

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

Vol. LXII No. 24 - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, April 8, 2010

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
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IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 8, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 17—The Biofuels Amendment Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 17, The Biofuels Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biocarburants, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: This bill will clarify and also seek to maintain Manitoba's status as the first jurisdiction to have a biodiesel mandate, as well as one of the first jurisdictions to have an ethanol mandate, and continue the process of making Manitoba the greenest province in the country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Many seniors from the Morden and Winkler area are currently patients in Boundary Trails Health Centre while they wait for placement in local personal care homes.

There are presently no beds available for these patients in Salem Home and Tabor Home. To make

more beds in the hospital available, the regional health authority is planning to move these patients to personal care homes in outlying regions.

These patients have lived, worked and raised their families in this area for most of their lives. They receive care and support from their family and friends who live in the community, and they will lose this support if they are forced to move to distant communities.

These seniors and their families should not have to bear the consequences of the provincial government's failure to endure—to ensure there are adequate personal care home beds in the region.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to ensure that patients who are awaiting placement in a personal care home are not moved to distant communities.

And to urge the Minister of Health to consider working with the RHA and the community to speed construction and expansion of long-term care facilities in the region.

This is signed by N. Fieher, J. Kleiver, D. Steedsman and many, many others.

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

PTH 15—Twinning

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

In 2004, the Province of Manitoba made a public commitment to the people of Springfield to twin the PTH 15 and the floodway bridge on PTH 15, but then in 2006, the twinning was cancelled.

Injuries resulting from collisions on PTH 15 continue to rise and have doubled from 2007 to 2008.

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation stated that the preliminary analysis of current and

future traffic demands indicate that local twinning will be required.

The current plan to replace the floodway bridge on PTH 15 does not include twinning and therefore does not fulfil the current nor future traffic demands cited by the Minister of Transportation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate twinning of the PTH 15 floodway bridge for the safety of the citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by G. Desautels, K. Zacharias, G. Nolin and many, many other Manitobans.

Ophthalmology Services—Swan River

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health has told the Town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program; however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with

the community to provide this service without further delay.

And this is signed by K. Genoway, C. Sparkman, D. Gray and many, many others.

Education Funding

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for the petition:

Historically, the Province of Manitoba has received funding for education by the assessment of property that generates taxes. This unfair tax is only applied to selected property owners in certain areas and confines, including but not limited to commercial property owners.

Property-based school tax is becoming an ever-increasing burden without acknowledging the commercial property owner's income or owner's ability to pay.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship, Youth—and Youth consider removing education funding by the school tax or education levies from all property in Manitoba, including commercial property.

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth consider finding a more equitable method of funding education, such as general revenue following the constitutional funding of education by the Province of Manitoba.

And this petition is signed by J. Lysak, R. Nielsen and P. Tylok and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Medical Clinic in Weston and Brooklands Area

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

* (13:40)

Community-based medical clinics provide a valuable health-care service.

The closure of the Westbrook Medical Clinic has left both Weston and Brooklands without a community-based medical clinic.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider how important it is to have a medical clinic located in Weston and Brooklands area.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by K. Cunningham, M. Hall, D. Hall and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

Bipole III

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background of this petition is as follows:

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

This decision will cost Manitoba ratepayers at least 640 more million dollars than an east-side route. The provincial government of Manitoba is facing its largest deficit on record, and the burden of this extra cost would not come—could not come at a worse time.

Between 2002 and 2009, electricity rates increased by 16 percent, and Manitoba Hydro has filed a request for further rate increases totalling 6 percent over the next two years.

A western Bipole III route will invariably lead to more rate increases.

In addition to being cheaper, an east-side route would be hundreds of kilometres shorter and would be more reliable than a west side route.

West-side residents have not been adequately consulted and have identified serious concerns with the proposed line.

The NDP government has not been able to provide any logical justification for the west-side route.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the cheaper, shorter and more logical east-side line, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, to save ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars during these challenging economic times.

This petition is signed by G. Pederson, S. Osborne, R.E. Pedersen and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help protect the safety of the motorists and pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by A. Van Der Busch, K. Lapointe, C. McKee and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Waste-Water Ejector Systems

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitobans are deeply committed to protecting the environment, and they want to be assured that the provincial environment policies are based on sound science.

In early 2009 the provincial government announced that it was reviewing on-site waste-water management systems regulations under the environmental act.

Affected Manitobans, including property owners and municipal governments, provided considerable feedback to the provincial government on the impact of the proposed changes, only to have their input ignored.

The updated regulation includes a prohibition on the installation of new waste-water injectors and the elimination of existing waste-water injectors at the time of property transfer.

Questions have been raised about the lack of scientific basis for these changes, as a Manitoba Conservation official stated October 8th, 2009 edition of the *Manitoba Co-operator*, we have done a specific study? No.

The regulatory changes have a significant financial impact on all affected Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Conservation–Minister of Conservation to consider immediately placing the recent changes on the Onsite Wastewater Management Systems Regulation under the environmental act to hold on such time a review can take place to ensure that they are based on sound science.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider implementing the prohibition on waste-water injection systems on a case-by-case basis as determined by environmental need in ecologically sensitive areas.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider offering financial incentives to help affected Manitoba property owners adapt to these regulatory changes.

Submitted on behalf of E.J. Sigurdson, F. Burdett, B. Patterson and many other fine Manitobans.

Bipole III

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct its next high-voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba, a decision for which the NDP government has not been able to provide any logical justification.

Since this will cost Manitoba taxpayers at least \$640 million more than an east-side route, and given that the Province of Manitoba is facing its largest

deficit on record, the burden of this extra cost could not come at a worse time.

Between 2002 and 2009 electricity rates increased by 16 percent, and Manitoba Hydro has filed a request for further rate increases totalling 6 percent over the next two years.

A western Bipole III route will invariably lead to more rate increases.

In addition to being cheaper, the east-side route would be hundreds of kilometres shorter and would be more reliable than a west-side route.

West-side residents have not been adequately consulted and have identified serious concerns with the proposed line.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the cheaper, shorter and more logical east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, to save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars during these challenging economic times.

And this petition is signed by C. Morison, G. Lefloch, A. McIntosh and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today, we have Elsie Clark, who is the guest of the honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

And also in the public gallery we have men and women representing 17 Field Ambulance based at Minto Armouries. We have Major Daniel Ayotte, Commanding Officer; Captain Vince Henderson; Captain Jason English and Corporal Holly Young.

And also in the public gallery we have, from Rural Leadership North Dakota, we have 18 delegates participating in a Canada seminar, Understanding International Issues and Culture. This group is the guest of the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Football Stadium Government Priority

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, after riding the brakes for 11 years on this stadium issue, and after two weeks ago, the stadium being such a low priority it didn't even get mentioned in the budget.

I just want to ask the Premier: What caused him to panic within eight days of the budget and suddenly make the need for a new stadium his top priority?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, when you can get the City of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba, the private sector, the provincial government and the Winnipeg Football Club to come together and agree on a strategy, then things become possible.

All of those players came together. They all made a contribution. The university offered up land. The football club offered to raise up to \$15 million. The private sector, Creswin, offered to put development fees in as a contribution. Everybody—the City offered to make their portion of taxes available through the tax increment financing as a backup. Everybody made an effort to solve the problem, and when all the players come together in a community to solve a problem, we get things done. And that's what we're doing: getting it done.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I don't blame the City of Winnipeg and the federal government and the football club and Mr. Asper. This is a great deal for those parties. The only losers are taxpayers of Manitoba and schools in Winnipeg, the schools that he proposes to take more than \$40 million away from in order to fund his top project.

I want to ask the Premier: What caused his spring-break panic? What caused him to rush in with money from schools in order to fund his new top priority as of this week?

* (13:50)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the property that will be redeveloped at Polo Park where the existing stadium is has zero tax yield on it right now. It pays nothing in taxes. The way the arrangement is structured is when the old stadium is cleared off the property for purposes of economic development, the new retail shopping complex that will go there will generate tax revenues. Those tax revenues, which are zero now,

will be available for schools, they'll be available for the municipality.

We're promoting economic development. We're solving the stadium problem. We're putting an asset in place to the benefit of all Manitobans. That's how you move forward in Manitoba, with everybody working together.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, we understand the way he is abusing the TIF legislation in order to take money away from schools because he panicked over spring break.

I just want to ask the Premier if he'll acknowledge, because we have no doubt that the other parties to this deal did a very good job of protecting their positions and negotiating on their behalf. The other parties did a terrific job, Mr. Speaker. The only party that got fleeced and hoodwinked in his panic over the spring break was the Premier.

Will he just admit he's completely out of control? He took his foot off the brake, jammed on the gas pedal, and now the provincial government that he's in charge of is completely out of control, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we have a proposal here that everybody has come together to support. The City's willing to put in their portion of the TIF taxes, if required. The private sector is willing to advance significant resources to look after the design of the stadium and the development fee. The Bombers have decided to come up with \$15 million over the next several years to support this stadium. The university has offered to put land available to develop this asset.

This asset will be owned by the university. It will be owned by the City. It will have a community-benefit agreement. It'll be played in by the Bisons. It'll be played in by the Bombers. It will allow for amateur teams to use it. It will allow the public to use it for fitness. This is an asset for all of Manitobans. Manitobans will now have a stadium at the university as good as or better what we see in Calgary, as good as or better than what we see in McGill. It's a win, win, win for Manitobans.

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

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, if it's such a good deal, why didn't they mention it in the budget two weeks ago? The Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk)

didn't even know about it when she introduced the budget two weeks ago.

Everybody goes away on spring break. He hits the panic button. He gets an MOU drafted up in crayon, Mr. Speaker, and he comes out and makes an announcement that's going to take money from schools to fund a stadium.

I want to ask the Premier: What does he say to the 150,000 Manitobans who, today, don't have access to a family doctor, that suddenly, as of last week, his top priority is taking money from taxpayers to build a stadium?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we've moved on a project that is long overdue. We're avoiding \$52 million—up to \$52 million of costs, to fix up the existing stadium. And this isn't—we're not going back to the '90s where the members keep trying to drag us, when they did nothing to help save the Jets or build an arena. We're not going back to the '90s where doctors were leaving Manitoba and they were laying off nurses. We have over 340 new doctors in Manitoba. We have over 2,000 new nurses in Manitoba. We have a record enrolment in the medical school at 110 seats. They had chopped it down to 70.

Everybody's better off in this province. Everybody's better off in terms of doctors, in terms of nurses, and now they're going to be better off in terms of the recreation assets that we have in this community.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) didn't know this project was coming two weeks ago and it wasn't mentioned in the budget, it makes it very clear he rode the brake for 10 years, he hit the panic button over spring break, he had an MOU drafted up in crayon, and he's throwing taxpayer money, school dollars, into a project because he's panicking, he's desperate and he's out of control.

And he should today come clean to those Manitobans: the 150,000 who don't have access to a family doctor, the people who at this very moment are waiting for hours on end in emergency rooms, the kids who are going to huts being attached to schools throughout Winnipeg and the province, those people across the province who are waiting in line for access to personal care homes.

What does he say to them, that as of last week, his top priority is a football stadium just because he panicked over spring break?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite would look at the budget, he would see that 60 percent of all the new resources in the budget go to health care. He would see that 90 percent of all the new resources in the budget go to health care, education, justice, family services, infrastructure. That's where the bulk of resources are going.

The stadium has been put together because Manitobans and their leaders have come together to find a solution, to solve a problem. They've done it in a way that everybody is making a contribution. The member opposite has a problem with that. I'd like to know what his alternative proposal is to create a public asset that will be available for the use of all Manitobans.

Everybody who attends the university will have access to that. The Bisons will be able to replace their old, shoddy stadium with a new one. The Bombers will be able to be a more viable team in this community because of the new stadium. The fans of Manitoba will finally get the kind of stadium that puts them at the front ranks of Canada for this kind of an asset.

Everybody's better off. The member's just—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure him I couldn't be happier.

And I want to just say to him that I agree—I disagreed with Gary Doer on lots of things. One thing I agree with Gary Doer on is you would never use a TIF. You would never take money from schools to fund a stadium. Mr. Doer was right, Mr. Speaker.

I want to ask the NDP leader what he says to the people in Portage la Prairie who just had their Adult Education Program cut because this budget—his budget cuts, Mr. Speaker. I wanted him to explain to the 8,900 people in Winnipeg waiting for an MRI, the 2,500 people in Winnipeg waiting for a CT scan, the 5,700 people in Winnipeg waiting for an ultrasound, why is it that these are not on his priority list, but a new stadium at public expense is No. 1 for this Premier?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, you know, I had the pleasure of attending Portage la Prairie and seeing what's going on in that community two or three times in the last few months. And they are opening a multiplex there that we contributed to. It's one of the finest recreation facilities in Manitoba.

I want to commend the mayor of Portage la Prairie and the reeve of the outlying municipality for their ability to do what we've done with the stadium. They came together, they worked together to share resources, they raised money locally, we contributed over 5 million to that multiplex concept. It's going to have a beautiful, indoor Olympic-sized arena. It's going to have a figure-skating facility, it's going to have a wave pool, the second one in Manitoba. It's going to be an excellent asset to the benefit of the people of Portage la Prairie.

And now we're building recreation assets in Winnipeg, we're building recreation assets in the north, we're building University College of the North, we're building university assets all throughout this province. I was just out in Brandon, Manitoba, with the Prime Minister, where we announced a wellness centre for Brandon, Manitoba.

Everybody in Manitoba's doing better because we have a good economic policy for the future of this province.

Football Stadium Impact on School Division Financing

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, it will become clear what the most—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member for Turtle Mountain has the floor and I need to be able to hear the question in case there's a breach of a rule. I'm asking the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it's become very clear that one of the most important clauses in the MOU signed last week is in regards to the use of tax incremental financing. Now, this is the clause that the Winnipeg School Division and the respective taxpayers should be looking at very closely.

Can the Minister of Education advise the House how much future revenue will be lost to the Winnipeg School Division and diverted back to the Province of Manitoba under this particular clause?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would ask—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It works both ways here. Order. It works both ways. I also need to hear the

answers to a question in case there's a breach of a rule.

* (14:00)

Order. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The facts are clear, and if the member would have listened to the answer I gave to the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), the existing property at Polo Park pays zero taxes, and when we move the stadium out of there after the new one's developed, that property will be redeveloped. That property will then generate new tax revenues for the school division. It will also generate new tax revenues for the City, and that will expand the economic pie of Manitoba.

That's the exact purpose of the tax increment financing legislation: 15(2)(b) encourage economic development. That's what we're doing: encouraging economic development.

And by the way, we're getting a new stadium, publicly owned for the benefit of all Manitobans.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, maybe the question should be: Was the Minister of Education at the table when the Cabinet made this decision?

I will—for the minister's advice—I will tell her that this particular MOU is built like a house of cards; if one of those cards fall, so does the house.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has to call in his insurance policy. The Minister of Education should know and understand the implications of that insurance policy. This is the tax incremental financing clause, or the insurance policy, and it comes at the expense of education in Winnipeg.

Has the minister discussed the proposed deal with the Winnipeg School Division?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Mr. Speaker, I find it curious strange that I am getting lectures from members opposite about education funding and investing in our education system here in Manitoba.

I just want to remind members—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Allan: I'd just like to remind members opposite that during the '90s they left quite a legacy here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know they don't want to talk about the '90s, so we won't talk about it, Mr. Speaker, because quite frankly—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I'm going to ask for some fairness here, because I have made an agreement with the House leaders on behalf of their caucuses, and that agreement is for the member that has the floor asking the questions, they get 45 seconds and the minister that is answering the question gets 45 seconds. And I don't think it's right for any member to be shouted down by either side, whether they're asking the question or answering the question. This is time for question period, and we have a lot of guests that have come here to hear the questions and the answers. So I'm asking the co-operation of honourable members please.

The honourable member for Turtle Mountain has the floor.

Mr. Cullen: Certainly, when the government doesn't have an answer, we know their fallback position.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a deal to be entered into lightly. If the insurance policy is required, there will be significant ramifications for the school division for many years to come. As an example, Polo Park currently generates \$3.9 million per year in education taxes.

Can the minister explain the implication of the Premier's insurance policy, how that is going to impact education in Winnipeg, and is she comfortable with diverting education funds into a stadium in Winnipeg?

Ms. Allan: Well, it's really unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite just don't seem to understand this issue. It's really quite unfortunate.

There is going to be an expanded tax base, Mr. Speaker, and because of that expanded tax base,

there will be more money for the Winnipeg School Division.

Mr. Speaker, and in—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Give her a chance to answer. Order.

Ms. Allan: And in regards to consultation with the stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, I was at the MSBA convention—the Manitoba School Boards Association convention—three days in a row, and I never saw a Tory the whole time I was there.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Post-Secondary Education Funding Decreases

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member for Morris has the floor.

Mrs. Taillieu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government has rationed funding to the universities for 10 years now and they are at the point of starvation.

Is the Minister of Advanced Education now going to admit that it's her misguided politics that have caused our secondary institutions to have to take desperate measures like drastically raising tuition fees just to survive?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): I thank the member for her question because it does give me the opportunity to put some facts on the record, and these are the facts, Mr. Speaker. In 1999, the grant to University of Manitoba was \$177.6 million; this year it's \$282.9 million. In 1999, the operating grant to U of W was \$28.5 million; today it's \$49 million. In 1999, the operating grant to Brandon was \$20 million; today it's \$31 million. Those are the facts; this is not starvation.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, our province could be the centre of excellence for post-secondary learning, yet, after 10 years of starvation by this NDP government, Dean Feltham has warned that the school might have problems renewing its professional accreditation in five years. He said that without money to support our post-secondary institutions, the business school will not be

competitive with Canada's best and the value of a degree may be perceived as less valuable.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister now admit that her politics of starving our educational institutions have threatened the ability of universities to provide education our students deserve?

Ms. McGifford: Well, Mr. Speaker, it does occur to me that the member from Morris wasn't listening to the information that I just put on the record. I did just put on the record that I had mentioned—given some information about operating grants to universities. I can also give that information in terms of percentages, and the percentage figure is that during our time in government, grants to universities have increased by 80.4 percent. On the other hand, during the '90s, a period that members opposite don't want to hear about—you know, if I were a member opposite I'd be ashamed of my record too and I wouldn't want to hear it—but during the '90s the increase was 16 percent. In other words, a lost decade, a disaster for post-secondary—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, this crisis in education didn't have to happen. This minister has made it happen. The Levin report clearly states that tuition fees are not the deciding factor in secondary enrolment. She knows that and she's always known that, but by allowing the students of the past to pay less, she's actually caused the students of today and the students of tomorrow to have to pay more.

Why does she do that? Was it simply pandering for votes and putting the interests of the NDP ahead of the best education for our students here in Manitoba?

Ms. McGifford: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said last time this member raised a similar question, it's like attending the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. Realities change, people change their position, hats go around the table.

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that during the '90s—and, again, the period they don't want to hear about—during the time that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) sat on the Board of Governors of the University of Manitoba, during that disastrous period, tuition went up under this government 132 percent.

Some Honourable Members: Shame.

Ms. McGifford: Indeed, indeed, shame.

I don't know whether this member—as I said, she seems to be changing her position from time to time—I don't know whether she wants lower tuition, deregulation, because her position isn't really clear. Does she want us to raise tuition by 132 percent? Does she want deregulation? Does she want us to have affordable, accessible education for all Manitobans?

* (14:10)

Minimum Wage Increase Economic Impact

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, the NDP are justifying their deficit and spiralling debt on tough economic times at the same time they are increasing the minimum wage to \$9.50, making our minimum wage the second highest in the country. Instead of helping businesses and workers, this anti-business government is making it more difficult for businesses to keep Manitobans working.

Mr. Speaker, if the government is serious about improving the position of lower income Manitobans, why didn't the government present an action plan to create employment opportunities rather than punishing small businesses with increased costs, such suggestions as the member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) had? He's got the right idea of growing the economy.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, we did today announce an increase to the minimum wage, the 10th increase since we've become—*[interjection]*—and those increases have been regular, and we think those have been important, both to maintain the spending power of people who earn the lowest amount of money, but also to make up for a decade when the minimum wage actually fell in real spending power.

Now, in terms of punishing small business, if punishment is reducing the small business tax to zero, which it will be in December, if that's punishment, I say punish me.

Mr. Dyck: Mr. Speaker, increasing the minimum wage is not an effective tool to combat poverty. The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg's child and family poverty report card said that, and I quote: "Minimum wage is minimum help." End of quote.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that more than half of the minimum wage increase will go back to government in taxes and premiums. Mr. Speaker, this increase is

not going to help business. It is not going to help minimum wage earners. The only beneficiary is government.

Mr. Speaker, how can this Minister of Labour justify this hidden tax on business?

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, I do want to just caution the member opposite. I also did take a look at those numbers provided by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Unfortunately, there are some errors in their calculation, and, in actual fact, they had assessed, I believe, a small—a minimum wage earner at a 46 percent income tax rate, which is not accurate, and, in fact, the net gain to a person earning minimum wage is going to be \$709, but 70 percent of the increase. So I just want to caution him on the numbers. I'd be happy to talk to him more about that later.

We think the minimum wage increase is important. We think it's important for people who earn it. We have also taken a step this year to put that increase in October, listening to the advice of business who need more time to adjust and need some notice. I think it's a balanced approach, Mr. Speaker, and one that we will continue to exercise.

Mr. Dyck: Well, the minister should do some of the numbers herself because the ones that are quoted are accurate.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, the minimum wage increase won't be going into effect until October the 1st so that summer employment isn't impacted. Clearly, the Minister of Labour recognizes that increases to minimum wage are going to impact employment and that is why she has delayed the increase.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister of Labour justify this increase when she knows that it's going to result in job losses?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, the experience so far with minimum wage increases has not been that. The experience with minimum wage increases has been in an economy with a consistently low unemployment rate. And, in fact, when I met with employers on this issue, one of the things they also wanted to talk about was the difficulty they have in recruiting and retaining workers and how we can help them to do that.

I would say that this is—we have a difference of opinion on minimum wage in this House. We have been in favour of increases, regular increases. The

party opposite did not do that in power, and, in fact, their leader recently called minimum wage political candy. For those families that depend on that wage, it certainly is bread and butter on the table, not candy, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member for Charleswood has the floor.

Health-Care Services Colonoscopy Wait Times

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the NDP health-care system is failing three of my constituents. One of my constituents has to wait a year and a half for a colonoscopy to determine if she has bowel cancer or something else. Until she's diagnosed, she can't be treated.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: Why is the wait for a colonoscopy for this constituent of mine a year and a half long?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. And I would say that I thank her for regular correspondence in asking questions about individuals or about policies. And I will say to her that I will be very pleased to discuss with her the particulars of this case.

What I do want to say broadly, Mr. Speaker, is that our commitment to bringing down wait times across all areas, not just diagnostics but the other areas, the big five identified by the federal government and our First Ministers and other areas—has been very clear. We've had significant progress in bringing down wait times.

This very clearly sounds like a situation that needs further investigation. I'm committed to do that.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this is more broad than just one patient. A second constituent of mine also has symptoms related to a colon problem. She's petrified that she may have cancer. Her wait to see a doctor is eight months, and then a few more months after that before she can even get her colonoscopy.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: Has this not hit her radar yet? How can these patients have to wait this long, anywhere from a year and a half and, this one, a year, in order to get a colonoscopy to find out if they even have cancer?

Ms. Oswald: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I would say that I believe every member of this House would agree that if they have a loved one or an

acquaintance that is suspecting cancer, that one day, even one hour, is too long to wait to find out the results of that.

That's why we have worked very diligently with our partners at CancerCare Manitoba to improve the wait time on the patient journey. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we were the second jurisdiction in Canada to announce a colorectal screening cancer program—the first jurisdiction to be on the ground with it—so that we can detect early, and we've also funded an expansion of our ability to do these diagnostic tests.

Again, as has been the protocol in the past in these situations, I'm very happy to explore these situations that seem very irregular, Mr. Speaker. I want to discuss this with her and pursue it.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, a third patient was told his wait for colonoscopy would be two years, despite his family having a history of colon cancer. He was too scared, so he went doctor shopping. He found somebody and had a colonoscopy, had surgery, had radiation and he had chemotherapy. He said that if he had waited as long as two years, as he was first told, he would be dead, because he had moderately aggressive stage 3 cancer.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health: Isn't it time that she ended all her political rhetoric and started to put the patients first and do something about looking into these kind of waits? It's not just one patient's. Get rid of the political spin and put patient care No. 1.

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that we, if there is an individual case that an—a member has a concern with, that we are going to be working with that individual and with the medical system to investigate that journey.

Further, Mr. Speaker, we know that we are not politically entrenched when it comes to dealing with wait times. We know that members opposite, when presented with an option of sending patients out of province for radiation therapy because it was dangerously long at six weeks, they refused to do it. They said it was not pragmatic. We, immediately, when we became in power, sent those patients out of the province while, at the same time, working to bring down the wait time for radiation therapy.

We are now leaders in the nation, with less than one-week wait time. We're going to continue to work on bringing down those wait times with our partners at CancerCare because it's the right thing to do.

* (14:20)

High School Students Drop-out Rate

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, one of the most important measures of our education system is the graduation rate or, turned around, the drop-out rate. Yet after 10 years of NDP management of education, Manitoba still has the worst drop-out rate of all the provinces.

Can the Premier (Mr. Selinger) explain to me and to Manitobans why his government has increased education spending by almost \$300 million over the past nine years and yet still has the worst drop-out rate in all of Canada?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question, and I also want to thank him for actually being at the Manitoba association of school boards conference with me, and I want to thank him for his interest in education.

Since we've gotten into government, Mr. Speaker, we believe that one of the most important things that make students successful in our education system is having a well funded public education system, and that's why we've made historic investments in our public education system.

We're also very pleased that since we've got into government, Mr. Speaker, our graduation rate has gone from 71 percent to over—[interjection] We're very pleased that our graduation rate has gone, in 2002, from 71 percent to over 79 percent.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it's not just about how much you spend; it's about the results that you get.

The fact is we are still the worst in terms of our high school drop-out rate in all of Canada, and let me give you a specific example. Take the Finance Minister. Right in the middle of her constituency, in the community of Camperville—when I was there, I was told that only 20 to 50 percent of kids are graduating high school each year. When the Finance Minister, with all the resources at her disposal, can do no better than this in her constituency, there is a serious problem, Mr. Speaker. The government should be ashamed of this.

We don't need spin. I ask the minister: What specific measures is her government taking to turn the situation around in communities like Camperville and make sure kids are going to graduate and have a chance in this world?

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I—the graduation rate in Manitoba is over 79 percent, and just recently Ontario put out a press release that said how proud they were that their graduation rate is 79 percent. The last time I checked, the Liberals are in power in Ontario.

So I'm not exactly sure where he's getting his statistics, but some of the statistics that he might want to look at is the international assessment data that shows that Manitoba does well out of all the jurisdictions in Canada, is right up there—and in the world—is right up there in regards to the education quality right here in Manitoba. So I would really like him to have a look at those statistics, and let's not play spin with the statistics.

We want to make sure that our public education system is funded and that we work with our educational partners to have good programming for all of our students, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the minister is avoiding the question.

You know, the issue is here that in Camperville that students are not graduating in the rates that they should be graduating. This government is letting down the people of Camperville and many other communities in this province. It's really tough when we can't get our kids through high school and into post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker. I mean, I need to educate the NDP: Does the minister know that the unemployment rate of people who don't graduate high school is twice as high as those who graduate from high school?

I ask again: What specific measures is the minister taking to ensure students in communities like Camperville move from having a very low graduation rate to having a very high graduation rate?

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the most important things that we can do is get to students early—we know around about the—grade 7, in regards to making sure that they have the supports and the systems in place so that they can be successful and they can stay in school.

Next week, Mr. Speaker, is Education Week, and you may want to stay tuned, because we will be making an announcement that will be very important in regards to graduation rates and encouraging kids to stay in school.

And I just want to remind the member opposite that when he was a federal minister and he made all of those cutbacks to transfer payments to our education system—maybe he, you know, might have a little history lesson in regards to what he did to our education system all across Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Emergency Health-Care Services Air Ambulance Purchase

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, this government continues to make important investments in providing emergency medical services to Manitobans.

We know that investments totalling approximately 13.2 million have been made to upgrade EMS stations in communities like Flin Flon, Dauphin, Gimli, Selkirk, West St. Paul and The Pas, and many others. This government has also made investments of \$10 million to purchase 39 new and replacement ambulances. Can the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation inform the House of recent top-flight investments we've made in the area of emergency medical services?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for The Pas for the question.

I want to put on the record, I was very pleased yesterday to join with our Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to announce Manitoba's newest air ambulance, a dedicated air ambulance, Mr. Speaker. I want to say we got a good deal on it. It's a slightly used former corporate jet and, irony of ironies, has gone from being used as a corporate jet by a bank to saving lives for Manitobans.

And, if I could, Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that since the inception of the dedicated air ambulance in 1985, 14,300 Manitobans have had the access to that lifesaving service. That, by the way, coincidentally, is the population of the city of Thompson. This, again, shows our commitment to the health of rural and northern Manitoba.

Tabor Home Project Status

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, December the 7th, 2009, I asked the Minister of Health to give an update on the study she had initiated back in August of '09.

At that time she said, and I quote: The community has requested more time to find a suitable location. End of quote.

That site has been found. However, they do need an answer to secure the site on a long-term basis. Could the minister tell this House when the findings of this study will be released?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question, and can let him know that work and discussions are ongoing with the regional health authority, with the community, with the Department of Health, as we work with community members to develop this very important project.

The work of the people at Tabor Home has been extraordinary. The work of the foundations out there has been excellent and we're going to continue to move forward in investing in health capital, Mr. Speaker, despite the tough economic times.

I can tell him, for sure, we will not be issuing a press release like they did in the '90s during a recession, saying that they—we were freezing capital spending. They said, well, we have no choice.

We respectfully disagree.

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Cross Lake Royal Canadian Army Cadets

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, getting young people out of their homes and into the cold on a long weekend in February seems like an impossible task. Yet, judging by the turnout for the winter exercise of the Cross Lake Army Cadets, this is one of the—this is one organization that has what it takes to win over the hearts of youth.

The Cross Lake Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps is the northernmost army cadet corps in Canada and the only cadet corps in a First Nations community in Manitoba, a source of much pride to our late MLA Oscar Lathlin.

Though the corps is less than four years old, the enthusiasm of its members was easily discernable on that frosty weekend. Close to 60 cadets showed up for the winter exercise in Jenpeg, Manitoba, ready to march and tumble with the best of them. And march they did.

I was proud to see how the cadets woke up at 6:30 in the mornings, forming up in ranks to make

the orderly trek down to the nearby Manitoba Hydro dam. They spent the weekend sleeping in winter tents which they had lined themselves, practising winter survival skills and more, all with big smiles on their faces.

*(14:30)

Also taking part in the weekend exercise was the Cross Lake Cadet Corps' affiliated unit and the community's medical reserve unit, 17 Field Ambulance, from Minto Armoury in Winnipeg.

Close to 70 members from that unit came to Jenpeg to practise the provision of emergency relief during harsh winter conditions. Manitoba Hydro employees also greeted the cadets on their marches. Helping prepare bannock in the kitchen had allowed me to not only observe, but actually feel as though I had a part in the experience.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all those who have dedicated their time to this wonderful event. I'd like to personally thank Major Daniel Ayotte, the commanding officer of 17 Field Ambulance for inviting me to experience this phenomenal event first-hand. I'd also like thank Mr. Brian Fox and the staff of the Manitoba Hydro Jenpeg station who went above and beyond their busy work schedules to help the cadets, second lieutenant Bob Smith, Cross Lake Cadet Corps' commanding officer, the many Cross Lake community council volunteers who worked behind the scenes on the event and the RCMP officers who came out to support the youth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Elsie Clark

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I rise today to share a story of the generosity of the human spirit.

The story begins at the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. An elderly Winnipegger, Elsie Clark, who is in the gallery here today, is on her way home from visiting her daughter in Corpus Christi over the Christmas holidays but is dropped off at the wrong gate for her connecting flight to Winnipeg.

By the time she's able to find help, she has missed her connecting flight to Winnipeg. Distraught and on the verge of breaking down in tears, the airline staff book Elsie on a later flight to Chicago without offering an apology. Unknown to Ms. Clark, it is on this flight to Chicago that her luck would turn for the better.

On the flight, Ms. Clark notices a man with shiny shoes sitting across the aisle from her. Since Ms. Clark has always admired people with shiny and well-kept shoes, she strikes up a conversation with the man. After hearing about Ms. Clark's tight connection in Chicago, the man arranges to have Ms. Clark get off the plane first and he personally takes her to her connecting gate. Unfortunately, her flight had been delayed and Ms. Clark misses her connection.

Unable to afford the exorbitant cab ride and hotel rates in Chicago, Ms. Clark is facing a night on the benches of Chicago's airport. To Ms. Clark's surprise, the man tells her, Elsie, I'll look after you. I've called my wife and you're coming over for dinner. The gentleman and his wife treated Elsie to dinner on the 56th floor of a downtown sky rise. After dinner, the gentleman gave Ms. Clark a tour of Chicago, dropped her off at an elegant hotel where all her needs were catered to in a full-size suite. In the morning, a limousine picked up Ms. Clark and brought her to the airport for her early and successful morning flight home.

This stranger of incredible generosity is Dean Germeyer, an executive at ACS, a global information technology firm in Chicago. I invite all members of this House to thank Mr. Germeyer for his actions. Mr. Germeyer's actions were truly inspirational and highlight what is truly best in the human spirit.

I hope that this story of generosity and kindness inspires us all to help out those in need around us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Shen Yun Performing Arts

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, last night I was one of several hundred Manitobans who sat mesmerized by the beauty of traditional Chinese dance and music displayed by the Shen Yun Performing Arts group.

In this show, scores of talented dancers and singers swept across the stage, performing acrobatic feats and intricate dance numbers that had the audience enthralled. Men and women with incredible voices performed traditional Chinese songs and even a few opera numbers. Shen Yun uses its travelling orchestra in the performances, as many of the numbers involve the use of traditional Chinese instruments like the erhu and the pipa.

Shen Yun's performance in Winnipeg was put on by the Falun Dafa Association of Winnipeg. It was

my pleasure to assist them in staging this magnificent event and to serve as one of its patrons.

I would especially like to recognize Maria Cheung and Song Liu who worked very hard at organizing and promoting this event.

Mr. Speaker, this world-renowned performing arts company has been touring the globe for only four years. Last year, they played in over 100 cities worldwide to an estimated audience of one million people. Part of the show includes theatrical performances that depict the struggles Falun Gong practitioners experience in modern-day China.

The objective of the show is to capture the spirit and essence of classical Chinese dance and music and bring to life China's pious and divinely inspired classical culture that has as its heart the themes of goodness, beauty, harmony and self-improvement.

I encourage all members to consider attending Shen Yun's second performance tonight if they are interested in seeing an inspiring and breathtaking professional performing arts company. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Travis Hamonic

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the achievements of a young man from St. Malo, who is one of Manitoba's top hockey prospects. Travis Hamonic started his hockey career with the St. Malo Warriors at the age of four. He is currently playing with the Brandon Wheat Kings in the WHL. Travis is close to reaching every young hockey player's dream of playing in the NHL. He was drafted by the New York Islanders, 58th overall, in the second round of the 2008 NHL entry draft.

Over this year's holidays, Travis was an instrumental part of Team Canada's national junior team that won the silver medal in Saskatoon. The tournament didn't quite go the way Travis had envisioned it would, and he was forced to watch the gold medal game from the sideline after suffering a dislocated shoulder in the semifinals against Switzerland.

In addition to his silver medal at the World Juniors this year, Travis has won gold at World Under 18 Championships in 2008, silver at the World Under 17 in 2007 and silver at the 2007 Canada Winter Games.

Travis and the Brandon Wheat Kings are currently in the hunt for the WHL's championship title leading Swift Current 2 to 1 in the Eastern

Conference semifinals. The Wheat Kings will also be vying for a national championship when they host the Memorial Cup in May.

I hope all members will join me in congratulating Travis for his achievements and wish him the best of luck in all his future endeavours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Norman Stanger

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise in the House today to pay tribute to and to mourn the loss of a great Manitoban. Dr. Norman Stanger was a man who had great passion for what is good, just and beautiful in this world, and it's my honour to share some of his story with the members of the House today.

Dr. Stanger was born in 1927 and was raised in Elmwood by his parents Arthur and Evelyn Stanger. Norm worked tirelessly during the postwar years to save enough money to get an education. He enrolled at the University of Manitoba, where he earned his Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture and a Master's Degree in Microbiology. He was accepted at the Ontario Veterinary College and, after four years of dedicated study, Norm was an award-winning graduate of the University of Toronto at Guelph and a veterinarian.

During this time he met Patricia, the one true love of his life. Pat worked hard at her teaching job in Winnipeg to support Norm during his studies in Ontario, but the separation was very hard on them and in many ways made the two appreciate the importance of just being together.

Norm had a distinguished career as a professor and he was adored by his students. He was a hands-on-style teacher long before it became popular, and he shared thousands of slides and hundreds of stories of his world travels and his experiences with nature in exotic locales, including Africa, the Seychelles, the Galapagos, Austria, Switzerland, England and Wales. He was honoured by the university as they dedicated an award in his honour entitled the Dr. Norman Stanger Prize in Pre-Veterinary Studies.

In 1975, Norman accepted a secondment with CIDA, and he and Pat moved to Lesotho, Southern Africa, where they spent several of the happiest years of their married lives. Norm instructed in vet medicine and directed a veterinary lab, but much more than that, the Stangers became beloved members of this community. Their impact was deep and lasting, and today the citizens of Lesotho grieve

the loss of their Morena, or chief, as he was dearly known to them.

For me, Mr. Speaker, it's just simple. Dr. Stanger was the grandfather my son never had. He and Pat have nurtured me and my family for many years, and we are better people for having known him. He taught me more than I could ever thought I would know about the BSE crisis some years back and, if Pat and I ever descended into frivolous talk about shopping or our favourite television shows, he would interrupt and teach me some fine details about chronic wasting disease or ask me to listen to his latest opera CD, which was another deep passion of his. For Norman, life was a precious gift, not to be wasted but to be experienced in deep intellectual, emotional and sensory ways.

He was my friend, he was the love of Pat's life, and he will be missed beyond measure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:40)

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker.

Under the assumption that we will be—that the House will be sitting on the next Thursday morning for private members' business, I'm announcing under rule 31(9) that the private members' resolution to be considered next Thursday morning is the resolution on Denouncing Israeli Apartheid Week, sponsored by the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that, under the assumption that the House will be sitting on next Thursday morning for private members' business, it's been announced under rule 31(9) that the private members' resolution to be considered next Thursday morning is the resolution on Denouncing Israeli Apartheid Week, and this is sponsored by the honourable member for Tuxedo.

**BUDGET DEBATE
(Fourth Day of Debate)**

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we will resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of

Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in subamendment thereto, and it's standing in the name of the honourable member—the honourable Attorney General, who has 15 minutes remaining.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'll carry on with my comments from yesterday, but I know that there are many members who want to speak to the Budget 2010, so I will keep my comments to a minimum.

I'm certainly pleased, Mr. Speaker, at the investments that Budget 2010 is going to make in the very important area of Justice. We will be making continued investments in crime prevention, in policing, in prosecutions and in corrections. And in policing, of course, this government has made steady, permanent increases in funding for policing inside the city of Winnipeg, outside the city of Winnipeg, to ensure that our citizens are safe.

I'm also very proud of the supports we've given to Crown attorneys, adding new Crown attorney positions in other budgets and, of course, in Budget 2010 for new Crown attorneys, as well as support staff to make sure they can do their work as well as they can, as efficiently as possible.

I'm very—it is also the case that we are continuing to make investments in corrections. We know that having more police on the streets and more prosecutors means that there are more people in Manitoba's corrections systems, and we are continuing to make the necessary investments, both in capital and in people, to make sure that our corrections system is the best it can be.

I'm also very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that, in this year, the Manitoba police commission will come into existence. I'm also very proud that the independent investigation unit will also come into existence. Budget 2010 provides support for these two important organizations to even improve the confidence that Manitobans have in police in the province of Manitoba.

I'm also very pleased, though, not just on the front of policing and prosecutions and corrections, but that we're continuing to invest in public safety. We are continuing to invest in the very successful Lighthouses program, which gives young people a

safe place to go in their community. We continue to expand the number of Lighthouses across the province and we continue to expand the number of young people taking advantage of that program as a safe place to go.

I'm also very pleased that we've provided support for gang awareness for parents, and Floyd Wiebe will be travelling the province talking to parents and young people with a very common-sense presentation on the need to be aware of gangs and the need for our young people to stay out of gangs.

Certainly, I'm very proud to be one of the Cabinet ministers that is a member of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. Together with seven other government departments, the Department of Justice works collectively with other government departments to make sure that we combine our efforts to do the best for young people in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

In conclusion, Mr. Acting Speaker, certainly, I take a lot of my advice from people in my community in the incredible constituency of Minto. There are many, many things to celebrate in the West End of Winnipeg. I see people continuing to make investments in their homes, their yards. They've seen their homes double in value over the past 10 years because of their own hard work, because of the investments in communities like the West End from this provincial government, and we are seeing the benefits as people put down roots, improve their homes and truly help to build the community.

I see investments being made by businesses in the West End along Sargent Avenue, along Ellice Avenue, along Erin Street, Wall Street, other major streets in the community. Businesses are voting with their feet, they're continuing to put down roots in the West End, and business has never done so well in this province as it has over the past 10 years with this government.

I'm also very proud to see the improvements in gathering places across the constituency of Minto, improvements in churches, improvements in halls, improvement in some of the different ethnic clubs and sports clubs—that's coming from the hard work of their members, that's coming from investments by this government through the Community Places program. It's also through the generosity of the private sector that people continue to have better and

better places to meet, to worship, to play sports, to do all those things that truly make a community.

I'm very proud as I visit the various schools in Minto to see the improvements that have happened due to this government's investments. Sargent Park is a tremendous nursery to grade 9 school. I'll be heading to the Heritage Fair next week where students from across the world celebrate their heritage at Sargent Park School. Their expansion with a new multipurpose room and new classrooms will be completed very soon, and I know that staff and students alike are very excited to enjoy those new amenities over at Sargent Park.

I've also had the chance to visit John M. King School where, through our day care program, the St. Matthews Kids Korner now has a new tremendous space for day care within John M. King School. Day care, of course, in the West End, which many times has been in older community centres and in church hall basements, is truly going to have a first-class facility within John M. King School and it's very exciting.

I'm very pleased, as I visit the facilities of Valour Community Centre, to see the work being done at all of their sites to improve, not just the capital, but also the offerings for young people in the community to keep them busy.

I'm also very pleased to work with the Spence Neighbourhood Association, with the Daniel McIntyre and St. Matthews community association as they work to empower people to bring our neighbourhoods together and give people more reasons to call the West End home.

And, as well, I'm very pleased that our government was first in line to support the West Central Women's Resource Centre as it moves up from the basement on Ellice Avenue to a tremendous new facility office at John M. King School, providing services to women in the West End.

So you can just see in those few words, Mr. Acting Speaker, that our investments have been continuous; they've been intended to support our communities. That is what we have done over the past 10 years and that's what Budget 2010 allows us to continue to do.

People don't want to go back to the '90s. In the inner city of Winnipeg, an area which was entirely forgotten by the Conservative government, we've stepped in. We've invested in communities like the one that I am proud to represent. We will continue to

invest with Budget 2010, and I look very forward, Mr. Acting Speaker, to voting in support of this budget in a few short days.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): It gives me a good opportunity to get up and put a few words on the record for—in regards to this last piece of work that we're calling a budget.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this particular document doesn't have a vision; it has zero—zero—vision. What we see is that it doesn't lay out a plan on recovery.

If we were going into a recession—and we did say that. We've said that now for some time, that Canada would be going into a recession. Everybody in Canada said that, all except for the members opposite.

The members opposite said, no, flat is the new up, but we are immune. We're immune to what happens around us. Unfortunately, Mr. Acting Speaker, we're not immune. We're not immune at all.

And so, over the past year, since our last budget, we've seen a number of changes in the province. We've seen the leadership in the province change, and I'm not exactly sure that it was for the best, but it was definitely a change. And we thought there was a breath of fresh air coming forward.

They went—the members opposite went through a leadership race and there were some pretty good ideas, I thought, that came out when the new young upstart from Minto, for example, who said, I want to be the next leader. I want to be the man that leads Manitoba out of this recession. I want to be the man that's going to save the province of Manitoba \$640 million by going down the east side. I want to be that man, the Minto—the man from Minto says.

* (14:50)

Unfortunately, for that young chap, it wasn't to be. It wasn't to be because he had some pretty grandiose ideas that they couldn't afford because, over a 10-year period, the NDP had squandered away 10 unprecedented transfer payments. Ten unprecedented transfer payments ruined that young fellow's dream. It did, it really did. And he certainly had our sympathy when it did that.

So, during that leadership race, however, one of the things that he did say, and after listening to his speech just now, one of the—and he was telling me

about, and telling all of us about what happened in the West End, and how people's homes had doubled and their yards were clean and on and on and on and on about how proud he was of Manitobans.

And yet, during the campaign, what he said was, and I quote, "I'm going to make Manitoba's situation look as dire as I possibly can to get every possible cent out of the feds."

It's little wonder that that young chap failed. He is a failure. He is a failure because of his approach to getting Manitoba out of debt. He had no interest in getting Manitoba out of debt. He just wanted to be a milking machine to milk the federal government for some more transfer money that they could squander, that they could squander taxpayers' money, taxpayers from Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C., Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and even Newfoundland. You're going to take their money and squander it.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it's unfortunate that he did lose, but I don't feel sorry for him, not a bit, because he'd created his own demise.

The NDP are looking for money everywhere, everywhere in the budget. It doesn't matter where you look in the budget, and I would say that the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), the former Minister of Agriculture, who was a failure in that position, moved in as the Minister of Finance and said, my goodness, that former minister of Finance has left me in a mess. He's left me in a mess and we might be going into a recession. We might be affected by the recession that's all around us. It might happen in Manitoba. So we have to get prepared. We're going to cut every department by 10 percent. The directive we'll send out—cut every department by 10 percent. And I want every department to raise an extra 10 percent, so that we can lend that money to build a stadium, so that we can lend that money some place. We can squander more money because we're not sure we're going to get the full amount from the federal government going forward. We're promised this year but we have to look into the future.

So they bring in a budget, a budget, Mr. Acting Speaker, that has \$84 million more income and yet their spending goes up by 5 percent. You can't spend your way out of debt. You can't borrow your way out of debt.

This budget reminds me of the Howard Pawley days. It reminds me of that so much so that I would probably be able to quote the then-federal—or the

provincial Minister of Agriculture who said a deficit is healthy. And at that time, farmers were going broke with healthy deficits.

And so, then—now Minister of Finance has the same policy. It's healthy to have a deficit. It's healthy to borrow money against our unborn grandchildren.

That isn't healthy, Mr. Acting Speaker. That's poor financing; that's poor vision. And to bring in the budget in tough times is not an easy thing. And we understand that, but at least then put a vision on the table, a pathway to recovery.

But you have to admit, you first have to admit, that there is a recession in Manitoba, that we have lost many, many jobs in Manitoba. We have lost those jobs because of the mismanagement for the past 10 years.

When we look over the past 10 years, and we look at our neighbours, our neighbours to the west, our neighbours to the west were a have-not province, and today they're a have province. They paid down debt.

We look to Alberta, who took money out of their rainy day fund. They took money out of their rainy day fund to balance their budget, and called it a deficit—and called it a deficit.

Our Finance Minister, for the last couple of years—both of them, the now Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the current Finance Minister—has taken money, plans to take money out of the rainy day fund and call it a balanced budget, but it's not. It's not a balanced budget. She can't fool us. She can't fool the people in the province of Manitoba. You can't fool those people forever, and it's not Monopoly money we're talking about. We're talking about real dollars and cents. And she can talk about the business tax going down, but she's replaced that.

She's—I heard one of her ministers today saying, the 50 cents raise is something—in minimum wage—is something that is necessary. It's necessary for our people to make a decent living in the province. There's no one on either side of this House that doesn't want to see everyone have an opportunity to have a good life in this province, but there's a hidden tax. That's what this is. This 50 cents an hour increase is a hidden tax. The worker that gets an extra 50 cents an hour gets an extra \$400 a year. The government gets an extra 600 in tax. Isn't that wonderful? We've really improved the quality of life for those on the lower end of the pay scale. It's a shame. It's a shame that this is the type of tactics

used by the government of the people. The government of the people who want to help all of those that are impoverished has just taxed them. By giving them 50 cents an hour more in wages they've taxed them two-thirds of that. It should be criminal. They should be charged. It's fraud. It has done nothing to raise their standard of living. In fact, it has hurt their pride, because they get less when they were promised more.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, when we're looking forward, and we see that these little taxes like 50 cents an hour, these little taxes like no park user fees—I heard the member for—the member of Conservation—the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) say, there will be no park user fees. No, that's true, but they have raised and came up with a \$6.25 per night increase in an overnight stay in the park. So it's okay that you can get in free, you just can't get out without paying. This is wrong. It's wrong to say things like this and then tax, little hidden taxes. They will pay a dollar for every three minutes that they're in a shower in a campground. The water is free, but I guess that dollar is either for heating the water or what they expect hydro rates are going to go up with the mismanagement they have running down the west side of the province at \$640 million instead of the east side.

* (15:00)

If you're caught speeding—and we all know that speeding is against the law, and none of us really want to be caught, and sometimes we speed when we shouldn't be speeding. We know we shouldn't be speeding. We should never be speeding, but sometimes we do, and unconsciously we do sometimes. So, now, they've raised the fines—are going up by \$13.50 to \$177.50, and if you're going 15 kilometres over the speed limit, you're going to pay \$51.25 more. And what happens is they set up the speed traps for this to happen.

They said, we will raise the speed limit on our main arteries in Manitoba from 100 kilometres to 110. So we invite people to come to the Keystone Province. Tourism is something that we thrive on, we live on. That's free money to this province. And so the speed limits in Saskatchewan are 110. The speed limits in Ontario are 110. The speed limits in North Dakota are, I think, 120 but when they hit the Manitoba border, they've now raised them to 110, right? That's what we heard in this House.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if you're coming from North Dakota and, when you get to St. Jean, if you're

still doing 110, it's going to cost you \$177.50 because it's only the first few miles into Manitoba from the south that's 110. It's a speed trap.

We want to encourage people to come here and to spend their holiday money here, their tourist money. We want them to come here and encourage them to come. But this government wants to tax them as soon as they get in. They want to hit them for \$177.50.

When our cousins come from Saskatchewan and our Ontario cousins come, exactly the same thing happens. They only get a short distance into Manitoba, the speed limit drops down to 100 for no apparent reason. The highway doesn't change. It doesn't get narrower. It doesn't get rougher. Well, in some places it does but that's because the former minister of Transportation forgot that he should be putting some money into our international highways. But at the same time it's a tax grab. The first thing we're going to do is tax that person before they get in here.

Do you know what the first thing is that they remember when they leave here? They remember that this government just bilked them out of \$177.50, before they could come and enjoy the Red River Exhibition in the city of Winnipeg, before they could drive up to Churchill and see the polar bears, before they could come and hear our ballet, or see our ballet, or hear our symphony, or come to the racetrack, or even come to Canad Inns Stadium to watch the Bombers play—in a stadium, by the way, that's paid for.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there's—there are other hidden taxes and ways that the departments under the direction of this particular Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) have had to go out and raise money. The vehicle registration fees have been increased from \$18 to \$19—no, by 18 to \$19. That's considerable. Take a look around at the vehicles in this province and multiply them by \$20. Just do a rough mathematics and look at the money that's being raised. And the purpose of that is what? It's a tax.

It's not going into the highways to make them better so that you can drive faster. No, they're not doing that. It's not going into the potholes on the highways that we see every spring in the same place, especially south of Winnipeg.

Another one of the more sly, subtle tax increases, that's been the merit system. And I give them credit for being very, very subtle. And we all

know that Manitobans would like to see more merits on their licence. Five was never really enough.

So the new system comes out and it says you can have a maximum 15 merits. Fifteen merits is a considerable amount. However, they failed to tell Manitobans that if you've had an infraction in the last 14 years of any kind—whether that was a red light, a stop sign, a speeding ticket or an accident in the last 14 years—you will not go automatically from five to 15. You will go to five to 10.

And so, Mr. Acting Speaker, you say, well, what's the difference? Well, the difference is only \$5—only \$5 on your licence. However, 250,000 people fall into that bracket, which raises \$1.2 million to be squandered—to be squandered, because that's what's happening with it.

It is being squandered on projects like west side hydro line that should come down the east side. It's being squandered on nitrogen removal in the city of Winnipeg, and many other things that we don't know. Those are the subtle types of increases—taxes. When they say we're holding the line, they're holding the line with the hook on it and they've got every taxpayer in Manitoba on that hook. And even with these subtle tax increases, our debt is skyrocketing. The province's total debt now is 23.42 billion, up from the 21.6–1.67 billion in 2009. That's 2-and-a-quarter-billion-dollar increase.

Mr. Acting Speaker, what do we have to show for that increase? Two and a half billion dollars is a lot of money. What do we have to show for that? I can tell you what we have to show. We have a huge waiting list for MRIs; we have a huge waiting list for shoulder operations; we have huge waiting lists for knee operations; we have huge, huge backlog of drainage issues in different parts of our province. For \$2.5 billion, we have nothing tangible—nothing—nothing tangible.

Oh, we built the odd monument. We built a monument to the former premier of the province when we built Manitoba Hydro building in downtown Winnipeg, that went from a \$75-million cost to 285 million—whatever it happens to be. Slight overrun—just a slight overrun. Maybe somebody made a miscalculation someplace. We were supposed to have a heating system that was geothermal and that would be excellent. That's not quite working the way it should; some of the offices they have to—the occupants have to bring their own heaters because they're too cold. The other ones are too hot.

But it is a beautiful monument, and when I read the propaganda that goes out and says that, somewhere around the world, that this is a model building. Well, I guess if you were in Haiti, after an earthquake, this would be a model building. But it is not a model. It's a model that should never have happened the way it did. It shouldn't have had that kind of an overrun. There was poor planning by this government and it's been a constant—that has been a constant theme for 10 years. They have squandered the best 10 years that Manitoba will see for many, many years to come with the transfer money that has come from the federal government.

Each morning, the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) should get up and she should bend to the east and say thank you, thank you, thank you, Mr. Harper. Thank you for everything that you do for me and my colleagues in the Manitoba Legislature. Thank you for two-thirds of my budget.

And if she needs a little bit of help to say, Mr. Harper, who'll be more than happy to help her.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there are many, many things in this budget that one could talk about that could save Manitoba money that haven't been mentioned. There are things that we will point out, however, that will cost Manitoba money, and lots of money, because there is no vision, no pathway to recovery, absolutely none.

* (15:10)

The Department of Agriculture, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers), got his directive. His marching orders were, you need to cut 10 percent and you need to find 10 percent in your department. So the day before the budget came out, this is what the minister, the newly minted Minister of Agriculture, the member for Dauphin, what he said was, agriculture will never be forgotten in the budget. He said his goal was to eke and to scrape together funds to support farmers.

Now, I'm not exactly sure what eke and scrape means to the Minister of Agriculture. However, he failed. He failed and I know he feels bad about it. He's a nice guy. He's a nice guy and I think he would do the right thing if he had the opportunity, but he doesn't have the opportunity. He doesn't have the opportunity to correct the mistakes that the former minister of Agriculture made, and he certainly doesn't have the money.

I haven't time to list them all but I could point out a few. I could point out some of her failures, and

I give the Minister of Agriculture credit for at least partially correcting one of them. The former minister of Agriculture could not get a hemp plant built in Dauphin. As much as she tried, she couldn't get it to happen. She was a failure. She couldn't get a slaughter plant built in Dauphin. As much as she tried, and even with my help, she was able to fail. But the newly minted Minister of Agriculture, with the help of the member, the federal member from Dauphin, Mr. Inky Marks, brings a half a billion dollars—oh, that's wrong—\$5 million to the table, and the provincial government says we can come up with a half a million dollars to help out so that I can stand at the podium and say, I was able to do what the former minister couldn't do.

We do now have a hemp plant, not in Dauphin—not in Dauphin—but in Gilbert Plains, which is close by and in the Parkland region, and for that I applaud the minister for at least eking and scraping out a half a million dollars. On a \$10-million project he was able to stand at the podium and say, I did what she couldn't do. I am the man. I am the man of the hour.

The plant, I would say, Mr. Acting Speaker, will be a benefit to everyone in the province. It certainly will. We grow hemp everywhere in the province and so, from an agriculture standpoint, this will be a boon to our industry. However, the biggest thanks goes to the federal government. It goes to Stephen Harper. It goes to our people like Inky Marks, who have worked diligently and hard for their community and for all of Manitoba and didn't waste money. They haven't wasted money in good times. They have a plan.

We have a plan here in Manitoba. We've heard that plan and I think I mentioned that a little bit earlier. The plan that the former member, the member from Minto, when he was running for—he wanted to be the leader of the province and—what was it that he said? What did he say exactly? I'm going to make Manitoba's situation look as dire as I possibly can to get every possible cent out of the feds. We need to be known for that.

The member from the Interlake has to be—has to be disgusted with that type of attitude because I know that that member, that member from Interlake, actually does farm. He has a farm and he understands what it takes in agriculture. He understands the pride of farmers, and to be embarrassed—to be embarrassed by a leadership candidate who wants to suck all they can out of the federal government, it has to be a

shameful, shameful day for that member from the Interlake.

The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), the minister responsible for Agriculture, he listened intently to what the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) said, and it said that he had to cut 10 percent and he didn't really know, he was new in his position and he doesn't have any agricultural experience, and so you can't really blame him for some of the foolish cuts that he made. When he makes a cut to one of the safety nets, to the producers of this province, to AgriInvest, he makes a cut to that. That's a federal program, a provincial program and also we participate as producers, and he makes a cut to it. It's a safety net for when something goes bad, when—peace, brother, peace—when he makes these type of cuts that shows that he does not know. He does not know what's going on, and when he does add 30 cents, 30 cents an acre to crop insurance for excessive moisture, that 30 cents is mandatory.

Mr. Acting Speaker, crop insurance has always been a voluntary program. So each individual assesses their situation, and they buy insurance accordingly. Excessive moisture, however, was something that was costing all producers in the province \$2.50 an acre if and when they needed it; that's a premium. That's a premium that they were willing to pay but, no, now we have a 30-cents-an-acre mandatory. But, at the same time, if we have a catastrophe in excessive moisture and we are unable to see that we have an excessive moisture claim, now we're still charged the \$2.50 but we're also charged the 30 cents, which brings it up to \$2.80 an acre. Take the acres in this province—and I know that the members opposite probably couldn't do the math, if they did know how many acres were cultivated in this province, but it does raise a lot of money.

Why? Why do you want to make these things mandatory? Don't we live in a democracy where you can make choices, where you can buy the insurance that you want to buy?

I can go on in agriculture for some time but I see that my time is getting short and there are some other things that I would like to talk about. One of them in agriculture that we would like to—and I'll see if my—one of them in agriculture that I would like to talk about—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): Order. Honourable member, the time is over, and I would request him to conclude.

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Acting Speaker, it gives me, of course, an opportunity and a pleasure to speak about the budget.

I want to, first of all, say that the communities that I represent are looking forward to more developments on the highways into Cross Lake and Norway House and other highways within the constituency that link the smaller communities into the larger centres.

* (15:20)

The Budget 2010 makes a strong commitment to the development of roads. This is particularly positive for northern communities because road systems provide a direct link for residents of isolated areas to outside communities for trade, economic trade and so forth. This link guarantees more efficient and cost-effective delivery of essential items, such as food and fuel and policing, medical supplies and other services, and generally improves the lines of communication between northern communities and the rest of the province. And I see the 2010 budget, you know, as a priority to the northern communities and Aboriginal communities. It gives us an opportunity to become players in the economy, locally, regionally and provincially.

Maintenance and upgrades to existing roads ensure safer driving conditions for residents of these communities, and that's always been a major concern for all my constituents, young and old. Prior to the upgrades to the highways there's been many, many accidents with severe injuries, catastrophic injuries and even fatalities. But, since the highways have been improved on, there's been more—safety is a primary beneficiary to these improvements of the highways.

Overall, over \$43 million has been invested in major capital investments in the north in 2009 and 2010, and nearly \$7.5 million has been spent on northern road maintenance, substantial amounts that greatly contribute to the quality of northern Manitoba.

Significant projects have been undertaken in my community of The Pas, for example, including grade widening and distribution of shoulder gravel south of Hargrave River to Ponton; grading for Wanless Provincial Highway 39; bituminous overlay for Provincial Trunk Highway 60, and Highway 282 and 287; grade and granular base cores, including new location for provincial roads 373, close to Kichi Sipi Bridge near Cross Lake.

So, to me, this amount of attention to the roads in the north gives me a good reason to believe that northern Manitoba is a priority as well, as far as the plans and a vision of this government is concerned.

This budget also demonstrates the government's awareness of the challenges posed by climate change to winter roads. This government, in partnership with other levels of government, is working towards a permanent solution and, in that process, we have not only scientists, engineers, but also people from the north, of the north who know the conditions extremely well and are able to give significant, important advice to all concerned.

In The Pas the expansion of the Neighbourhoods Alive!—and two other rural northern communities and municipalities—we have benefited from increasing unconditional operating funding. Under the co-ordination of the Neighbourhoods Alive! initiative, organizations can access funding and other resources that support neighbourhood revitalization efforts. And I can tell you that the many communities that I represent in my riding are very much concerned about the—keeping their communities—you know, with the development of roads, walks and hikes, hiking trails and so forth, that just improves the quality of life for everybody, young and old.

Over the past three years, for example, the government of Manitoba has invested almost \$470,000 to expand the successful Neighbourhoods Alive! program into The Pas. And the people that benefit from this development include not just members of The Pas, but visitors as well that come into many different events and festivals that we have, including Northern Manitoba Trappers Festival, Opaskwayak Indian Days, The Pas Rodeo and on many, many sporting events. When people come into our community, they take advantage of these developments under the—that were developed under the Neighbourhoods Alive! program.

Much of that has funded improvements to The Pas Community Renewal Corporation in the form of renovations, training, small grants funds and community development co-ordination. And it is through this initiative The Pas Friendship Centre was able to construct a skateboard park for the town's youth, and provide after-school programming through the Kelsey Recreation Centre. And I'm very proud of The Pas Friendship Centre, who operate with very limited fiscal resources, but with very dedicated board members, volunteers, that take the

time to work with the youth and other members of the community, along with the Kelsey Recreation Centre employees, and they have their own volunteers as well.

I think when organizations and agencies come together to provide opportunities for young people to get involved in the community, that's the way to go if you want your young people to become involved in municipal and provincial affairs. But it's made possible through the funding of Neighbourhoods Alive!

The expansion of Neighbourhoods Alive! has also contributed to character and vibrancy of The Pas through a signage project and a pathway lighting project that not only create a more inviting environment for cyclists, joggers and pedestrians, but also enhance the safety of the town. And these pathways that we have built over the years in The Pas are supported not only by this government, but by the municipal government of The Pas and other jurisdictions in the area, as well as community service groups. Again, these initiatives like this are supported by many, many different organizations and agencies only because of the leadership role that this government took to provide those resources in the community.

Other positive effects include support for the popular Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival. As you know, it's been a long running event, very historical background history to that. Just this year we had Rick Mercer come in to The Pas and participated in the events, and it gave us an opportunity to showcase to the rest of Canada what our community is made of. It's made up of individuals, both citizens, taxpayers, business people and private, public organizations who get together to plan an annual event which other visitors from all parts of Canada come to and participate in those events.

It shows Canada what we can do as citizens to enhance quality of life during the harshest months of the year—winter—but also it gives us a chance to socialize with other parts of Canada and make new friends, make new alliances, make new partners in the process. So this Neighbourhoods Alive! program has tremendous outreach into the communities and has benefited The Pas extremely well. The expansion of Neighbourhoods Alive! has been a valuable initiative in The Pas that has greatly contributed to community engagement, economic development, facility improvements and green projects.

* (15:30)

I want to also mention that this budget of 2010 provides support for apprenticeships for Aboriginal people in northern Manitoba, particularly in my riding, as well.

Government has a continuing—this government has a continuing commitment to increasing opportunities in apprenticeship training, despite the challenges of the current recession. Meeting the training needs of Manitoba workers and businesses requires a collaborative approach. The provincial sector councils act as key links between Manitoba education, business and labour communities, the co-ordination of skills training supports for Aboriginal people. Immigrants and apprentices helped Manitoba companies connect with more than 18,000 workers last year.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, it's important for us to know and to understand that the priority for economic—community and economic development and recovery includes northern Manitoba and Aboriginal communities and people in general. And it's important for us to know that Aboriginal people, given the opportunity to participate in economic development, whether it's a major industry or small business, and with the University College of the North being involved in the process, it gives us rise to believe that we are actually a part of this process in developing Manitoba grow and develop.

Since 1999, the number of registered apprentices has more than doubled, and Apprenticeship Manitoba is anticipating a further 35 percent increase over the next two years. And, as a result, a number of targeted initiatives over the past decade, Aboriginal apprentices now comprise 17 percent of all apprentices in Manitoba.

I am very proud and happy to say that many members of our constituency—for example, The Pas, OCN, Cross Lake, Moose Lake, Cormorant, Norway House, Young's Point and Wanless—they all take advantage of the opportunities that are provided in industry, including forestry, mining, hydro and so forth.

The Budget 2010 increases apprenticeship training support by \$2 million, in addition to the two new designated apprenticeship trades in 2009, six new designated trades. Our government understands the value of providing training opportunities for Aboriginal people, in particular practical skill development through apprenticeships.

Since 1999, Aboriginal apprenticeships have more than tripled, increasing 264 percent, from 355 to nearly 1,300. That is a significant improvement to what we previously had in previous years.

Now, I understand the importance of this, having grown up in the north, having grown up in Aboriginal communities, having worked both the north and in Aboriginal communities as a technician and as a politician, as well. I understand the importance of that. I understand when you—when we put in a person, take that person from the welfare roll to a job, we are not only providing, you know, that person or that family an opportunity to improve quality of life, but we are also providing opportunity for their children to see their parents and to look upon their parents as role models for, you know, providing jobs for the family and bringing food to the table, providing shelter for them, providing education monies for them and so forth. I know what it is—what it means to be poor, but I know also know what it means to have opportunity to go places where you've never been before. And I know what it means for many of our people that gain employment, that have disposable income, that they can do something for themselves in the community, in the region. I know what it means for those people to finally free themselves from the bondage of poverty and move on to higher expectations for themselves and for their family. So, for me, this budget represents that vision for our people to move forward and to plan ahead—to plan ahead for themselves, to plan ahead for their families, to plan ahead for their communities—so that they can take full advantage of the social and economic opportunities that are provided for them through our initiatives.

Our government has also provided 4.5 million for the four-year Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative, which will assist unemployed and underemployed people to upgrade the skills they need to enter apprenticeship training. I was very proud. At one time, we had an abundance of people going to UCN, taking trades courses and so forth. And, at one graduating exercise, we've had over a dozen of our members from my community alone earn their Red Seal certification. To me, that represented an era—a new era—for us to enter into the mainstream economic activities in Manitoba—not only just Manitoba, but in other parts of Canada as well where there is economic activity.

We are able to provide those kinds of opportunities for our people through this government's initiatives. In the north region, which

includes The Pas, 50 percent of apprentices are Aboriginal, for a total of 279 apprentices. As of March 31st, 2010, there were 33 active Aboriginal apprentices in The Pas.

Mr. Acting Speaker, you have had to grow up in northern Manitoba, in Aboriginal communities, to understand the importance and the significance of these milestones. We are making a difference. We are making a difference in our communities. We are making a difference in the minds and hearts of our people. They know that, if this government continues to move forward in that direction, we will eventually eradicate poverty in northern Manitoba if we continue to move in this direction. They know that. We know that. I know that. And we are working hard to move forward aggressively and in a positive manner that benefits all.

Community-delivered training provides northern and rural First Nation, Métis and Inuit apprentices the opportunity to complete the technical training of component of their apprenticeship in or near their home communities. On-site training provides communities with the opportunity to develop or enhance facilities that complement local infrastructure. I think, Mr. Acting Speaker, that, you know, it wasn't all that long ago that many of us that wanted to continue on with our higher education, training, apprenticeship programs, we've had to go away, far away, from the communities, southern Manitoba, point west, point east, to get that training, to get that apprenticeship programs that we needed to move forward.

* (15:40)

But this government's vision made it possible for us to take our apprenticeship programs in our backyards, and at the same time the industry, business and commerce were able to take advantage of that opportunity as well, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The initiatives that we have is not just for the Aboriginal people in general. The Aboriginal people who will go into jobs will benefit the companies and the businesses that they work for. The businesses and the companies that benefit from these initiatives will contribute to the community through many various forms of grants, of contributions to community development, to sporting events, community events throughout the region. Everybody benefit from that.

The first community developed—that delivered training opportunities began in 2001-2002. As of March 31, 2010, 354 apprentices from 15 Aboriginal

communities have participated in community-based training with 42 sections of training being delivered. Community-delivered training has been offered primarily in the trade of carpenter but also in the trades of industrial mechanic, power electrician, cook and plumber. CD courses have been offered in 15 different communities.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we are making a difference. We are making a difference.

There is, of course, additional economic opportunities for Aboriginals. Aboriginal companies are an integral part of the flood protection strategy, for example, and this has translated into jobs and other positive economic impacts for Aboriginal people. The Floodway Authority has awarded 25 contracts worth approximately \$43 million on a Set-Aside Initiative which ensures that Aboriginals and other underrepresented groups in the construction industry benefit from new jobs.

Building on the success of this initiative, the government also introduced legislation to create the East Side Road Authority to develop a partnership with east-side communities on the construction of all-weather east-side road, ensuring residents share in the economic benefits. And I mention again many of our people that went through—that go through the apprenticeship programs in various colleges and universities will take full advantage of these opportunities. Everybody will benefit from these initiatives.

I want to also mention that although we are moving forward, looking forward to the future in many areas—social, economic, housing, education, health and so forth—we also have to preserve the past, preserve the history of what has transpired that led to where we are today.

For example, the Heritage Grants that are being provided throughout Manitoba, it gives us that opportunity to set aside areas, heritage sites, to set aside facilities or buildings so we can show the rest of Canada, show our children, where we came from, how we developed and how significant the contributions of our forefathers were in those times.

The Sam Waller Museum, for example, in The Pas, benefits from this as well, the Natural History Collections Management program, for example, the Oral History Project and the interpretive brochure that we were able to develop to showcase our history. The Pas, as you know, is very historical in

terms of, you know, how the explorers and the fur traders moved throughout the region.

It's common knowledge in our area that Henry Kelsey, for example, came through there and it has—in fact, it is often said that The Pas was the first place in western Canada to grow wheat. Well, you know, that's information that's worth, you know, telling all parts of—all Manitobans and all Canadians that visit our community.

Mr. Waller, Sam Waller, was an Englishman. He was a veteran, a war veteran, Second World War, but for some reason, he wanted to come to our part of the country and settle there, live there, and contribute to community. He opened up that museum. Just a small—a small house that he converted into a museum using his own resources, his own money because he wanted to preserve the history of The Pas because he understood the importance of preserving history. Mr. Waller, who was a veteran, communicated well with the community of OCN, The Pas, and other surrounding areas. He was very instrumental in starting up this museum to where it's at today. Mr. Waller eventually, you know, became sick and passed away but his request was that he should be buried with the veterans in OCN cemetery and that's where he is today. And for us, it was important to recognize his contribution and his commitment to the preservation of history so our community is very much involved in the preservation of history in our area.

We are very proud of that little museum and we share it with other members of—Manitobans and Canadians, but it is through this government's initiatives and the budget that we're able to do that, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): Order. The honourable member has two minutes left.

Mr. Whitehead: I want to just say now that the income gap that we are narrowing for Aboriginal people is very important at this point to understand and to recognize that from 1996 to 2006, we have closed that gap. Not entirely, but we have made some significant improvements to closing that gap. And it is through initiatives, it is through efforts and through the vision of this government that we're able to do that.

I want to say that the economic recovery and the strategy that we have will give rise to new opportunities for our people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): I rise to speak to the budget and in support of the amendment brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition and, in a brief summary, the budget is mired in excess of spending, with no attention to details, and that's where—that's the—where it goes.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this budget is really—it starts out with three very glaring spots where they're spending money that is just totally wasteful. They could save a billion dollars. The \$640 million on Bipole III, the west-side diversion, which is coming through my—which is proposed to come through my—which is proposed to come through my constituency, and there will be much more to say about that one before it ever happens; \$350 million they're forcing on the City of Winnipeg to remove nitrogen.

*(15:50)

There's a significant misunderstanding on the part of the government about nitrogen and phosphorus removal and the effects on the lake. And, of course, they're spending \$14 million on an enhanced driver's licence. If they just would take that \$14 million, for instance, and convert that into helping people get passports, it would be cheaper in the long run. But they insist on doing something that very few people in Manitoba have taken up.

So the essence of the budget is in order to scramble and try to make up for this money that they're going to throw every which way with no regard to response. There's only two ways that you can raise money and that's, one, is to up taxes or service fee—service charges or fees, which they will do on everything. And the other one is—the other way to do it is to borrow more money and they're—they've got their credit card maxed out and I think instead of—what they've done now is they've just got another—a new credit card and they're just going to smoke that credit card too before this four-year plan is up on this one.

And what's really interesting is the last—for the last year and a half we've heard the NDP claim that we weren't in a recession. Manitoba missed the recession. Manitoba's doing good. Fair ball. All of a sudden, now we have to do massive spending because we have to get out of a deep recession that Manitoba's in. So where are we? Like, before, flat was the new up and now, all of a sudden, we have to spend our way out of a deep recession.

So it really—it's really interesting to know just—are we in a recession day? Are we in a day where we're not in recession? And we continue to be and will continue to be the highest-taxed jurisdiction west of Québec. Their revenue, according to their very own budget, their revenue is going to be up \$84 million this year, but their spending, though, is up 5.2 percent or 533 million. You cannot begin to balance books when you take in only \$84 million, but yet you're going to spend \$533 million more.

We're headed into record deficits. They're predicting the—and yet we're—they're predicting the economy to grow by two and a half percent this year in Manitoba. So there isn't any rationale for it, I guess, other than NDP economics here. But they rewrote the balanced budget legislation a year ago because they couldn't balance the budget and so they went to a four-year summary rolling average.

Now—and that was from a projected—last year, fiscal year was something like a, what, \$8-million surplus and they went into \$590-million deficit in one year. So, when they project the \$533 million now, good heavens, where will it end by the time we get to the end of the year, knowing how they are.

So what they're doing is they rewrote the balanced budget legislation. Now they have to rewrite it again because they're going—the Cabinet ministers will take a 20 percent salary cut this year because they couldn't even balance the budget on a four-year rolling average. So now what they're going to do is they're going to rewrite the balanced budget legislation again so that that no longer applies and they will not have to take a further 20 percent.

Not only will they not have to take a further 20 percent pay cut next year, they'll get their 20 percent back. So all will be well again with the Cabinet ministers. And it's not how much you spend. This government just really doesn't understand, it's not how much you spend. It's the results that count.

But, instead of curbing their spending habit—instead of trying to curb spending and spending more wisely this government just increases a whole host of fees. They'll continue to drain the Crown corporations as they've done over the last number of years and they're going to increase the debt on—for this year alone, \$2.25 billion. That is a huge amount of money to the taxpayers in Manitoba, to our future generations in Manitoba. And as you read through the budget, there are some very interesting lines in that budget. And one of the lines that caught my interest was the largest, the single largest budget line

increase, is not health care, it's not education; it's the cost of interest. The interest cost will go up 10 percent.

An Honourable Member: No. No. No.

Mr. Pedersen: Well, it's right there in the budget. But that's also assuming that interest rates remain flat for this year. The Bank of Canada is already warning about rates going up and soon. We don't know how much; we hope it's not too much, but that will throw out their projections greatly because when you have a lot of borrowed money, the interest rate does indeed—is a huge factor to you.

In Agriculture, they drop the budget 4.2 percent. However, they've turned around and added additional fees of nearly half a billion dollars, is what they're going to collect out of additional fees. There's no—there was no acknowledgment in the budget about agriculture, the contribution of agriculture and the food sectors to Manitoba's economy; it's all about how much can we take out of agriculture. And the 2 percent quota—2 percent tax on supply-managed quotas is an excellent example. It's a new tax. It came out of nowhere. They did not consult with the supply-managed commodities and, yet, here we are, they're going to take money out of agriculture producers.

And I have a broiler operation in my constituency. There's a young fellow who is managing this barn, and he would like to buy this operation in a year—within the next couple of years. The interesting part about it is that the owner of this broiler barn happens to be a very strong—was a very strong NDP supporter, but now that—this quota on this barn alone is worth \$2.5 million. That's going to be \$50,000 on that quota alone, that the government's going to suck out of agriculture and the only way that that will happen is that that young producer who wants to buy that is going to end up paying the cost. There's just no way that that's going to not be transferred. So it's a real drain on agriculture. It's unfair that you pick on sectors that are contributing to the economy.

Under Conservation and Water Stewardship, 5.4 percent drop across the board. We have an on-site waste-water management system, new regulations coming in, that's caused extreme issues in the rural areas. I know the Minister of Conservation's (Mr. Blaikie) aware with it—of it. We've met with him. We hope that he will—at the very least, we would hope that he would drop these. We know that's not going to happen, but at the very least, he

will take a look at this and realize the hardships that he's put on rural property owners.

And on top of that, you put those—you've put more regulations on the rural communities. You've dropped the budget, but then now you're going to—in—within the budget it says that they're going to hire more inspectors. So where's the money going to come from to hire more inspectors? When you've already dropped the budget, but you're going to add more people in there, that money has to come out of that department somewhere, and it's going to come out of budgets that should be going to things like drainage.

Our drainage system in—across rural Manitoba is in a state of disrepair. There's not the money in there. You've got 72 boil-water advisories, but you're going to hire inspectors to police waste-water management systems, instead of getting out there, putting the money into boil—to where there are boil-water advisories. You've got drainage police running the countryside, looking for people who are going to touch up their drains or dig drains. All of a sudden now we have to have police for drainage.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pedersen: At least landowners look after their drains, unlike the Province, who doesn't.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in terms of—one of the—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): Order, please. Have decorum.

* (16:00)

Mr. Pedersen: One of the interesting places in education that the Province says that they're going to put more money into education, so why is it that you're going to then take money out of education to build a stadium?

You've used the TIG program for the school divisions—*[interjection]* No, TIG, on the school divisions. You've offered TIG on school divisions. You've bled the school divisions dry. They've drained their savings. They—unlike this government they actually had savings, but now they don't. So what's the next—what are you going to do now to them? We still have you—you're forcing school divisions to maintain schools with minimum enrolments, and yet you're not allowing the school divisions to work like they should. If you want to regulate the school divisions, why don't you let them operate as they should?

And, of course, we still have the no-fail policy. The no-fail policy is in place. We have our no-fail policy. Don't blame the students; don't blame the teachers; don't blame the parents; don't blame the school divisions for the no-fail policy. This is—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran) : Please have decorum. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

We only have this NDP government to blame for a no-fail policy because this is their belief, that nobody should fail.

As I go through the budget, the Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade's budget's dropped 3.1 percent. B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan continue to develop trade agreements internally. They don't ask Manitoba. Manitoba's not invited to the table on this. B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan are now committed to a joint trade mission to both China and Japan. So where is Manitoba on this? Do you not believe in trade? Do you not want to be part of western Canada? We're being left behind. Instead, this government's focus is on transfer and equalization payments from the federal government. That's their idea of trade and it's not sustainable.

This budget projects equalization payments to remain the same. We know they're not going to remain the same. The main contributors—B.C., Alberta, Ontario—are not able to contribute to equalization like they have. Equalization payments will drop: no provision in the budget for this.

Under Family Services, you talk about building new housing—new public housing, but you can't even maintain the housing that you've got. I've got public housing in my constituency that's got mould. It's got wind that blows through the doors, through the windows. You can't even maintain what you own now and yet you keep talking about building more.

We know child poverty has gone up. There are more children living in poverty than ever, and yet your idea is to always just spend more money. Where does this money go? If you were really spending money wisely, poverty rates would be dropping in our communities.

Under Health, we've now changed from hallway to highway medicine. The federal government's come to the rescue again of this government for this year, for this year at least, in maintaining their health transfer payments, but for all the money that's going

into health care—and we all have—every one of us has examples in our constituencies of how this government continues to fail health care.

I have a nurse practitioner in my constituency who's had her licence taken away. The municipality has offered to hire her to pay for the RHA's portion of this; the Province, Manitoba Health, would pick up the rest. Instead, what they've done is they've taken away her licence to be a practical nurse. We had an—the municipalities—the two municipalities went together and had an excellent arrangement set up where this nurse practitioner would take—would assist the local doctors in our nursing homes, in our personal care homes and in our assisted living homes and in public health too. What do they do? They pull her licence, and the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) is responsible for that. She could've sat in here—stepped in here and fixed that problem, but she chose not to.

We have 17 rural ERs that are closed. Like I said, we've changed from hallway to highway. Now you see the ambulances going. Heaven help you if you need to get to a hospital quickly because—and if it's at least open, my—our local hospital in Carman was closed here a couple of weeks ago for the weekend, and I have already had calls about people who showed up there and then had to either decide to go to Boundary, to Winnipeg or to Portage. When you're looking at time-sensitive issues like this, this is a huge step, and no matter how much money this government's thrown into it, they've just messed it up worse. It is worse shape than it ever was.

Infrastructure and transportation is—you know, if it wasn't for the federal government throwing in all their money, we would still be running around on buggy carts here in Manitoba. Our roads are in horrible shape. In spite of the money that they claim they've thrown in, I can still take you to highways in southern Manitoba where you have a six-inch drop off of the pavement onto the shoulder. I've already had constituents who have rolled their vehicles in the ditch because of that danger. They've got caught on that shoulder—and we're not even talking about paving roads. We're just talking about putting some gravel alongside the roads, and they can't even do that. They're not able to do anything in terms of that.

We look for long-term planning in our major routes in southern Manitoba, how we can—through my constituency, how we can move trucks on specified routes so that the highways are heavy enough to carry them so that they can get through

there so they don't have to dodge here and there and go on back roads and ruin municipal roads because the provincial road is not able to take these trucks.

And, of course, again today, we heard the announcement of the minimum wage going up 50 cents in October. I know the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard) contacted one of my constituents who runs a service industry. She was very upset about the prospect of the wage going up. Last year the wage went up. She hired less people because of it. She will hire less people again this year because of it, because the margins are just not there. And instead of looking at alternatives other than raising the minimum wage, this government looks at the easy route to go and, in fact, in their convention this weekend they're talking they have a motion coming forward to raise it to \$11 an hour, or more, and if they're going to do—if they want to do that, then you may as well just say goodbye to the service industry in Manitoba. And what it really comes down to, it's just additional taxes for those people working on minimum wage, because the more money you make, the more you will pay in taxes, and this has become a back-door tax grab for this government.

But I've saved the best one till last, and that's Manitoba Hydro. It's the biggest blunder to date of this government, of this Province, to propose to build this west-side Bipole III. We know we need Bipole III. There is no argument about that, but the thing to do with this is to build it down the east side where it should be, where Hydro has been planning for the last 20 years. You're going to waste \$640 million, and that's just the start-up number. We know how costs have escalated under anything under this government. So when you start at 640 million, we know it's going to be a lot longer—lot higher than that. We know that line losses are going to be excessive, because the line is going to be longer.

They've—we've heard the excuses about the boreal forest; it doesn't count. You're going to go through more boreal—or just as much boreal forest on the west side as the east. When you talk about going through agricultural land and, I guess members opposite don't appreciate this, because they haven't been in the business, but you cannot take a high-power line like this through irrigation country, through dairy country. This is—and if you propose to do this, you will have to be able to pay fair market value for this, and this is what my constituents—all three of these proposed lines are coming through my constituency. This is a real concern to my constituents. We have very intensive agriculture

coming right where this line comes through, and this is a bad deal for Manitoba. It's the single biggest waste of taxpayers' money to date out of this government, and there is no logical argument. They cannot, they have not—they cannot give us any logical reason for not pursuing the east side: faster, shorter, cheaper, greener. That's the idea of the east side, and it can be done. And I realize that most members here don't have any appreciation of agriculture, but in my country it is a huge event for them.

* (16:10)

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm just going to wrap up by saying that, again, this budget is mired in excessive spending, and there's no attention to results. No other business can spend without looking for results. No other business can get out of debt by taking on more debt without a plan to get out of it. And there is no plan because we know that they continue to spend.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, this is a bad budget. It's bad news for hard-working Manitobans for today and for the generations to come, because we all hope to have generations to come in this province, and they're going to be the ones who will have to pay for this mistakes of this current government.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): My pleasure to rise to respond to the budget and, as others have before me, I'd like begin my remarks by welcoming the new member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). And he's my seat mate, as a matter of fact. And if you'd said that I was going to be sitting next to the member from Concordia a year ago, I would have said the odds were pretty poor. But, lo and behold, in politics truth is stranger than fiction. So here we are.

I want to also begin my remarks by commending the Deputy Premier, the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), for a very good budget. I had the privilege of working with her in Agriculture for a decade and got to appreciate truly her steady hand on the tiller in that department, and I know that she will do as well in the Department of Finance.

I notice very early on in the budget speech she made reference to how Conservatives deal with times of trouble, such as we are in today. And I've listened to a dozen members opposite, and it's pretty obvious that they have learned nothing from their time in office. The decade they've spent in opposition, you'd think that there would have been an epiphany

somewhere along the way, but, unfortunately, that's not the case.

It's obvious if they were in government in times of recession that they would carry on precisely how the former Conservative Premier Filmon conducted 'himself'. You can hear them that, oh, you're spending too much and you're going into deficit. But how did Filmon react to things? I recall when I came to office that doctor shortages were a prime issue, and that was largely as a result of the Filmon government reducing training spaces and following suit with the Liberal government in Ottawa that cut social and health transfer payments to our province.

So they think that's a solution. It's taken us a decade to reverse that and build those training spaces back up to a respectable level. But that's not all. You look at things across the board, infrastructure a prime example. The member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) was making reference to highways. Well, when we came into office, we actually did an analysis of our highways. We did a comprehensive study, and we found that if we continued to spend at the rate that Conservatives were spending, that we were facing a systemic collapse of our provincial highway system, a systemic collapse. That's what we inherited from members opposite. There is the wisdom for you, Mr. Acting Speaker, you know, not focus on things that are important on infrastructure. Let things crumble to the point where you're facing systemic collapse. That's their legacy, and that's how they would continue on today. This government has stepped up to the plate. We committed to \$4 billion over 10 years and are spending above that level now, I believe. So, from a highways perspective, we will be okay.

Drainage, again, you know, here's the, supposedly the party that represents rural Manitoba and, under their stewardship—under their stewardship, Mr. Acting Speaker, things got so bad—so bad that a judge actually threw The Water Rights Act out the window. That was one of the first things we had to do is reconstitute it, because they were so inept, so irresponsible that a judge ruled that they weren't even competent to be managing provincial and municipal drains in this province. So there you go. That's their commitment to rural Manitoba; that's their commitment to infrastructure.

And how did they deal with times of trouble? They make reference to Manitoba Hydro. Well, we had another Crown corporation back then, the Manitoba Telephone System. And there's an old

saying, the southern belles, rich heiresses in the southern United States that inherit money, the golden rule for them is never touch the principal. You can always live off your interest, but you don't touch your principal. You don't sell off your Crown assets that make money, and that's exactly what members opposite did. So there you go. That's wisdom from a Tory perspective—[interjection]

You want to talk about tax hikes? Now, I remember when I was considering seeking office in the late 1990s. I was watching what the Tories were doing, and the person that I ran against, not once but twice, Betty Green, was the chair of the Lakeshore School Division at the time, and she was actually the national chair of school divisions. And how did she manage affairs?

Because members opposite had slashed education funding consistently over their time in office, in 1997 or 1998, I believe it was, the Lakeshore School Division had an increase of 17 percent from one year to the next—numbers that are unheard of. That's how Tories managed things. They cut payments and downloaded responsibilities onto the school division.

I'll give you more example—one more example—something that's a small thing, a small thing, but it was much appreciated by the farmers in this province. It was called the rural stress line. You know, when times got tough in the farming sector, at least they had somewhere to phone. It wasn't expensive; it only cost a couple hundred thousand, you know, or even less, I think it was. Too much for the Tories, though. They had to even cancel that, even cancelled the rural stress line. There you go; the defenders of the farmer couldn't spend a hundred thousand dollars to keep a stress line going so that if people had troubles, they had somewhere to call. There you go. That's leadership for you.

Now, our approach, we have tough times ahead and our minister has focussed on four key areas: health care—and I look to my own constituency as an example of critical spending, and members opposite would slash health care. We know that. The farmer—or the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) was just making references to that a few moments ago. So we know exactly where they would go with health care—down, down, down—and obviously it would be—privatization would be the next step to that, which is, of course, part of their mantra, part of their republican way of looking at social services, because social services are bad. Social—that must imply

communism or something. The marketplace is better as far as they're concerned, and that includes things like the health-care field.

I look to Eriksdale. Good example. We've put an ultrasound unit in there that serves also the community of Arborg, upgraded their hospital. We have a new wellness centre we'll be opening the doors on shortly, which will be delivering CancerCare services to the northwest Interlake, something that would never, ever have happened if those people across the way were in office. I could assure you of that.

We had the caucus and Cabinet were in Arborg just a week or so ago, and a good example there, we announced a new emergency measures building in Arborg, a million-dollar investment to ensure that the health-care needs, the emergency health-care needs, of people in that area are addressed.

I look to dialysis. Did members opposite take that into consideration? Our government is opening the doors on a new dialysis unit in the Percy Moore hospital in Hodgson, just south of the Peguis Reserve, hopefully very soon, this summer.

* (16:20)

The second component, of course, is education and training, and this is critical, of course. If our people aren't trained, then, you know, they're not going to contribute to their maximum capacity to the economy. And we're focusing on training across the board, including our First Nations peoples. I mentioned Peguis a moment ago. I look to that community, to the community to the north, Fisher River, a lot of different initiatives underway, working with our colleges and universities to deliver courses out in the rural areas so that all people don't have to come to Winnipeg or Brandon to get an education. This is a step in the right direction, a step that this government has taken.

I mentioned Arborg a moment ago. This is an area that's been very hard hit—tough times because of excessive rainfall, floods and so forth. And, you know, it's a microcosm of my riding and it was mentioned no less than four times in this budget speech.

The emergency measures—building the north Crooked Lake drainage project—one of many that we have underway.

Flood relief for farmers, although we're still waiting for Ottawa to agree to an AgriRecovery

program that we've proposed to them and we hope that they come across sooner rather than later because people have to go seeding shortly.

And another thing in Arborg, the biodiesel plant—this is something that this government has led on. Members opposite—I guess it never occurred to them over the decade that they were in office—it's not like it's something new but news to them, I guess, because in 10 years we never heard a word about biofuels really. This government has put it in place.

And I look today to Bill 17. Bill 17, this very day, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) tabled a bill, The Biofuels Amendment Act, which will put in place direct grants to biodiesel producers. This is fundamental to get this industry up and off the ground.

And—must be a little bit disconcerting for one of the Conservative candidates in the Interlake who is running against me, who is involved in the biodiesel plant there. I haven't heard him call us and thank us in this regard yet, but he certainly should because this will put that plant—that business that he's involved in—over the top. This will put it on the map. So I'm still waiting. I'm still waiting. He's—I'm in the phonebook. The member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) maybe could pass that on to him that the NDP has stepped up, once again, for farmers, for diversification, for value-added production in the agriculture sector in the Interlake.

Now there was some talk about a five-year plan and members opposite were making snide remarks that it was Soviet rhetoric and—but I would remind them, and I have a degree in east European studies, so I'm familiar. There are five-year plans back in those days.

They also had something else. They had 25-year plans and this government is working on something that fits that mould and I'm referring, of course, to the whole CentrePort venture. This is a long-term project with huge infrastructure investment requirements on the part of the federal, provincial, municipal governments, which we have done. We have stepped up to the plate. We've committed in excess of \$200 million to CentrePort Way, the major road that will go through this area, and, over 25 years or so, this will come to fruition. It's not going to appear over night but it takes a government with vision—with commitment—to even consider something like this that, you know, will—well, we'll probably still be in office or back in office 25 years from now, given that, you know, we've been the

government for probably three-quarters of the time in the last 40 years here. But that is something that I look forward to seeing in my old age. And I will think back to these days, where it started—here, in this Legislature, by this government.

Something in conjunction with that, of course, also mentioned in the budget speeches, is the Arctic Summit. Being a trade hub implies trade in both directions. We have Gary Doer as our ambassador down in Washington now. He did—worked very hard establishing trade connections south of the border and is rightfully now the U.S.—or ambassador to the United States. And I look over the Pole. If we're going to be a trade hub, of course, we have to connect with markets in India, in China. These are the world's fastest-growing economies and this Arctic summit is something that will work toward that. And it will involve the Russian Federation as well. If you're going to fly over the Pole, you're flying over 5,000 miles of Russian territory so we will have to work with them, which is a good thing. Members opposite are laughing, but there's—we have a lot in common with that country, and the Arctic is the key to that. And we will make sure that we work toward maintaining peace, globally, through trade as opposed to, you know, the Conservative-Republican way of doing things which is always conflict and war, invasion and so forth. I think trying to create business, trying to connect different countries, whether it's China, whether it's India, whether it's Russia, whether it's the European community, peace through trade is the best approach and this Arctic summit will be a huge step in the right direction.

My time is running low, but I do have a few points to go yet.

Manitoba Hydro. To listen to these people, members opposite, I think of the big Tory lie that they can cancel this and have it up and running before 2017 where our contractual commitments kick in. It's just not realistic. It's not true, not true at all that they could accomplish that. And them trying to put that line across here in this Chamber, and in the public, is a massive disinformation campaign that the people of Canada—Manitoba—will be made aware of in the next election campaign.

I want to close just on one note and I want to quote the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard) who said something earlier this afternoon when we were talking about minimum wage, which is something that we have been committed to as a government. Ever since we took office, we've raised the minimum

wage because we care about people, we care about the poor, we care about the common working man in this province, not like members opposite. Members opposite—they're for the big companies, they're for the corporate sector. They could care less about the working people, which is why they've spent the last 25 or 30 of the last 40 years in opposition. The member—the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), this was the quote: Minimum wages, political candy. That's what he thinks of the working people in Manitoba here. That is—that's shameful. That is shameful. That is arrogant. That is elitist. That is typically Conservative. Doesn't surprise me in the least. And I think I would like to close on that note, Mr. Acting Speaker.

We have put together a good plan that will bring us out of this deficit situation. When economies go into deficit, governments have to spend. That's all there is to it. The business community does not step up and pull the economy back into the black. It's up to governments to do so. That's precisely what we're doing. That's what the rest of the country, what the rest of the world, is doing right now. The great epiphany: investments in infrastructure. Everybody's doing it. Even their Conservative leaders in Ottawa are doing precisely that and running—what is it a 60, 70-billion-dollar deficit in the process? So cry a river over there, but the Tories in Ottawa are doing exactly the same thing that we're doing here in Manitoba because it has to be done. That's what governments have to do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): In fact, I'm going to have to get some Kleenex and dry my eyes after that speech. I can certainly tell you that on this side of the House we do have the respect of the people when we think about what this government has done in regards to this budget and the deficit it is going to leave not on our children, but our grandchildren in the years to come.

* (16:30)

I do want to address a number of issues today in regards to my sixth budget speech that I've had the pleasure and opportunity to represent the people of Lakeside on, and I'm very proud of the fact that they have elected me to be there and represent them. However, having said that, I do want to also welcome the member from Concordia. I know that he will do a great job, and anybody that puts his name on a ballot in this House and has the opportunity to serve, I certainly take my hat off to

every member in this House. And they're all honourable, and I certainly respect anybody that does that. So my best wishes to him. I wish we would have won it, but that's the democracy that we live in, and I certainly respect that.

Also, the budget response was supposed to be for all Manitobans, and I can tell you that I'm disappointed. When I look at what we received in my constituency of Lakeside, it's very limited. And I know that the government looks at things that are especially in swing ridings, you know, and to mention just a few of those, like St. Vital and Wolseley and Gimli, Kirkfield Park, Elmwood, Rossmere, St. Norbert, Kildonan—there's another one there—River Heights, River Rouge, Fort Garry, St. James, Wellington, Lord Roberts, Southdale, Minto—don't leave any of them out.

And then you get into rural Manitoba and you look at the money that's spent in rural Manitoba, and these are the ones that need help as well. And when you look at ridings like the Interlake, for example, Gimli, Dauphin, Selkirk, Brandon East, Swan River, La Verendrye. These are ridings that where we see money being spent which is great. I think this is fabulous to be seeing the opportunity for those ridings that are especially in trouble, that's having MLAs that can't quite get their message out, have the government come to their call and say, look, I need some help. Build me some roads.

The member from Interlake was talking about the biodiesel plant. That's been talked about for the last eight years. Finally, he's doing something. There's finally getting some recognition. He talks about the candidate that's running against him. My golly, is that what it takes—somebody to run against you, to do something? There's three other great candidates up there. Next thing you know you're going to announce that the fishing is a good thing. Next thing you're going to announce that hunting and trapping is a great thing. Next thing you're going to announce that we have so many things going good for us in these areas that are swing ridings. And I would worry—I would worry—if I was a member from Interlake, and I would try and plead with the government to make sure that they would look after me.

And, in fact, the member from Gimli is also worried. There's three good candidates running there. We have a rail line, a rail line that's been abandoned. He needs to get the ear of his caucus. We need to make sure that Diageo is protected. Some 700 cars a

month come into Gimli just for them alone. Also, the farmers, not only from Gimli, but from the Interlake riding use that line—again, swing ridings, but we will look after it. We need to make sure those people are looked after so we continue to have these MLAs at the Cabinet table until we form a government.

Also, another swing riding—another swing riding—which is Lakeside. I'm not afraid of it. I'm up for grabs. Anybody can beat me tomorrow, but I tell you what. We do look after our farmers. We want to make sure our voice is heard, and I will continue in this House to raise issues, and I know we're not going to get our fair share. But I will tell you my voice will be heard in this Legislature. And I want to make sure the member from Gimli, the member from Interlake and every member in this House understands how important tourism, agriculture is important to rural Manitoba and to every member in this Chamber. We need to make sure that we do have the people at the table to make sure those dollars do flow.

Now, in regards to the personal care homes, at least in my area that's been the number one priority for the Interlake Regional Health Authority. I know that the people in Gimli are very important. They have an addition put on. They've got a dialysis unit that's been implemented very recently, which I thank the government for. This is also very important. Also up in the Interlake the member talked about what happened in Eriksdale. These issues are important to each and every Manitoban. The RHA has said time and time again, along not only with the R.M.s of Rosser, Rockwood, Armstrong, the Town of Teulon, the Town of Stonewall, this is their priority. Their money is on the table. What we're doing is exporting our people out of their area which they pay taxes in, worked hard all their lives, provided for their families, and now they are being displaced out of their community, Mr. Acting Speaker. I find that unacceptable. I find that, whenever we look at ridings that I've talked about, these swing ridings, now where's the money being spent. Look at it. We had an announcement last week. That was not a good announcement for all Manitobans. We need to look fairly and equably at all situations and whenever the RHA makes recommendations, which, quite frankly, I think the board has made the right decision, and this—and I can't say it's made up of Tories. They made the appointments.

You know who the board members are. They said, look, make this a priority. It has not come to the table. I don't care if it's in Teulon. I don't care where

it's in Gimli. I don't care whether it's in Eriksdale. I don't care if it's in Kildonan. Do the right thing. Look after the people. Those people deserve to be heard and they need to make sure that they live in the community, and most of these people, Mr. Acting Speaker—and those that don't understand rural Manitoba, a lot of the farm wives in the old days didn't have a licence through no fault of their own. That was the era they were brought up in, and the husband usually went town, bought the groceries. And a lot of those women, when their husbands are put into a personal care home, they have no way of going to Selkirk, to Deer Lodge, to Winnipeg, to see those loved ones, so they rely on their children, their other loved ones, their neighbours. So let's make sure we get this done.

Now there's other issues that I want to talk about also within Lakeside before I get into my comments in regards to agriculture, infrastructure, transportation, my areas of critique of which I've been asked to look after, but also is the road issue within Lakeside, the highway issue, and I know that the Highway 227, which is the escape route for Winnipeg. It's a safety issue; 227, for those who don't know, was supposed to have been hooked up to the Yellowhead Route back in the 1960s. We have not made it a priority. I'm not blaming this government. I'm not blaming the Tory government. I'm not blaming the Liberal government. What I'm saying is if we truly want the safety—we truly want the safety of Winnipeg in mind, we need to look after making sure that Highway 227 gets upgraded so that we can get people out of Winnipeg up into those areas, and also the tourism that comes back and forth, not only from Winnipeg going to Riding Mountain, going over to the other national parks or to the other provincial parks, is also 'substancing.' So we want to make sure that those people as well are going to be looked after.

Mr. Acting Speaker, 415 is another highway that we need to be talking about. We talk about east-west. We don't have enough connections; again, whether that be in the Interlake, whether it be in Gimli, whether it be in Russell, whether it be in Arthur-Virden or Brandon, we need to make sure we have more east-west connections. We have lots of north-south, but east-west, we're very limited. It's one of the priorities that I think we need to be looking at. Yes, we know there's limited money that's going to be available, and we know that there's some other priorities, but we need to develop that five-year plan in order to ensure that we do cover off for some of

those necessities that I feel that's so important in rural Manitoba.

And I know that every member that gets up in this House and talks about, you know, building roads, and we know that there's priorities. And we know, when we get into government, we're going to have the same problems, but the reality of it is some of those roads—some of those roads—are just have to get built and we have to make them a priority and sometimes we have to make those tough decisions about where we need to go on that.

So, in regards to agriculture, a word that was not used in the budget, which is very disappointing, and the member from Interlake talked about the funding that was brought forward on the ag recovery program for the Interlake farmers last year in the flood, actually the year before. I, along with the federal Member of Parliament, Mr. James Bezan, also had made various pleas with not only the R.M. and the farming community, Keystone Ag Producers, Manitoba pork producers, Manitoba Cattle Producers to come up with a plan that would work, that we could submit to the provincial government, to the federal government that would work. We did that. The member from Interlake was there, and I can quite tell you, quite proudly tell you, that we were unanimous in that decision.

Now that was last June. July come along. We had letters or disaster assistance of every magnitude that we thought we could put together to bring, make sure that the provincial government and federal government had the tools they needed to ensure those farmers had a backup plan. This is now April, not very far away from seeding time. I know that there is a program in the works, according to the Minister of Agriculture. I encourage you to make that announcement very, very soon. I know there's other priorities, but these farmers, these people in those areas are hurting deeply. I encourage the government to make sure they announce something very, very soon in a way that might be able to sustain some of the grain industry.

* (16:40)

I can also tell you the livestock industry, a number of those producers are gone and that's sad. A lot of that land is very marginal land, Mr. Acting Speaker, and that land, quite frankly, is made for cattle. It's not grain land. It can't be used for grain land, and nor will it ever be used for grain land. That's either going to have to become another provincial park, become Crown lands. It's not

sustainable for livestock without some type of an assistance to get them back into the livestock program, and if that program don't come very soon, I can tell you, we'll see a more exodus of our livestock, and it won't be good for our province overall.

As we all know in this House, Mr. Acting Speaker, that 25 percent of our economy's made up of agriculture and without a strong agriculture sector, we are not a strong province. That's very significant. As we know when we went through the budget last year, we talked about the trouble in the hog industry. We talked about the country-of-origin labelling. We talked about the high U.S. dollar. All those are important factors when we look at the overall livestock economy.

The grain sector has been fairly stable in the last four or five years, but we've seen an increase in fertilizer cost. We've seen cost of leased land going up. We've seen cost of fuel go up, and a lot of these expenditures are no fault to the farmer. In fact, the net return to the farmer has actually went down. So all we've seen is larger farms, more corporate farms. In fact, when we talk about farming, almost all farmers are incorporated now. In fact, the agriculture act needs to be revamped, relooked at in a way that's going to make the dyed fuel and the other fuels more adaptable to legislation that's going to be correct. I believe the last time the act was opened up was 1947, which is significant, in order to make sure that we are operating under the right act, and making sure that those laws are not being broken in a way that where our members, because they incorporate, won't be looked after.

Also, in regards to the agricultural budget, when I look at 4.2 percent decrease, and I look at programs that are so important as AgriInvest, and I talked about this the other day in my questions in regards to the minister on what's going to happen with agriculture in rural Manitoba, certainly will raise a red flag for me if I was in government. And I know in opposition it's very important to us and very important to actually the other members as well. We have to ensure that rural Manitoba and the farmers are there to support us, and we need to make sure that we are there when they are in need to support them.

And also I know that the Agri-Food Research and Development Initiative also fell from 750,000 to 350,000, and we have said time and time again that the University of Manitoba does a fantastic job. I

think we'll all agree to that. It should be a centre of excellence. We're striving, we know we've been into a recession. *[interjection]* It is, but it could be a lot better, and we need—we need—we need—to ensure that those dollars are there, and by cutting from 750,000 to 350,000 dollars in research and development is significant, least in my book.

Also, in regards to science, I know that we have on this side of the House, talked time and time again in regards to making sure we rely on good science for those decisions, and with the research station in Glenlea, I can certainly tell you the work that they do out there is 'uncomparable' to none. And I had the opportunity to hear Dr. Don Flaten speak at the Manitoba Cattle Producers last fall, and I would encourage each and every member, both sides of the House to, if you haven't the opportunity to hear him and look at the scientific data, we need to do that. We need to make sure they have the funding to provide us with the technology, with the science, that we need to give them the tools in order to make sure they can, in fact, do their job.

I know that, I just don't want to skip over this too much, but I know my time is limited, because I want—do want to talk about my critic role in regards to infrastructure, transportation, local government services. But I want to talk about the farm tax rebate that's been in the budget every year except this year, and it was supposed to go to 80 percent this year. And one of my peeves, and I've talked about this time and time again is the way it's administered. We do not have to have the farmer pay the tax, submit the claim to the government for reimbursement. All we have to do is eliminate that portion of the tax from the tax bill, take it from that department over to the other department. It's a very simple thing, costs no money.

Last year in Estimates I asked a question, what was the cost of administering this? It was \$1.4 million. That would go a long ways—a long ways—to helping producers. It would go a long ways towards helping our tourist industry. It would go a long ways to helping develop new technology and new research that we can have to help our rural economy.

So, with that, I want to go on to the Infrastructure and Transportation and local government that I've had the honour of being moved over to, and I certainly enjoyed Agriculture for the number years that I had it, from 2003 until now, for seven years. I can certainly tell you that I'm very

pleased with the organizations that I was able to work with, not only with KAP, Keystone Ag Producers, the corn growers, the pulse growers, the wheat growers, the Wheat Board, the Manitoba pork producers, and all the others that I can certainly tell I worked very hard with them, and I'm very proud of the fact that we had a great relationship with them. And I know my colleague from Emerson will do a great job in that portfolio as well.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm pleased to put a few words on the record in regards to the budget in relations to transportation, infrastructure, and government services. Highway 75 is very important, and I know that the government has that on their radar screen in order to make sure that we can get those transportation services to our cities, to rural Manitoba and this road is so important. And I can tell you that whatever we do together to work on that, whether it's a bypass around Morris, whether it's building the town up through the main route through Morris and a dike—that's another thing—but whatever it is, it needs to be done in a way that's going to make sure that we do have those services because I think it's so important that we go out and develop CentrePort, which is going to be a fantastic opportunity for us in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We know it's going to be a job creator. We know it's going to have economic spinoff not only for Winnipeg but those surrounding bedroom communities like West St. Paul, East St. Paul, Tyndall, Oak Bank, Woodlands, Teulon, Stonewall, Stony Mountain. All those communities are going to benefit not only in an economic way because of CentrePort, but they're going to create an income in that where they're going to have those extra dollars to spend within those smaller communities, which, again, will be very positive for all of us in Manitoba.

As we look at infrastructure, we may as well look at it as an ongoing concern not only for government but for all those that concern as we increase our tourism, as we increase the transportation mode of which we want to see grow and prosper within our province. As we know, there's a number of roads that just don't last, and we know that roads have a certain lifespan, that we need to come back and resurface those roads, reupgrade those roads in a way that they're going to be able to haul the products that we need to, goods and services back and forth to those communities that are so important.

I know that I did talk earlier about the rail line in Gimli, and we lost the one in Teulon. I can tell you it's substantial from Winnipeg to Arborg, and I can tell you that, as a result of that, it's increased the traffic substantial on Highway 7, 8, 9, and 6. And, as a result of that, those roads need to be upgraded, need to be kept in good shape, and, again, of course, that takes an awful lot of money as well. So we only have X number of dollars. We only have one taxpayer that's going to come from.

I know the Association of Manitoba Municipalities pointed out in its March 31st submission to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, I quote: Insufficient investment in Manitoba, deteriorating infrastructure has created a major burden for municipalities in the form of severe municipal infrastructure deficit estimated in excess of \$11 billion for Manitoba. End of quote.

I'm looking forward to the Estimate process. As I say, it will be my first opportunity to ask the minister questions regards to changes, upgrades, and whatever else is going to be going on in course in regards to the upgrades and what's going to be happening in those services.

Also, I know that the budget talked about the east side. We're all in favour of the east-side road. We're also very much in favour of the east-side hydro line. If they can't go in harmony together, then something's drastically wrong with the program. We know that in fact that road needs to be built. We need it not only to get those products up to those people so that they're able to have the quality of life that's so important to each and every Manitoban and we believe that is the right to be made. We know that, in fact, Mr. Speaker, that that road needs to be built but it needs to be built along with a few steps and guidelines to make sure that the consultation process has been done. They tell us it has. We need to make sure that that, in fact, has been done. I know I've been talking to a number of people in regards of it, and certainly there's still some concerns out there, and we know that it does need to be rolled out in a way that's going to be sustainable.

* (16:50)

And we know that \$72 million is a lot of money. That's on top, I believe, of the 27 million that was announced last year. So we've got almost a hundred million dollars, but we know it's not going to be enough to get there. But it's certainly a start, and certainly if we had the hydro line coming down beside it, the extra \$640 million that's being spent to

go down the west side would go another long ways to providing the infrastructure, the roads that we need in order to sustain those people on that side.

The, also, I want to talk about the importance of rural and northern airports. I know the minister talked about buying a new plane today or a refurbished plane, which is also very important to the interprovincial economy. Of course, those facilities that we don't have in the north, actually gives them an opportunity to, in fact, get down and get the services that they do need. So I know that the budget is certainly a guideline in regards to looking after some of those issues.

But also we need to talk about water treatment, well water, those types of things that I know the member from Carman talked about that in his speech earlier. But also I know that a number of these programs aren't, just aren't enough. And I know we need to do a plan there as well, a 10-year plan, so we can tell those people not only in rural Manitoba, but also those in the city of Winnipeg what our plans are. What's our long-term vision? How are we going to get there? How long will you have to boil your water?

I know Lorette was just talked about the other day as well, and I know that's an important community that needs to have the infrastructure put in there as well. They have to haul their water for quite some distance, and I know my daughter lived in Macdonald, and they had a well brought in or put in, and it was quite costly. And I know that that's something that we have to work on, that can ensure that that plan is, in fact, in place.

And, of course, the nitrogen that's going to be removed from the waste water here in the city of Winnipeg, we could save tens of millions of dollars there, tens of millions of dollars that would not have to be utilized, and utilized for something else. I think we need to re-evaluate our priorities. Look at those priorities in a way that's going to help us, help every Manitoban, not just those swing ridings I talked about earlier. Those are important, but where are we going to be? Where are we going to be with those people and that amount of money in 10 years? What could we have done? This is very, very important.

Also I want to talk about the regulation that was changed last summer in regards to the sewer injector system. I know I've been reading petitions on this in the House for the past four or five days. We've talked about it in question period last fall, and I know the government needs to readdress this issue. I've had the

discussion with the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie), and I know that he is going to do the right thing. We need to re-evaluate this. Look on it at a case-by-case basis.

I know the municipalities have made it very clear their position on this, very-very clear to the government. And I can tell you this, that we have to have a grandfather right in there. We know we need clean water; we want clean water. But to do a blanket policy for the province across this great land of ours is dead wrong. We need to re-evaluate that position. We need to listen to the people on the ground. We need to listen to the people who make those decisions. We need to consult with our well drillers. They are a fantastic resource, Mr. Speaker. We need to listen to the reeves and the councils that make those decisions each and every day. Those people have an awful lot of knowledge that we are not utilizing, and we have an opportunity to make a wrong a right. And this is done through regulation, so this is something that was never brought before the House as a bill or resolution. So it can be done back through a regulation in a way that would be the right of the wrong.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that my time is almost up, but I do also want to thank my colleagues on this side of the House, and I know that we have an awful lot to say about this budget. We have made a substantial amendment to this resolution which I'm asking the government to support and look at our ideas and certainly the ideas that we bring forward I think are very thoughtful, and I think that they're put through in a way that's going to be sustainable for this province in the future.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, and I like the enthusiasm from the members opposite about my speech that I'm about to begin.

First, I'd like to welcome the member from Concordia, the newest member of the House, who has just been re-just been elected. It's nice to have yet another member on this side of the House, and I like the fact that he's a young, dynamic person who has lots of energy as opposed to some people who have been here a little long.

And I look at our budget and I look at the budget speech that we've provided, and I'm pleased to support this budget speech because it provides a long-term vision, and I'm also pleased that we are investing for all Manitobans.

I look at what the member previously has said and he said it's—we need to invest in infrastructure. We need to invest in roads. We need to invest in better water. We need to invest in people. We need to invest in science and technology. We need to invest in CentrePort. We need to invest in things that all Manitobans believe in. I'm pleased that the member opposite said that because that's what we're doing. This part of the government, this government, believes in investing in those items as opposed, a member opposite said, and I quote: The Tories will put less focus on other issues. It says, such as health care, roads, social services, agriculture, rural depopulation, and First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, one of the members opposite, said it. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) didn't correct that so I assumed that it is the policy of the Conservative government not to invest in health care, roads, social services, agriculture, rural depopulation, or First Nations. That is exactly what happened in the '90s and I can understand why the member from Russell is trying to get rid of the history curriculum from high schools because those who do not know history are truly doomed to repeat it.

I look at what we're trying to do. We're trying to stimulate the economy, and I would like to look at what a very noted economist said about stimulating the economy. He said that it's very, very important to stimulate the economy. It's necessary in a world recession, and he worked with the other G8 leaders to make sure that they had a good solid stimulus package. That leader, by the way, is the Prime Minister of Canada. So we're following—and may I—I would like to let the members opposite know that

they are voting against a budget that does that, an NDP budget. What else are they doing? They're voting against building infrastructure. They're voting against dropping the small business tax to zero, the lowest rate in the country. They're voting against more housing.

We're talking about housing. We're talking about renovating 2,000 units and we're building 250 new units. They're voting against that, Mr. Speaker. They're voting against an elder abuse strategy that is working very, very well in co-operation with the seniors in the community and that's sad. They're also voting, and they voted against a Primary Caregiver Tax Credit, and this is supporting seniors and people who need the support out in the community. They're voting against modernizing health-care facilities, personal care homes, and they're voting against modernizing the Health Sciences Centre with a \$135-million investment in health care.

They're voting against a lot of very positive science investments where we doubled science, and so I look at this and I say, what do we stand for? We are actually investing in children. The Healthy Child program is a wonderful program that's investing in children, in families, and in action, in community development. There—we are investing in more doctors and nursing. We're investing in public transport and trails. We're investing—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have 25 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 8, 2010

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