoba budget a leap forward for poverty reduction—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, end of quote.

I have noted with consternation the statements made by members across the way, criticizing the budget but offering no alternative plans. It boggles the mind why any community-minded, community-loving individual will object to build a stronger Manitoba.

Budget 2014, which is \$5.5-billion, five-year plan, focused plan, to grow our economy and create jobs, it will provide even more opportunities for our kids to train, work and stay in Manitoba. The plan invests in roads, highways and bridges and flood protection. The Conference Board of Canada

says this investment will boost the economy by \$6.3 billion, create more than 50,800 new jobs, boost exports by \$5.4 billion, create 2,100 housing starts and boost retail sales by \$1.4 billion. Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked, the Conference Board of Canada is a foremost, independent, not-for-profit research organization in Canada which delivers insights on economics, public policy and organizational performance.

Mr. Speaker, we're keeping life affordable for families. Because of tax reductions our government has made since we took office, the average Manitoba family will save \$3,800 this year. Manitobans know that taxes aren't the only thing that makes life affordable for families. It's also the basic household costs, like utilities and child care, and that's why we focus on all these costs. Manitoba is the most affordable place to live. The average family saves over \$5,400 over the national average, the best in Canada, on their taxes and basic household costs.

Budget 2014 contains a new program, Manitoba Works!—parenthesis at the end of Works—in collaboration with community agencies to provide essential skills, training and work experience to people who face many barriers to a good job. I will be delighted to share this information with my constituents in the coming days. For those presently on welfare, they will not be worse off when they leave welfare for work. Likewise, the new Manitoba Rent Assist benefit will significantly increase housing support for people on social assistance and will move with them as they move into the workforce.

But that's not all. Besides additional rent support, there will be more affordable places to call home. In this budget, we will finish our current plan to develop 1,500 more affordable housing units and support 1,500 more social housing units. And this year, work will begin on an additional 1,000 social and affordable housing units over the next three years.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Logan is home to several high- and low-rise housing units. I have started counting with my fingers, and my 10 fingers are not enough. And several of these housing units are brand new. It is a joy and source of pride to see these buildings being built and then visiting them once they are finished.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that I am not ashamed of saying is that our government has raised minimum wage each and every year since 1999 to help

low-income earners and their families. And our government has opened some 150 new child-care centres since 1999. Budget 2014 will add another \$5.5 million for new child-care spaces and increase funding for centres to expand, create thousands of new spaces and provide higher wages and additional training for more child-care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured and humbled to be entrusted with the Multiculturalism and Literacy portfolio. Meeting the department staff, adult learning centres, teachers and students, literacy programs, stakeholders and members of multicultural organizations have made it very clear to me that Budget 2014, along with past budgets of our government, have thoughtfully considered the best for all Manitobans.

In a knowledge-based economy it is important that people have opportunities to improve literacy and essential job skills so they can take advantage of opportunities for good jobs. Our commitment to lifelong learning has made Manitoba a leader in terms of establishing a government framework for adult learning in Canada. In 2012-13, more than 1,300 adult students graduated with a high school diploma from an adult learning centre; 42 per cent of students in adult learning centres were employed in full- or part-time jobs; 24 per cent of students in adult learning centres received income assistance; 45 per cent of students in adult learning centres self-identified as Aboriginal. Over the last decade, funding for adult literacy and adult learning centres has increased by more than \$21 million in funding annually.

Mr. Speaker, late last year I had the privilege of meeting adult learning centre petitioners and students. I heard emotional testimonials of adult learners and how their lives were turned around for the better in the weeks and months they attended the learning centres. The program that they took and the dedication of teachers and staff at the centres resulted in additional knowledge and confidence they needed to get ahead and lift them up from their present situations. Many are now looking forward to opportunities for improved and meaningful jobs while they have set—or some have set their sights in pursuing further education.

Last month I have heard the same theme from students of the open doors adult learning centre located in King Edward school. I was touched by the honesty, courage and determination of these adult learning and literacy students who have faced many

challenges in life but are now seeking a bright future ahead of them. Having faced many challenges and hurdles myself growing up and into my adulthood, I am even more strengthened in my resolve to represent them and walk with them in their search for improved opportunities in the workplace or in further education.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to visiting more adult learning centres in the coming days and months. I hope to see many adult learners take on the apprenticeship trainings that will be made available by Budget 2014, which has made it easier and more attractive for employers to take on employees as apprentices. Budget 2014 creates a new bonus for employers who take on apprentices for the first time. It offers a \$1,000 bursary to assist apprentices completing their final year, and expand successful partners in the Northern Sector Council and employers to create more on-the-job training.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many more excellent items in Budget 2014 that I wish to share, but I will do that with the Logan constituents whom I thank and appreciate highly for their trust and support for me for the past seven years now. I value their trust, and I will work hard to earn their trust. Moreover, I will gladly tell them Budget 2014 will be just the beginning of bigger and better things to come. So, Logan constituents and all of Manitoba, stay tuned. Under this government, many bests have come and will continue to happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

\* (16:10)

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, I'm always pleased to have an opportunity to address the budget. And before I start on making my comments, I would like to welcome our two new colleagues who recently joined us in the Legislature, the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk) and the member for Morris (Mr. Martin). And I would like to compliment them on excellent budget response speeches. Both of them had a really good look at the budget that was before them, but they also looked at many other aspects of that, Mr. Speaker, and have put a lot of very interesting information on the record and I really give them a lot of credit for the—you know, standing up the first time and being so articulate. And I think they both did a wonderful job.

I also have to say I liked something that the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) did this year. And she bought a necklace instead of shoes and some of

the women that I've said and told them about that, they couldn't believe that there would be somebody that didn't want to buy a new pair of shoes. And I thought that was kind of nice, that we had, you know, a female Finance Minister and she wanted to buy jewelry and because I like jewelry probably more than shoes I'm sort of on her side with that one. But I know that some of my female friends gasped when they heard that it wasn't a new pair of shoes. *[interjection]* Yes. But I would compliment the minister, too, on her choice, where she picked a Hilary Druzman with a lucky stone.

Now, it's very, very interesting, Mr. Speaker, in January, well before the budget, I also bought a necklace, and my necklace also has lucky stones and they're from Gimli and they're tiny little stones found on the beach and there's a hole in all of them and those are lucky stones.

Well, interesting enough that the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) bought one stone and I bought mine with three stones, so I'm hoping that with my necklace I'm going to be luckier than her in addressing the 2014 budget and that more people are going to believe me and support my comments over hers, and I suspect that that's already happening, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, the public has a lot to talk about these days with looking at the NDP's track record and how the NDP are now doing business. And the public is not on side with this government, despite all the comments that we hear from members opposite as they stand touting their budget. That is not where the general public is. There is still a significant amount of anger in the community for the PST increase, especially after it was promised by this Premier (Mr. Selinger) that he would not do it and, in fact, then turned around and stuck Manitobans with the biggest tax grab in 25 years. So the public is not letting that go, Mr. Speaker. That is significantly resonating.

And as I've heard some of my colleagues this week putting on the record where the PST has increased and it was, you know, pointed out the other day on a number of baby products. And then today he also pointed out that PST was also on a number of children's athletic gear and various articles there. So it makes it difficult, then, for families to be able to afford putting their kids into athletic programs if a lot of that product that they have to buy to support the child has this, a huge PST.

The other item that hasn't been brought up around that, and I'm waiting for that question to

come from him in the future, too, is around how much it now costs to die in Manitoba. Because if you look at all of the items that are charged the PST and you look at all the items that the PST applies to in death, it probably costs more to die here in Manitoba than it does in other provinces. And the—it really is like a no-tax-left-behind when it comes to this NDP government.

What we're seeing, too, with this budget, Mr. Speaker, and it is one, you know, in speaking with university students this morning, even this young university student that I spent some time with, recognizes that what the NDP are doing is kicking the can down the road, rather than dealing with some issues. This morning—rather than dealing with issues that matter for young people down the road, rather than dealing with it, this government is just living for today and I guess they're keeping their fingers crossed and hoping things are going to work out better for them. But all they are really doing—and even this young girl who is working on her master's degree here in Manitoba has recognized that she's going to be the one stuck in the future with some of the challenges that the NDP have put forward for her generation to have to deal with.

And what we're also hearing from this government—and I guess when you can't defend your record, that the only approach you really have is to yell a lot and look backwards, and they do do a lot of that. They do like to talk a lot about history. Well, interesting enough, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly acknowledge my colleague from Morris, when he gave his first speech he looked back, too, at what the NDP track record was under a former NDP government. And whether it was Schreyer or Pawley, there was certainly enough stuff there for us to be able to look back and, if we wanted to, you know, blame this government. But we all know that that's a little bit silly, looking back 20 and 30 years and then blaming a current government who's been in place for 14 years and blaming them for something that happened in the past.

So we're taking a higher road than that. This government is not, Mr. Speaker. All they can do is look in the rear-view mirror, and they're quite happy to blame somebody else for their problems. Instead of being a responsible, accountable government, it's easier for them to blame everybody else for their problems.

So, you know, Mr. Speaker, they—if they want to look, you know, at history, we could certainly

just take a look back, and we don't even have to go further than the last 14 years. We've got a government here—if I'm going to look back, we've got a government here that has out-of-control spending because they have a spending addiction and they don't know how to rein that in. They're a tax-and-spend government, and who was that? Was that Howard Pawley, perhaps, that was labelled tax and spend, or Ed Schreyer, was he tax and spend?

So we see, Mr. Speaker, that now we don't see them labelling themselves as the new NDP anymore. That was Gary Doer's moniker; it is not this government's moniker. These guys here, today, are no longer today's NDP; they are yesterday's NDP, because they are just replicating every other NDP government that's ever come before them. It's tax and spend, and then spend and tax, and nothing is truly happening other than they're kicking the can down the road for future generations to clean up their mess.

And that's what always happens in Manitoba. The NDP come in and they spend like crazy, and then the public gets mad at them, kicks them out, and then a Tory government has to come in and clean them up. We have to clean up the mess.

I even found it interesting, Frances Russell, who was—even Frances Russell, who I don't think was particularly friendly to us, wrote a really interesting op-ed piece in the Free Press a number of years ago, and she said, isn't it interesting that that always happens. The NDP come in, out-of-control spending, and then the Tories always have to come in and clean up their mess, and then as the Tories are putting us on the road to prosperity, they get kicked out and then the NDP come in and the cycle starts all over.

Well, this government has been given much more latitude, I think, by the public, but that is coming to an abrupt end. The public does not like what they're seeing right now with this government. We now have a provincial debt sitting at \$32 billion, and it's amazing, in a time when transfer payments from the federal government are the highest they've ever been, when own-source revenues are the highest they've ever been, we've got a government that does not know how to control their spending. Instead they keep going to Ottawa, demanding with their hand out that all these taxpayers from all these other provinces across Canada keep giving them money here because they don't know how to rein in their own spending, how to set a vision and have a have-province instead of a have-not province. They have no shame in that. They have no pride in wanting to stand on their own

two feet. They're quite happy going to Ottawa and demanding what they say is their right.

\* (16:20)

Well, it isn't. People are starting to get very, very agitated in Manitoba because they don't want to be so embarrassed by what is happening out there. People want us to be a have province. They want us to be able to stand on our own two feet and reach the potential we have here in this province. The NDP don't go down that road.

This government spends way more than they take in every year. They have rarely made any of their budgets. They run structural deficits. Even in a time of largesse, they're running structural deficits. They break promises. We've got the highest income tax—I think it's what, now, west of, is it Quebec or New Brunswick? We have the highest PST in western Canada. Totally reliant on federal handouts. I think it's one other Maritime province and Manitoba that are the most reliant in all of Canada on federal handouts. One day that is going to stop, and there will be changes. And this government isn't going to be ready for it. And, by having blinders on in those areas, it is going to be the taxpayers of Manitoba that are really going to hurt. And it's going to be the poor and the working poor and the seniors and the students that are all going to feel the pinch most of all.

Mr. Speaker, this government doesn't address bracket creep. By not addressing bracket creep, that's a hidden tax on Manitobans. And to have \$67,000 make Manitobans the high—at the high-income earners, that means all of them over there are, then, the highest income-earner bracket in Canada. I don't know why they don't sort of recognize that themselves, that they're rolling in dough over there. But yet people that make \$8,800 in Manitoba are taxed. And that is so ridiculous. If we want to move Manitoba forward, we have to leave people with more money in their pockets. And that lower tax bracket has to change. We need to take tens of thousands of people off of income tax. And this government has not done that.

So, as much as they talk about caring for the poor and the working poor, these are the ones, across the way, that actually don't do very much to help them. Nor do they work very hard to do anything with increasing rental rates for people on income assistance. They have absolutely refused to do anything, and now they're starting to think, well, maybe, maybe it's time we do something. And then

they're dragging it out over four years, well past the next election. If they really believed about helping the people that need it the most, this NDP government would have done a better job over the last number of years, and they haven't. They're hosing taxpayers; they're hosing the poor; they're hosing the working poor and seniors and students.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think this government has much credibility. And, you know, it's like they stand in here, when they're doing their budget speeches, and it's like it's a fairy tale. But it would really help if they just took some time and, instead of looking around and trying to blame everybody else, have a look at where they could make a difference and how they can help Manitobans better than what they're doing right now.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would note that the former Finance minister, only a—just under a year ago—

**An Honourable Member:** Which one?

**Mrs. Driedger:** Which one? The one from Dauphin, said, and I quote—and this was a really interesting quote coming from him—he said: Clearly, an organization that is this dependent on a government subsidy today is not sustainable. And that was the immediately past Finance minister, and I'll read it again: Clearly, an organization that is this dependent on a government subsidy today is not sustainable. Why didn't he then look at how dependent they are on the federal government? He basically said, it's not sustainable; and it's not. And yet this government has done very, very little to try to make it—very little, they've done nothing—to try to make this different.

And then what we see now, and I was actually shocked last year, as the Finance critic sitting in Estimates, and the Finance minister is telling me that they underspent their infrastructure budget by \$300 million last year. And, all of a sudden, all of this infrastructure-touted spending was starting to unravel. And then they went into scramble mode, trying to find a way to justify to the public their PST increase. Well, the public was very, very attuned to this. And the public knew that they were being snowed by this government and the public wasn't buying it. So the NDP were in scramble mode, and they were trying to then try to convince people what their infrastructure spending was doing.

And, in fact, Mr. Speaker, as we look further at this, in the last four years, they have underspent in infrastructure by 27 per cent, or \$1.9 billion. If they were so committed to infrastructure, they did not

have to raise the PST. All they had to do was walk their talk over the last number of years. If they were committed to infrastructure, why did they let \$1.9 billion lapse? It really shows that—and where did that money go, by the way? That was never something I could find from the minister of Finance. Never did tell us where he actually spent that money.

It was built into the budgets, but all of a sudden it wasn't there, and I asked, well, where did you take \$1.9 billion, then, over the last number of years? Where did you put it? And the minister of Finance did not have an answer. But certainly what it shows—a lot of the—all of the other provinces in Canada were under the same strain financially. Not one of them raised their PST, just this government. So, Mr. Speaker, it just doesn't wash. It was a bad decision for Manitoba. It was very, very bad for Manitoba to raise that PST.

And, when we see the government continuing to spend, running structural deficits, building up the debt, we heard just recently today too how it's all being pointed out that the amount of money spent on interest payments, on paying off this loan—well, not even paying off—it's just covering off interest rates and servicing that debt that's over, I believe, \$850 million now a year. Where could that money come in better? I think probably in daycares, in health care, in education, in the environment. Imagine what we could do with \$850 million more a year if we didn't have to pay interest. That's just like taking a pile of money and just burning it because we are not getting a benefit from it. It's just going to pay for service charges, and this government really isn't again looking further than the next election cycle, and it really is not to the benefit of everyday Manitobans.

They also promised seniors that they were going to provide tax relief on property tax. Well, what happened to that? You know, another broken promise again, and it's something we're seeing over and over again by this government. They will say anything before an election to win an election, and then they will turn around and they will change their mind, change a deadline They will do what they promised that they weren't going to do, and they are breaking promises now left, right and centre, Mr. Speaker.

So they're failing Manitoba families and they're failing them very, very seriously. I think too, Mr. Speaker, nobody's finding this government to be trustworthy anymore because integrity is a huge part

of being in government. But this government has lost its way. This government is now more about itself and retaining power than it is about working in the best interests of people. So there has been a large lack of faith and a loss of trust by the public, and certainly we're seeing it in the polls. This government is now seen as a tired, cranky government, more interested in serving themselves than they are for what they were elected, and that is to be there for the people.

\* (16:30)

And they've lost their way, Mr. Speaker. And all they can do now is, you know, run around and fear-monger. Say, the only ones running around with scissors nowadays is all these Cabinet ministers that are going to ribbon cuttings for the infrastructure announcements that they're making, a lot of them reannouncements rather than anything new. And a number of them, announcements that aren't even going to take place for years, if they even take place.

So here we have a government running around with scissors. They need to be careful they don't fall on those scissors because they're pretty sharp, and it's this government that is trying to fool the public with all of these grand announcements, and they're scrambling. But, unfortunately, for them, the public has been made much more aware of what 14 years of a government has finally become. And there's a level of arrogance out there right now with the long-in-tooth government, and they know that fear mongering is not going to be something that the public's going to buy anymore. And, if they would just pay a little bit more attention to general Manitobans, instead of maybe some of their political people around them, they would realize that Manitobans aren't going to be fooled again, and the fear mongering is not going to work again.

And I do remember after the last election and I ran into Michael Balagus in the hallway and I said, I was so upset that you guys brought American-style politics into this past election with these negative smearers. And I said, you know what, you know, attack ads like that were just ramped up inordinately by the NDP government. And you know what Michael Balagus said to me? He said, Myrna, we're going for a fourth majority. We can't run on our own record anymore. This was the only thing that we could do. And I believe Michael Balagus because I've now seen—I have now seen their document—their smear document that was developed before the last campaign where it talked about how they were going

to smear the Tories, how they were going to fear-monger, and I have a copy of it, Mr. Speaker, and it is shameful.

It is shameful what they've done, and they're going down the same path again. Only this time they really have lost their way. They have now become a government that is dysfunctional. They're all about power grabs, name-calling, bullying, lying, blaming, and that's what they have come to stand for, and, Mr. Speaker, it's not getting any better for them. Some of the name-calling that we hear even in this House has really gone to a new low, and it just shows what happens with a very arrogant government, and it is time for a change.

And I don't think it should come as any surprise to anybody over on that side we can't support a budget that is this poor, that has no vision, that isn't there for the people of Manitoba, and that is kicking problems down the road for a lot of young people, as was pointed out to me this morning in my office by a young university student.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would urge the government to support our amendments when they come to a vote tomorrow, and maybe pull up their socks and do a little bit better and go out there and work for Manitobans instead of just trying to blame everybody else and grab the power and just work in order to get elected next go around. That's not what being good stewards of the public is all about, and they are not behaving in the manner that is good for Manitoba. *[interjection]*

My colleagues are encouraging me to keep going.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot more, and I've got so much information in front of me. But maybe there's a couple of points that really need to be put on the record today.

And let's look at the birthing centre, because again the NDP again, just like they do with so many things, say one thing before an election and then they don't follow through, and that was the same with the birthing centre. Only that was in 2007 election, and they were so in a rush to get in front us on that issue that they promised a birthing centre. They didn't do their homework, Mr. Speaker. They didn't have enough midwives to keep it open, and now, if anybody chooses to read the Winnipeg Sun today, they will find out that that birthing centre is not anywhere near capacity for birthing babies. They—the minister indicated there would be 500 a year; they

aren't even anywhere near that. And everybody is wondering, you know, there's a lot of operational funds going into it, but what is the money going for if we're not birthing babies at the birthing centre? And this government is going to have to be accountable for the mess they've made of this, and that is their mess; it happened under their watch. And had they done a better job of training midwives in Manitoba, we might not have the problems that we're in right now.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's being pointed out to me that the minister, the former minister of Finance, actually broke an election law, along with one of her colleagues, and they went into the birthing centre and took media with them to have this wonderful 'photo op—photo op with a little baby, and it was determined that they broke the law in order to get this photo op. But that's what this government is all about. It is about photo ops; that's all they care about. That's why they're running around with scissors to cut ribbons all over Manitoba.

And then we find that—we find out that a lot of these infrastructure projects—I guess we'll hold our breath and wait to see if they actually take place.

Right now, there's another very serious issue before us, and, again, prior to the last election, the NDP government, without tendering a \$100-million contract, went out and signed a sole-source contract for a helicopter EMS in Manitoba. They did not pull out—*[interjection]*—this government—and I notice that the former minister of Health is chirping away, and it's certainly going to be her legacy when we see what happens with some of this, Mr. Speaker. This STARS issue right now is of concern, and it's not so much just about what we're hearing about; it's about what we didn't see in how the government moved forward with this and set up the contract. How in the world do you have a \$100-million contract signed in Manitoba that is sole-sourced and doesn't get tendered? So we didn't have the ability to shine a light on this whole program. How much of the mistakes that we're seeing today, or the challenges that are faced today, are because of mismanagement by this government, because they needed that photo op with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) in front of this red helicopter?

And then they put that on their website—on their party website. That helicopter had nothing to do with the NDP party; that was—the government paid for that—not the NDP party. And yet they have no shame in taking advantage of that photo op and putting it on

their own website. And they just—they had to rush, rush, rush before the last election to try to pull this picture together and get it out there as a prop. And what we see now—Mr. Speaker, we are seeing some very serious issues that have occurred, and I think the problem lies largely with how the government mismanaged this. They didn't get their ducks in a row on this either, just like with the birthing centre. The government just bulldozed ahead, they didn't do their due diligence, they didn't do their homework, and now we're seeing patients having some issues with this. We're seeing this government, you know, take this issue of STARS and hurt the reputation of an organization. This government has no shame, but it's their mismanagement; and it's their mismanagement that is starting to shine through.

And I think we're going to see it with a number of other issues, Mr. Speaker, because mismanagement is really what we're beginning to see much more in health care. And we're also seeing a government that has so ramped up their spin, but I just want to tell them that spin doesn't hire doctors, spin doesn't hire nurses. We have got such a significant doctor shortage in Manitoba that we've got groups coming in to see us, because they're so worried about health care.

So the government may have put money into health care, but all they did was prop up the status quo. They didn't look at what really needed to be changed to make it better. Instead, Mr. Speaker—and people told that, you know, to this government—others—money just props up the status quo; you're not going to fix the problem.

So I would urge this government: Do a better job and, hopefully, maybe they'll come to their senses tomorrow and vote for these amendments.

\* (16:40)

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** In 2011, the Premier unveiled TomorrowNow—Manitoba's Green Plan and it contained over one—*[interjection]*—Mr. Speaker, I can't hear a thing—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** —with over 100 initiatives to make this province one of the most sustainable places to live on earth. Over 75 per cent of those initiatives are now in various stages of implementation. Budget 2014 supports this strong agenda for the environment and for a green economy for this province.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. David Barber is a renowned scientist. He's an ice scientist at the University of Manitoba, and a couple of months ago he presented to a group of us a graph that showed the increase in open Arctic waters since just the mid-1970s. It was astounding to see that graph; the dramatic line was as convincing as any evidence I have ever seen about climate change—the carbon pollution.

We are heading to catastrophe, Mr. Speaker, yet, unfortunately, too many in this Legislature itself are saying—and I can't believe this—stop this hydro 'thing'—stop this hydro thing, let's do gas. We hear it over and over again. We heard it again today in question period. I think that, increasingly, this unfortunate division marks a key difference between Conservatives and New Democrats in the province of Manitoba. This Conservative view is entirely, of course, consistent with the Leader of the Opposition's position as an MP to reject an emission reduction plan for this country.

And, by the way, the biggest conservation issue in last session's question period was our effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our provincial parks by reduced grass mowing. It was the big hurrah of members of the opposition. Get this, you know, Conservatives in this House, they would cut health care, they would cut education, and they'd also cut grass way out in bush. Now talk about a new light on their priorities, Mr. Speaker.

But, as for our priorities, we are making extraordinary investments by both reducing emissions and enhancing resilience to the impact of climate change.

First, Manitoba Hydro's expansion—and the plan is, indeed, the essence, I think, of our climate-change effort.

I am told that Keeyask emissions over 100 years would be the same as one gas-fired plant emissions over one year. So we know where members of the opposition stand when it comes to climate change; it's loud and clear.

Of course, other clean energy initiatives that are under way by this government include funding to help coal users transition to biomass, in light of the first coal and petcoke heating ban in North America and, as well, stimulates a rapidly maturing biomass sector.

The Province has also invested millions for what I understand are now 1,000 geothermal installations, and, most recently, for geothermal conversions at

Peguis and Fisher River First Nations. I understand, I think, about 120 conversions there.

Regarding the challenge of transportation emissions, we've invested in phase 1, of course, of Winnipeg rapid transit. We are now committed to funding our share—our fair share—of phase 2, and as well we've been providing historic investments in active transportation.

We've invested millions for methane capture at the Brady landfill site and at Brandon.

The Agriculture Department has been investing, over the years, in beneficial management practices, manure management, and, of course, most recently, with the partnership with the federal government in the ecological goods and services program, flowing through conservation districts for agricultural producers.

Budget 2014 supports new strategies for boreal conservation, including peatland stewardship, as well as our new UNESCO bid, which all must rightly be understood as climate-change efforts, given the huge carbon storage this ecosystem provides.

Budget 2014 also supports \$320 million over the next five years for flood protection, which must also rightly be understood as climate-change adaptation.

Senior officials are now identifying the likely impact of climate change on public services to develop our resilience beyond flooding.

The news for Manitoba is that from 2000 to 2012, population is up 11 per cent, the economy is up 31 per cent, while greenhouse gas admissions are down 2 per cent. But, Mr. Speaker, we know that sustained reductions both here and everywhere are absolutely required, so that's why we are now developing, with the involvement and leadership of the IISD and with the help of this budget, our province's next generation climate change strategy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all have heard and know and take seriously the revelation that Lake Winnipeg is at a tipping point. Now, last session the opposition all spontaneously clapped, some got up and gave a standing ovation, gave a big hurrah when I predicted that if they ever became government, they would scratch all of the regulations that we have put in place to better protect our waterways and Lake Winnipeg. That was loud and clear—literally. Instead, Budget 2014 supports first-ever efforts in the Lake Winnipeg basin: First, to institutionalize the lake friendly alliance which brings together about

75 organizations to co-ordinate and focus—it is now embarked through a series of working groups and they're having their fourth meeting this week on a new level lake friendly action plan; second, to engage governments and citizens through a Lake Friendly Accord; and third, to conclude a surface water management strategy that moves us to sustainable drainage, based on the feedback we received this winter to the concepts that are being proposed. And that includes feedback from the new stewards alliance, over 300 municipal reps at the last AMM convention, representatives from conservation districts this winter, as well as scientists from the IISD and the University of Manitoba.

And, moreover, this budget supports a \$1-billion investment in Lake Winnipeg over the next five years through leveraged federal and municipal funding.

There have been, indeed, reductions in phosphorus concentrations in Lake Winnipeg since comprehensive action was launched in 2005, but there are many variables at play that influence concentrations and we have committed to do better.

They aren't making any new land on the planet; indeed, natural areas are under pressure from development at an historic high. So we must all ask this question: What places do we want to keep? The Leader of the Opposition has given his answer. He doesn't support the UNESCO World Heritage Site nomination advanced by the First Nations of Manitoba and Ontario of the region—Canada, Manitoba and Ontario. Conservatives want a hydro line down the middle of this area, one of the few great forests left intact in the world and where Aboriginal people have been taking such care of the land. The Leader of the Opposition expressed concern in the Legislature that the UNESCO bid was just to obstruct development in that region. And I think a day or—before that, he suggested that protecting the boreal was a waste of money.

So we present a contrast. In addition to our UNESCO bid, and as part of our new \$100-million park strategy called, Building the Parks Province, this budget commits \$16 million this year to enhance our provincial parks. It commits millions to remediate orphan mine sites, especially in our parks, 10 of them in the Whiteshell. The budget supports consultations on the study area of the proposed polar bear park.

Manitoba can do better when it comes to the waste that we send to municipal landfills. While

Conservatives tried last year to weaken enforcement against companies that avoid their reduction—their waste reduction obligations, we're preparing a new strategic direction. In the meantime, we're concluding a new composting support initiative.

Mr. Speaker, there's growing medical evidence about the risks of synthetic chemical pesticides, particularly to children. The Leader of the Opposition, I understand, is reportedly against reducing child exposure to these pesticides and, reportedly, says that dandelions are a bigger risk to children than these pesticides. Budget 2014 supports a risk reduction approach that's already in place for most other Canadian children.

I urge members to read our plans to address the challenges facing the living world of the wild as set out in TomorrowNow; compare that to the Conservatives who want to make our natural resource officers second-class law enforcement officers. Last year, for example, they tried to take away their ability to conduct investigations on private property and conduct covert investigations. They tried to reduce poaching fines for endangered species. It's lost on them that extinction is forever. So they're on the side of poachers, and we're on the side of wild life.

\*(16:50)

This budget supports the creation of a new and long-sought-after trust fund, the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund, to supplement efforts for healthy fish and wildlife populations to help ensure even greater hunting, tripping—hunting, trapping and fishing. This budget also invests in addressing the challenge of moose populations and supports the development for public comment of an updated caribou recovery plan, polar bear and beluga strategies.

Mr. Speaker, since we came into office, investments in conservation and water stewardship have increased by 54 per cent—that means there's \$56 million more in this year's budget over the last Conservative budget. If any member in this Legislature seeks a more sustainable province, then I for one will see that member stand tomorrow and signal a high five for Budget 2014.

Thank you.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** A pleasure to have the opportunity to reply to Budget 2014. Mr. Speaker, I want to echo some of the comments that have already been made by members of the House

and certainly welcome everybody back to the Assembly. Nice to be back at a more timely time, I would say, early in March; we'll have lots of opportunity now to debate legislation on the different issues that come up rather than bringing the House back in mid-April, which has been the pattern of this government, and then trying to ram through legislation in six to eight weeks—a legislation that sometimes they consider to be important to Manitobans, but they're scared for Manitobans who actually have an opportunity to hear and debate.

But I also want to echo some of the colleagues—my colleagues who made comments about the new member for Morris (Mr. Martin) and the new member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk); we want to welcome them to this Chamber, to this House. They both have big shoes to fill, of course, but we know already in these early days that each of them will exceed expectations in doing that for their constituents. I know that they'll both be strong members of the caucus, both here in the House but specifically in their own constituency advocating for the different priorities of the residents of Morris and of the residents for Arthur-Virden, Mr. Speaker, and I want to wish them well as they embark on what I know will be a lengthy political career for each of them.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that this budget, I think, is transparent in terms of what it's intended to do. I'll have opportunity tomorrow, I suppose, to speak about the debt and the overspending that's often the case with this NDP government and, in fact, all NDP governments. We know that there isn't an NDP government in Canada, whether it's federally or those that existed previously provincially—and I know they're a dying breed; they're almost like dinosaurs, almost extinct. But there still is one NDP government that roams the land here in Manitoba, not quite extinct yet. Might feel like we're in the ice age this winter and perhaps the ice age will sweep out this NDP government.

But we know, even nationally we heard Thomas Mulcair who came into Manitoba during the fall, and Thomas Mulcair, the federal leader of the NDP, vowed that he would do for Canada what Greg Selinger has done for Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** I'm sure the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen)—order, please.

I'm sure the honourable member for Steinbach knows the rules and procedures of this House,

probably as well as any member, and that we're to refer to ministers by their portfolios and other members by their constituencies. So I'm asking for the co-operation of the honourable member for Steinbach.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, I apologize, Mr. Speaker, my mistake. But I certainly meant to say that the federal leader, Thomas Mulcair, flew into Manitoba and said that he would do for Canada what this Premier (Mr. Selinger) has done for Manitoba. And on the heels of that promise he promptly lost two by-elections because Manitobans know that they don't want to have done nationally what's been done in Manitoba.

Now I've not heard Mr. Mulcair sweep back into Manitoba and repeat that promise, Mr. Speaker, and I suspect we might not hear him repeat that promise because I know when I heard during the scrum, when Mr. Mulcair had made that comment, the media asked him a lot of questions: Well, you mean, you're going to raise the GST and you're going to raise taxes? And he was kind of caught off guard. And I think somebody quickly swept him out the kitchen, out the back of the hotel, into a waiting car, threw him into a car and then quickly drove off to the airport, never to be seen in Manitoba again, realizing, I suppose, that the NDP track record in Manitoba isn't exactly what he thought. Maybe he was thinking of Gary Doer. Maybe he didn't realize that there was a new Premier in town. I don't know what Mr. Mulcair's issue was in making that promise, but I'm sure that he's not going to make it again, because Manitobans have seen what happens when you have a long-term NDP government.

Now, this budget, of course, was intended to try to get people to forget. It was the budget that was intended to get people to forget what happened to them and what was done to them only a year ago. It was only a year ago, Mr. Speaker, that we had people protesting on the steps of the Legislature, waving to the Attorney General (Mr. Swan), waving to the Premier's office, hoping that they would come out and speak to them. They didn't come out and speak to them.

In fact, what we had was the Attorney General and the Premier close their windows. There was a rumour that the Attorney General moved his curtains and peeked out the window. There was a rumour that the Premier kind of slipped around the curtain to see what was going on in the steps of the Legislature. Those are unconfirmed rumours, but I suspect that that might have happened, that the Premier would

have heard the hundreds of people on the steps of the Legislature trying to be heard.

Now, they weren't able to be heard outside the building, so they came inside the building. They came inside the building to committee. And day after day, Mr. Speaker, we heard from hundreds of Manitobans—and it's ironic, because the Premier (Mr. Selinger) invited those Manitobans. He said, well, I'm not going to listen to you at your rallies, I'm not going to speak to you at your rallies, but I want to hear from you at committee. Those were the words of the Premier. He said, I want to listen to you. I want to hear from you about the PST increase at committee. And so the committee eventually came to be, during the summer, the summer of our discontent, some would say.

And here we were at the Legislature, and hundreds of people came to committee. They were looking for the Premier. They were hoping that he would be there. After all, he invited them. It's a bit like, you know, you hold a party, you send out invitations, and then you don't show up to the party that you invited people to come to, Mr. Speaker. But the Premier didn't come to the committees—not one. Now, I understand the Premier's a busy guy. I'm not expecting him to be at everything. I know he's got competing interests, but I think there was eight or nine different evenings where committees were held. And I don't believe that there wasn't one night—that there wasn't one night—where the Premier couldn't have poked his head in, shook hands with a couple of people, listened to two or three presenters. But not one—not one—presenter did the Premier come and listen to. Not a single Manitoban did he respect enough to come and listen to. Didn't want to come and listen to one single—one single—person. And that's unfortunate, but it speaks to what this Premier feels about Manitobans. It speaks to what he believes in terms of respect for those Manitobans.

And so the government was hoping, of course, that they—people would forget. Forget all of that. Let's bring in a budget and hope that all of a sudden

all of that goes away. It hasn't gone away, Mr. Speaker. People are still talking about the PST increase, not only the fact that the tax has gone up, but how it's gone up. And I know that the NDP members, they hear it too.

Now, I heard the member for—the minister responsible for—formerly for Culture and Heritage come and tell us that there was parades in the streets over this budget—parades that everybody was happy about this budget. She indicated that everybody was excited about the budget. Well, that's not true, and the members know that, of course. What they're still hearing about is the PST increase; they are. They're still hearing about the fact that the government continues to tax.

I know that members have said that, Mr. Speaker. We know that that is what they're hearing. Minister of Education shakes his head; he said, no, that's not what he's hearing. Well, he's probably hearing about all the teachers that are being fired, so he might be hearing about something different. Probably his phone is ringing for a different reason. All the people that are calling his office to try to complain about the PST can't get through, because all the school divisions are phoning him and complaining about underfunding and how they're going to have to fire teachers because of this NDP government. So I'll give him a pass. Maybe he's the only person who isn't hearing about the PST increase, because people can't get through to his line.

But I know that other NDP members, those who are left, those who haven't gone to sit as Independents, I know that they're hearing about it, Mr. Speaker. They're hearing from—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) will have 21 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

Monday, March 17, 2014

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