

**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*

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, May 20, 2010**

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

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PETITIONS**

**Multiple Myeloma Treatments**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Health Canada has approved the use of Revlimid for patients with multiple myeloma, a rare, progressive and fatal blood cancer.

Revlimid is a vital new treatment that must be accessible to all patients in Manitoba for this life-threatening cancer of the blood cells.

Multiple myeloma is treatable, and new, innovative therapies like Revlimid can extend survival and enhance quality of life for the estimated 2,100 Canadians diagnosed annually.

The provinces of Ontario, Québec, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Alberta have already listed this drug on their respective pharmacare formularies.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the provincial government consider immediately providing Revlimid as a choice to patients with multiple myeloma and their health-care providers in Manitoba through public funding.

And this is signed by J. Van Helden, M. Van Helden, H. Van Helden and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mount Agassiz Ski Area**

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

For several decades, the Mount Agassiz ski area, home to the highest vertical between Thunder Bay and the Rocky Mountains, was a popular skiing and snowboarding destination for Manitobans and visitors alike.

The operations of the Mount Agassiz ski area were very important to the local economy, not only creating jobs, but also generating sales of goods and services at area businesses.

In addition, a thriving rural economy generates tax revenue that helps pay for core provincial government services and infrastructure which benefits all Manitobans.

Although the ski facility closed in 2000, there remains strong interest in seeing it reopened and Parks Canada has committed to conducting a feasibility study with respect to the Agassiz site and future opportunities in the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government to consider outlining to Parks Canada the importance that a viable recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area would play in the local and provincial economies.

And to request that the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider working with all stakeholders, including Parks Canada, to help develop a plan for a viable, multiseason recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area.

This petition is signed by B. McRae, G. Levandoski, L. Levandoski and many, many other fine Manitobans.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

**Fifth Report**

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Vice-Chairperson):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

**Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):** Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense? Dispense.

*Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Fifth Report.*

### **Meetings**

*Your Committee met on the following occasions:*

- April 29, 2009
- May 13, 2009
- May 19, 2010

### **Matters under Consideration**

- Auditor General's Report – Audit of the Province's Management of Contaminated Sites and Landfills dated October 2007
- Auditor General's Report – Special Audit: Rural Municipality of La Broquerie dated March 2008

### **Committee Membership**

*Committee membership for the April 29, 2009 meeting:*

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Ms. HOWARD (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. JHA
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. MAGUIRE
- Ms. SELBY
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER
- Mrs. STEFANSON

*Committee membership for the May 13, 2009 meeting:*

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Mr. DEWAR
- Ms. HOWARD (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. JHA
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MAGUIRE
- Ms. SELBY
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER
- Mrs. STEFANSON

*Committee membership for the May 19, 2010 meeting:*

- Ms. BRAUN

- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mrs. DRIEDGER
- Mr. GRAYDON
- Mr. JENNISSEN
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF
- Mr. STEFANSON
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK

### **Officials Speaking on Record**

*Officials speaking on the record at the April 29, 2009 meeting:*

- Carol Bellringer, Auditor General
- Jack Buckwold, Director of Special Audits
- Hon. Mr. ASHTON
- Linda McFadyen, Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

*Officials speaking on the record at the May 13, 2009 meeting:*

- Carol Bellringer, Auditor General
- Hon. Mr. STRUTHERS
- Mr. Donald Cook, Deputy Minister of Conservation

*Officials speaking on the record at the May 19, 2010 meeting:*

- Carol Bellringer, Auditor General
- Hon. Mr. BLAIKIE
- Mr. Fred Meier, Acting Deputy Minister of Conservation
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK
- Mr. Hugh Eliasson, Deputy Minister of Finance
- Hon. Mr. LEMIEUX
- Ms. Linda McFadyen, Deputy Minister of Local Government

### **Reports Considered and Passed**

*Your Committee considered and passed the following report as presented:*

- Auditor General's Report – Audit of the Province's Management of Contaminated Sites and Landfills dated October 2007

### **Reports Considered but not Passed**

*Your Committee considered the following report but did not pass it:*

- Auditor General's Report – Special Audit: Rural Municipality of La Broquerie dated March 2008

**Mr. Dewar:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), that the report of the committee be received.

*Motion agreed to.*

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Forest Fire Update

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation):** I have a ministerial statement to make.

I rise today to provide a second update for the House on the current status of the forest fire situation in Manitoba.

To date, there have been 136 fires resulting in over 4,000 burned hectares. The significant fire near Berens River has burned approximately 3,500 hectares.

We've been advised that Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, in co-operation with the Manitoba Association of Native Firefighters, have evacuated 56 people from Berens River as a precaution due to health concerns from smoke. Additionally, the First Nation's school has closed on a temporary basis. We are closely assessing the situation and monitoring weather conditions, and I have been in touch with Chief Kemp of Berens River to discuss the situation.

Manitoba Conservation is deploying the following resources to the fire: a water bomber group consisting of two bombers and one Bird Dog aircraft, a single-engine air tanker group, four helicopters, one incident management team and approximately 80 firefighters.

Cooler temperatures in northern Manitoba have alleviated the general threat, although dry spring conditions continue to exist and are ongoing reasons for concern. In southern Manitoba, high winds and above-normal temperatures will be a concern for the next few days. However, rain is forecasted for Saturday throughout much of southern Manitoba.

I know all Manitobans recognize the important work of those on the front line fighting these fires and are concerned about those communities that are affected. We will continue to update the Legislature on this matter as necessary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** And I would like to thank the minister for that update on the situation at Berens River here as well. In today's update from the ministerial statement, there's another three fires, I believe, burning overnight, from the statement that he made yesterday, in Manitoba.

We, too, have great concern for the people, the 56, for sure, that have been evacuated out of Berens River and who are in danger of smoke inhalation. And to be able to move them expeditiously is a credit to the firefighters and the other emergency personnel that are on site, who I want to give credit to, as we did yesterday, for their efforts in regards to making sure that all of these types of situations are—that they minimize any kind of a catastrophe that could happen.

I want to say that, as well, that, you know, I've farmed long enough, as the minister may well know, that even though he's predicting cooler temperatures and forecasts of Saturday of rain, that you best not count on it until it actually comes. And so I think we need to continue to be prepared in our firefighting efforts, as I'm sure that the department is, in regards to making sure that the personnel are required and on site in other areas fighting the other fires that are available in—or that are presently going on in Manitoba as well, although I know that of those 136, there are a number of those that were put out earlier, as I mentioned yesterday. And so we need to look at the actual amount that are being—presently burning today, as well, and make sure that we have enough resources for that. Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave has been granted.

\* (13:40)

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend, on behalf of our caucus, the concern over the—to the people of Berens River and to the chief of council. I know that their community has been working very hard to improve things, as I was visiting in Berens River in February, and there are many very dedicated people here, and it's difficult for a community when forest fire threatens like this and people have to be evacuated. Certainly we hope that this will be short-lived and that the fire can be brought under control quickly and—but, nevertheless, given the conditions, we need to be vigilant.

And I would also like to extend a special thanks to all the firefighters and emergency workers who are putting in the efforts to try and end this fire and

make sure that there are not other fires developing or becoming larger. Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today, we have Sara Thurlbeck and her family, who are the guests of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Health-Care Services

#### Laboratory Misdiagnosis Settlement

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans rely on diagnostic tests and services to ensure that they and their families receive an accurate diagnosis regarding their health.

In March of this year, the Premier approved, through an Order-in-Council, a \$95,000 settlement to a former Manitoban who was told by a provincially run lab that she had hepatitis C when, in fact, she did not have hepatitis C.

Can the Premier tell Manitobans whether he sought an assurance from his Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) that before he gave the settlement, that all the problems that led up to this misdiagnosis were taken care of so that no other Manitoban would have to suffer a misdiagnosis like what happened in this case?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good to see you back.

There is continuous review that goes on with respect to Diagnostic Services Manitoba on any of these events occur. The settlement was agreed to mutually by all parties. But we ensure, through the health-care system, that if an event like this occurs that there are corrective measures, and they continue to monitor to ensure these events don't occur in the future.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Speaker, in her statement of claim from being misdiagnosed with hepatitis C and losing her career as a result, the claimant indicated that the provincial laboratory was negligent from the misdiagnosis because of, among other things: failing to follow proper protocols for collecting, labelling and testing blood; failing to have appropriate safeguards in place to ensure the results

were properly reported; failing to ensure there was proper training at this provincially run lab.

Mr. Speaker, rather than dispute these very, very serious allegations, the Premier and his government decided to sign off on a settlement essentially saying that they agreed with those allegations.

Will the Premier tell us whether or not he agreed to pay \$95,000 because these failings were in fact true?

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, Mr. Speaker, nobody should overinterpret what the member has said in terms of what was acknowledged or not. There was a mutual agreement arrived at to the satisfaction of the person that felt they had a grievance with the way they were treated. It is important that governments act fairly in these matters and ensure that people are treated properly.

It's also important that we do continuous review and continuous reviews have been done in terms of investigations of these types of matters to ensure that these kinds of errors do not occur in the future, and that is what has been done here and that is what will be done in the future on any other events. And there will be prevention done too, in terms of the kinds of reviews that are done to ensure that testing is done in an appropriate way with valid results.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Last March, the Premier agreed to pay \$95,000 as a result of someone being told they had hepatitis C, which in fact they did not, as a result of a test coming from a provincially run lab. She indicated that the protocols were not followed, that the safeguards were not in place and that there was improper training at this provincially run lab.

Instead of disputing any of these claims by the individual who brought it forward, the Premier decided to pay \$95,000. There could only be two logical explanations about why \$95,000 were paid out: either because they were true, which is certainly possible, or he simply didn't want this to go to court and have a public display about what is going on at some of the provincial laboratories.

Which is it? Was it because there—it's true or he didn't want it to become a public inquiry through a court?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, it is very appropriate to do a settlement when there is a grievance that somebody has and it had resulted in a loss of income. Without getting into the specifics of the case, what is

important to note is that there was mutual agreement on this settlement.

Within the last year, there has been a review done. An external review committee took a look at Diagnostic Services Manitoba. They identified opportunities for improvements, specifically in human resources, quality assurance and critical incident reporting and investigations, which we have enshrined in legislation. We have enshrined it in legislation, so there's a learning culture within the health-care system. When a critical incident occurs, it is investigated and lessons are drawn from that on how to improve service delivery to prevent these kinds of errors having negative impacts on Manitobans that use the service.

That has been done here. It will be done on a continuous basis. And this is the kind of culture we're trying to inculcate within our health-care system, not the hide-it-under-the-carpet approach that the members opposite used to use. We have disclosure now. We have legislation to protect people. And, Mr. Speaker, we also have whistle-blower legislation if there are any other practices [*inaudible*]

#### **Health-Care Services Laboratory Misdiagnosis Settlement**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** A lawsuit was filed against this government's provincial lab for negligence because a patient was wrongly diagnosed with hepatitis C. This Minister of Health and the Premier agreed to quietly settle out of court. Obviously, they agreed that there was negligence.

Can the Minister of Health tell us: What did she do to ensure that the problems which led to this misdiagnosis were fully investigated?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** And, again, we need to ensure that there are facts on the record. There was a discussion about a case that occurred, where there was a misdiagnosis. This was very unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, and conversations went on and there was an agreement to a settlement for that. This does not presuppose that there was no review about potential errors that occurred. In fact, it's why we did enshrining legislation, the compulsory review of critical incidents, not just in our labs, but across our health-care system.

The blame-and-shame mentality of the 1990s that led to errors being swept under the rug is being changed so that we have openness and the discussion of errors and an opportunity to improve.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, considering this minister covered up the truth about Brian Sinclair, she has no credibility with her comments.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Let's have a little decorum here, please.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The claimant made some very, very serious allegations about the provincial lab. She said that protocols weren't properly followed, that safeguards were not in place and that training was not taking place.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us: Did she settle for \$95,000 because in fact the failings were in fact true?

**Ms. Oswald:** Mr. Speaker, there was a conversation that went on with an individual who had an inappropriate test result provided to her. There was a conversation that went on about the circumstances that resulted from that result—from that test result. And there was a settlement that was made.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's be absolutely clear that Diagnostic Services Manitoba has many protocols in place for continuous improvement, for review of the nature of the training that goes on, for review of turnaround test time, for review of accuracy. That's best practice. We're not sweeping errors under the rug. In fact, we're learning from them. That's this culture. We remember what happened with the pediatric cardiac inquest, and when those baby deaths were swept under the rug.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, I hardly think that a misdiagnosis of hepatitis C is an inappropriate test result. This government figured it was better to settle out of court and out of the public spotlight to keep this thing quiet, so they quietly paid the claimant \$95,000.

So, can the Minister of Health tell us: Is this just one more way that the NDP government covers up some of the horrible things that are happening in their health-care system?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would remind the member Diagnostic Services Manitoba, Cadham lab, here in Manitoba, participate in national, international lab proficiency standards. They're fully accredited institutions.

\* (13:50)

And, yes, there are thousands upon thousands upon hundreds of thousands of tests that happen every day. Errors, I regret, Mr. Speaker, may occasionally occur.

When the member opposite and her attitude [*inaudible*] to deny that a mistake will ever happen, that's when we can never learn, and we saw that with the baby deaths. On this side of the House we believe in a culture of investigating critical incidents, in speaking about them in an open way so that we can learn and go forward. Every patient safety advocate in the land would support that, why doesn't she?

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for Charleswood, on a new question.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Manitoba labs seem to have their hands full these days. Whistle-blower allegations of financial abuse, unsafe workloads, unsafe patient care, government stonewalling about travel and restaurant expenses for bureaucrats, and now a lawsuit for negligence because of a wrong diagnosis of hepatitis C.

So, can the Minister of Health tell us why she whitewashed the whistle-blower's concerns and attacked his credibility when she knew that mistakes were happening in her labs?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, on the contrary, Mr. Speaker, when the allegations were brought forward by the complainant, we immediately called for an external review. That external review did provide some recommendations, all of which we accept. The recommendations, including providing more support or pathologists in Brandon, improving critical incident investigation processes, optimizing workloads, working with staff to improve relationships and working with the pathologists and our partners at Manitoba Health and Doctors Manitoba on remuneration issues.

We worked through with the external reviewers, which included a pathologist from outside of the province to come to the bottom of these allegations, many of which were unfounded, but we're going to work on those recommendations and continue to go forward.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I would remind the minister when that whistle-blower came forward, he was harassed, bullied and told to stay quiet. Mr. Speaker, the whistle-blower alleged that there were unsafe workloads in the labs leading to unsafe patient care. The Minister of Health knew about this long before the whistle-blower came forward, but she did

nothing. Between '07 and '09, \$1.4 million was spent on overtime for lab technologists, which speaks to the workloads. That's a red flag right there.

Knowing all of this, instead of all of her excuses, why doesn't she do something to make our labs safer?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I'll say to the member that within days of receiving the allegations from the complainant, we struck the external review. There are hundreds of thousands of tests that occur in our labs every year, the majority of which are done, you know, very competently and swiftly. When errors do occur we need to review why those errors occurred. Did they occur because of issues of human resources? Did they occur because of issues with technology? That's why that continued review goes on.

And I'll say to the member that on the issue of this particular review, there's a very well-respected community doctor, Dr. Sharon Macdonald, whom the member opposite has had nary a pleasant word to say about, and an external pathologist that the complainant himself said was the paragon of pathologists in our nation.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, the longer the Minister of Health is in the job, the worse her credibility gets. She called her health-care system stellar just hours after Brian Sinclair died; then she covered up the truth about his death. She is stonewalling right now—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Let's have a little decorum, please.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then she is stonewalling right now on FIPPA requests for restaurant and travel expenses of her bureaucrats. Now we find out that she paid off a plaintiff to keep a case of negligence out of the public eye.

So, I'd like to ask this Minister of Health and this NDP government: How far are they prepared to go to manipulate information to keep things quiet?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the—this is the government that brought—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Selinger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the government that brought in the legislation and the concept of critical incident reviews so that all of



these kinds of events, when they occur, are properly looked at for the lessons that can be drawn from them to improve the delivery of health care. This is the government that brought in whistle-blower legislation so that people could bring forward complaints with protection of anonymity, and we're still waiting for the whistle-blower legislation from the members opposite. They've never actually produced it. This is the minister that was responsible for initiating this external review and, then, followed up on the recommendations.

The members opposite still play the shame and blame game. We look for an approach that improves the culture of learning and effective results for patients in Manitoba, and that's what we are committed to doing.

### **Social Assistance Overpayments**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** And in 2008, the Minister of Family Services promised to implement the Auditor General's recommendations to curb social assistance overpayments. Despite that promise, Mr. Speaker, overpayments climbed from 4.5 million in 2008 to 5.5 million in 2009.

Can the minister explain why?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs):** My recall that the position of the opposition on overpayments is just to forgive them, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what argument the member is taking now.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** And this week the minister confirmed that the average monthly number of social assistance cases has gone up by more than 2,000 per month, or nearly 7 percent.

With the number of social assistance cases on the rise in Manitoba, what is the minister doing to ensure that recipients are not receiving payments that they are not entitled to?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, contrary to what the opposition—what they have put forward, Mr. Speaker, it is not our view, actually, to forgive people for their overpayments. And I know that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) wants us to do that, but there has to be a better accounting than that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm—I can inform the House that, in fact, the welfare rolls in Manitoba over the last 10 years are actually down about 6 percent, and we certainly know, though, that there has been some increases to the welfare rolls across this country. But

it's my duty to report to the House that in Manitoba the increase in the welfare rolls is the lowest west of Québec.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Mr. Speaker, have I—have you recognized me? Have I been recognized?—*[interjection]* Yes? Thank you.

And documents we received under FIPPA indicate, in April of 2009, four individual reviews revealed an overpayment totalling \$227,697, almost a quarter of a million dollars, Mr. Speaker. That's for four cases. That's nearly \$57,000 in overpayments per case.

How can this minister explain that one person or one family received \$57,000 in social assistance payments while he's cutting support to autistic families?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** So one day, they say, forgive the overpayments and, then, yesterday we heard in this House—and I don't know if they know how silly they look—they stood up here on a new initiative for intensive services for autism, said it was a cut. So I don't know if they know just how silly that sounds and how that looks.

Mr. Speaker, services for autistic children have increased, actually, 520 percent since 2002 when we began the ABA program.

When it comes to overpayments, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has looked at it, and has recognized the new efforts that have been put in. In fact, we've added investigators to ensure that there's accountability.

And when it comes to EIA or welfare in this province, Mr. Speaker, rewarding work is helping people get off welfare and into work.

### **Crown Land Purchases (Bissett) Municipal Request for Consultation**

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, the community of Bissett is a northern community and, as such, in order for the community to grow—in order for that community to grow it is required that Crown land be available for purchase. Building lots owned by the Province are available, but cannot be purchased because the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation will not respond to letters and requests from the Bissett community council.

\* (14:00)

So I ask the minister: Why has not—why has he not responded to council's requests?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Mr. Speaker, there is a process in place for Crown lands. We have the Crown Lands agency. The member will know that, unlike a number of years ago, when there were very few controls in place, we do have a process that's in place. And, in fact, I would indicate to the member we've been following that process, making sure that all the steps are taken. I think Manitobans would expect that.

It doesn't matter whether it's coming from a community or from an individual, we want to make sure that the integrity of our Crown lands disposition is put in place, Mr. Speaker. And if there are any undue delays, I certainly encourage the member to contact us. There is a process. All departments are consulted and that would be no different in this particular case, and the member knows that.

**Mr. Hawranik:** The San Gold mine in Bissett is experiencing a critical shortage of mine workers, and part of the reason for that shortage is due to the fact that even though building lots in Bissett are available for purchase, mine workers can't buy them because the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation has been dragging his feet on this issue for four years. That's quite a process. What a process.

So I ask the Minister: Why has he not acted on the requests and demands of Bissett community council? What does he have against Bissett, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Ashton:** You know, the member knows that there is—there are very clear guidelines in terms of Crown lands. The member knows that.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I just love Conservatives when they get up and have a new-found interest in northern Manitoba, because—well, I'm wondering if maybe it's because their leader isn't here today, because in the last election, he said he was going to cut highways funding in northern Manitoba.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Mentioning the presence or absence of members are against the rule. I ask the honourable member to withdraw that last comment.

**Mr. Ashton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There goes the Lady Byng award.

**Mr. Speaker:** Did you withdraw that—order. I asked the honourable member—*[interjection]*—to withdraw the last comment.

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, and I do want to stress again that there's a process for—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I've asked the honourable minister to withdraw that last comment, please.

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I did mention—I did withdraw it.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay. Let's continue.

**Mr. Ashton:** I want to stress again there's process in terms of any Crown lands, Mr. Speaker. And the member may want to add whatever rhetoric he wants to it, but if he's concerned about any specifics, the Crown Lands agency consults with all departments of government. He knows that there's processes in place, and we're more than open in looking at any of those situations.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that, again, in parts of the province, particularly the mining industry, we are seeing some encouraging developments. We're seeing it in Snow Lake as well. We're seeing it throughout the province, and we're prepared to work with those mining communities on any and all of those matters.

But, indeed, Mr. Speaker, again, there is a process and the member knows that, and I'm more than happy to look at the details of it if there are any specific concerns he has.

**Mr. Hawranik:** Bissett community council is completely frustrated with this minister. There have been land sale applications to the minister dating back to 2006 and no action has been taken by this minister. And I table the most recent letter written to the minister by the Bissett community council, dated April 1st, 2010, the latest one to which again the minister has not bothered even to reply.

Let me quote from the letter. Here's the letter: "It is with complete frustration that we are once again writing to you in respect of the same land issues in Bissett that have seen no progress made in any way, shape or form for as long as we have been expressing our concerns . . . on land sale applications dating back to 2006."

So I ask the minister: Why has he ignored Bissett? Does he want that Bissett gold mine to close or not?

**Mr. Ashton:** The member knows that we've gone through a process, Mr. Speaker, with the situation we saw at Hecla a number of years ago, where we saw what the members opposite did with the kind of policies they had for Crown land placements in the 1990s. We have adopted the recommendations in the report that came in place, in terms of not only Hecla but Crown land across the province.

And I—that member may want to have political interference in the acquisition and—of Crown land, Mr. Speaker. We have a process which protects the interests of Manitobans, and we don't follow through in the kind of politically oriented kind of approach they followed in the '90s.

We want to make sure the public interest is protected, and we will do that through proper approach in terms of Crown lands, Mr. Speaker.

### **Livestock Industry Economic Impact of BSE**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the minister hasn't learned anything. He's doing worse than what they did in the 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, today marks the seventh year anniversary of the discovery of BSE in Canada [*interjection*] It's fine. This was the beginning of the end for many family farms in Manitoba. The former minister of Agriculture led producers to believe that BSE—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam or Mr. Speaker—we're having a little bit of difficulty. Well, after a couple of false starts we'll get this going.

Today marks the seventh anniversary of the discovery of BSE in Canada. This was the beginning of the end of the family farms in Manitoba. The former minister of Agriculture led producers to believe that BSE would lead to a short-lived glitch in income and that the situation that—for producers would be back to normal in short order.

Mr. Speaker, can the current Minister of Agriculture tell livestock producers affected by BSE when they can expect profitability to return?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** The sooner the better, Mr. Speaker.

We, of course, want profitability not just in the livestock sector but across the board when it comes to agriculture because we know agriculture is a very key sector in our whole provincial economy. We meet with the—we meet with cattle producers. We talk about a whole number of projects, the number of programs, many, many, Mr. Speaker, very much related to the—you know, to the finding of that one cow in Alberta that got us into this whole mess.

So, I'd be really interested to know, too, some of the—some options from my friend from Emerson to help. I'm open to his advice.

**Mr. Graydon:** Well, it's nice to have that invitation. Unfortunately, he hasn't taken any advice up till today.

Let's remind the minister of the facts. Agriculture Canada recently reported that the cattle farms will lose an average of \$5,195 in 2010. The economic recovery has yet to happen seven years after BSE hit. This NDP government misrepresented the severity and the longevity of the BSE crisis. Rather than take advice, they bumbled and stumbled along with poorly thought-out solutions and plans that didn't work.

The livestock business is truly a family venture, and expertise is passed from one generation to another, but we permanently lost a lot of producers.

Mr. Speaker, the former minister was an abject failure. Is the current minister confident that he can restore Manitoba's cattle industry to its pre-BSE strength?

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, one of the angles to this whole thing is something that we learned a little bit from talking with cattle producers and that was that a slaughter capacity in this province would be a very key part of any kind of recovery plan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know, members opposite want to know how it's going. Well, you know, we've got some capacity in places like McCreary now. We've got capacity in Carman. We've got capacity at Blumenort. We've had some growth. The only time it, kind of, didn't go forward was when members opposite ran a sword through it.

\*(14:10)

So, Mr. Speaker, they can talk a good— [*interjection*] yeah, they're touchy about this, I know. They can talk a good game—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Graydon:** This government mishandled the BSE crisis comes as no surprise. After all, their federal leader couldn't tell the difference between BSE and SARS.

The numbers tell the story of NDP mismanagement of agriculture. We had 10,585 beef producers in 2003; we have 8,500 in 2009. The NDP bungled the Ranchers Choice plant in Dauphin causing losses to producers and missed slaughtered opportunities.

In Manitoba, realized net income this year is projected to be 233 million, a decline of 57 percent from 2009, yet the 2009 budget chopped more than 5 million out of AgriInvest program.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture, today, apologize to the beef producers of Manitoba, and when will he commit to do better than his predecessor?

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think, in one of his more honest moments, the member for Emerson would have to admit that we had a hell of a—hell—

**Some Honourable Members:** Heck of a, heck of a.

**Mr. Struthers:** Heck of a—we had a heck of a Agriculture Minister in my predecessor in this province, who had the courage to go to bat for the Manitoba cattle producer on the slaughter question over and over and over again, only to see members opposite, at these same meetings, wandering around telling ranchers not to put money into it and not to sign up their cattle for the beef slaughter plant in Dauphin.

Mr. Speaker, lots of hot air in here, but nothing out on the landscape, describes exactly your position on slaughter capacity in this province. You should do better.

#### **Waste-Water Treatment Facilities (Winnipeg) Nitrogen Removal**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the City of Winnipeg approved a contract with Veolia Canada to upgrade two of the City of Winnipeg's water-sewage treatment facilities.

In the report it's noted that, because the Province is requiring nitrogen to be removed, the project's capital costs are \$350 million more than with no nitrogen removal. And annual operating costs are \$9 million per year more, for an extra \$180 million over 20 years. The City of Winnipeg has requested

the Province to abandon the unnecessary requirement to remove nitrogen.

Will the Premier now agree that the nitrogen removal is not required and that the \$530 million can be saved?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The Clean Environment Commission is taking a third look at it, but in their first two looks they indicated that these numbers were inaccurate because ammonia was the central question—ammonia and phosphates—and that the proper technology to ensure the ammonia was properly treated would lead towards a biological nutrient removal solution. They also indicated, and we have always indicated, we're prepared to put our one-third up for this.

There has been over a billion dollars—there's been over a billion dollars of payments that we've made to the City of Winnipeg since we entered into the Provincial-Municipal Tax Sharing Agreement over the last 30 years. So, we have put abundant resources available to the City of Winnipeg. We are prepared to commit more.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, the City is making their own choices on how they wish to proceed on this, but we, clearly, want to have a solution that provides clean sewage treatment and healthy lakes in Manitoba.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, the City wants to remove phosphorus and ammonia, but not nitrogen, which is what the experts are saying, but this Premier is still being indecisive. Here we've got a contract approved yesterday, and because of the Premier's being indecisive, one of the major details of that contract can't be finalized.

The Premier and his government have been in opposition to the majority of scientific and public opinion in the City of Winnipeg for some time. He's not listening to experts.

I asked the Premier: Why is he and his government going to make the City of Winnipeg residents pay an extra half a billion dollars in unnecessary costs?

Mr. Speaker, the Premier needs to be careful or his fortress Winnipeg may crumble under this burden.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we do take advice from experts, and they are part of the Clean Environment Commission, and they do their due diligence on

these questions, and we have followed their advice in the past. We will follow their advice in the future.

There is a variety of opinions with respect to how to treat waste water. All the jurisdictions to the west of us have proceeded with biological nutrient removal—including Brandon, Manitoba—as the preferred technology to address phosphates, ammonia and nitrogen, where required, and this technology has generated less sludge going into landfills.

The Clean Environment Commission report also indicates where BNR or biological nutrient removal technology is used in other jurisdictions, it saves on the cost of chemicals. It saves on operating costs, in other words, Mr. Speaker. So we will again carefully consider the advice we get from the Clean Environment Commission.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, back in the 2007 election, three years ago, I campaigned then on saving taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars by only removing phosphorus and not having to remove nitrogen. Since then, there's been abundant scientific evidence presented which has supported that removing only phosphorus and not nitrogen will protect the health of Lake Winnipeg and will save us hundreds of millions of dollars.

I ask the Premier: Will he do the right thing for the city of Winnipeg residents and the lake and stop this massive and pointless spending? Will the Premier get off the fence and give taxpayers a final decision? If the Premier can't make up his mind, will he call a referendum on this issue and let the people decide?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, if the member can show me how a referendum will resolve a scientific dispute, we'll consider it, but it hasn't worked so far on other issues that have been out there.

Peter Leavitt, who's an expert in these matters, has said the costs to upgrade the waste-water treatment plants of the city of Winnipeg are largely fixed by the unavoidable need to meet federal regulation concerning the release of ammonia. The vast majority of costs for urban wastewater upgrades are for detoxifying NH<sub>3</sub> and removing phosphates, not for removing nitrogen.

The Clean Environment Commission is very sensitive to this matter. It's a body of people that do careful deliberations on these issues. They want to ensure the health of Lake Winnipeg. They want to ensure that wastewater treatment is done properly.

We are prepared to make our one-third investment in this, in addition to the billion we've transferred over the last 30 years to the City of Winnipeg, and we want to ensure that any solution that we support is one that's durable for the benefit of all Manitobans.

### **CentrePort Canada Asia-Pacific Trade**

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure today to rise in the House during question period.

I would like to note, however, that Chicken Little, Fox Mulder and the Winnipeg Comedy Festival were not consulted in the research of this question, leaving behind the fearmongering conspiracy theories and comic relief displayed by members opposite. Rather I'd like to ask a question of substance in relationship to the Manitoba's economic future.

As we all know, China is an important trading partner for Manitoba with two-way trade between Manitoba and China nearly doubling over the past five years. If members opposite would provide the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation with peace—[interjection] No.

Would the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation please inform the House about an important agreement that would build on this relationship and further enhance the province's strategic position along the Asia-Pacific Gateway, if members opposite would provide him the silence to do so.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Well, Mr. Speaker, members opposite may not be interested, but this week we saw historic agreement between the Cuntan border zone in Chongqing, China, which is part of the global reach of CentrePort. We met recently with the Indian minister of national infrastructure. We have significant contacts with Russia. We're investing in CentrePort Way. We're upgrading Highway 75, Highway 1, Highway 16.

This government is working on putting Manitoba on the global stage with CentrePort, and I'd invite members opposite to get out of their myopia when it comes to what's happening. Stop heckling our members. This is one of the most important things of the next generation in Manitoba. Why don't we all support CentrePort, which is the future of this province, Mr. Speaker?

**Premarin Manufacturing Plant (Brandon)  
Employee Layoffs**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's been announced that the manufacturer of Premarin has laid off about 25 employees at their Brandon plant and is closing down contracts for 38 PMU farmers in this province, leaving only 22 Manitoba producers in this once extremely viable agricultural industry.

\* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker, while this isn't the first cutback faced by this industry, I'd like to ask the Minister of Agriculture what discussions he's had, if any, with this company and the affected ranchers who've had their livelihood shut down.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting. I think he should talk to his leader who, the other day, in this House, declared the recession was over, and then he gets up and asks a question now. He gets up—actually, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) denied there ever was a recession in the first place, and then his member gets up and starts to talk about the job losses in the southwest part of Manitoba predominantly having to do in the PMU industry. I think they should get their stories straight over there to begin with, and I think I'll take the advice of the member for Arthur-Virden and that is that there is challenges out there that are facing the farm community—unlike what others in his party have said—and I think we do need to work together with industry to make sure that Manitoba producers gain the benefits of the work that they do.

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

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**Sara Thurlbeck**

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** Mr. Speaker, Sara Thurlbeck is a young woman in my community with an altruistic spirit worthy of recognition. Sara was recently honoured with a student citizenship award through the Manitoba School Boards Association, and I would like to acknowledge her today for the outstanding work she has done to earn such a prestigious award.

Sara's steadfast belief in the necessity of giving back to those in need began in 2008 when she embarked on a mission trip to Peru. The experience opened her eyes to the tremendous food, financial and medical need in developing countries, but also to

how people are capable of inspiring change through their stories, talents and faith and through commitment to one another. Equipped with a sense of duty to give back, Sara returned home and immersed herself in effecting change in her own community. She actively volunteers in her school and church, leading youth projects and events.

Most recently, Sara held a fundraiser concert at Westwood Collegiate to raise money for her upcoming trip to Kenya where she will volunteer with Me to We, a charity that builds schools, works with local communities living in poverty, and encourages volunteers to learn about pressing global issues. Through her efforts, Sara was able to raise more than \$1,300, which will go a long way in covering the cost of her trip.

On top of her volunteer work Sara has excelled in school, completing the International Baccalaureate diploma program and was nominated for the Gerrie Hammond Memorial Award of Promise and placed in the Mayor's Leaders of Tomorrow Speech scholarship.

Sara has an inherent understanding that we are all members of one global community and has devoted herself to the betterment of humankind. I am humbled by her dedication and drive, and I wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Congratulations on the positive impacts you've created, Sara.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable member, I'd like to ask the co-operation of all honourable members. This is the coming long weekend and we have the Western Canada Youth Parliament will be using our facilities, Manitoba's turn to host the other provinces. So I'm asking members to empty the contents of their desk before leaving today and I encourage members to use the blue bins here in the Chamber to recycle their *Hansards* and copies of bills. Any other material you have to recycle should be placed in the larger blue bins in the two message rooms, and I thank all honourable members for your co-operation.

**Emergency Medical Services Week**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** It is hard to overstate the importance of emergency medical services. Often the work of a paramedic means a life is saved or serious complications are avoided. Our paramedics, air ambulance staff and dispatchers are highly skilled and dedicated individuals, yet, sadly, their work often goes unnoticed, which is why I want

to take this opportunity, during EMS week, to recognize EMS providers in Manitoba.

All of our paramedics and emergency medical service providers undergo extensive training in order to offer the highest quality of care. They are well qualified and able to respond at a moment's notice, providing reassurance that any time emergency care is needed, EMS personnel will be there to help. Though the work is often challenging and unpredictable, our paramedics and other EMS staff are constantly rising to the occasion, and, for that, we are truly thankful.

*Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

Paramedics also contribute to health care in Manitoba through awareness and training for others. Many paramedics provide first-aid training to parents, babysitters and other interested individuals, which helps to prevent situations where emergency services are needed. Providing good health care and ensuring safety means responding to emergencies but also helping to prevent them. The benefits of Emergency Medical Services are boundless and the lifesaving work of our EMS personnel touches the lives of Manitobans everyday. Even if we have not directly required the assistance of a paramedic, every person is better off for having well-trained and dedicated Emergency Medical Service that is ready to respond.

EMS Week is a reminder of the lifesaving work that EMS personnel carry out each and every day. While they deserve to be recognized all year round, we want to take this opportunity to thank all paramedics and other EMS staff for their outstanding service in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

#### **Sisters of the Holy Rock**

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise today to tell the Assembly of a very special event which occurred in the community of Ashern this past weekend. The singing troupe Sisters of the Holy Rock came to town to perform a benefit concert for the Lakeshore Handi-Van.

Handi-Van organizations receive some capital and operational funding from the provincial government, but additional fundraising is required at the local level. I would like to acknowledge all volunteers for their efforts in this regard and would like to recognize Mrs. Ruth Goertzen in particular for her efforts in organizing this event.

Sisters of the Holy Rock are a non-profit interdenominational singing group which formed in 1993 under the direction of the Reverend Mother Carole Stone, who was inspired by the movie *Sister Act*, starring actress Whoopi Goldberg.

The sisters consist of about 80 members that perform roughly 30 concerts a year. To date, they've done over 600 shows, having entertained in excess of 300,000 people. Over this period, they've raised \$2.8 million for charity and have gone even further in that they've given away some 250,000 of their honoraria to needy individuals.

Mr. Speaker, you should be aware that two of your own Legislative Chamber staff, Mr. and Mrs. Ray and Barbara Gislason, are Sisters of the Holy Rock.

The unique style of the troupe, mixing a wide variety of songs with a touch of vaudeville-style humour, is what gives the Sisters their successful appeal. From the classic song "Hallelujah" to Jackson Browne, from ABBA to Willie Nelson, truly, it was shown that their range and potential are unlimited.

On behalf of the people of Ashern and the Lakeshore Handi-Van, I want to thank the Sisters of the Holy Rock for their appearance.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

#### **Decor Cabinets Green Program**

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Each one of us has an impact on the environment, particularly the business community. Community Led Emissions Reduction program is a way to encourage industries to reduce their environmental impact.

This year, the first ever Green Award was presented to Morden's Decor Cabinets. Even though Decor Cabinets has taken part in a range of environmentally friendly initiatives, they have recently increased their green output through the creation of GreenCor. GreenCor is a committee of nine employees who are responsible for coming up with new ways that will allow Decor to reduce its environmental footprint.

The following are some of the ways that Decor Cabinets have increased their green productivity: replacing paper cups for reusable cups, which has eliminated approximately 1,000 paper cups a day since January; printing on both sides of the paper when possible, which has saved about 500 pages a week; making sawdust available for animal bedding

and sending plant's solid wood scraps to Pembina Valley Containers to be used for heating pucks.

The company has also created policies to recycle approximately 80 percent of the cardboard that comes through the plant; set up recycling stations for batteries, aluminium, paper and plastic throughout the plant and offices; replace high wattage lighting with more efficient bulbs and fixtures; reuse reclaimed solvents in the amount of 120 to 205 litre barrels a year; and implement a no-idle program for long-haul trucks; auction obsolete or defective products to staff; and start a company composting program.

The GreenCor committee is interested in expanding their environmentally friendly program and hopes that other industries will share ideas with one another. It is expected that there will be more Green Awards handed out in the near future to other companies who share the same green principles.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm delighted that Decor Cabinets has taken it upon themselves to start a green program in their plant, and I commend them for the work that they have done in reducing their environmental footprint. Thank you.

\* (14:30)

#### **École St. Avila Home and School Association**

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert):** Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the École St. Avila Home and School Association on receiving the Manitoba Parent Council Recognition Award last month.

This immersion kindergarten to grade 6 Fort Richmond area school beat out strong competition from schools all across the province. Few people in the Fort Richmond area are surprised about the win of the award as the École St. Avila School Association has gone to great lengths to enrich its grass-roots community and improve its school in recent years.

The association has operated a successful milk program and helped develop the school's nutrition policy in an effort to ensure École St. Avila's students grow up healthy and strong. The association also initiated a before and after school day-care project which has grown to serve 60 students and is now operated by the Pembina Trails School Division.

Their proudest achievement, by far, remains an extensive landscaping project called Down the Drain

which will include a rain garden bioretention system for storm water runoff on the grounds of École St. Avila and the adjoining Richmond Kings Community Centre.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

This creative solution will set an ecological model for the handling of storm water runoff on a small urban site. It has garnered a great deal of national attention, including that of Canadian environmental icon, David Suzuki. Construction of the Down the Drain project will begin on June 1st.

This province is proud to be one of the main funders behind Down—the Down the Drain project.

Mr. Speaker, the benefits of hard work and creative vision of the St. Avila Home and School Association will be felt throughout the community for decades. The parents, the staff and the children deserve a special congratulations for winning the Manitoba Parent Council Recognition Award.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **GRIEVANCES**

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for Carman, on a grievance?

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** On a grievance.

**Mr. Speaker:** On a grievance.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Today, May 20th, marks the seventh anniversary of the discovery of BSE in a beef cow in northern Alberta.

For those of us who were involved in the industry—certainly remember that day, and it's very vivid as to the announcement that came out of Alberta and the fall-out that began from that. And those of us who were in the industry can really, truly appreciate that, and I realize that others who were not involved just don't realize the significance of this.

And this year, being the seventh anniversary of this announcement, it's significant because, at the time, while most of us knew about BSE—we had seen it in Britain and in Europe—we had never thought it would show up here in Canada, and seven years is significant, because at the time we were told by the experts of the day that in seven years the disease would disappear, everything would go away from BSE, and we would be back on track again.

And while we've certainly seen—history has certainly proven that that has been very wrong and is



just—we're probably deeper into this problem than we ever have been in seven years.

I think that May 20th, 2003, marks the end of an era, and I believe that this era was somewhat—some 30 years in the making, because this era leading up to 2003 took advantage of Manitoba's abundant forage production, our geographical position, our high-quality genetics in our—from our beef cattle herds.

When I started in this business in the mid-'70s, we had five packing plants in Winnipeg that regularly drove into my yard every Monday morning to buy cattle, and it was during the '80s, during the NDP administration, those five packers left town and moved to Alberta.

During this era, I sold cattle from Québec to Alberta. I sold cattle in Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois. We had free trade and, yes, we did have some glitches in trade from time to time, but we really had free trade in the cattle business.

And the spinoff to our local economy just can't be compared. The local economy, the Manitoba economy as a whole, gained immensely from this thriving cattle business that we had—that we used to have—here in Manitoba.

And the difference was most times, not always, but most times we sold cattle at a profit, and since 2003, profit has been all but taken away from the beef cattle industry.

But I believe that—but May 20, 2003, ushered in a new era. It's an era that's been filled with trade restrictions, downsizing, financial distress. Canadian consumers certainly stepped up to the plate. If you would remember after this—after May 20, 2003, and despite the news media playing this scene from a downer Holstein cow in Britain over and over and over again on our news, as BSE made the news constantly, the Canadian consumer stepped up to the plate, and we actually increased consumption of Canadian beef during that immediate period after May 20, 2003.

But I think this new era still has yet to be defined because I'd like to think that we will come back in this business. But there are some definite directions in which this new era will be defined. We've had markets closed, and they've been closed because of political pressures, both in United States and the Asian markets. The—Europe continues to use politics to close markets. No science involved in most of

these trade disputes—no science involved. We've seen this from this government over and over again, how they use politics, and not science, to make decisions. We've seen cattle production and the official figures. Our cattle production is down 20 percent in Manitoba, and I think that that's underestimating it. I believe that the cattle production in Manitoba is down much more than 20 percent.

And the statistics also show that there's 2,085 fewer family farms with cattle, livestock, on their premises and I—this is truly to the detriment. If you are involved at all in the rural communities right now, you see how this has affected our rural communities, be it in the business within our communities, with our schools, because people have had to leave their farms. They've had to move elsewhere to find employment, and it's been very hard on our rural economies.

Now the governments in Canada have responded in various ways. The current federal Agriculture Minister has aggressively pursued opening world markets to Canadian beef. And I know that from talking to the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. They tell me that Minister Ritz has done an outstanding job in opening markets throughout the world, and it's been to his credit that he has taken upon himself to do this.

Provincially, there's certainly been a mixed response. Basically, Ontario's written off their cattle industry. We used to sell a lot of cattle into Ontario, and there's only a fraction of them going in there now. Québec always does have its own agenda when it comes to agriculture and many other things. Saskatchewan and Alberta have aggressively consolidated to keep their business there—to keep the beef business thriving in—within their provinces. And that's certainly a different perspective from what Manitoba has done. This province—this government has just paid lip-service to the beef industry, panning to them, saying, yes, business is bad, isn't it too bad?

But they really have not taken a proactive stance. Instead, what we've seen is they've introduced more regulations. Their answer to everything is more regulations, more taxes, more costs to farm families. And our farm families and our communities have suffered because of this.

The spinoff is gone, right now, from the cattle industry. And I can tell you from personal experience that spinoff within the community is huge, and it's gone now because of the decline in the cattle business. But what's really missing here in

Manitoba—what really is missing is that the government has not sat down with the industry and looked at developing a long-range plan. Yes, we're in short-term difficulties within the cattle industry that's not necessarily Manitoba-made, but there's never been an acceptance by this government to sit down and develop a strategy to keep the cattle business here in Manitoba, to use our natural advantages, such as forage production, our geographical position, et cetera. They've never done that, and they have no intention of doing that.

And what we're looking at is to keep the cattle industry here for the next five, 10 and 20 years. Let's play this era out. Where will we be in this era? Not just shrugging your shoulders and saying, well, it's too bad; it was here and it's gone now.

\*(14:40)

So seven years today, and for those who have been involved in the cattle business, it's been a long and difficult struggle. And myself, and many of my fellow producers, know all about that struggle, and it's been—it has been a real struggle, and there's no end in sight.

But it's not too late to start that consultation, to have that vision for Manitoba, and I urge this government that we really do need a vision here in Manitoba. And, if your vision is to get rid of the cattle business, then say so, so that, then, the cattle producers in this province know where this government stands.

But don't pay any more lip-service. We've had far too much of that.

We can still define this new era in a positive way, but it will take a proactive stance from all parties involved, from cattle producers to government. Seven years: It's not too late to become involved in defining this new era for the betterment of all Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for Lakeside, on a grievance?

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay. On a grievance.

**Mr. Eichler:** I do want to put a few things on the record in regards to the BSE crisis's seventh anniversary since May 20th, 2003.

Well, I remember that day very clearly. It was on the campaign trail when I got the news in regards to a cow that was found in Alberta in regards to this sector that was going to put a hold on the cattle industry, as we know it today and seven years later.

And I just want to recap some of the things that has happened. I know back in September of 2003, we called the House back along with the government, and I remember very clearly the Liberals were the ones that came in during that debate and argued about where they were going to sit.

And I was very disappointed to hear with a crowd full of cowboys and ranchers and farm families in this House, and you're arguing about where they were going to sit. I was really embarrassed, Mr. Speaker.

I can also tell you that at that time, the government came forward and talked what they were going to do in their plan. That plan never became a reality. We know that the BSE crisis that happened back in May of 2003 has had an effect on our industry like we've never seen before. From some 10,000 producers, there's just a little over 8,000 producers today. We have a loss this year, predicted loss of about \$5,000 per farm family within the province of Manitoba. I'm very concerned about where this government is leading us and the advice that's being given to those cattle producers that are so important to the overall economy of this province.

I know that the minister of the time and I know that the current minister said that the minister did one heck of a job. Well, I can tell you that she didn't. In fact, I can talk about a couple of those things. And we talked about Ranchers Choice, a \$4.5-million investment, of which they went and bought equipment before they're actually ready. They started hiring staff to do blueprints before they were even ready. They didn't have the business plan in place before they were even ready. A backward-thinking program that caused a number of producers within this province to lose not only their livelihood as a result of this mismanagement of the government—in fact, I was one of those investors that invested in Ranchers Choice. I put my hard-earned money on the table. I was very disappointed this project didn't move forward.

So what did we do? We turned around and we sold that processing equipment for some \$18,000—the price of a used pickup today—instead of \$4.5 million and had a Ranchers Choice processing plant right here in the province of Manitoba that would still be

running today with the proper management, with the proper business plan and with the right leadership. I know we would have seen it happen.

In fact, I'll go back to what we talked about on our party, on our side, back when BSE had broke out. We brought forward a five-point recovery plan. I want to put it on the record again to mark the anniversary. We had our five-point plan. One was, first of all, to invest \$40 million to increase slaughter capacity to meet, at minimum, the additional 500 head per day shortfall that currently exists in Manitoba.

All cattle over 30 months be required to be tested for BSE; cattle under 30 month be random tested, depending on market demand. Right now in Manitoba, there's a need to be slaughtering at least a minimum of another 500 head per day. That's not happening. Yes, we invest—we've seen the government invest in another plant here in Winnipeg, another plant in Carman, but what we have not seen is increase in those small abattoirs, the backbone of this province, small business which makes what it is today.

And that's what we should have done. It's very easy to sit back and say, yes, that's what we should've done. We were right at the time and the government was wrong in their initiative putting all their apples into one basket. As a result of that, we have not seen the increase in slaughter capacity that we needed to see. And as a result of that, our farmers and ranchers are suffering.

And I want to go back to what happened the following year in 2004. We saw another setback, and we saw loans being paid out to producers of some \$50,000 per farmer which they had to pay back. That was not part of the plan.

Part of the plan that we brought forward was to also create a \$2-million, fully funded feasibility study and business plan which would be, those interested investors would have access to \$2 million to study and fund studies, business plans, that would be better positioned to attract potential investors, and they—we were—we're going to follow those similar to what was happening in the other industries across Canada, and we saw the federal government step forward with a number of those initiatives, and we never saw any money come into the province of Manitoba as a result of that.

The third thing that we wanted to do was provide \$10 million in forgivable loans to existing or small,

new plants and allow them to move forward with the necessary upgrades to meet federal-inspected standards, thereby allowing Manitoba beef to be exported to other provinces.

That's significant, Mr. Speaker, because what we have now is basically three plants that are doing the bulk of our processing, or we can get them outside the province. Unfortunately, if we would have had our plan brought forward and accepted by this government, we'd have close to 20 or 25 plants within the province of Manitoba. We'd meet those 500-head-per-day requirement that we need, and we wouldn't be exporting those jobs throughout the province into other provinces.

And that brings me to my fourth point that I wanted to make in regards to this—I'll come back to this in just a minute—and that was another \$20 million to provide immediate cash advance to producers to allow them to choose to sell their cattle when they want to be processed and then they'd pay that money back through that program. So it gave them the opportunity, at that time, to access those markets when they were ready and pay that money back once they sold those cattle. So it was a very interesting program and I'm sorry that the government did not pick up on it.

But I want to come back to the point I talked about in regards to the money that was being brought forward on Ranchers Choice, on the \$4.5 million. When we look back at that—in fact, one of my constituents was the president of that association on the last legs of it, and I can tell you he put his heart and soul into it and nobody believed in that plant more than he did, and I can tell you from meeting with him and talking with him, how unfortunate it was that when you see somebody put that much time and energy into it and we see a boondoggle being sold for some \$18,000, it's an embarrassment not only for the minister at the time but for all Manitobans to see \$4.5 million flushed down the toilet and nothing to show for it yet today.

Also, I want to talk about where we're at today and where we should be positioning ourself. That was then; this is now. We talk about different things and different things than what we shoulda, woulda, coulda done, but let's talk about the New West Partnership. We're left out again; we're left out again. If we truck our cattle down the highway, who are they going to process them with? They're going to truck those cattle to those that they look after. Manitoba's not part of that plan. Alberta,

Saskatchewan and British Columbia are part of that plan.

Now, as a businessperson, you're going to look after yourself first. We're third, fourth. Where are we? I can tell you where we are. We're No. 4 and they're not going to be processing our cattle. We don't have the facilities here. So, again, we're going to be left out in the dark because of this government's inaction, not to be able to have the vision to move forward on that initiative. Unfortunately, we go back to the cattle producers that I talked about that went from some eight–10,000 down to 8,000. The producers are wondering, where is the government? Where is this Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) going to take the leadership and show them what they're going to be doing in the next generation, the next year, the next five years? What is the long-term plan?

I know, because I invested very heavily—and I know the member from Emerson also was one of those investors—into bringing the best purebred stock into this province. We have no idea what this has done to the purebred business. I know I've been out of it for a number of years and I've been retired out of the livestock business, but I can tell you the member from Emerson's doing one heck of a fine job in promoting his breed, his livestock. It's a purebred business, but the rest of us have no way of measuring the loss overall for the quality of cattle. We have the best cattle. We hung our head high. We're very proud. We still got the best producers that are in the province, in Canada, and I'm afraid we're going to lose those.

\* (14:50)

Without the right leadership, without the technology that we have for those producers, the purebred producers that are breeding the bulls and the heifers that are so important to the overall benefit of all Manitobans—is so important that we make sure that we keep those.

Also, just in closing, I know my time's just about up. I have so much more to grieve for and very little time, but I can maybe roll it into something a little bit later on. But also, just in closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage the minister to take this advice. Take this advice very seriously.

We are committed to helping the industry listen to those cattle producers, listen to the agriculture producers, the Keystone Ag producers. And we need to know that Manitoba cattle producers and Keystone

Ag producers are heard. They don't want to listen to us, that's fine. But listen to those people that on the ground, each and every day to make sure that this sector, in fact, does stay alive, not like it's done for the last seven years. It's gone backwards, and we want to see it move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for Emerson, on a grievance?

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** On a grievance, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me no pleasure to rise today on a grievance in this House, and the grievance would be on BSE. It's the seventh anniversary of BSE, Mr. Speaker, and I have a lot of personal experiences with BSE. Some of those were the immediate losses that we had in our industry, and I'll just give you a kind of a thumbnail overview of what that was.

I'm in the purebred business; I was in 2003. My main market was the United States. We sold at an average of 30, 35 bulls, and that year, when BSE hit, we sold three bulls. Now, I don't need to explain to you the economic loss that I had, and I don't expect you to feel sorry for me. However, I do expect you to feel sorry for the producers of the province that had the same losses and experienced the same losses.

My colleague from Carman would have felt that same loss in his feedlot, only ten times worse. And the other feedlots, the feeding industry in Manitoba, took a terrible, terrible hit in 2003; 2004 was the second anniversary of BSE, Mr. Speaker, and we celebrated that on the steps of the Legislature. I was a part of that celebration. It was my cow and calf on the steps of the Legislature that day, and it was not a good day. It wasn't a day to be proud of that we came to town with cattle. We've taken cattle to town many, many times, and we were very proud to be there with them.

That particular day was a sad day. It was a sad day because we hadn't moved forward in the industry, not one bit. We'd seen meetings. There had been meetings throughout the province, and it was meetings that were called by the Department of Agriculture asking for ways that we could possibly find solutions to the terrible crisis that we were in.

At the same time the Minister of Agriculture was saying, this is a short-lived crisis. We're got to try

and get through this together, but perhaps we can find some solutions.

So in one particular meeting that I remember distinctly was a meeting in St. Claude, Manitoba, and that particular day there was 700 people in attendance, Mr. Speaker. And for the first half an hour or so that we heard many testimonials from different individuals that were losing their farms; these were the young producers of our province. They were just in the business; perhaps they'd just bought the cows the year before, and they couldn't, they didn't have the necessary deep pockets to continue. They were too highly leveraged, and the testimonials were terrible that night.

So the minister wasn't in attendance that night, but her deputy was there. And, Mr. Speaker, she'd wanted some solutions to the issue that we were being faced, the crisis. And so I went to the mike and I said to the minister, keep all of your handouts. Keep them all, all of the subsidies that you're talking about. Build us a slaughter plant in the province of Manitoba. Give us cattle producers a bill for that and give us a receipt for what you were going to give us in handouts. Put that towards the bill that we will take over for that slaughter plant, and let's address this issue head on. Unfortunately, that never took place.

The minister didn't pay any attention to us, and so then she stumbled and bumbled along, and I've said that earlier today. We tried a number of different things and, all of a sudden, there was an individual that says, we're going to build a packing plant. And so then the minister decided, maybe we can try and get on to this. But then she got into it and meddled with it. The Province didn't bother putting their money in, and they had to go back to the securities and by this time, producers weren't in a position. They had no faith in the government at that point to do business, and rightly so. They had no reason to have faith in them, because this has now carried on past any time that it should've taken.

*Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

The feeding industry in the province—the feeding industry was struggling when BSE hit, and the reason that it was struggling was under the Pawley government that we lost the slaughter capacity in this province. At that time we slaughtered 681,000 head of cattle, that year that we lost the slaughter industry, and today we don't slaughter 20,000 head. That is a terrible, terrible consequence of mismanagement at that time by the Pawley government. Now, they can

suggest that my colleagues may have been opposed to the slaughter plant that was supposed to be coming back in the BSE days—it never did come—but the fact was the mismanagement had taken place much, much before that and it was continuing at the same time.

And so, Mr. Acting Speaker, the feeding industry then, that was struggling—it was in its infancy, it was just barely getting on its feet—was just smashed. It was smashed, and you have to keep in mind why we should have a feeding province here, why we should have that industry. The Crow benefit that was there for the grain industry had been removed. So that gave us the opportunity then to have a feeding industry here, and we were on a level playing field with all of the feedlots that were concentrated in Ontario and Québec. We were now on a level playing field. But instead of realizing the potential that we had, they ignored that potential, and the feeding industry then dwindled and dwindled and dwindled, and it's difficult today to say that we have any feeding industry in this province.

Our cattle are shipped out, and when those cattle are shipped out that means our grain is shipped out. That means that our jobs are shipped out, and so it's little wonder that our young people move to Saskatchewan and Alberta, because they are moving ahead. They have some—well, you have to take a look at the western agreement. There is a perfect example—perfect example—of what you do to do business in today's world. You have to get to a certain size in today's world to be economical, and the western provinces Alberta, Saskatchewan and B.C.—and we should be part of that. We've always been classified as a western province, but today we're not. We're left out of this loop. We're left out because we had one of our—one of the leader contenders who quit—he was a quitter—but at any rate, he said, I will go to Ottawa with my cap in my hand and I'll get all the money I can from Ottawa. I will go begging. Alberta, Saskatchewan and B.C. don't want beggars. They want people that want to do business. They want people with some foresight to move ahead.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, the feeding industry moved out of our province. It moved out for a couple of reasons, the mismanagement of the current government and it moved out because of the mismanagement of the Pawley government.

The purebred industry. We have a reputation in Manitoba because of the ROP program that was in place for many, many years. We have the reputation

of having some of the best breeding stock in the world. We have people that come here because our stock is healthy, safe, clean and the best genetics that you can get in the world.

And Mr. Acting Speaker, just to show that that does happen—just to show that it does happen—I'm exporting myself, exporting 35 females to Russia this year in the purebred Charolais business. So we are looking for our own markets and we're doing that, not with the provincial government's help at all.

We should be out there promoting what we have in this province. We should be saying, we have some of the best Angus breeders. We've got some of the best Charolais breeders and some of the best Hereford breeders in the Interlake, and wherever the member from the Interlake is, should be out there promoting that. But instead he sits around playing with his BlackBerry and doing some other odd jobs around home, I guess.

In 1979, in the first election of the MCPA, we made recommendation. We made recommendations to the Pawley government and what they needed to do to keep that slaughter industry here. It never did happen.

\* (15:00)

We have lost so many producers in the industry today. And, as you know, there are farm teams in hockey. You've got the peewees and the—going on and on until you got the farm team. You got the Brandon Wheat Kings and then you get to the NHL where you got the Maple Leafs. Today we have nothing. We have nothing left but the NHL. And the expertise passes from one generation to the next and unfortunately, in this province, the expertise of farming—you wouldn't understand that, the member from Riel wouldn't understand that at all. She doesn't understand agriculture and she doesn't care about agriculture. She only cares about herself.

However, on the other hand, we need that expertise to pass from one generation to the next and that—we've lost that generation. So it gives me not great pleasure to stand today. I could grieve for many hours on this subject, but thank you for the opportunity to grieve for the last 10 minutes. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer):** Seeing no further grievances, we'll move to orders of the day. Are there any further grievances? Seeing none, orders of the day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

##### Bill 31—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2010

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader):**

Mr. Acting Speaker, I'll resist the temptation to grieve the loss of more time to debate the Bill 31, but we now have the time to debate Bill 31, and the House will now proceed to the consideration—further consideration of second reading of Bill 31.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer):** We'll now resume debate, second reading of Bill 31 standing in the name of the honourable member for Pembina, who has 21 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Well, I guess I'm somewhat of the same mindset as the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) was, that it doesn't—I don't—first of all, I got to clear my throat and that's what I need to start off with. It chokes us up to speak on these bills here.

But anyway, just the fact that this bill does come forward in the way that it does and the shape that it does under Bill 31, known as The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act. It's really a bill. It's an attempt to—for the members opposite, especially the Cabinet ministers to protect their own salaries. Really, they should be taking—according to the legislation, they should be taking a hit of 40 percent, but they're changing the legislation to suit their own needs.

And so the Cabinet ministers are certainly silent on this, but I would think that the backbenchers would get up because what the Cabinet ministers have done for the backbenchers is they have frozen their salaries. And so you would think that they would be getting up and speaking against Bill 31 and indicating that this is not quite fair. But, again, as I said yesterday, we've had no responses at all from any of the NDP members regarding Bill 31 and the information that is outlined in Bill 31.

Again, the fact that they want to try to maintain their own salaries and yet they're asking other people in the province to just maintain where they are at, and the Cabinet ministers don't want to take a decline or a reduction in their salaries and so, consequently, they're bringing forth Bill 31. Added to that, it's interesting how they change legislation to suit their

own needs. And as indicated yesterday, with the whole fiasco of the radar that we had previously—the judge and, of course, the ruling that came out regarding that—a lot of people in the province would have said, well, why don't you just change the laws so that I, in fact, can get my dollars back or that I would be treated fairly. But, no, that was not the direction that the government saw to go.

So here, again, is an attempt for the government of the day to try it and try—and they will change the rules in order to meet their own needs. And so that's why we are opposed to this legislation. We believe that the gutting of the balanced budget act is wrong. And I happened to be here in '95 when the new act came in, and I agree with the fact that we need to spend within our means, and the government of the day has decided to go a different direction. And just as I indicated yesterday—but, again, to recap some of the facts of the dollars that were spent. And right now we have moved from the year 1999 to the year 2010, where we had—in '99, we had a \$6-billion budget and today we have an \$11-billion budget.

We have a tremendous increase in dollars coming into the province and, yet, though, if we look back and we look back to the years 2007-2008, the NDP overspent their budget by \$264 million and we have to remember that they had added revenues. In 2008-2009, they overspent their budget by \$321 million and, again, as I indicated, they had revenues that had surpassed the year before; 2009-2010, again they overspent by how much? By \$421 million. And in three years, the NDP overspent their budgets by a billion dollars.

Now, the revenues increased and, yet, their expenditures increased dramatically and they overspent the dollars that they had coming in. Now that's no different than, Mr. Acting Speaker, you or myself overspending on our credit cards or in our own home finances. We can only do that so long and the banker comes along and says, sorry, no more.

We are slowly becoming the Greece of the north. This province is heading in that direction. I've said this time and time again that in the—you make some of the worst decisions in the best of times, and that's what's taking place. You're now—where has some of this money gone? And I know that the government of the day would be very interested in hearing this again, and I'm sure that they're aware of it and it must bother them when they hear that. But some of the wasteful spending that has taken place in the past years, and one is, of course, the one coming up with

the—and taking place, the Manitoba Hydro bipole line moving to the west side of the province, an added expenditure, huge, huge dollars going in there.

Making the City of Winnipeg remove nitrogen from its waste water instead of focussing on removing phosphorus, \$350 million. I hear one of the members chirping from the other side and I assure you that as soon as I am done speaking that you will have the opportunity to go and refute and to put comments on the record which show that maybe I am wrong, but I would encourage—I believe it's one of the ministers who's doing some chirping there who's—by the way, she's the one who's trying to protect her own salary so I can understand why she's probably chirping. On the other hand, I doubt if she will be getting up and making comments and putting them on the record. I don't think she would get up and put comments on the record. In fact, I think they have been muzzled across the way.

Then let's move on to some of the other mismanaged and wasteful spending. The fact that they forced the unwanted, enhanced driver's licences on Manitobans to a cost of \$14 million. Another one, it took place this morning. We don't have a problem with the Blue Bombers getting a new stadium. It's the way it's funded. *[interjection]* No, no, just the way it's funded. No, no, I'm a Blue Bomber fan. I enjoy going to the games and I know that you like to twist and turn and just gerrymander all kinds of different comments, but the point being it's the way it's funded. That is the issue. Private sector should be out there. The government of the day—by the way, doesn't have the funds to fund Tabor Home, a personal care home in my area.

They say, well, we're out of money. Now I do need to expand on that a little. I just found out in the last several days that where I've been asking questions of the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), who has repeatedly said that, yes, we do need a new personal care home. It's important that you get one. It's old. It needs to be replaced, and so she has been lobbying but, however, it appears now it's the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) who's digging in her heels, and saying, well, no, I don't think we should do that. I think the Blue Bomber stadium is more important. I think that's where the dollars should go.

So, you know, that's the feeling that we get and those are the comments that are out there. So I think it's important that we recognize it's a priority. This government has its priorities in the wrong place, and

so another example I can give is the fact that the schools within our area—and we had a postponement of the high school. And I've said this time and time and time again that if it were a private school or if it were private industry, you would never allow the kind of crowding to take place that we see taking place in Garden Valley School Division.

\* (15:10)

When the students don't have access to washrooms, I mean, that's not acceptable and yet, though, this government appears and seems to think that that's okay. Now, they say, sure, we will build a school. But how long? How long down the road? And they've had ample opportunity to make some of these decisions, but have they done it? The answer is, no, they have not done it.

And so, now, they go ahead and they postpone the school for another year. Just added to that. Workplace health and safety would never allow the kind of crowding that we saw. In the high school we had four classes in the hallways. They would never allow that and yet, somehow, when government does it, it appears to be okay. What do they do? They just close a blind eye and they just say, well, I know nothing and I see nothing. I hear nothing—reminds me of Schultz. That was a movie—or a show that was on.

**An Honourable Member:** *Hogan's Heroes.*

**Mr. Dyck:** Yeah, *Hogan's Heroes.* Right. I see nothing. I hear nothing. That's sort of what we are starting to hear from this government, that they're closing their eyes to situations within certain areas, certain areas that they deem not to be a priority, and they're overlooking that and just allowing it to take place. And yet, though, an individual, a private individual doing that would be closed down, shut down so quickly.

And I give examples of that within our own area of industry who, when, the moment that they don't quite reach the code, this government just shuts them down and, added to that, puts a fine on them because all they need to collect some more money.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I really feel strongly that the Bill 31 is out, here. It's not a necessary bill. We need to continue to have balanced budget legislation within this province, and yet, though, the reason that this bill came forward is because the mess that this government has gotten itself into. And, as I indicated, it's not because the funds have dried up or that they decreased over the past 10 years. The

funds have increased. The problem is that the expending—the expenditures, rather—have increased more rapidly than the revenues. And so, today, we are at 23-plus billion dollar debt in the province of Manitoba. This is a debt that we are passing on to the next generation, to our children, to our grandchildren, and somebody is going to have to pay this.

And at the end of the day—and I've said—made this comment in this House before—we know that the NDP leader, when he was the premier of Ontario, Bob Rae, tried exactly that, and at the end of the day he said, you cannot spend your way to prosperity. It does not work. He did try that. It did not work.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I am appalled by the fact that we would have a government that would come forward—and, back in 2008, in fact, they made some of the changes that they were—that they thought they needed in order to be able to bring the legislation back in sync with where they were going.

And may I remind the government of the day, as well, that their previous leader, Gary Doer, indicated, first of all, in 1999—and he made this comment, he says, we've said all along that we're not going to change the things that they got right—referring to the Conservatives—and with that, he said one of the election commitments that he made was that they would keep balanced budget legislation and they would lower taxes. Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, here we are today again, we are debating the fact they're wanting to gut balanced budget legislation.

Moving further on, the NDP campaign on balanced budgets, in 2007—and what did the then-leader, the premier of the province say? Gary Doer placed balanced budget as a priority in 2007. When referring to spending promises made by other parties, he stated: They're all going to be running deficits if they keep their election promises, God forbid. That was the then. So I guess we have a dramatic change in direction with the new Premier that we have today.

Just moving on, in 2008, the now-Premier said ministers would take a penalty if they failed to balance the budget under the new rules. This was in 2008. How soon we forget, how soon. Memory seems to be slipping.

So if you don't—and then—and to add to that, if you don't do that—which is balance the budget—you will take a penalty, as prescribed in legislation. This is in *Hansard*, May the 1st of 2008. This is a quote



from the—today's Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the Province of Manitoba.

So, why are we here debating Bill 31? It's because they have overspent. Well, the answer—the question is why. And maybe this is the opportunity for members opposite to get up, after I sit down, and I'm sure that our next member who is speaking would give that opportunity and would allow the individual to get up and speak—members opposite get up to speak and put their comments on the record.

**An Honourable Member:** Dictatorship.

**Mr. Dyck:** Well, okay, and someone has mentioned here it's a dictatorship. I called it that they were muzzled, but maybe it's the dictatorship that's taken place here. So—no, we would love to have their opinions and to give us the reasons why they really feel that it is this important.

Okay, further, Mr. Acting Speaking, I just wanted to make a few other comments regarding some of the wasteful spending that has taken place and that is taking place in this province. And as I did before, I alluded to the fact that Bipole III, which is a huge issue—the City of Winnipeg, the removal of the nitrogen, another huge issue—a lot of dollars that are being used, and what we see and feel—and again, there's no scientific proof to back that up. And then, the unwanted, enhanced driver's licence.

And, as I indicated, these dollars—and of course, I have failed to mention the other fact, that within the budget that was tabled—I guess, what, two months ago approximately—that the highest increase in expenditure is the interest charges within the Province of Manitoba. And so the government of the day is looking at huge costs. And I believe it's around \$400 million that are going to be added to the costs that we have to pay out.

And when I look at our Tabor Home or our personal care home, our assisted living within the area, or I look at the schools that we have—how many schools could we build within this province? How many personal care homes could we build within this province as a result of the interest dollars that we are paying and putting out there every, every year in the—to financial institutions? And it's not the right way to go.

And one other area that I have not talked about, and as time is going on, within the province—and we see the growth taking place within my region, it's the huge infrastructure deficit that we see out there. Now, we have growth. We have growth that is

unprecedented within the province of Manitoba. We are one of the fastest growing regions in rural Manitoba, and yet, though, the infrastructure dollars are lagging far behind.

It was, I believe, last week that I asked a question on Highway 32. And I was surprised, and yet I wasn't surprised, at the answer that I got from the minister. But at the end of the day and then the following day, I thought maybe I had not heard correctly, so I went and read on *Hansard* and I thought, you know, I've got a six-year-old grandson who could have given an answer like that. It had nothing to do with the question that was out there. It was a very simple question of the four-laning of Highway 32, which is a provincial responsibility.

Now, the government does have responsibilities, not only in the city of Winnipeg, but in rural Manitoba as well, and especially, I would say, areas where growth, the real growth, is taking place. And I'm not saying that other areas should not get some dollars, but certainly we need to backfill. We need to support those areas that are growing.

And I represent one of those areas. And if you will look at the new map that has come out by Elections Manitoba regarding the redistribution, the geographic area that I will be representing next time, it now is just a very compact area known as Morden-Winkler. And in fact, we had to go out and lobby that we want to actually go down to the U.S. border, but that could not take place because, again, of the volume of people that we have in the area.

So, the infrastructure dollars that we need out there, and as I've indicated the growth that has taken place, we need some of those dollars put into this area. And again, it's a matter of the mismanagement of the dollars of this government here.

And so, as a result of the mismanagement that has taken place, we are now debating Bill 31 because they cannot live within their means, because we have balanced budget legislation that's in place today. So, consequently, we need to change the rules in order to accommodate the overexpenditures that have taken place. And so, in order to be able to accommodate that, we change the legislation to suit our fancy.

\* (15:20)

And that is what we are objecting to. We feel that there was no need to go in that direction, again, because of the increased revenues that we've had in the last 10 years, from \$6 billion all the way to \$11 billion, substantial, substantial increases in

dollars. And yet, though, what has this government done? They have spent every penny, plus more. And with that, of course, as I indicated, they have put us further and further and deeper and deeper into debt which will, ultimately, have to be paid for by our children, by our grandchildren and their children. This is not something that's just going to go away, because it takes huge revenues to pay back those kinds of dollars.

I know that members opposite have said that these are dollars that are used to fund and to build and, then, that's right. And some of the building that is taking place, it needs to be done. Again, I would go back and I would say it's priority. It's priority spending. You need to prioritize the dollars that you have, and you need to spend them wisely. It's a very important—that you do that.

And so, again, as I indicated and I have said several times, you make some of your worst decisions during the best of times. That's what we see has taken place here. Now, in order to live within the legislation they change it, rather than be in violation of their legislation that they had. They're now going to change it to accommodate and to meet their own needs.

And so with that, Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record. Thank you.

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Acting Speaker, and it gives me almost grievance pains to stand and speak to this budget and to speak to Bill 31, and some of it, well, you've probably heard before, yesterday, and some you'll hear again today, some of the reasons that we wouldn't be able to support such type of legislation.

But, first, I would like to touch on a couple of the things that my colleague from Pembina has indicated. And it is true that the area that he represents and a good portion of the area that I represent—the boundary is an imaginary line and the development that has taken place in that area is unprecedented. The—and it's done it. It's—this expansion has done this in spite of the policies of the NDP government—in spite of, not with their blessings. They've done nothing for the infrastructure in that area. They collect a huge amount of money in gas tax that's supposed to go to roads, and I would suggest that only a portion of that goes there. The payroll tax, I'm not sure where that goes, but it doesn't seem to find its way back into the constituency of Pembina, doesn't find its way back

into the constituency of Emerson, doesn't find its way back into the constituency of Carman. The constituency of Steinbach that has a huge, huge payroll and puts a lot of money into the coffers of this province, and the tax money doesn't seem to find its way back. It—I'm not sure why it doesn't.

Oh—in fact, I am sure why it doesn't. It goes into projects like the west side hydro line that wants to waste \$1.7 billion. There's a pretty good example of unnecessary waste. And, Mr. Acting Speaker, it's not because Hydro said we want to go down the west side, not at all. It's because the minister said we want to go down the west side. There's no other logical reason, and that's not a logical reason, by far, but that's the reason that Hydro has been directed to go down the west side. For 20 years, they said, we'll go down the east side.

They did an environmental study on the east side that says it's fine to go there. But, no, the First Minister says, we're going down the west side. We want to do another environmental study. We want to go through another UNESCO park. We want to go through a number of Aboriginal lands, the same number on the west side as there is on the east side. We want to go through more miles of boreal forest. We want to waste more money—waste more money—and then come to the prime agricultural lands and disrupt the people that farm that land.

And I would say to you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that there will be huge, huge amounts of opposition, not just from us on this side of the House. Absolutely not. There will be some reasoning from this side of the House, to try and put reason on the table and get the members on the opposite to understand their folly. But the true opposition will come from the people that live on the west side. The true opposition will come from the people in Winnipeg, the people in Winnipeg that have to bear the cost, the exorbitant costs of this line. And they will do that in rate increases: 2.5, 2.9, 5 percent increases at a time. But the people in Winnipeg do understand that they're being taxed, and they're being taxed for folly. There's no science that says they have to go there. There's no reason that they have to go there on the west side. Not at all.

So the opposition will come, and it will be a groundswell. I'm surprised that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of this province and the Minister of Hydro haven't changed their mind. I'm surprised, with the reason that has been put forward from this side of the House, reasonable discussions about the proper

alternative that Hydro knew which was the best place to go. And I think they probably will change their minds. They just don't know how to do it in a delicate fashion that they can save face.

However, I'll give you an example. There is one member on the other side, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie). Now, there's an individual with a large degree of common sense. He came from the big House to the little House, and he got to clean up a mess that his colleague had created with waste-water management in the province. And I recall a comment that the member made. He said, I can't tell you if there's any science involved in this at all, but, he said, I can tell you it's going to be very difficult to change their minds. Well, I give him credit. I give him credit for having common sense, and looking for some common ground that the population of this province, the ratepayers of this province, that they could not afford what was being suggested. He found the common ground that all people in the province can work with.

We, on this side of the House, we want to protect the sensitive areas in the province. We want to protect our environment. Rural Manitobans know that they want to pass on the land that they have. They want to pass it on in a better condition than they received it. And this minister found a way to do that, and he found a way to do that economically. The former minister had some difficulty. And I'd almost compare him to a fish, and I don't say that lightly. You see, you have to understand why a fish gets caught in a gillnet. The fish will come through the water slowly and comes to an obstacle, but it can't back up. A fish can't back up. And that's the minister—the former minister couldn't back up. The current minister has found a way to compromise. He didn't really have to back up, but he compromised. He was able to turn to the side.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I can see—I can foresee, and in my crystal ball tells me that the Minister of Hydro and the Premier of the province are going to have to find a way to compromise, because the people in this province will not allow—they will not allow that line to come down the west side and waste \$1.7 billion. Agriculture will not allow that. Municipalities are passing resolutions now: you will not come down through our municipality.

So you can exercise your power. You can use the muscles that you have. Flex your muscles. Go bully those municipalities. Go bully those

municipalities. Go bully those people that are by the Parkland. Go bully them and see how far you get.

\* (15:30)

And then tell the people in the city of Winnipeg, your rates are going up. And you can try and blame it on those people out there that you have to expropriate from, but the people in the city aren't going to buy that. We're going to help them not to buy that. We're going to help them because you wouldn't listen to reason in here; then you'll listen to reason out there.

And it's unfortunate, it's really unfortunate because I know the member from Elmwood—I know that member will look for a reasonable alternative. He is a person with some common sense. And I hope that he can convince some of his backbenchers, who would like to get re-elected, to support him when he talks to the Minister of Hydro and when he talks to the Premier of the province and say, look, look at the folly of your decisions.

Look what you're doing to the province of Manitoba. What are you doing? You're going to raise the hydro rates. The hydro in the province of Manitoba is the oil of Saskatchewan and the potash of Saskatchewan and the uranium of Saskatchewan. It's the oil of Alberta; it's the cattle industry of Alberta, the slaughter industry of Alberta. Hydro is that to us. That's a natural advantage we've got.

And you want to waste it? I can't believe that you want to waste it. You see, we would have a slaughter industry in this province. We would have a slaughter industry in this province if it hadn't been wasted by the Pawley government. Nothing has been learned by these—by this NDP government since the Pawley government.

When one of the ministers—and that was an agricultural minister that said a deficit is healthy. So, as I look across the room today, they've got to be the healthiest people in the world. It's not healthy to have this type of deficit. It's not healthy at all. Our grandchildren will be very fortunate if they can afford to pay for this debt that we have today. And you want to add another 1.75 by going down the west side of the province.

That's a shame. That's a shame to saddle not this generation, not the next generation, but the third generation with this debt going forward. There has to be some rationale on that side that will open their eyes to the fact that you can't live beyond your

means forever. You can't borrow your way out of debt.

In 1999—and I hate to go back to the '90s today for some reason, but the NDP government campaigned on balanced budgets. They took a page out of the Tories' book and said, yes, you guys did the right thing; you did the right thing with balanced budgets and we're going to do the same thing today.

In 1999, they campaigned on that and Gary Doer was successful. And he campaigned on that more than once—2003, 2007—and he said, if we deviate from that and if we can't balance that budget, we're prepared to pay the price. We should be prepared to pay the price, and I will face the people and I will let them make me pay the price.

Well, unfortunately, Mr. Doer was offered a position that was difficult to turn down, and he's seen that the deficit was rising in the province. He was unable to convince his Cabinet members to stay within their budgets. He was finding it more and more difficult to work with them. He's seen that they were on the wrong track, and when he was offered the job that he has today and his true colours came out, he became a Conservative and he took this position because he knew that the ship was sinking.

He knew the ship was sinking. He tried to turn that ship around. He tried to get his ministers to understand the folly in the way they were thinking and that they hadn't paid down the debt over the many years that they were in power and have been in power. They hadn't paid the debt down at all. They just continued to borrow and borrow and borrow.

So, rather than suffer that embarrassment, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I know it was with a heavy heart that he left, but he did have a smile on his face. He had a smile on his face because he knew that he was leaving at a time that was going to make him look very good, and he knew how bad the party—how bad a shape the party was in.

And he also was smart enough to understand that there was a recession. Now we know a year ago there was no recession in Manitoba. Over a year ago that was not—we were recession proof. We were recession proof; we were going to float through this and the next thing we heard, was no, no, no. Flat is the new high.

Oh, well, okay, so now we understood on this side that there was an opportunity that we could get frosted a little bit, just on the edges. But, no, now we have companies leaving the province. And because

of some of the policies they've got, we're going to have more and more people leave the province. We have the payroll tax that they haven't been able to turn back. We have a number of rules and regulations they've put in place.

One of them was put in place by the now-Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers). He put in place some regulations, and he put a moratorium on an industry that was generating more cash, more cash than Manitoba Hydro. He put a moratorium on it. He killed that industry in the province of Manitoba. He drove it into the ground. Not only the hog industry did he do that to, he did that to the research and development. He did that to all of the people that work in there, the genetics people. We had the finest genetics in—hog industry in the world, and the research into that stopped dead. The research into how feed additives could be put in to control some of the phosphates that would pass through that hog—that stopped. We chased feed mills out of this province, and I think I mentioned earlier in the House today about the Crow rate.

Now, I know a lot of the members on that side have no idea what the Crow rate is, but I'm sure that the member from Elmwood has an idea, and I'm certainly sure that—oh, we've got one in the back that's got to—do you have to go to the bathroom? You had your hand up. And then, of course, we have the member of Dauphin. He has an idea what the Crow rate is, and he doesn't know how to back up either.

At any rate, Mr. Acting Speaker, that Crow rate gave the province of Manitoba an opportunity to be a feeding province. We're the farthest from any port in Manitoba. So that means that the producers that grow the grain in the province of Manitoba are forced with higher costs to market their grain.

But doesn't it make sense, Mr. Acting Speaker, that we could have a sustainable agriculture here, that we could have a hog that eats the grain, that produces your bacon and then your hams that you want, and your bacon for your eggs. Produces the grain and the by-product, of course, is a natural fertilizer. We wouldn't have to be applying commercial fertilizer. That puts a—takes a big, big environmental footprint off the land in Manitoba. Would have gave them an opportunity to meet the Kyoto target that they had set for this province without hurting anybody, and it would have been productive for this province.

It would have put more tax dollars into the coffers but instead, no, we're going to shut it down.

We're going to put a moratorium on. We're going to kill that industry, and that's effectively what has taken place today. And there doesn't seem to be any relief in sight, none—no relief in sight. The reason that it was talked about, the reason that they brought in the moratorium, and often I heard from the members opposite, you don't care about the lake. Let me tell you, we care about the lake more than anyone else does.

And we can get in that argument if you want. But at the same time, putting the moratorium on hasn't taken one barn out of operation. It didn't take one barn out of operation. Everything is exactly the same today as it was two years ago. The only thing is the by-product of the industry, the research and development, those high-paying jobs have left this province and gone some place where they are going to be appreciated. The technology that was being developed in this province has moved out of the province. We don't need it; nobody can afford it. No one can afford to expand because you can't expand in this—with the moratorium. And in order to afford new technology, you need to have money, and that comes from expansion.

\* (15:40)

But, no, just shut it down. Just shut it down. There was no alternative and, unfortunately, the member from Elmwood wasn't here with his bucketful of common sense. I think it would have been beneficial. I just hope that that bucket has enough common sense to be spread around through the backbenchers, because he's the person that I think can turn things around here in the province for a lot of different things.

When we seen the budget and when it was presented in the House, the word agriculture wasn't included. The word "agriculture" wasn't included. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) doesn't believe that agriculture is a core economic driver in the province. He doesn't believe that. It would have been in the budget. The Finance Minister doesn't believe that agriculture is a core economic driver in the province or she would have included the word in the budget. I'm sure that two of these people—rural people—should have understood how important agriculture is to the economy, but they couldn't put the word in the budget.

It's not an oversight. No, it's not an oversight. Their actions speak much, much plainer. You've killed the hog industry. You got rid of the beef

industry—got rid of the packing industry first. And now we have the PMU business leaving the province. And we don't hear anything from the minister—nothing. The agricultural expenses—expenditures in the budget have been decreased dramatically—dramatically, they've been decreased—and yet the income from the federal government has increased by more than what the cuts were in the budget. So one wonders what plan the minister has going forward with agriculture.

Continued growth and success in the agricultural industry and sector is good for the province bottom line, but the minister doesn't seem to understand that. And I'm going to work with him. I was hoping he would stay because I'm not finished. Funding for agriculture, for agrifood and research and development was cut in the budget. So if you're going to cut the research and development of agrifood, and you're cutting it by \$400,000, you're not really interested in developing a value-added industry in the province of Manitoba. You want to be just a primary producer and selling primarily outside the province so that our children and our grandchildren will move to Saskatchewan and Alberta to work, to find jobs. That's not right. You need to create the opportunities in the province. You need to provide the atmosphere and the infrastructure, not tax them out of the province. You create the atmosphere and the infrastructure in the province that will facilitate development. But to cut the funding for research and development is something that one would say you were moving backwards. Unlike—*[interjection]* Yes, unlike the fish. You are moving backward.

Forty percent pay cuts for multiple deficit years—let's talk about that a little bit. Forty percent pay cuts and—would amount to a fair amount of dollars to every Cabinet minister in this House. And Gary Doer said, we agree with that. That is the penalty. That is the incentive for every department to make sure that they deliver on time and in budget. And that's a new phrase for some. I know the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux). I know the member from La Verendrye isn't used to that phrase, on time and on budget. I know he's not used to that. It's a pretty good example when we—and I'll give you an example of when he was the minister in charge of the floodway and—never on time, certainly not on budget, but he had an ability to try and make people think, and he even convinced the member from Riel that he was on time and on budget. But, really, he wasn't.

No, what he did was he took the Floodway Authority and he rolled that into highways. He rolled it into highways to hide the deficit he had in the floodway and take the money out of highways, and so what saved him—oh, yeah, it was a shell game. He was taking from Peter and paying Paul. But finally it came down to the fact that the floodway's not finished. The floodway's not finished. The money is long gone, way over budget, but the floodway's not finished.

What we have is we have it expanded around the city of Winnipeg, but the mouth of the floodway is exactly the same size. It can't take any more water, it's just so much can get through that mouth of the floodway. The rest of it can handle all the water, it just can't get there. That's good planning? No, it's not good planning. He knows that it was mismanagement, and if he had it to do over again, he would do it different. We know he would, but because he messed up, he got moved. It's unfortunate he got moved, but he then—he was able to convince the member from Riel that he was—and he was on time and in budget.

But there hasn't been projects that he has been on time and in budget, and we'll take a look at 75 Highway. There's another issue, 75 Highway. And, I think, for three years and I—maybe four years that I heard promises, announcements, ribbon cuttings. However, he said, we will do Main Street, Morris, and I'm sure that the member from Morris could tell us today, in this House, that you don't have to put a speed limit on the Main Street in Morris; you can't drive over 10 mile an hour. It's a shame. This is the gateway to Manitoba. This is the gateway from the United States. We want to welcome tourists here and they leave half of their vehicle in Morris.

**An Honourable Member:** That's after you get caught in a speed trap coming from 110 to the 100.

**Mr. Graydon:** The member from Carman brings up a good example of the mismanagement and the ability of this—members opposite to find ways of extracting money. Extracting money from people unsuspectingly. When they want to raise the speed limit—raise the speed limit in the province of Manitoba, to get in step with the rest of Canada, and so, we come from the west and it's up to 110, to Virden. To Virden. The highway doesn't change from west of Virden to east of Virden. No, it's the same on both sides, but the speed limit changes and it just cost you \$285 bucks.

**An Honourable Member:** What?

**Mr. Graydon:** Two hundred and eighty-five bucks. Two hundred and eighty-five bucks, and so, we don't get everybody. You know, sometimes the police have to take a rest. But it generates a lot of capital.

So tourism has been slacking off a little bit, and so what we have now from the United States, we have from the American border to St. Jean, 110, beautiful highway. We've been spending money, the federal government's been giving you buckets of money to fix that highway, 85 million two years ago to fix that highway; 110, you're sailing along and, bang, you're into \$285 worth of trouble. Because it drops down—[interjection] Two hundred and eighty-five dollars of trouble. Drops down to 10—from 110 down to 100.

I'm just wondering what they do with that money. What do they do with that money? What do they need that kind of money for?

**An Honourable Member:** General revenues.

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Graydon:** It goes into general revenues. Well, that general revenue then, Mr. Acting Speaker, would that be used for important things like a new stadium? Would that be what it's used for? Is that where the money comes from for those types of investments? When we're running a deficit, four-year deficit, they don't want to take the money out of their salaries. No, they want to slip in legislation. They want to slip in legislation into the 'bista' bill so that we can't support it. We can't support—but they want to cover their derrières.

Mr. Acting Speaker, they want to make sure that they have that extra cash. They aren't concerned about the people in Winnipeg. They're not concerned about the individuals on the street. They're not even concerned today about the unions that didn't support them in their leadership campaigns, that they didn't put out enough members. They're not concerned about that and that is obvious by what they're not doing in Wuskwatim, where you have everybody from Québec working in the province of Manitoba and the people in Manitoba aren't working. As soon as you ask your minister in charge of Labour, you would understand that, madam from Riel.

So what they want to do is change their regulations. Change that regulation so that they can put an extra 40 percent wages in their pockets—only concerned about themselves. The backbenchers, they're on their own. You're on your own; you're going down. You're going to lose your positions

because of the greed in the front row. They're going to lose their positions. Well, some of the front row will go and, of course, there's the—there's some MLAs that they can't find right now, that they're not around.

But, with those few words, Mr. Acting Speaker, I'd like to be able to go on for another couple of hours, but with those few words, thank you very much for the opportunity.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Acting Speaker, I just want to thank my colleague, the member for Emerson for his words that he put on the record, and very common sense words that were spoken by the member for Emerson as he debated Bill 31, which we, on this side of the House, have extreme difficulty with.

You know, it basically guts the balanced budget legislation that was introduced and passed in 1995, and we know that the NDP party at the time in opposition certainly didn't support balanced budgets, and they made their views very clearly known. And then they had a miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus in 1999, when then-leader Gary Doer indicated that he, all of a sudden, was in favour of balanced budgets.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think that was one of the reasons, you know, when he indicated clearly, publicly, that he would keep all the things that the Conservative government had done right and he would get rid of some of things that they had done wrong. But, clearly, the balanced budget legislation was something that they had done right, something that he was supporting and something that he made a promise and a pledge to keep.

Well, he was able to keep that pledge and that promise for a period of time when there were unprecedented revenues coming into the province of Manitoba and things were happening and going very well. But all of a sudden we found ourselves in a situation where we have a government that's spent beyond its means. Year after year we saw them raid Manitoba Hydro to increase the coffers of the Province of Manitoba when it suited their needs, and they went on a spending binge, Mr. Acting Speaker, that was second to none. *[interjection]* Well, Howard Pawley may have back in the '80s, you know, taxed and spent. We used to say about Howard Pawley and his government that they never saw a tax that they didn't like or they didn't hike.

And, quite frankly, those were the days where there was major deficits. We saw what happened to Manitoba Public Insurance, where the rates were set around the Cabinet table in the Pawley administration, and they kept rates artificially low before an election and then, miraculously, after the election, determined that there was a need for a major hike in Autopac rates. And, you know, Manitobans saw through that. Even one of their colleagues, and he was the member for St. Vital at the time—I think his name was Jim Walding—saw the light and determined that he should vote against the government of the day, and that's when the government fell in 1988. I remember that day well.

And we all know what the results of Jim Walding determining that he could no longer support the kind of activity that was going on on the NDP benches in the government. And as a result we saw a change in government. And, you know, we know from time to time that governments do change in the province of Manitoba. They change across the country and they change in Ottawa fairly regularly. And the day will come also when Manitobans will again see the light and recognize this tax-and-spend NDP government for what it is.

You know one of the reasons I continue to be vigilant in my role, in my responsibility in this Legislature is—I would say there are two very good reasons. And those two reasons are my two grandchildren, my grandchildren that I don't want to see saddled with the kind of debt that's being foisted upon them by an NDP government that is spending out of control, with absolutely no concern for the future of our province and for our future generations.

So my four-year-old granddaughter and my two-year-old granddaughter are very important reasons why I want to be here and I want to see some sanity brought to the spending and the management of tax—*[interjection]* well, the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) tends to say an awful lot from her seat but she doesn't have the courage to stand up and speak on the record on this legislation, but she tends to have much to say from her seat.

A member of the Legislature, the member from Riel who made an absolute mess of the Department of Family Services and Child and Family Services system and had to be removed from that portfolio because of the chaos that was in the system and her implementation of the devolution process in the Child and Family Services system. And we're seeing

today, Mr. Acting Speaker, the results of her gross mismanagement of that portfolio.

And, if she wants to stand up and defend herself on the record, I would challenge her to have the courage to do that, because the constituents of Riel are going to remember the mess that she has left and the children that have been devastated along the way as the result of her inability to get the whole process managed and under control. And we saw horrendous things happen under her watch. So I don't think that she should really have much to say from her seat.

Mr. Acting Speaker—*[interjection]*—yes, and I remember well some of the spending and the mismanagement that is going on right today, the thousands of dollars that have been spent by this government on feel-good ad campaigns like Spirited Energy where we saw no value for the dollar. And we see deficits continue to go up and up as a direct result of the gross mismanagement of this NDP government. And Manitobans will not forget. And we're seeing today, even though the deficits of the Province of Manitoba are skyrocketing and we've got a government that is projecting deficits for the next five years, we see program cuts to children and to individuals that should not be happening. We see wrong priorities being set by this government.

\* (16:00)

And I just want to talk a bit about what we've heard over the last number of weeks from families in Manitoba. And we have heard, and I think we all know, Mr. Acting Speaker, about children that are vulnerable, special-needs children in our communities that need support. And I don't think there's a member in this House that would disagree that special-needs individuals should have the individual-individualized kind of support that they need and that they deserve to grow and to thrive and to become the most productive members of society that they can be.

And we all talk about early intervention and prevention and early child development. I don't think any of us disagree that that is the direction that we should be going. But we see, time after time, as we talk to people out there that we have a government that has its priorities mixed up. They would rather spend money on ad campaigns to pat themselves on the back and make them look like they're doing something and yet cut programming and support to special-needs children that need that kind of support.

And I just want to talk a bit about autism and what I have come to know and to understand from talking to many, many individuals throughout our Manitoba community—individuals that have children with autism or children that they know, teachers that have worked within the school division and have had to work with children with autism. And we all know that it is a lifelong disorder, and it's something that really does have an impact on families, on society and the community at large.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, research has shown that the ABA program that works both with the school system and with families at home is a program that has been very successful in meeting the needs of many, many autistic children in our Manitoba society. We know from the research, also, that the therapy that's provided within the school system and the therapy that is provided at home has to be consistent in order for these children to function more fully in society and live life to the fullest of their ability. And we know that if the programming that they've been receiving is interrupted, very often these children will regress, and they will move backwards. And they won't be able to grow and learn to their full potential.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, it's not a program where one size fits all, and there isn't a consistent amount of support or the same amount of support that's needed for every child. Every child is different and it's individualized, and some of the children that received support from three years of programming within the school system are probably further advanced than others are and they may not need as much support on a go-forward basis. But many of those children will need the kind of support that they were receiving and maybe on a scaled-down basis looking to try to wean them off of that support if they're able to do that and if they're able to manage.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, we've seen a government that has paid lip-service to the families that have come before them with several different proposals. One may be a little richer than—or one—three proposals that I know of—one was a little more intense and they gave a second version and a third version of a proposal which certainly was a scaled-down version of what they felt children might need.

And you know, Mr. Acting Speaker, they were led to believe that government was just taking time to look at the proposals to make a decision and, you know, even the—as late as April, I guess, it was



April 30th of this year, there was an article in the paper that said that the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) and the government were working on an answer.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, we know now what—this week, what the answer was. Some two short weeks later, the answer was: we'll give you 50 percent of the lowest proposal and we're going to cut, completely, any in-home support that these children might require.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, all the research has indicated that the school program and the home program have to be consistent and have to work together in order to ensure that these children have the very best options and possibilities to grow to their full potential and to learn to their full potential. And one piece can't work without the other.

And we've seen the Department of Education talk about providing some support. We'll look to see what that support is and whether it's actually the kind of support that is needed by autistic children. But we've seen the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) completely cut any home support for the children, the 38 children, that are going to be without a program in the school system as a result.

And you know, Mr. Acting Speaker, I have to ask myself, when it comes to the priorities of the Minister of Family Services or this government, and we see a \$300,000 ad campaign asking the private sector to hire people with disabilities, and we find out, when we ask the question of how many people were hired, they don't have any answer because they didn't—they don't track the results.

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

Well, certainly, the 38 children, autistic children in the school system, have been tracked and have thrived and have grown as a result of the support that they've received. So we know that there are some measured outcomes for these children. But we have no measured outcomes for a \$300,000 ad campaign, so the government can pat themselves on the back and look like they're doing something, when in fact, Mr. Acting Speaker, there is no data and no information.

Now, if you asked the taxpaying public of the province of Manitoba what they would rather see, Mr. Acting Speaker, would they rather see the supports go to children where we see concrete results for the intervention that's been provided, or would

we like to see some fluffy ad campaign that gives us no information on what results were achieved or accomplished. And I think you'd find most taxpayers would want to see the money spent on the children, the special-needs children, that need our support. And we know if they get that bit of support, the support that would have had to been provided, it would have been less than the \$300,000 that was spent on the ad campaign.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, you tell me what the priorities are of this government. You tell me how they can sleep at night.

And I know the former minister of Education—and maybe if he had still been in the Minister of Education's office, he would of, instead of just talking from his seat, he would have stood up and advocated around the Cabinet table for the support within the education system. And he would have lobbied his Minister of Family Services to provide the in-home supports that were needed to ensure that the program was consistent and there was some continuity, and these children would be well served. I may be giving him too much credit, but I think that, maybe, just maybe, he would have been able to get some action and advocate for these children and say, yeah, let's not do that fluffy ad campaign. Let's put the support into the hands of the families and the children that need that kind of support. So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I have to indicate that I'm extremely, extremely disappointed.

\* (16:10)

And, you know, I asked some questions in question period today around welfare overpayments, and you know, I didn't get any answer except a bunch of huffing and puffing again from the Minister of Family Services, but no answers as to why almost a quarter of a million dollars was spent on four cases. That's overpayment of almost—I think it was \$227,000 on four cases, where they were paid more than what they should have received on Employment and Income Assistance.

Now, there was no explanation for where that money went. There was no explanation from the minister on whether he'd been able to get to the bottom of what had happened. And I think, if I look back, and—for any of the information that was provided under FIPPA, it didn't give us any indication, Mr. Acting Speaker, of where that money went and what they were doing to try to ensure that that kind of thing didn't happen again.

Now the Auditor made recommendations in 2008, and the minister stood up and, as he usually does, says, we're going to implement all of the recommendations.

But, what did we see as a result of his implementation of the recommendations? We saw overpayments on welfare go from 4.5 million to 5.5 million, increase of a million dollars.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I ask you: What could a million dollars do in the Department of Family Services to provide the additional supports for special-needs children, to provide additional supports for the most vulnerable within our society? It shouldn't be going to pay welfare payments to people who are not entitled to those payments, at the expense of going to children who need the supports and the services so critically from the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh).

But you know, we've heard the Minister of Family Services, time after time after time, stand in this House and wax eloquently about how—the wonderful things he's doing in the Child and Family Services system, and how he's implementing all of the recommendations that have been made to him, over 240 or so recommendations that have been made as a result of child deaths in the Child and Family Services system.

And he keeps talking about how wonderful things are. Well, we're not hearing how wonderful it is, Mr. Acting Speaker. We're hearing from many families out there, right across the province, who are saying: We have foster children within our care. With no warning and no reasoning or rationale, these children that have been with us for several years, are now being moved to a family, to a community, where they don't know anyone, they haven't met anyone and they are going to start to move them to another community.

Now, there's no rationale, there's no reasoning, there's nothing put in writing, Mr. Acting Speaker, to indicate why it would be in the best interest to move that child. But the next thing you know, you've got a stranger, a worker, at the door, taking this child, who they've never met before, to the airport for an airplane ride to another community that takes several hours, and that child is there for a period of time for a visit.

Well, we're hearing again from foster families, Mr. Acting Speaker, who say that those children come back somewhat traumatized. They cling to

their foster family. They don't understand what has happened to them, and they act out in inappropriate ways as a result.

We've heard instances where children have been trained, toilet trained, and come back and have regressed and are no longer toilet trained. We hear horror stories. And these are issues that I am not prepared to go public with names and circumstances, but I certainly have brought them to the attention of the Minister of Family Services. And I certainly have asked him to personally review and look at these cases, and tell me why or how he can justify not supporting a very key recommendation in the Gage Guimond report that says before a child is taken away from a long-term foster placement, if there are no protection concerns, there should be something in writing that talks about what the plan is and why that plan should be implemented and why it's in the best interests of the child.

And, you know, today, Mr. Acting Speaker, that is not being done. Foster families are appealing the decision that the agency makes—and they're given no reason. They're just told that child is going to move. They appeal to the second level, which is at the authority level, and the authority agrees with the agency and says, with no reasoning or no rationale, nothing in writing, that we agree. And then that foster family takes the appeal to the third level, which is the adjudicative process and the minister's office, and we get a five-page report that says that that child should remain with the foster family and all the reason and the rationale why that should happen.

You know, Mr. Acting Speaker, why should a family and a child have to be put through that kind of an appeal process for a year and a half? Why? Why should that child be subjected to that for a year and a half? Because this government has so badly bungled the whole process of devolution and the whole process of putting the interests and the safety of the child first. I cannot, for the life of me, understand where people on the government benches are coming from, and how the Minister of Family Services can turn a blind eye to these issues and say, well, it's not up to me. He is the minister responsible. He is where the buck stops, and he is the one that, ultimately, has to take responsibility for how his legislation is being implemented.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, he can't slough his responsibility off to the authorities that he's created or the agencies that he's created. He, ultimately, is

responsible for the legislation, is responsible for the implementation of that legislation, and is responsible for the vulnerable children under his care who have been removed from their natural family for a set of circumstances that is varying and different. But, ultimately, do they not deserve to be protected and nurtured and cared for in some sort of a loving family relationship?

I have extreme difficulty, Mr. Acting Speaker, in understanding how this government that talks the good talk, can't walk the walk when it comes to protecting and ensuring that children, first and foremost, that are most vulnerable within our community are protected and nurtured. I have extreme difficulty and, you know, it's not an isolated case within the system. We're hearing from all over the province. We're hearing from the city of Winnipeg. We're hearing from the north and we're hearing from the south that these things are happening.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, I cannot believe that anyone in this Legislature, if they knew the full story or heard the full story, could condone the kind of thing that's happening today to children within our Child and Family Services system. And, you know, I've tried to get straight answers from this minister on the whole review of the Gage Guimond report, and we've heard several different versions of the story. And we still, today, do not know the circumstances surrounding the decisions that were made before the death of Gage Guimond and after the death of Gage Guimond.

\* (16:20)

Mr. Acting Speaker, I know for a fact that something is extremely wrong with the process that was followed in the review of the Gage Guimond file, and I do know that the minister had a hand in directing the way the review would go and distancing himself from the final report that came out on Gage Guimond.

And, to date, Mr. Acting Speaker, I haven't seen the kind of action that we need to see from a minister who talks about being out of his skin but, indeed, doesn't take seriously the recommendations that have been made and, you know, we have to question where the leadership is in the Department of Family Services today.

For many of the reasons I have explained, we certainly can't be looking to support any kind of budget implementation bill that would be put

forward by a government who has made such a mess of so many things within the government today and look to protecting their own salaries, Cabinet salaries, at the expense of those within our system that really need the kind of support that's missing.

So, with those comments, I look forward to the many people that will come out to speak and I know many of them will be speaking against this legislation. Thank you.

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** I was taking my time to get up to speak to this bill. Perhaps someone from the government benches would have risen to speak in support. I'm quite interested to hear what they have to say, but they're not really interested in debating the bill. Perhaps they don't support the bill. Perhaps they have been told not to speak to the bill. But, you know, I'm always reminded, when I'm standing to speak in this Chamber, of what democracy is and how important a job we have here in this Chamber.

And one of the things that we need to do here in this Chamber is to debate legislation. Now, the purpose in doing that is, you know, there's a bill proposed and brought forward. There's an examination of that bill. Perhaps some of the things should be looked at again and amended. Some of the things should be maybe taken out. Maybe there's an agreement to that and sometimes things can be added in but that comes with a fulsome debate so that a lot more opinions brought in and shaped into the mix will just create a much better and broader piece of legislation.

But I do want to say, Mr. Acting Speaker, that I do want to add my comments on this Bill 31, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statute Amendment Act. What's particularly interesting about this bill is it really is the bill that protects Cabinet ministers' salaries. That is the whole emphasis of this bill. Sure, there are other little bits and pieces in this bill, but the major part of this bill is about protecting the Cabinet ministers' salary.

Now it's very curious that this is the only bill for debate that's being called in this House. The only bill to date that's been called for debate is Bill 31. So we know what the priorities of this government is. The priority is their own salaries. That is—this is the only bill that's been called. And we want to debate this bill. We want to have a fulsome debate on this bill. And yet members opposite have made comments from their seats but are unwilling or unable or are afraid to get up and put comment on the record about their own bill, which I find curious because most of

the time, they want to talk about supporting their own legislation. But this time, well, I'm sure that they're getting a lot of feedback in their constituencies. I'm sure the members that are not in Cabinet are getting a lot of feedback on why this bill is a priority in the Legislature. And perhaps they've been told, you know, we don't want you to speak on it. Just be quiet and, of course, the Cabinet ministers, well, we know why the Cabinet ministers want this bill as the priority bill, because it protects their own salaries.

Now, you know, when you look on this Order Paper, Mr. Acting Speaker, there's, I think, well there's 36 bills that have been introduced, and there's still some more coming. And I would suggest that there are good bills on this Order Paper that would warrant some discussion, some debate in this Chamber—some very important bills. And perhaps the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard) would like to be debating The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act. I think that's something that Manitobans might be interested in hearing a debate on. And yet what do we hear—Bill 31, the one that protects the Cabinet ministers' salaries.

And, of course, we have another bill, the Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Fund. Now this is something that the government has talked about and is passionate about. But have they called Bill 12 for debate? No, they've called Bill 31, the bill that protects the Cabinet ministers' salaries.

And, you know, there's another one. There's a franchises act, called by the minister of Education. Now I'm sure he'd like to be debating this bill. But why, then, wouldn't he go to the House leader and say, can we debate Bill 15, The Franchises Act? And the House leader's going to say, no, we're going to debate Bill 31, the bill that protects Cabinet ministers' salaries.

That's the priorities—priorities. And, you know, I think that there's a number of other bills on here. There's No. 3, The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Municipal Amendment Act. There's The Cottage Property Tax Increase Deferral Act. Have they called those bills for debate? No, Mr. Acting Speaker, the priority is Bill 31, the bill that protects Cabinet ministers' salaries.

And, you know, maybe the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) wants to call Bill 6, The Manitoba Association of School Trustees Amendment Act. And has she gone to the House leader and said, I'd like to talk about Bill 6,

Mr. Acting Speaker? No, because the priority of this government is Bill 31, the bill that protects Cabinet ministers' salaries. That's the one they want to debate.

And perhaps the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) has a couple of bills on here, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act. There's a few on here. Perhaps he wants to debate those bills. I don't know why he doesn't go to the House leader and say you know, Mr. House Leader, why aren't we debating bills that are really important to driving in Manitoba, to safety in Manitoba? Why aren't we debating those bills? Well, and I guess the acting or the House leader is saying, well, no, you know the priority of our Cabinet and of our government is Bill 31, the bill that protects Cabinet ministers' salaries, Mr. Acting Speaker.

And you know, I could go through these, because there's a number of bills that I'm sure that Manitobans are waiting for. I'm sure that these are bills that some of the ministers on that side of the House feel are very important. Otherwise, why would they have proposed them? They proposed this legislation because they feel that it's important, but yet they don't want these bills to come before the House to, for debate. All they want to do is bring Bill 31, the bill that protects the Cabinet ministers' salaries, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Well, it's very interesting why. As I say, we have a number of bills here. We have very little time to debate these bills, unless the government intends to just ram them through. And, of course, you know, part of the bill process is going through second reading and then to the public for public input at committee. And so why aren't we getting that process done, Mr. Acting Speaker? Why aren't we getting these bills coming up for debate in the Legislature? No, because the priority with this government is called Bill 31, the bill that protects the Cabinet ministers' salaries.

Well, you know, I'm giving full opportunity. As I said, Mr. Acting Speaker, I took my time to rise in my place to speak to this bill, giving ample opportunity for any one of those Cabinet ministers to stand up and say why they needed to have—protect their ministerial salaries. You know, if they feel that that's what they need to do, why aren't they giving us—why aren't they trying to convince us of that, that it's a good thing?

\* (16:30)

You know, I think that there are, as I say, a number of other bills that are important, and—but we know what the priority of this government is, is to protect their salaries. But what this bill has—*[interjection]* Well, the interesting thing is from that side of the House, there is no argument. They refuse to stand up. They're afraid to stand up and put comment on the record. They'll only chirp from their seats. They won't stand up and get on the record and be up front with the public as to why they're protecting their Cabinet ministers' salaries, Mr. Acting Speaker.

This government has the undeniably good fortune, I guess, of being in a position to change the laws to suit themselves. They can just say, well, you know, we can't balance the budget, so let's look through here—oh, dear, if we don't balance the budget, we're going to have to take a cut in ministerial salary. Oh, so what are we going to do about that? Well, we're going to have a look at how we can just get away with that for one year, because, obviously, under the legislation, because they're not going to have to balance the books again for another four or five years, they should be taking this cut in ministerial salary every year, Mr. Acting Speaker, not just this year, but every year. So, because they don't want to do that, they'll just amend the legislation. We'll just change it to suit ourselves.

Now, I'm sure—I'm sure that there are a lot of people in here, a lot of people in Manitoba that would say, boy, would I ever be like to be in a position where I could just change the law to suit myself. If I saw that, oh, it looks like I'm going to have to break this law, then perhaps I would just be a little bit pre-emptive and change the law ahead of time to suit myself so that I didn't be caught in the act of breaking my own law, which is exactly what this Cabinet and this NDP government is doing.

We know we saw a lot of people—and I know that some people have admitted to this in the House—that, sure, you know, everybody makes a mistake. Speeding, you know, sometimes it happens, and you go through photo radar and photo radar picks you up and sends you a ticket. And, hey, there's a lot of people that would like to say, well, I wish I could just go back and change that law because I don't really want to have to pay that ticket. So if I could just see that I was going to get that ticket and go and change the law ahead of time so I didn't get the ticket, wouldn't everybody be so happy to be able to do that?

But, you know, they're not part of the club of 19, the gang of 19 in the Cabinet over there that can just do that; they can just change the laws to suit themselves, and to heck with the rest of the people. We don't care; we are going to protect our salaries because Bill 31, the only bill that's being called the bill that protects Cabinet ministers' salaries, Mr. Acting Speaker.

It's interesting that we go back and we look at campaign promises from 1999. They said that they were going to commit to keeping budgets balanced. In fact, Mr. Doer, the former premier, who now is a very good public servant of the Canadian federal Conservative government, he now—he said in 1999 that the Tories had a good idea. I guess he was a Tory back then too, Mr. Acting Speaker. And what he said is, we've said—and I'm going to quote him—he said: We've said all along that we're not going to change the things they got right.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, they campaigned on balanced budget legislation, and, for a time, they thought balanced budget legislation was okay. Then, again, in 2007, they again went to the doors and went to the polls on balanced budget legislation. But it wasn't long before they realized that, gee, you know, maybe we can't do this. Our overspending habits are finally catching up to us, and maybe we're going to have to—have a look at this, because you know, if we don't balance our budget, we're going to have to take a cut in ministerial salary.

Hence, Bill 31, the bill that protects the Cabinet ministers' salaries. That's the whole reason for this bill, Mr. Acting Speaker.

So, you know, and in—I'm just going to say again, in 2008, the Premier said that ministers would take a penalty if they failed to balance the budget under the new rules. He said, and if you don't do that, meaning balance the budgets, you will take a penalty as prescribed in legislation. But the problem is that this would have required a 20 percent reduction every year for the next four or five years that they aren't intending to balance the budget, Mr. Acting Speaker. So in order to protect their salaries next year and beyond, they needed to change the law, which is what Bill 31 does. The gang of 19 got together and cooked up a scheme where they can change the legislation to protect their salaries past this year.

I don't think that Manitobans are very impressed with that kind of dictatorial government and self-interest government. We all know, as families,

all of us here in this Chamber know that you have a budget and you live within your budget. If you can't live within your budget and you need to borrow money for big-ticket items like cars, or, you know, homes, well, sure, we understand that. But there is a limit when you go to the bank and the bank will say to you, no more, no more, no more borrowing, no more spending because you're at your limit; you're going to get yourself in trouble if you go any further than that.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

But, you know, people don't need to even go that far. They know it themselves when they're going to find themselves in a financial difficulty, but they don't have the ability to change laws and go to the bank or go to the credit card companies and make them change the way they operate. They don't have that ability because there are laws that are set in place that people have to abide by. It's only this Cabinet, this gang of 19, whose priority bill is Bill 31.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I've cautioned members before, in the past, of using the term "gangs." We have honourable members in the House. There's members of political parties, but I don't see any gangs or gang activity in this Chamber and I hope that we never will. I've cautioned members before in the past and I'd ask the honourable member to refrain from using that term "gangs." There's members of political parties on both sides and I think members should be addressed according to their party statuses.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** And I will just say, the group of 19 of the Cabinet—group of 19 Cabinet ministers. I think that's actually one more than there was before, so they've actually shown their priority there too. Priority spending within their own Cabinet increased the number—increased the numbers in the group, so the priority is not only to protect their salaries, it's to create more ministerial salaries, Mr. Speaker. So we know what their priorities are. It's all about them. It's all about self-interest. It's all about their salaries for themselves, and it's nothing about any of the other pieces of legislation here.

There's—as I said, look at this one, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, that is going to protect consumers, if I can go by the name of the bill. Where's that bill? Where's that—that bill's not being called for debate. I would think that the minister of—responsible for Consumer and Corporate Affairs would want to debate that bill. But, no, all

we're debating is Bill 31, the bill that protects the Cabinet ministers' salaries, Mr. Speaker.

And I—you know, I want to get back to talking about the balanced—the unbalanced budgets. I mean, here we are running these deficits. I mean, we've—the debt right now in the Province of Manitoba is over \$23 billion. So it's increased from, I think it was about 11 billion in 1999, to 23 billion in 2010; that's an astounding increase in debt. In fact, we see in the budget books the biggest amount of spending by this government is interest payment on the debt; that is up 10 percent because of the debt of this Province and this government, and it's just mind boggling how you can get yourself so badly in debt when you've had unprecedented transfer payments from the federal government over the last 10 years.

\* (16:40)

But, you know, when you think about it, you know, they're projecting a what, \$550-billion deficit this year and even though the revenues aren't projected to go down, so it's all new spending. And next year they're projecting another \$448-million deficit which, you know, that's a projection, that's a—projection. It's only a projection, so I'm sure that what will happen next budget is they'll bring in a budget that shows a projecting of a lot of spending needing to take place so that, come the election time, they can just declare: Oh, look how wonderful we've been. We didn't need to spend all this money. We've all recovered. Look how great we are.

You know, they think the public is going to not see through that. The public sees through that, you people. They do. They see through it. They—you can't just pretend that you're going to be running these huge deficits and then miraculously recover just before the election to say, look what a good government am I, because that isn't the way the public sees it. That is just—I mean, if you think that that's the way the public sees it, you really got your head in the sand. I suggest you go out and do some door knocking in your constituencies.

In fact, the other night I was out door knocking in one of your constituencies. I wonder which one it was. But I was out door knocking in one of your constituencies, and we certainly got an earful about the deficits, about the balanced budgets. We got an earful. We got an earful at the door about this government and how mismanaging—how they're mismanaging the finances of the Province and, you know, people are concerned. People are concerned. But I told them at the door, well, you know what the

priority of the NDP is? The priority of the NDP is Bill 31. It's the bill that protects the Cabinet ministers' salaries.

They were asking me, what is the biggest issue in the Legislature right now? You're sitting. What's the biggest issue in the Legislature right now? So I had to tell them. Well, you know what we're debating—and it's the only bill we're debating. It's Bill 31 and it's about the balanced budgets, and what it does is it protects the Cabinet ministers' salaries. That's the priority bill. That's the only bill that this Cabinet and this government wants to debate, Mr. Speaker. So, when they ask me, I'm telling them the absolute truth, the absolute truth—that this is the only bill that the Government House Leader (Mr. Blaikie) has brought before this House for debate.

And, you know, they ask me about—well, what are they possibly spending all this money on? Well, then, we talk about the west-side bipole line, and, as soon as we bring the Hydro issue up, they're just going, oh, my goodness sakes, what are they thinking? They're going to take that line all the way down the west side of the province. Doesn't it make more sense to go the shorter, cheaper, greener, cleaner route? That's what they ask me. That's what they're asking me, Mr. Speaker, and I agree with them, and I said, of course, that makes a lot of sense.

You know, you people out here living in the suburbs and in the communities, and in inner-city Winnipeg, and out in rural Manitoba, they are a lot of sensible, sensible people out there, and they get it. They get it, what's going on. They understand that there's going to be \$1.75 billion spent—overspent to take a bipole line way down the west side of the province. They also understand that that is a pile of money and that money could be going to other priorities—other priorities—in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And, you know, the government keeps saying, well, we're jeopardizing sales to the United States, but nobody yet has ever come up and said: Look, here is the agreement. If we don't go this route, we don't have an agreement. So it's just smoke and mirrors. There's no agreement, so, you know, if there's that agreement and you could show us that agreement, then that might be one story but—*[interjection]* Well, maybe the member from Minto saw that agreement because he decided that he thought it would be a good idea to go down the east side, but, you know, I don't know—I don't really understand. If there is some agreement that says if

you don't go down that east side, we will not buy your power, if there's an agreement that says that, show us. Show Manitobans, because all of Manitoba—all of Manitoba—wants to know, and they should have the opportunity to know why you're going to spend almost \$2 billion to go that route. Why wouldn't you just say, look, if we go that route, this is what is going to happen? Instead of just saying it without proving it, why don't you prove it? Why don't you prove it? If you could prove it, you would, I'm thinking.

**An Honourable Member:** That would make common sense.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Yeah, well, you know, as one of my colleagues has said, that would make common sense, and that's something that we aren't going to see coming forward.

All we are seeing is the priority of this government, as I keep saying, because it's true, the only priority of this government is to call Bill 31, Mr. Speaker, and we know that the Bill 31 is all about protecting the Cabinet ministers' salaries—all about protecting the Cabinet ministers' salaries. Well, you know, they seem to be groaning and moaning about that, but none of them are standing up to dispute that fact. So, if you're not standing up to say, no, that's not true, then you're sitting down and saying, yes, that is true.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I said, there's—this government has run up a \$23-billion debt, a debt that is going to be left to our children and our grandchildren. And, as I know the member from River East, when she spoke, she talked about the reasons why she felt it was very important—very important—to be discussing the deficits in this Province, because those deficits are going to go on for years, not just to our children, but to our grandchildren. Those deficits, you know, I'm imploring the Cabinet ministers on that side of the House to think about what they're doing to the future of families in this province. Our children, our grandchildren are going to be saddled with this debt for years to come because of their mismanagement and wasteful decisions and spending.

And, not only that, because they're choosing to do this type of spending, that because their policies and their politics demands that they go and do this kind of spending, they've got themselves in a position where they're overspending. They can't balance the legislation. Now, I mean, this balanced budget legislation has been in effect for I think it was

passed in 1995, if I'm correct. I could stand to be corrected on that. But we've had that balanced budget legislation, and, then, in 2007 it was amended, and in 2008 it was amended, in 2009, and now again—and now again—because they still can't live within their own laws.

I just—I find that offensive, Mr. Speaker, that a government makes laws and then can't live within them themselves. They expect Manitobans to live within the laws they make, but they just don't want to live within the laws they make for themselves. And, because of that they can go—and because of the positions that they hold—and, you know, this is a position of trust in Manitoba. I would think, but it's a miss—it's an abuse of power to just change the legislation to suit yourself and to preserve money in your own pocket.

That's an abuse of power. And I hear that when I'm campaigning at the door. I hear people say that, and, you know, and if they haven't said it, I sure let them know that that's what it is, because they deserve to know. They deserve to know what the people that they elected are doing in this House—what they're doing. What are we doing? What are we doing today? Are we debating anything like The Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act? No, we're not debating that piece of legislation. We're not debating The Advanced Education Administration Act. We're not debating the law that says The Strengthened Enforcement of Family Support Payments and Miscellaneous Amendments Act. We're not debating those acts.

\* (16:50)

Why aren't we debating those things that are important to Manitobans? Because we are debating—because we are trying to tell this government they've got their priorities wrong. It is incumbent on us to—we're passionate about this, you've got your priorities wrong. Your priority, Bill 31, to protect your Cabinet ministers' salaries, is the wrong priority. It's wrong. It's wrong for you, it's wrong for the government, it's wrong for the people of Manitoba. It's just dead wrong, Mr. Speaker.

I can't say how disappointed I am in the political process in this House when they won't get up and defend it. They won't speak to it. They will just arrogantly say, no, I don't care, I'm passing this piece of legislation.

And, by the way, it will be the first piece of legislation that we pass in this House. That is the

priority. The very first bill that we're going to do, again, Mr. Speaker, Bill 31, the bill that protects those Cabinet ministers' salaries. I say, shame on them for making that their priority of this session.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. David Faurischou (Portage la Prairie):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I have to—I recognize who is up, and no one was standing. That's why I—if no one is standing, I call the question. But I noticed the member for Portage la Prairie is standing. So I will now recognize the honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

**Mr. Faurischou:** I was a little tardy to my feet because there was a lot of discussion going on, on the government side of the House. And I'm extraordinarily surprised that the members want to speak from their seats and not be recognized.

I see the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) is very anxious to speak and I'm very much also surprised by the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), who was quite animated and spoke almost the entire time of which the honourable member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) was speaking. And now, the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) really wants to get up and speak as well. Yet, once given the opportunity, they quiet right down because they're, I can only surmise, extraordinarily embarrassed, then, do not want to be recognized with the bill, by any specific mention within our official record, the *Hansard*.

But I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to participate in second reading debate of Bill 31, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act. Now, that is an annual submission to this Chamber, pertaining to the budget, which is tabled in the House, and, vigorously, has been debated over the past month and a half.

But what really surprises me is the attitude by this government towards how legislation comes to be debated within the House. Their attitude, obviously, is coming from south of the border. The United States often puts in clauses within their budget bill that really don't belong within the budget bill itself. But because they want to pass something through, under the radar, if you will, of the general voting public, this is what one does; you bury it in another piece of legislation. And so, I want to recognize the



New Democratic Party, the governing party in Manitoba, as to their wherewithal and understanding of how one tries to get around the issue of proper debate by employing an American tactic within their submission of legislation to this House.

Obviously, they really appreciate the American way of and style of debate and want to become Americans, because, obviously, they're placing legislation before us that is styled in the American way of doing politics.

So let's get right to the meat and the potatoes of the issue to which I refer. The balanced budget legislation was brought to the House independent of the budget and should, therefore, be amended separate and apart from the legislation we have before us.

Year in and year out, as the honourable member from Morris made mention, it came to this House independent of the budget bills, so that we had an opportunity, the public had an opportunity, to debate, discuss, participate and attempt to perhaps amend the legislation.

They will not have that same opportunity this year, because this government has now adopted the American style of politics and wants to bury major change to the balanced budget legislation by putting it forward in The Budget Implementation and Tax Statute Amendment Act—BITSA bill.

Right within the explanation, the act requires government to table a balanced budget each fiscal year and to achieve a positive balance each year. This bill suspends these requirements for the current fiscal year and the next three years.

Why is this government doing that? They haven't adequately gone to the public and asked whether they support this initiative. They did not receive a mandate from the voting public because of when we went to electorate back in 2007, this government stated that they support balanced budget legislation. And today we're seeing that they no longer do that.

That was very curious that I was listening to radio emanating out of Portage la Prairie, and the announcer made reference to the change in the

balanced budget legislation because the government couldn't live within its means and that the Cabinet ministers were going to be penalized for that.

And so he asked persons to call into the radio show and it was hilarious. I will say that each and every individual that called in there made a mockery of this government and its action taken by way of modification of this legislation.

I wish the honourable members across the way could've listened to the radio, and perhaps they should have taken the opportunity to participate and gone on live air and defended why they needed to change the balanced budget legislation and protect their own salaries because of their incompetence, shall I say, in their fiscal responsibilities.

They also hear requests of the changes to the fuel tax act and The Gasoline Tax Act and The Motive Fuel Tax Act. And what they're doing, essentially, is that they are repealing The Gasoline Tax Act and the motive tax—fuel tax act and coming out with a fuel tax act.

Again, those pieces of legislation were debated on their own merit independently within this Chamber. Why is this government changing tactics? Why is this government afraid to look at legislation independently?

They are, obviously, scared to do so. They're embarrassed to do so. They want to have a minimum amount of debate, a minimum amount of exposure, because they want to change major pieces of legislation through one bill.

Again, an American tactic that they are now so comfortable with after criticizing the Americans on virtually every issue. This government has gone on at length and there are numerous examples within our—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member from Portage la Prairie will have 22 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 20, 2010

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>			
<b>Petitions</b>		Premarin Manufacturing Plant (Brandon) Maguire; Struthers	2362
Multiple Myeloma Treatments Driedger	2351	<b>Members' Statements</b>	
Mount Agassiz Ski Area Briese	2351	Sara Thurlbeck Blady	2362
<b>Committee Reports</b>		Emergency Medical Services Week Driedger	2362
Standing Committee on Public Accounts Fifth Report Dewar	2351	Sisters of the Holy Rock Nevakshonoff	2363
<b>Ministerial Statements</b>		Decor Cabinets Green Program Dyck	2363
Forest Fire Update Blaikie Maguire Gerrard	2353 2353 2353	École St. Avila Home and School Association Brick	2364
<b>Oral Questions</b>		<b>Grievances</b>	
Health-Care Services Goertzen; Selinger Driedger; Oswald Driedger; Selinger	2354 2355 2356	Pedersen Eichler Graydon	2364 2366 2368
Social Assistance Mitchelson; Mackintosh	2357	<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)</b>	
Crown Land Purchases (Bissett) Hawranik; Ashton	2357	<b>GOVERNMENT BUSINESS</b>	
Livestock Industry Graydon; Struthers	2359	<b>Debate on Second Readings</b>	
Waste-Water Treatment Facilities (Winnipeg) Gerrard; Selinger	2360	Bill 31—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2010 Dyck Graydon Mitchelson Taillieu Fauschou	2370 2374 2379 2383 2388
CentrePort Canada Blady; Ashton	2361		

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