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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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.
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.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
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	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.
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SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	N.D.P.
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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.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 15, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, a matter of privilege is a very serious matter, and so I rise today with the utmost of gravitas in this matter. A breach of privilege infringes upon and limits our ability as members of this great House, as members of Her Majesty's official opposition and as elected representatives of our constituencies to perform our functions and our duties.

There are two conditions that must be met to satisfy a prima facie case of privilege. First, the matter must be raised at the earliest opportunity. Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that this is the first opportunity to do so, having had the chance to review *Hansard* and confirm statements made by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) yesterday in question period. Secondly, is there sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached; I submit there is significant and sufficient evidence and— which I will outline for the House today.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro has been planning to build a third bipole transmission line required for reliability down the east side of the province. In September of 2007, then-minister of Hydro, now the Premier, sent a letter to the Manitoba Hydro board directing the Crown corporation to run the Bipole III down the west side of the province. In November of 2007, Manitoba Hydro's capital expenditure forecast put Bipole III at \$2.2 billion. Since 2007, and for the last three and a half years, the NDP have maintained that the cost of Bipole III was \$2.2 billion. Since we last sat in this House, a leaked Manitoba Hydro document from August of 2009 put the cost of bipole

at \$3.9 billion. Another leaked document from October of 2010 put the cost at \$4.1 billion. The Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) admitted it could be \$3.3 billion.

How can we have any faith in this government's assertions about the true cost of Bipole III?

And then, two days ago, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said the costs without converters were \$1.1 billion. Then he said \$1.2 billion. Yesterday he said \$1.26 billion. Which of these versions is correct, Mr. Speaker? It is clear that they are bringing false information in at least two of these numbers.

Since August of 2009, in the last 18 months, there have been three standing committees on the Crown corporation. Five sessions of this Legislature have taken place. Manitoba Hydro has issued two financial forecasts and two capital forecasts. There have been two hearings of the Public Utilities Board, which Manitoba Hydro did not disclose any information. And, recently, a Public Utilities Board hearing saw a Hydro official finally admit the cost of Bipole III as higher, and senior officials were aware of that. It was impossible for the minister to claim she didn't know the costs. Either she had been negligent in her ministerial duties or she was wilfully blind, Mr. Speaker.

There have been countless questions put in this House to the minister responsible for Hydro and to the Premier. There have been many, many opportunities for the minister to update the House on the costs, and yet the NDP have maintained the cost was still \$2.2 billion until forced recently to admit the costs are actually at least a billion higher.

Mr. Speaker, in our system of responsible government, the government must seek authority from this Legislature to spend public funds. This Legislature, and specifically the opposition, has a responsibility to hold the government to account and to scrutinize government spending. *Beauchesne* citation 24 defines parliamentary privilege as a sum of the peculiar rights of each House collectively and by members of each House individually without which they could not discharge their functions. The privileges of Parliament are rights which are absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers.

Marleau and Montpetit, in House of Commons practice and procedure, chapter 3, lists the individual privileges of members as, among other things, the freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation and molestation. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that deliberately withholding information regarding the true and escalating costs of the Manitoba Hydro Bipole III project by this government, beginning in 2007 and continuing for over three and a half years, is obstructionist, as it interfered with our ability of opposition and as individual members to hold the government to account and scrutinize government spending. This—there has been a desperate and deliberate attempt to mislead this House and its members as well as the public on the true costs of the Bipole III transmission line.

This is not an allegation of misjudgment or maladministration on the part of the minister in her performance of her ministerial duties but rather a deliberate withholding of information from this House and for the public to further the government's own political interests.

Other Manitoba Hydro projects, such as the Pointe du Bois transmission line and the Keeyask Dam project have seen cost adjustments made to them since 2007, yet this government withheld the escalating costs of the Bipole III transmission line because it was a politically sensitive issue.

Mr. Speaker, the ability of members to perform their duties and responsibilities is founded on information being brought to this House which is accurate and can be relied upon for debate. For years inaccurate information has been brought to the House and continued as recently as yesterday. Inaccurate information affects our ability to raise questions in question period. It affects our ability to debate bills. It affects our questions in committee. It affects our ability to respond accurately to requests for information from constituents, and it restricts our ability to ask questions on something we are not made aware of. Deliberately obstructing the flow of true information and misleading the House can be treated as contempt of this House and, as such, can only be ruled a matter of privilege.

*(10:10)

Mr. Speaker, there is contradictory information on the cost of Bipole III. The government maintained the cost was \$2.2 billion. Manitoba Hydro documents showed it to be at least \$4.1 billion. Another estimate now says \$3.3 billion, and on

Wednesday the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and finance committee—minister gave numbers of \$1.1 billion, \$1.2 billion and \$1.26 billion, all within 15 minutes. How can we do our jobs and scrutinize government spending with all these conflicting versions of the cost of the project? Simply, we cannot do our job with this type of confusing, misleading information. We have many versions of the true cost of the Bipole III before this House.

Speaker Milliken, in his finding of prima facie in February of 2000 said, quote: "The situation before us where the House is left with two versions of events is one that merits further consideration by an appropriate committee, if only to clear the air." End quote.

And, Mr. Speaker, respectfully, Speaker Milliken, in his recent ruling concerning a contradictory statement by the Minister of International Cooperation, considered these comments from members and said, and I'm quoting: Indeed, these members have argued that the material available shows that contradictory information has been provided. As a result, they argue, this demonstrates that the minister has deliberately misled the House and, as such, a prima facie case of privilege exists. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, in that ruling, Speaker Milliken quoted Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* when he said this, and I quote: The Speaker should ask himself, when he has to decide whether to grant precedence over a public business to a motion which a member who has complained of some act or conduct as constituting a breach of privilege desires to move, should he not do I consider it assuming the facts are as stated, the act or conduct constitutes a breach of privilege, or to put it shortly, has the member an arguable point. If the Speaker feels any doubt on this question, in my view he should leave it to the House. End quote.

I therefore move that this House find this government in contempt, and also move that this Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), and the minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, and the Premier of Manitoba be censured for first withholding information, then providing contradictory information and deliberately attempting to mislead the House by maintaining the cost of Bipole III was \$2.2 billion for at least 18 months, even though they were aware of contradictory evidence about the true and escalating cost of

Bipole III and as recently as yesterday continued to bring conflicting information to this House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When moving a motion in this Chamber, the honourable member must have a seconder.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, the motion is seconded by the member from Steinbach.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the motion has been seconded by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): I was listening attentively to the Opposition House Leader, perhaps more attentively than many of her own members were listening to her argument. And clearly, as I was listening, what this comes down to, Mr. Speaker, is a dispute over the facts. However, using the word "facts" to describe any of their arguments is perhaps overly charitable on my side.

If they had been listening to the First Minister as I have been listening to him as he's answered their questions about this matter, I've heard very clearly him talk about the cost of the bipole at \$1.2 billion, a number which has been independently verified, which Hydro has had independently verified.

Now the cost—that's the cost of the bipole line. The cost of the converters, which are required no matter what side the line goes down, and which—and who—the only folks in this Chamber who think should be cancelled are those sitting on the other side, the only people who would put the reliability of Hydro at risk in this province. Those costs, in addition to the cost of the line, leads to a total cost for the project of \$3.2 billion.

Now, my honourable colleague across the way talked about our responsibility to be factual in this House, to be accurate. That is a responsibility that extends to the opposition, Mr. Speaker, all the members. All the members in this Chamber have the right and the privilege to hear accurate information, and, if you listen to some of the information that's been coming from the other side on this matter, I would note that, in fact, their cost of the bipole has changed no less than 12 times.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When members bring points of orders or matters of privilege to the House, it's not a frivolous issue that they're raising. It's a very important issue, and you're asking me to make a

judgment on the presentation of either a matter of privilege or a point of order, and, in order to do that, I need to hear every word that's spoken.

So when someone raises a point of order or a matter of privilege, I ask the House for the ability to hear every word that is spoken. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members. If you want to heckle, save it for later. A matter of privilege and a point of order is very serious or it shouldn't be brought in the House. When someone brings it in, it's very serious and it should be treated as such.

Ms. Howard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I was listening carefully to the arguments of my honourable colleague across the way on this matter, and, certainly, we all have the right to accurate information and we strive very hard to provide that. On their side of the House we've heard no less than 12 numbers in relation to the cost of the bipole line, and the current number that they're floating around that I'm hearing in this House would actually put the total cost of that project at \$3.8 billion, far, far above—[interjection] No, that's the number that we've heard from the official Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), which is not the number that anyone else has verified.

So I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is nothing more than a dispute over the facts, a dispute over the philosophy of what we do with Manitoba Hydro, and I'm sure that dispute will continue for many months, and we'll take that dispute to Manitobans and they will be, I think, the final arbiter of who has Manitoba Hydro's best interests at heart.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that contributions at this time by honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether an alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, a few brief comments on this matter which, as you have indicated, is a very serious matter when there is a matter of privilege coming forward and whether there is a concern that there may be an issue of contempt before this House.

Certainly, it is fundamental that the government provide accurate information to members of the opposition, and that is really the issue here, as to whether the government has provided accurate

information or whether the array of numbers, in fact, represent some inaccurate information coming because they can't all be right.

The issue, as I see it here, has nothing to do, as the Government House Leader is implying, with the accuracy of statements by the opposition, right? That's an issue for another time and another day. But the issue here is whether the members of the opposition are getting accurate information from the government. This is the fundamental basis on which the House must operate, and we are now working in an environment where it's not just what we had before. That is to say that we work in a system where the rulings that are made here and the rulings that are made in the House of Commons and in other jurisdictions add up and give us a body of precedents on which decisions are made.

* (10:20)

And, as I think most members of this Legislature and most Manitobans are now aware, that there has been some rulings in the House of Commons which clarify the situation of what is contempt and what is not contempt. And there have been two instances recently in which the Government of Canada was found to be in contempt for not providing accurate information, and one of these, I think, has direct relevance to this circumstance of whether the government is providing accurate information.

We in the opposition parties, we in the Liberal Party have—deserve to have accurate information from the government.

And one of the questions here, Mr. Speaker, as you well know from previous matters of privilege, is whether there's been a deliberate attempt to misrepresent the situation. And I think that this is an important part of this, that the question is: Are the members of the government, in providing inaccurate information in this case, are they being deliberate in providing inaccurate information, or is the—members of the government just, you know, not very competent, they don't know what they're talking about?

And I think that's a judgment that, you know, as Speaker, you will have to make, because if there is a deliberate attempt to provide inaccurate information, then that clearly falls under question of privilege and would fall under the category of contempt of Parliament for providing inaccurate information.

And I, on this case, come down on the side of the House leader for the Conservative Party and would argue that, indeed, the government should be held to account. The government should be responsible, providing accurate information in this House and that the—as Speaker, you should look very carefully, and I think if you do so, you will find that there is a legitimate case for this being a matter of contempt because they have provided inaccurate information.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, on the matter of privilege raised by the honourable member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), a matter of privilege is a serious concern, so I'm going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities, and I will return to the House with a ruling.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 18—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and consumer protection (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 18, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code de la route, be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Attorney General, seconded by the honourable Minister for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, that Bill 18, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the Government of Canada has listened to the government of Manitoba and has passed Bill S-9 which creates four new Criminal Code motor vehicle theft offences. It will come into force on proclamation on April 29, 2011.

Those new offences are motor vehicle theft, tampering with vehicle identification number, trafficking in property obtained by crime and possession of goods obtained by crime for the purpose of trafficking.

This bill amends The Highway Traffic Act to add these new offences to the list of offences that give rise to automatic post-conviction long-term driver's licence suspensions.

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

Bill 212—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Elimination of Benefits for Auto Thieves)

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 212, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Elimination of Benefits for Auto Thieves), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, this bill denies benefits under part 2 of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act to a person for injuries received in an accident, whether or not the person was at fault, if he or she is convicted of stealing a motor vehicle involved in the accident or of taking it without the owner's consent.

Benefits are also denied to a person in circumstances where they would otherwise be subject only to a reduction if the person was operating a motor vehicle that he or she knew to be stolen or taken without consent.

And I might add, Mr. Speaker, this is a reintroduction of a bill that was introduced three years ago in this House.

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

PETITIONS

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On December 11th, 2009, in Winnipeg, Zdzislaw Andrzejczak was killed when the car that he was driving collided with a stolen vehicle.

The death of Mr. Andrzejczak, a husband and a father, along with too many other deaths and injuries involving stolen vehicles, was a preventable tragedy.

Many of those accused in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

Chronic car thieves pose a risk to the safety of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all court orders for car thieves are vigorously monitored and enforced.

To request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by M. Van Helvert, T. Stewart, B. Crone and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Convicted Auto Thieves—Denial of MPI Benefits

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

In Manitoba, a car thief convicted of stealing a vehicle involved in a car accident is eligible to receive compensation and assistance for personal injury from Manitoba Public Insurance.

Too many Manitoba families have had their lives tragically altered by motor vehicle accidents involving car thieves and stolen vehicles.

It is an injustice to victims, their families and law-abiding Manitobans that MPI premiums are used to benefit car thieves involved in those accidents.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Justice deny all MPI benefits to a person for injuries received in an accident if he or she is convicted of stealing a motor vehicle involved in the accident.

And this petition is signed by D. Rinn, L. Trumbla, R. Graham and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Bipole III—Cost to Manitoba Families

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been directed by the provincial government to construct its next high

voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba.

This will cost each family of four in Manitoba \$11,748 more than an east-side route, which is also shorter and more reliable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to build the Bipole III transmission line on the shorter and more reliable east side of Lake Winnipeg in order to save each Manitoba family of four \$11,748.

This petition is signed by D. Suffield, C. Klassen, B. Tardift and many other fine Manitobans.

* (10:30)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): I'd like to provide a brief update on the House in terms of the flood situation before we head into the weekend.

I can advise that the ice jam on the Assiniboine that overtopped the dike at Spruce Woods Provincial Park yesterday has resulted in significant flooding to the campground and buildings in the park. The dike is being re-established today, then drainage will be assessed and the public will be informed as to how park operations will be affected this summer.

I can also advise that the 30—pardon me—the 90 people evacuated from Dauphin River First Nation are now back home, but over 600 people remain evacuated from their communities, primarily from Peguis First Nation.

Further, CP Rail has closed their main line approximately five miles east of Brandon because of the track roadbed that has been compromised by flood waters. CP has rerouted rail traffic and repairs are scheduled to be completed today.

The Province will continue to assess hour to hour the situation at Morris and on Highway 75. Local officials will be notified and a media bulletin will be released as soon as the need for closure arises.

Provincial officials will also continue to diligently monitor the situation around the province over the weekend and provide assistance to local governments in their flood response as needed.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, thank you again for the opportunity to put a few comments on the record about the flood of 2011.

We have snow on the forecast today, which is not welcome news. We hope the impact on the current situation will be limited.

As noted, there continue to be evacuations on a number of communities including Peguis First Nation, Sandy Bay First Nation, Fisher River First Nation and Roseau River First Nation, among others.

The temporary relocation of residents in health-care facilities and personal care homes continues as needed, such as the pending movements of residents of the St. Adolphe Personal Care Home to Grunthal early next week.

We recognize that temporary evacuations are very stressful for those involved and we appreciate the efforts of those working to support the evacuations and trying to make these relocations flow as smoothly as possible.

Overland flooding continues to cause significant problems throughout the province, causing the temporary loss of access to dozens and dozens of provincial municipal roads. It will take certainly some time to restore the infrastructure when floodwater subsides.

There's also, as the minister mentioned, been a temporary rerouting of Canadian Pacific Railway traffic after the tracks along the main line east of Brandon were damaged by the floodwaters.

Agricultural producers continue to assess the situation as well, given the potential impact on spring planting.

As we head into what will be another busy weekend for those on the front line of the flood fight, we extend our thanks to the hundreds and hundreds of volunteers who are working so diligently to protect their neighbours. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Again, I thank the minister for the latest flood report.

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? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his statement today.

I want to echo the appreciation that we have for the people who are helping around the province to try and deal with this flood situation.

And I want to say a word about the evacuees. I noted that when we had a report two days ago, at that point it was 400 people who had been evacuated and that 95 per cent of those had come from First Nations communities.

And I note today that we have evacuations from Peguis. We've had them in Roseau River, Fairford, Sandy Bay, Fisher River First Nation, and it really speaks to the lack of inadequate attention to permanent solutions for many First Nations communities. And this clearly is something which is badly needed, has not been adequately attended to in the last several years, needs to be addressed and hopefully the minister will come forward with a plan jointly with the federal government to address this in the very near future.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us—we have guests from the—Marymount, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Mackintosh).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Cardiac Surgeries Wait Time Increases

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we thank the minister for the update on the flood situation. We certainly extend our thoughts and good wishes to those many Manitobans who are dealing with the stress of evacuations today and, in particular, those seniors who have had to be moved from the familiar and safe surroundings of their personal care homes and into other facilities.

Mr. Speaker, on another matter of concern to many Manitoba families, we were alarmed to learn about the significant increase in the number of Manitobans who are now awaiting cardiac surgery within the province of Manitoba. We were alarmed to see that number double almost from where it was in September, a situation where all but life-threatening cases are being dealt with and a situation where now, as of Thursday, 190 people are

awaiting cardiac surgery in the province of Manitoba, up from 150 in February and up from 99 as of last September.

Mr. Speaker, how—what does the Premier have to say to explain to these families, these 190 Manitobans and their families, about how it is that they find themselves in this situation with these unacceptable waits and unacceptable lineups?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Thanks to the member for the question. We do not want anybody to have undue stress of waiting longer than necessary for proper heart surgery.

There are apparently three people that have exceeded the benchmark established across Canada for getting heart surgery in an appropriate time. Those three individuals and their families have been offered out-of-province options. They have apparently declined that and so the cardiac team is arranging their surgery as early as possible, and I understand it may be available to them as early as next week.

The benchmark for providing service to people in Manitoba is achieved 99 per cent of the time. There's still 1 per cent that are not getting it within the required benchmarks, and that is why we've invested \$40 million in a new facility at the Asper centre at St. Boniface Hospital, to ensure that we have the most modern facility possible to, again, address the concerns of people with—who need cardiac surgery in this province.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the comments about the benchmark are both out of date. They relate to a year ago and don't take into account the spike in the number of people who are waiting today.

The Premier seems to indicate that a benchmark of 190 is acceptable, when we know that we've had a dozen people die waiting around the 57-day mark once they had been slated for surgery. Mr. Speaker, these benchmarks that the Premier is throwing around mean nothing to the 190 patients and their families who are waiting with undue stress because of their mismanagement of the health-care system.

What does the Premier have to say to these 190 Manitobans and their families awaiting this with incredible stress, Mr. Speaker, while he throws around outdated numbers about benchmarks? Why doesn't he get on the job and apologize to these 190 families and get on with the job of getting them the surgery they so desperately require?

* (10:40)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it was this government that established a list and made it public so people knew what the benchmarks were.

You have to bear in mind when members opposite were in government they never even disclosed that kind of information; it was completely buried within the system.

The measures that have been taken are both immediate, and I'm informed that as of today 98 per cent are receiving care within the benchmark. But immediate measures have been taken. Two additional ICU beds have been opened up at St. Boniface Hospital, dedicated to cardiac services. Two additional beds have been opened up at the Health Sciences Centre to handle non-cardiac cases so that the ones can be freed up for cardiac care at St. Boniface Hospital, and additional staff to the cardiac access co-ordination office have been made available, who are in frequent contact with the patients.

And, in addition, as a temporary measure, the WRHA has requested that northwestern Ontario patients who come to Manitoba be temporarily dealt with in Ontario so that we can continue to provide service within the benchmarks. And, what's important, Mr. Speaker, is that we do all the things necessary to serve these families—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, they made promises to Manitobans about addressing issues in health care, and here we find ourselves today in a situation where the number of individuals and families impacted by these waits is now at 190 patients. It was 150 in February, it was 99 back in September, and all they do is come into the House and try to point fingers. He reads facts from a briefing note today, all of which were reported this morning in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. He's not on the file. He's not on the job. He's not focused on fixing health care and he owes an apology to these 190 Manitobans and their families.

Will he today offer that apology, but, more importantly, Mr. Speaker, will he get focused on keeping the promise that he made to Manitobans to improve health care rather than allowing it to get worse, which is exactly what's happening under this Premier's watch?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, not only have we invested in new facilities, not only have we doubled the number of cardiac surgeons—actually, they've gone from 4 to 11; it's almost tripled in Manitoba. And we've doubled the number of cardiologists. They've actually gone from 12 to 31 in this province. So there's more trained specialists available to serve the public in a higher quality facility which has been built for \$40 million. And, of course, we have complete public disclosure on the waiting list, and 98 per cent of the people are met within the benchmarks as of today.

Mr. Speaker, this is in stark contrast to what the members opposite did. They lost specialists in Manitoba. They lost doctors in Manitoba. They fired nurses in Manitoba, and they refused to invest in health-care capital.

They actually cancelled health-care capital in Manitoba. That's the contrast: cancelling health-care facilities, laying off nurses, driving doctors out of the province versus our approach which has been to almost—which has been to more than double the number of surgeons, the number of cardiologists, and make an investment in a first-class facility which will serve Manitobans for many years to come.

Vote Tax Legislation Government Use

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, last week the New Democratic Party showed just what a tired and desperate party it truly is. Its membership, the membership that put this Premier (Mr. Selinger) in his chair, the only people that have actually voted him in as Premier, said that they were too tired to raise their own money and too desperate to hang on to power, so they voted in favour—at their convention—for a vote tax. The true sign of a party that's out of steam is one that no longer has the confidence to go to Manitobans and ask for support on the virtue of its own ideas.

Why doesn't this Premier just admit that he supports the vote tax because he's a desperate leader of a tired party, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, you know, it's interesting to note, we wouldn't even be able to ask a question about what happened at their annual general meeting because the doors were closed.

Mr. Speaker, this government has taken action time and time again to make sure that when we engage in democracy in this province, that we do so

on a level playing field. That's why we took the stand to ban union and corporate donations.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll end the suspense for the member. I'll end the suspense and tell her we as a party voted against the vote tax at our convention.

You know, this Premier, he had a choice. He had a choice. He could've told his party members that he was committed to asking for donations based on ideas, not based on a demand and a law. He could've told them that they would repeal the vote tax law. But, Mr. Speaker, that would've taken conviction, that would've taken leadership, that would've taken vision, none of the attributes that are held by this current Premier.

I want to ask this Premier: Will he stand up today, will he say that he'll take some leadership, he'll overrule his party and he'll repeal the vote tax, then get his hands out of Manitobans' pockets, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, well, you know, another difference, I guess, between the way our party works and the way the opposition party works is that actually we let the members of our party have a voice in how the party's run. And, actually, it's the membership—*[interjection]* I know opening the doors and encouraging democracy are foreign concepts to members opposite. It's the executive of our party that has decided to decline that money year after year.

But I would say to the member opposite I'm still in the dark as to where they stand on taking union and corporate donations. Is it something they oppose? When we brought in that law to ban union and corporate donations because we believe that individuals in Manitoba should be the ones that have a direct say in how their democracy runs, they have never stood up to say they support that law, and we're still waiting to hear what they're going to do on that.

Mr. Goertzen: It's clear, Mr. Speaker, that the provincial NDP party wants to treat Manitobans' Treasury as though it's their private piggy bank. You know, if you have some trouble with the budget, well, just take \$200,000 and advertise out of the public coffers. You know, if you want to get onside with a US environmental group, well, just take \$4.1 billion and put a hydro line on the wrong side of the province. And, you know, if you're worried about actually gaining support from Manitobans, well, let's

not ask for that support; we'll just reach in their pockets and take it through a vote tax.

The provincial Treasury is not there as a piggy bank for the NDP party. Why won't this Premier do what so many other Manitobans do and go out and earn their own money, Sir?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite because it allows us to be very clear. This is the only party—this is the only government in the history of the province which has banned corporate/union donations, in the history of the province, and the members opposite want to return to those days. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) has never supported a ban on corporate/union donations. He wants to roll back the election laws and put decision making back in the corporate boardrooms on how this province is run. That's exactly what he wants to do, aided and supported by the member from Steinbach.

We believe political conventions should be open to everybody to participate. We believe there should be democratic debate and votes, and we believe Manitobans should have the purchasing power over democracy and their votes should count on election day. That's what we do; they do the opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Vote Tax Legislation Government Use

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely clear: We believe in individual grassroots fundraising, and that's why—that is why in 2010 we raised twice as much money as they did from regular hard-working Manitobans. Twice as many people donated less than \$250 to the party. If you go through their returns, they raised their money, big donations from a small group of party insiders, two-for-one tax credits, special interest groups, and never was I more embarrassed for the old NDP than seeing Ashton delegates, delegates for the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), locked out—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind members when addressing other members in the House that it's ministers by their portfolios and other members by their constituencies, not by their names.

* (10:50)

Mr. McFadyen: We were—we saw, only a short period of time ago, delegates who wanted to come

and participate in their convention locked out of delegate selection meetings just because they weren't coming to vote for the preordained leadership candidate. Shameful.

I want to ask this Premier: His party members over the past weekend passed a resolution and it said, and I quote: Let us " . . . henceforth accept our share of the funding to which we are entitled." Mr. Speaker, to which we are entitled.

Does he share the view of his membership that they are entitled to take money from the hard-working taxpayers of Manitobans when those taxpayers deserve a break? They shouldn't be forced. Does he think they have this kind of entitlement from taxpayers?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I'm glad we're having this vigorous debate over the budget we presented to the members of the Legislature.

The members opposite have never said they will ban corporate and union donations in this province. They have taken over a million dollars of public money in the last election. They've never sent the cheque back to the people of Manitoba if they don't believe in public financing, and they say they're a grassroots party.

Isn't it a senator in Ottawa, an unelected senator in Ottawa which is running their campaign? How grassroots is that, Mr. Speaker, to have an unelected senator running their campaign?

The reality is they want to run democracy out of the corporate boardrooms. They want to run democracy out of the Senate. They want to run democracy with corporate donations.

We've banned corporate and union donations. We like the people of Manitoba to have a chance to come to a convention and have a healthy, open, democratic debate, the exact opposite of what they did behind closed doors in Brandon just this fall.

Mr. McFadyen: I find it surprising, Mr. Speaker, that the individual who is serving in this office for a longer period of time than any other person who has occupied that office, our unelected Premier of Manitoba, would be taking potshots at unelected senators in Ottawa, our unelected Premier who has never received a mandate from the people of Manitoba.

He got a mandate through a faulty NDP leadership process, Mr. Speaker. Unelected Premier,

falsified election returns, two-for-one tax credits, taking money from Manitoba taxpayers—why not just show some leadership?

They've turned down the vote-tax money three years in a row. I know his party members think that they have an entitlement to take money from taxpayers, that they have no choice but to pay, Mr. Speaker. Will he show some leadership? Will he stand with taxpayers and will he show that he, even though he's unelected, is prepared to stand with taxpayers?

Mr. Selinger: I remember the last election campaign very vigorously, and I truly enjoyed talking to the people of Manitoba in the last election, and they gave us a mandate to support the banning of corporate and union donations in this province.

The member opposite has never sent back the public subsidy that his party has received from Elections Manitoba. He's never sent that million dollars back to the people of Manitoba, so he can't have it both ways. He cannot say he's against public support for political parties and take the cheque, which is exactly what he's done. He can't say he believes in grassroots democracy and then have his campaign run by a senator. That's just unrealistic. And he can't say that he supports democracy and not repudiate corporate and union donations in the democratic process.

It's very clear who supports the democracy of Manitobans. And, by the way, we were never caught in a vote-rigging scandal like the members opposite.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, this is an unelected leader whose campaign filed a falsified election return. His personal campaign in St. Boniface filed a falsified election return in order to get money from Manitobans that they weren't entitled to. When he found out about it, he got a get-out-of-jail-free letter signed by the brass of the NDP. When I asked him about that letter the last time, what did he say? That he had personally destroyed that letter, that this leader of the NDP personally destroyed that letter that he received, Mr. Speaker, as part of that cover-up. He has that on his hands.

So if he wants to move forward and demonstrate that he's interested in democracy rather than shredding evidence relevant to their cover-up, why doesn't he stand up and shred the vote tax bill that they brought in a few years ago?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite wishes to advance democracy, he should repudiate

today, in front of the members of this House and all of Manitobans, his desire to return to corporate donations being part of the political process. Let him stand and say he will never, ever change the law which bans corporate and union donations in this province. Let him then return the cheque that he got from Elections Manitoba of public support in the last election. And when he's done those two things, then we can truly talk about democracy in this province.

We've banned corporate and union donations. We've made it possible for Manitobans to participate in the democratic process, both financially and in terms of increased access to polling stations. We are interested in all measures which strengthen the democratic process, so Manitobans, no matter where they live, no matter what their backgrounds, no matter what their means, have the opportunity to fully participate in this democracy which we enjoy, one that we do not think should ever be tainted by election scandals.

Bill 212 Government Support

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, three years ago we introduced a bill that denied car thieves from profiting from their crimes. This government would not support it, refused to let it go to committee, refused to hear what Manitobans had to say.

Today I reintroduced the bill, a bill that supports the innocent ratepayers of Manitoba and denies benefits to car thieves.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister now support this bill, let it go to committee and let Manitobans have their say, or will he continue to support the criminals instead of the victims?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Indeed, auto theft has been a major problem in this province beginning back in 1992. Unfortunately, the government of the day did nothing to deal with the epidemic of auto theft. The government of the day brought in a bill in 1995 creating the no-fault system. Strangely enough, the opposition—or the government of the day—including the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), including the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson)—they sat around the Cabinet table; they passed a law which didn't take away any benefits for convicted car thieves.

We moved in 2004 to bring in a piece of legislation which would then reduce benefits for car thieves. I've been very clear: We will be moving to take away any benefits for convicted car thieves. We will indeed be moving to shut the door on any benefits for those convicted of stealing cars.

Mrs. Taillieu: Oh, Mr. Speaker, we didn't have car thieves in this province until they took over government in 1999.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is on the table again and they won't support it. They are on the side of the criminals. We're on the side of the innocent ratepayers of Manitoba. *[interjection]* Well, you know, at least not as many, anyway. We are on the side of the innocent ratepayers of Manitoba. They are on the side of the criminals.

An innocent cab driver was killed, Mr. Speaker. An innocent cab driver was killed when seven people in a stolen vehicle rammed into the side of his taxicab. He paid into a system that eventually paid out to the car thief that killed him, Mr. Speaker. That's just wrong.

Manitobans know that. Why doesn't this minister know that? Why is he stalling, Mr. Speaker? I'm asking him again: Will he support this bill, pass it on to committee, and let's hear what Manitobans have to say.

* (11:00)

Mr. Swan: You know, Mr. Speaker, I don't find auto theft to be a laughing matter, and the member opposite has put terrible misinformation on the record.

In 1995, when the government of the day passed the bill, Winnipeg had become the auto theft of Canada, and, in fact, auto theft had increased by 218 per cent in the four years leading up to the new bill coming in. Since that time, since our government has been in power, we've taken great steps to take on auto theft. That's why auto theft is at its lowest rate in two decades despite the fact there are more cars on the road. We will be moving to shut the door on auto thieves.

I don't understand, frankly, from reading this bill, why the member for Morris doesn't also think it will be important to take on those who are involved in an accident street racing. We think there should be strong legislation that deals with that issue. I'm not sure why the member for Morris thinks that someone

who's injured when they're fleeing from a police officer gets benefits.

We'll be bringing in stronger legislation to deal with these situations. We won't be saying anything any time we feel like it in cheap, political points. We'll be taking strong steps to protect Manitobans because that's how we do it on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't see his bill on the Order Paper. Why is he dragging his heels? Where is the bill? He says he's going to introduce it—he's not. Where is it?

My bill is here on the Order Paper, on the table. Let's debate that bill, Mr. Speaker. It's here; it's three years overdue. If he is serious about this matter, he will support this bill; he'll put it to committee, and let's hear what Manitobans have to say about this bill, because they'll support it.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, as the members opposite should know, I introduced a bill today dealing in particular with Bill S-9 which is new federal legislation dealing with auto theft. I don't believe the member actually took that into account when she was drafting this bill, and we want to make sure that any piece of legislation that's passed by this Legislature is effective and not simply something for show.

As I've said, Mr. Speaker, we've taken steps to bring down auto theft, down 80 per cent since 2004, lower than at any point in almost two decades in this province. We've done that by investing in police officers, every single one of which each of those members have voted against. We've done that by increasing resources for our Crown attorneys. Every additional Crown attorney has been voted against by the members opposite. And we've used Manitoba Public Insurance, their immobilizer program and other work by that corporation, to take on this epidemic and prevent tragedies in our communities.

Police Services Federal Funding

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, last week a \$14.4-million mystery was solved in the province of Manitoba. That's the amount of money that the federal Conservative government gave in 2008 for policing for Manitoba, their share of a cross-Canada program. And yet for three years it went missing. You know, the Brandon police were looking for it; the City of Winnipeg was looking for it; we were looking for it, and, lo and behold, last

week out comes the Premier (Mr. Selinger) with the bags of money. Apparently he had it stashed under his desk in a pre-election election fund.

Why is it, Mr. Speaker, that the Attorney General let his Premier play politics with police and hold that money when it was desperately needed three years ago?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am absolutely delighted to have a question on justice from the member for Steinbach, and I am delighted to be able to talk about investments in policing.

With this budget we will have added, with provincial money, 255 new police officers across the province of Manitoba. You know, every year that this—that the member for Steinbach has been in the House, he's stood to vote on the budget and he's voted against more police officers every single year.

In 2007 we promised we would add 100 police officers across the province of Manitoba. Budget 2011 makes that commitment complete. That doesn't include the support we've given to the police helicopter in the city of Winnipeg. That doesn't include the support we've given to setting up a cadet program in Winnipeg. That doesn't include the many specialized units, the many investments that we've given.

I'm hoping that perhaps the member for Steinbach has had a conversion and he'll be supporting more police as is the—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: We supported that \$14 million three years ago, three years ago, that the Harper Conservative government gave to the—gave to this government. But, you know, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) decided he was going to play politics. He was just going to hold back that money. Brandon police were looking for it. They were asking. We need the money now, they said a couple of years ago. The City wanted the money a year ago, but, no, the Premier decided, I'm going to hold it and I'm going to have a pre-election announcement, even though that money could have saved individuals. It could have reduced victims.

Why is it that the Attorney General, who should be standing up for victims, allowed his Premier to play politics and hold that money and put his own political interests ahead of the interests of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Swan: Well, it's quite amazing, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the member for Steinbach's made it more clear because sometimes it's hard to understand. The member for Steinbach opposes permanent, sustainable funding for police officers in Manitoba, but he supports temporary, interim funding for police officers in Manitoba.

The member opposite should know that the fund provided by the federal government is a short-term fund. There was a promise during a federal election, of all things, to add 2,500 police officers across Canada. Somehow the funding was less than expected and somehow it turned out to only be a commitment for a short period of years. We welcome the money. That's why we're going to make sure every cent of that money is spent on police officers in Manitoba.

We're calling on mayors; we're calling on police chiefs across the province to work with us to make this a permanent commitment to add more officers to our streets.

Mr. Goertzen: If ignorance was painful, the minister would be screaming day and night, Mr. Speaker. This is money that was committed three years ago. Ontario flowed their money a couple of years ago. Saskatchewan flowed their money. They've had police officers on the street protecting their citizens because they used the money earlier on, and yet here in Manitoba the—through the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) direction, that money was held for a pre-election announcement.

Why didn't he allow the money to come forward to hire police officers when communities like Brandon, Winnipeg and all those across Manitoba said, we desperately need the police officers now. Why did he allow them to play politics with policing instead of allowing those police officers to be on the street earlier protecting Manitobans?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, the only person playing politics with policing is the member for Steinbach. Where was he in 2008 when we added more police officers across the province? Voted against the budget. Where was he in 2009 when we added more police officers across Manitoba? He voted against it. Where was he in 2010 when we added more police officers? Voted against the budget.

And he stood up last year, several months ago, and he stood and he voted for a amendment to a budget proposed by the Conservatives which would have cut \$500 million out of front-line services

across this province. That would have meant fewer teachers. That would have meant fewer nurses, fewer doctors. Not only would it have meant no further police officers, it would have strained municipalities. It would have cut police officers. There would be fewer police officers on the street due to the reckless suggestions of the opposition leader and his Conservative colleagues on the other side of the House.

We're not doing that. We're adding police officers. We've done it every year and we will—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Moose Population Restoration Plan

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, in parts of Manitoba the moose population has been severely decimated. Population data from the NDP government survey just recently finished estimates the moose population in gaming hunting areas 14 and 14A has plummeted from 2,480 in 1992 to only 148 animals in this latest survey. The NDP government has dithered, and moose numbers in some areas have continued to fall. In the budget the Province had to announce that it's investing in a moose population restoration plan.

Will the Minister of Conservation now admit that he wouldn't need to be investing in a moose population restoration plan if he'd managed the moose population properly in the first place?

* (11:10)

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): Well, Mr. Speaker, everyone who's familiar with the situation in those game hunting areas knows that there is a serious situation with the moose population, and we're working with all the stakeholders. And the member might have acknowledged that last year we did ban licensed hunting in those areas, but I don't expect him to give the government any credit, so we won't be surprised on that count.

But what we need to do now is to move on all the fronts, whether it's predator control, whether it's questions of access to moose. And, of course, we are doing a section 35 consultation with First Nations and with the Métis in case we come to the conclusion that there's a need for a conservation closure, which there may well be.

So we're trying to do it properly, Mr. Speaker, and we know that everyone wants to come to the

table. Everyone acknowledges the problem and everyone will make a contribution. I hope the honourable member will make the same contribution to solving the problem, instead of talking in hindsight of what might have been done.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, groups like Moose for Tomorrow and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation have been raising these concerns about the declining moose populations for some time. Reid Woods of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation said recently, and I quote: You have to maintain a critical mass of animals so the herds can be rebuilt. We fear if the moose population dips—numbers dip too low in some regions, the herds can be lost for good. End quote.

The Manitoba's Progressive Conservatives have proposed a more decisive approach: the use of temporary conservation closures in certain areas to help protect vulnerable moose populations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a PC action plan announced in March.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Conservation today commit to using temporary conservation closures in specific areas to help protect vulnerable moose populations?

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Mr. Speaker, the honourable members opposite are showing their usual respect for the rights of Aboriginal peoples and First Nations in this province.

The fact of the matter is if there's going to be a conservation closure, this would infringe on treaty and Aboriginal rights, and that means that there has to be, pursuant to Supreme Court decisions that have been made with respect to section 35 of the Constitution, the appropriate consultations.

We're engaging in those appropriate consultations so that we can have a conservation closure in a way that would actually work, instead of creating a lot of division out there.

We want to bring everybody to the table, and I can tell you that Aboriginal people and First Nations communities, they realize the problem. They want to be part of the solution. We're helping them to be part of the solution so that all of us can work together on a moose recovery strategy.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's Progressive Conservatives aren't the only ones

calling for this temporary conservation closure, and I'll table for the minister an article from today's *Free Press* for his information in regards to his discussions.

Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation band council just passed a resolution calling for a five-year ban on moose hunting in its temporary—in its traditional territory in the Porcupine and Swan-Pelican Provincial Forest. They know of the severity of this situation, Mr. Speaker, but the minister's not listening.

Craig Stevens, land manager of the Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation stated in today's *Free Press*, and I quote: There has to be a complete ban in all three areas for at least five years so we can develop a sustainable management plan to get enough time to have the numbers reversed. End quote, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Conservation, again: Will he enact temporary conservation closures in certain areas to help protect these vulnerable moose populations, or will he continue to consult while the populations are decimated?

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware of the band council resolution that the honourable member refers to. In fact, I met with the chief just a couple of days before that resolution was passed, as we are meeting with all First Nations communities in those areas. And with Moose for Tomorrow, we've set up a moose advisory committee on which the Manitoba Wildlife Federation will sit, along with the representatives from Moose for Tomorrow.

So if we're going to have a conservation closure, it has to be done properly. It's easy to call for it; it's another thing to do it properly so that it actually works. That's what we're going to do. We're going to do something that actually works, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Debt Out-of-Province Servicing Costs

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister of Finance could speak to the \$807 million that's leaving the province this year because of the NDP's policy of using Manitobans' wallets like an ATM machine without any accountability. This Minister of Finance has committed to cutting a cheque for \$807 million to out-of-province lenders to pay the interest on the debt.

Mr. Speaker, over the last two years combined, the NDP has put a burden of \$1.5 billion in interest on middle-class families and the working poor in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, when is the minister going to admit that it's wrong to send \$800 million of Manitobans' money out of province to out-of-province banks because she can't get her books in order?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I want to just tell the members of this House that we have worked very hard to bring the debt-servicing costs down in this province.

The member opposite is talking about how the debt is financed, Mr. Speaker. I will remind the member opposite that in 1999 we were spending 13 cents of every dollar on debt financing. Now we are spending 6 cents on every dollar on debt financing.

We have worked very hard and have worked with financiers to ensure that we have the finances that we need in place to continue to deliver the services that Manitoba people want, the services to keep front-line services open, to ensure that there is police officers on the street, Mr. Speaker, all of the things that have to be done in this province.

We're doing it, Mr. Speaker, and we're doing it at less than half the price it was being done in 1999.

Mr. Gerrard: And now because of her poor management, almost a billion dollars is leaving the province every year in interest on the debt.

If the minister wonders why private sector business has the jitters about investing in Manitoba, maybe she should look to the article recently in *Bloomberg* magazine, one of the world's leading business publications, about this minister's record debt budget. The focus of the article is the almost \$500-million deficit, which would startle anyone looking to create jobs in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, now that *Bloomberg* magazine is worrying private investors about creating jobs in Manitoba because of the NDP's record debt budget, perhaps the minister will now admit that it's not smart to manage our Province's finances so that she has to send almost a billion dollars to out-of-province interests to service the Province's NDP's bad debt.

Ms. Wowchuk: Again, I will remind the member that we are spending half as much on debt servicing—

6 cents on a dollar versus 13 cents on a dollar—than it was in 1999, Mr. Speaker.

I would remind the member, as well, to look at some of the information that's in the budget where, in fact, investment in Manitoba is growing. And I would remind the member to look at that same magazine and see where they rate Manitoba cities, and Winnipeg and Brandon are in the top 10, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our economy is growing. There's more people in this province. Our population is growing, getting younger, and we are training those young people to take those jobs that will come forward with a new investment.

Mr. Speaker, I again remind the member that we have reduced the debt-servicing costs from 13 cents on a dollar in 1999 to 6 cents on a dollar in 1999.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, in the two years that this minister has been Finance Minister, she has increased our net debt by \$3.5 billion. It's a concern that if the NDP were to continue—if they were to be re-elected, we would have a net of \$7-billion increase in debt over the next four years. That's countless hundreds of millions more of Manitobans' money going out of province rather than investing in good jobs and good services for everyday Manitobans.

And with this record debt budget, this year the debt has magically gone up more than three times over what the actual deficit is. How is this? Can the minister answer why the debt has gone up so much more than the actual deficit?

With almost a billion dollars of Manitobans' money going out of province to service the NDP's debts, when is the minister going to admit she's exploiting middle-class Manitobans, exploiting the working poor in Manitoba and putting the future of children in dire risk and that this is wrong.

* (11:20)

Ms. Wowchuk: The member is asking why the debt is going up. I wonder whether he has supported all of the stimulus money, all of the investment in infrastructure, whether it be in schools, whether it be in hospitals, whether it be in roads or drainage. Right across the country—right across the country, no matter what political stripe a government is, they have been spending money in infrastructure to build our economy and to keep working—people working during this downturn.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at our debt-to-GDP ratio, our debt-to-GDP ratio is 26.2 per cent versus what it was in 1999, and it was 32.9 per cent. Our debt-servicing costs are less than half of what they were—were during Conservative times. In 1999, it was 13 cents on the dollar. Now it is 6 cents on the dollar.

Mr. Speaker, we are making investments in Manitoba for Manitoba families, for Manitoba children and our economy is growing.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Portage la Prairie Terriers

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today in this House to recognize the Portage la Prairie Terriers as the 2011 Manitoba Junior Hockey League champions.

On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to congratulate the players and coaches on winning the coveted Turnbull Cup last Saturday night when they defeated the Selkirk Steelers 5 to 2 in game five of the series, in front of an enthusiastic sold-out crowd of over 2,200 fans in the new PCU Centre in Portage la Prairie.

The Portage Terriers finished the regular season atop the MJHL with a record of 40-15-7. The Sher-Wood Division semi-finals, the Terriers defeated the Swan Valley Stampeders, four games to two. They went on to capture the Sher-Wood Division title by beating the Dauphin Kings, four games to two. The Terriers were then challenged by the Selkirk Steelers, but the Terriers outpaced the high-scoring Steelers to claim the MJHL title.

Despite the adversity of losing their star captain, Cory More, during—to injury, whose number 24 stick still remains on the bench alongside the players, head coach Blake Spiller, and the entire coaching staff have done a tremendous job with managing the team and giving the players the skills they need to become a winning team. The Terriers' success has, indeed, been a team effort. However, I would like to mention the play of team MVP, and now captain, Stephane Pattyn, along with veteran Terrier Tyler Moore, MJHL playoff MVP, for their on-ice leadership and outstanding performance, as well as Cory More for his continued inspiring presence in the locker room.

Mr. Speaker, the Portage Terriers will now focus their attention on the La Ronge Ice Wolves as they attempt to duplicate their 2005 ANAVET Cup win by beating the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League champions. The series starts tonight in Portage la Prairie, and I will be alongside those in the packed house, as Portage fans have proven to be loyal supporters of their team. The winner of this series will be rewarded with a spot in the Royal Bank Cup, the National Junior A Championship, to be held in Camrose, Alberta, April 30th to May 8th.

In closing, I would like all my colleagues to join with me in wishing the very best to the Portage Terriers in their quest for the ANAVET Cup. An enthusiastic season ticket holder, I'm looking forward to a lot of celebrating in the new few weeks.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs. Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a point of order.

Mr. Faurshou: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the leave of the House to include in *Hansard* the names of the players and coaches and organization of the Portage Terrier 2011 MJHL champions. I have it on a list.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement of the House that the honourable member would include the name of each player on the Portage Terriers to be recorded in *Hansard*? [Agreed]

Mr. Speaker: Okay, so if you give it to the recorder, it will be in *Hansard*.

Portage Terriers

Executive: Dale Deschouwer, President; Brad Sanderson, Vice President; Brent Michie, Treasurer; Denise Sanderson, Secretary; Trent Ward, Governor.

Directors: Brian Braden, Kevin Dales, Ed Gray, Frank Hay, Greg Kirk, Mo McLeod, Warren Quick, John Schapansky.

Coaching Staff: Blake Spiller, Head Coach and General Manager; Paul Harland, Assistant Coach and Director of Marketing; Jim Tkachyk, Assistant Coach; Frank Harding, Head Scout and Director of Player Personnel; Dennis McNish, Jesse Peters,

Doug Novak, Darrin Ward, Vaughn Guy, Len Robinson and Oscar Marx - Regional Scouts; Geno Romanow, Trainer and Equipment Manager; Harry Funk, Team Chaplain; Bruce McCallum, Education Consultant.

Team Roster: Jason Kasdorf, Kirk Crosswell, Cam Canart, Josh Dufresne, Brett Adnum, Yvan Pattyn, Adam Robson, Tyler Harland, Kenton Valliant, Cody Kosteki, Tyler Moore, Mike Gemmill, Stephane Pattyn, Brent Wold, Tanner Harms, Brendan Harms, Tanner Waldvogel, Kajon McKay, Shaq Merasty, Cory More, Kyle Turgeon, Andrew Wiebe.

Marymound 100th Anniversary

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): It's with great pleasure, Mr. Speaker, that I rise today to share with all members of the House an important announcement. This year marks the 100th anniversary of Marymound, a community organization for youth and children in my riding.

Marymound was founded in April, 1911 by five Sisters of the Good Shepherd, who were invited to Winnipeg from Montréal by Bishop Langevin on the recommendation of Judge Thomas Daly of the Juvenile Court. Judge Daly recognized that many of the young women he saw in his court were not criminals but girls and women struggling to cope with poverty, abuse, addiction and neglect.

The Sisters set to work immediately and soon had such a large number of women and girls in their care at their first location at 373 William that they outgrew this building and moved in September to the Leacock Estate at 442 Scotia, where Marymound remains today.

Marymound School opened in 1950. Facilities in Thompson, Manitoba opened in 1980. Marymound now offers over 20 different programs to meet the ever-changing needs of the community it serves. Today, approximately 3,000 young people and families access Marymound services each year.

There are still four Sisters living on site, and, while they don't play as active a role as they once did, they provide valued inspiration and guidance to Marymound staff and youth.

Marymound became a member of the Catholic Health Corporation of Manitoba in 2008, but the Sisters' legacy lives on. Staff continue to adhere to the values set out by the standards of care for Good Shepherd agencies. Above all, they live by the words

of the order's founder, Saint Mary Euphrasia, who stated: One person is of more value than the whole world.

I'd like to acknowledge those in attendance today from Marymound: Sisters Florence McCadden, Brigid Hussey, Lorraine Perreault and Barbara Wells; as well as the chief executive officer, Ian Hughes; fund development co-ordinator, Mardy Yager; and manager of communications, Gwenda Nemerofsky.

I wish them much success in planning the festivities through the centennial year. Thank you to the Sisters and staff for the accomplishments and great service that Marymound has provided to Manitoba's youth for 100 years.

Scotties Tournament of Hearts (Altona)

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to congratulate the community of Altona for hosting a fantastic Scotties Tournament of Hearts that was held on January 26 to the 30th.

Cathy Overton-Clapham of the Fort Rouge Curling Club and her team consisting of the thirds Karen Fallis, second Leslie Wilson, lead Raunora Westcott, and fifth Breanne Meaken and coach Cathy Gauthier captured the Manitoba Scotties Tournament of Hearts championship. It was estimated that 1,000 people gathered in the Millennium Exhibition Centre to watch Overton-Clapham's thrilling last rock victory over the Chelsea Carey's squad of Morden Curling Club.

The tournament displayed Altona's ability to organize and to host one of the biggest curling events in Manitoba. Many positive memories for the community and its organizing committee were created by the successes of the week's event.

The committee generated over \$35,000 in ticket revenues, attracted over \$70,000 in sponsorship revenues, awarded 50-50 pots of over \$6,400 and netted almost \$12,000 in the silent auction and other fundraisers.

The tournament's legacy will extend far beyond a financial surplus which will fund much needed repairs to the Altona Curling Club ice plant and make a sizeable donation to the Altona Community Foundation.

The committee heard time and time again about the quality of the ice, the friendliness of the 300-plus volunteers and the professional execution of the competition. In addition to great curling, there were

other events that made the week one to remember. The Asham Stompers delivered a performance in front of a standing 600-person crowd at the Thursday night fish fry. Over 300 students from area schools were in attendance to watch some of Manitoba's best curlers. The hospitality of the town was confirmed on Friday night as a storm came through the area. Almost 40 Altona families voluntarily opened their homes to out-of-town curling fans who were given the option of not travelling during a typical prairie storm.

Mr. Speaker, the week was a huge success and I would like to thank all of the volunteers and the town of Altona for hosting this first-class event.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

* (11:30)

Park City West Community Centre

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Today I rise to talk about the efforts of many dedicated volunteers and board members of the Park City West Community Centre in my constituency.

I was pleased to attend, along with my colleague, MLA from Transcona, a very successful open house on 13th of April at their premises located on Sanford Fleming Road.

The dynamic team of dedicated volunteers whose names are attached herewith have been working towards building and expanding the Park City community centre for the residents of Radisson.

I have been supporting this concept since my first meeting in 2004 when the team presented their plans to construct an arena and healthy living centre. I see the need to build wellness centres in our communities to give our residents facilities to practise healthy living styles in a safer environment while doing their physical exercises.

The process has also involved consulting nearly 300 local residents to get their input in what they would like to see included in the new community centre. They support the project, and they have received community members' comments in a very overwhelming way, and their input is reflected in the final plans of the new facility. They're now in the home stretch of finalizing details of the business plan. When the project is complete, it will include an indoor ice surface, a daycare centre, an exercise area and a track for people of all ages to enjoy.

Park City community centre volunteers, in particular, Neil Ajudhia, Scott Donald and Scott Van Alstyne, recently, at their event, announced they're partnering with the Seven Oaks General Hospital's Wellness Institute to offer programming. I wish that their efforts be paying off so many years after dedicated and perseverance efforts on their behalf. I support their plans to build a facility that continues to the health of well-being of local residents and also bring the community back to the community centre.

Mr. Speaker, I like to ask for the leave to have the names of the Park City community centre board members and other volunteers included in the statement in *Hansard*. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to—for the names to go into the record of *Hansard*? [Agreed]

Neil Ajudhia, Scott Van Alstyne, Scott Donald, Carol Donald, Susan Desjardins, Stephen Strike, Raffaele Borelli, Gil Delorme, Mike Purdy, Jim Donaldson, Craig Marshall, Mike Segal, Brenda Hrycyk, Dave Brown, Sherry Purdy, Les Kauk, Lome Hammerberg, Greg Spitula, Ed Davidson, Kerry Steinke, Pat Henderson, Marion Segal.

Eleanor Enns

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that I rise today to recognize the passing of Eleanor Enns on March 20th, 2011.

Eleanor was a familiar face around the Legislative Assembly, as she served as administrative assistant for the Progressive Conservative caucus for many years and was the wife of long-serving MLA and former colleague of mine Harry Enns.

Eleanor was born in Winnipeg in 1945. At the time, her family lived in Headingley. They later moved to St. François Xavier where her family farmed and ran Jones' Café. As a young girl, Eleanor could often be found working in her father's café.

Eleanor had a vibrant career. Before working in the Legislative Building, her career began as an operating room technician at Winnipeg General Hospital. After spending some time in Alberta, Eleanor then returned to Winnipeg where she earned accreditation as a medical transcriptionist and worked in this capacity at the Health Sciences Centre. Then, in the early 1980s, she took the job of administrative assistant for the PC caucus. It was

here that she met her husband, Harry Enns. The two married in 1984, after which time Eleanor left the Legislative Building to work in the federal regional minister's office in Winnipeg. I had the enjoyable opportunity of working alongside Eleanor in the minister's regional office for Charlie Mayer just prior to the 1993 general federal election. She was always a delight to work with and had a great sense of humour.

Eleanor loved her home, the Morning Star Ranch in Woodlands. Here she kept many animals, including horses, sheep, goats and alpaca and her beloved Red Angus cattle which she called her red ladies. She shared her passion for animals with her grandchildren, taking them for walks to feed the animals.

As she was an accomplished potter, friends and family enjoyed receiving Eleanor's handmade pottery creations as gifts. She also loved gardening, and her green thumb produced gardens that bloomed all summer long. She put a great deal of time and effort into the gardens, spending the winter months researching the plants she planned to grow in the spring. Eleanor also had an interest in ancestry and passed many hours researching her family history with the help of her sisters.

Eleanor leaves behind her daughter, Allison, sons Curtis, Andrew and Nathan, and five grandchildren, as well as numerous other loving family members. She will be missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing her. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE

(Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and is standing in the name of the honourable member for Ste. Rose, who has 29 minutes remaining.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to continue my remarks on the amendment brought forward by—to the budget on—by the Leader of the Opposition.

You know, we've seen some very alarming things in this budget. There's some issues in there—some commitments made that we certainly agree with, but we still see expenses of government continuing to go up by five-point 5 per cent for this next year while revenue streams are only 2 per cent.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

There's only one end in sight to that type of financing and that is rising debt. Today's debt is always tomorrow's taxes and I think sometimes government forgets that.

We've seen modest, very modest, a \$250 increase to basic personal exemption in this budget. That means \$27 to each and every one of us in savings on next year's income tax. I hope I don't get carried away and spend it all in one place but, whoops, I forgot, we've still got bracket creep that's already gone. So debt service has gone up a whopping \$40 million in one year. It's hard to believe that we can pay so little attention to a growing debt. We know that \$800 million is going to service that debt each and every year, \$800 million that, if we could keep the debt under control, could be used in much needed infrastructure and things that people in Manitoba are really asking for.

The most wasteful thing—probably the most wasteful public policy that's ever been thought of in this province is the routing of Bipole III. It impacts the best farmland in the province. It crosses a floodplain which the president of Manitoba Hydro, by the way, once said we would never build in a floodplain. It doesn't make any sense.

We have First Nations on the east side saying that they're opposed to the west-side route. We have members on the other side of the House blowing that there's going to be \$20 billion in revenues, and on and on and on. Hydro is priced here. We have to sell into a competitive market. They're not going to pay extra prices simply because we route the line in a certain direction. That's simply not going to happen.

I wonder if this is going—if they're so willing to pay all this money, and we see the revenues dropping, by the way, from last year to this year, about 50 per cent of the revenues on power sales but, I wonder, if they're so impressed by this, why aren't the Americans just building the hydro line?

I am sometimes, kind of, a little confused by the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro and her misdirection on what actually is happening here.

I wrote a letter to the editor in the *Brandon Sun* earlier this winter using the figures of \$1.5 billion of extra cost and the minister's response was, oh, the Tories have got it all wrong. It's not actually \$1.5 billion, it's only \$460 million we're wasting. So you're wrong. We're only wasting half a billion, not a billion and a half. That's really good economics. It certainly is.

* (11:40)

Then the other misdirection that she likes to perpetrate is the converter stations and sales to Saskatchewan. And I have many more things that I would like to mention here, but I see my time is running short so I'll thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker, and you can move on to the next speaker.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Acting Speaker, as I begin my remarks on the 2011 budget speech, I do want to most specifically thank the citizens of Brandon East for continuing to place their faith in me as their representative in the Manitoba Legislature. I am very, very proud to represent Brandon, my home community, to represent Brandon without fear or favour, and to work with so many in the Wheat City to build a better community for all people who live there. And I am very, very proud, in addition, to be working with a government that shares that view.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this term will—or this session will be the last time when we will see many members in the House. There are a number who are leaving, and there are probably a number of more, perhaps, including myself, who won't be back here after the election in October. But, the—on both sides of the House, in my time here since 1999, this will be the largest turnover. I've got eight members that will be leaving, according to my list right here, and it will be the largest turnover in my time in this Legislature. So I wanted to spend a couple of moments reflecting on some of those members and my relationship with them, as a matter of historic record.

The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), my good friend the member for Flin Flon, who was born and raised in Sleik-Echt, Limburg, the Netherlands, a post-war child, post-World War II, who came to Canada. The member for Flin Flon who is proud to call himself a democratic socialist, and I'm proud to associate myself with a philosophy of caring, a philosophy of compassion, a philosophy of building community together, not leaving anyone behind. Mr. Acting Speaker, the member for Flin Flon has been, over the course of my association with him since

1999, inspirational to me as an MLA, who works day in and day out in his community, on behalf of everyone in his community, again, without fear or favour, something that I am proud to share with him.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) will no longer be with us after this particular election. The member for Burrows who is a—who spoke yesterday in this House, we will miss him profoundly. He's represented his north Winnipeg constituency exceptionally well over the years. I should also note there's an old joke about the New Democratic Party being a party of teachers and preachers; the member for Burrows, as my colleague, Jim Maloway, who's now a federal MP, used to refer to as the Reverend all the time, we are going to miss, and I am personally going to miss the Reverend in this House, and I want to say that it's been a privilege to serve with the member for Burrows over these last 12 years that I've been in this House, so I thank him for his work.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the member for Lord Roberts (Ms. McGifford) will also be leaving us this session. Again, I'm sad of that occasion—although I know that she will be enjoying herself up Victoria Beach and enjoying her family a lot more frequently and with a lot more intensity, I dare say, once her retirement from this House is complete.

I first met the member for Lord Roberts, she may not remember this, but she may, too, back in my days at UWSA when I was in my early, early twenties, through her daughter and mutual friends of ours at the old University of Winnipeg Student Association, in my days at University of Winnipeg. And I have always greatly appreciated both the advice, the wisdom and great sense of humour that the member for Lord Roberts possesses. I've very much appreciated working with her, and very much appreciated her advice and support and encouragement over the years. So thank you to the member for Lord Roberts who, in addition to the member for Flin Flon and Burrows, has been an exceptionally good MLA for her constituency over the years.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the MLA for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick) will also be leaving us this year. And I got to know the member for St. Norbert very closely; we share an office suite in the Legislature. I did not know the member until she came to this House, but I have been privileged to become a very good friend of the member for St. Norbert and her husband, who has—who have been very good friends over the last

number of years since she came to the Manitoba Legislature.

There is no doubt that the member for St. Norbert is one of the hardest working constituency MLAs in this House, Mr. Acting Speaker. She has built a south Winnipeg exurban constituency that's not typically New Democrat in its demographic into one that strongly has supported her over the last number of years, and she has indeed earned the trust and earned the confidence of the people of St. Norbert as an able and passionate representative of their interests within government.

And, you know, I take a lot of inspiration from the member for St. Norbert in her work ethic and in her engagement with constituents on a daily basis. In that regard, the member from St. Norbert would hold her own with my own predecessor, Len Evans, and the ethos that we, in Brandon East, bring to the table that our job, our job No. 1 and our boss, are the constituents of our particular riding, and that's where we take our marching orders from, Mr. Acting Speaker.

On the other side of the House, there's four members from the government side of the House—and the other side of the House, Mr. Acting Speaker, I had the privilege to spend last night with the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), who is my brother's favourite MLA—my brother, Grant Caldwell, who's a teacher in Manitou. He speaks always very, very highly of the member for Pembina, as do his constituents, I might add.

Last night we enjoyed ourselves in Winkler at the Chamber of Commerce gala where the member spoke eloquently to his constituents, and, as I recall, the Chamber paid tribute to him in his time as an MLA for Pembina—16 years, I believe, is what we spoke of last night.

In fact, the member for Pembina gave me a ride back to my car, which I'm very grateful for, last night from the—what was a long walk between the parking lot and the church. So I thank the member for his time here and I do want to commend him because, as I say, my brother, who is a constituent of his, soon to be a constituent of the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), I believe—was that right? Or Carman. Maybe Carman. Manitou is moving in the redistribution.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

But I—we will miss the member for Pembina in this House, and I was, as I say, pleased to spend last night with him in Winkler.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), who is also leaving this House at the end of this session—we go back an awful long way. Before I came to this House, the member was the minister responsible for a variety of portfolios, but one portfolio where we crossed over a lot and got to know each other was the—was when I was a member of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities, later the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and MAUM.

The member was very active in provincial issues, municipal issues, as an educator, and as a former Minister of Education. I also got to know the member through the file that he shared with me when—during my time as Minister of Education and Training in the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member for Russell is a legendary figure in that part of the province, and he will be missed—in this House in particular he will be missed because his voice was often one that overwhelmed all others in this House. So I pay respect to the member for Russell and his long career in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) is also leaving at the end of this session. I got to know the member for Portage la Prairie during my time in this Legislature, although he did have and does have a close family relationship with my maternal side of the family in Portage. My mother and the Rands, Wright, Elgert family—families are all—have all been prominent in Portage over the years, and the Fauschou family were very close friends within my own family. And I know that the member for Portage will be missed in his home constituency as he goes on to other career opportunities after leaving this House this coming session.

* (11:50)

I know also—I should say that the member is very proud at the work that was undertaken to complete the long-anticipated recreation complex in Portage. He spoke earlier today in his member's statement about hockey finals taking place now in Portage. That new rec centre, which, you know, I'm proud that our government built, Mr. Speaker, was very much a long-held dream and desire for the member of Portage, and I'm very happy that he was able to

achieve that with the support of our government this past session.

And, Mr. Speaker, the last but not least of the eight members that I've got that are leaving of their own accord in this coming fall is my good friend the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), somebody who I have worked with for 30 years, which seems extraordinary.

Long before I sought elected office, the member for Brandon West was a city councillor in Brandon. We served together on the city council of Brandon when he was mayor and I was councillor for the downtown Rosser ward. We worked together when he was a Member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, and I an MLA, and then more recently we've worked together on a number of files as Brandon East and Brandon West MLAs, respectively. We will miss the member for Brandon West in Brandon. It has been a pleasure to work with him over the last four years.

I—in speaking about the member for Brandon West, I should note that the first 10 years of our political—direct political friendship, we mostly fought on city council. We had many, many disagreements, Mr. Speaker. We fought.

For example, one of the major issues that confronted me as a new city councillor was the fact of universal, blanket high-density residential zoning throughout my entire ward, Mr. Speaker, in downtown Brandon, which resulted in, as you might expect, every single house in that ward being open season for a boarding house and rooming houses, and of course it created all sorts of problems, with the fragmentation of the residential neighbourhood, with the creation of unsafe and crime-ridden zones in the area, with pressures on homes. You'd have several, several, you know, up to a dozen people living in a home with one or two bathrooms, all by law. And it was one of the major reasons I ran and sought elected office to begin with, was to reverse this wrong-headed policy which was creating a war zone in downtown Brandon, and I fought for 10 years before that blanket high-density zoning was removed. And every step of that way I fought against the wishes of the member opposite, although I have to give him credit: at the end of the eight years, council finally did support a change in that blanket high-density zoning to reflect a more diverse zoning—low density, moderate density and high density where it was warranted, as opposed to just the universal, blanket high-density zoning that existed—and that has made a big difference in Brandon in the

10 intervening years or the 12 intervening years, where that neighbourhood is now taking root and gaining strength as a mixed density, low—small—where small families and moderate density with larger families in duplexes exist side by side with high-density apartment blocks. A far more satisfying and far more cohesive community has been formed since the elimination of that high-density zoning.

I should also say I, you know, I fought to even file papers in 1992 or '93, I can't remember, it goes back now. But my papers to run for office were contested by the City with the member for Brandon West as mayor. I had just returned from a honeymoon and had been away from Brandon for a while in India, and when I came back and filed my papers I was met with opposition because, despite the fact that I was born, raised, pays taxes and lived in Brandon all my life, somehow I was a threat to the Tory establishment in town and they challenged my very ability to file election papers on the grounds that, of course, I didn't live in Brandon. I never—of course, that was rejected after several thousand dollars in legal fees expended by the City because, obviously, I was born, raised, live and pay taxes in Brandon. There's no place else on the planet that I could possibly live, despite the honeymoon I took in Asia.

Having said that, in terms of the fighting against issues in Brandon with my friend from Brandon West, we also worked together during those times. And the most significant example of that, Mr. Speaker, was the development of the Brandon Riverbank Assiniboine riverbank corridor, which was a signature achievement and a legacy achievement of the council that the Brandon West MLA was mayor of. And the riverbank corridor, the discovery centre continues to play a very, very important role in the recreational opportunities available to Brandonites. And it does create a very valuable role in the community as a centre for relaxation and a centre for recreation, and as a major park throughout—running throughout the centre of the city. So I'm very—I was very, very proud to work with the member for Brandon West as a city councillor on creating the riverbank development in Brandon, the riverbank park system. And I was also very pleased to struggle with the member for Brandon West during my time on council to achieve a mixed-density zoning downtown, which has made all the difference in the residential neighbourhoods down there, as I said, and to build, in fact, a better Brandon with him.

Mr. Speaker, the—it brings me an opportunity to segue because the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), kind of, unfortunately, he's never had a chance to be in government. He's—as an MP he served in opposition, in this House he served in opposition, and as a city councillor—as a mayor of Brandon—as I said, he did fight against an awful lot of things for me. And I think the for-and-against aspect has got some relevance in this budget speech because we do have two parties in this House. We on the government side of the House who are working each and every day to build in Manitoba, to build a better Manitoba, a greater Manitoba, to build a Manitoba that includes all citizens of Manitoba that can truly take its place as a leader not only in Canada, but a leader in terms of initiatives like the UNESCO World Heritage site on the met-Lake Winnipeg east side, an international and global leader.

Whereas members opposite are against things, they're—they represent—they're against things. They're against, for example, Mr. Speaker, during the years that we've been in office we've completely transformed the Brandon Regional Health Centre, the most recent initiative being the CancerCare treatment centre that is near completion at the Brandon RHA. Every single nickel, every single penny for that CancerCare treatment centre was opposed by members opposite. Every single nickel, every single penny for the development of the Brandon Regional Health Centre was opposed by members opposite. They were against and voted against funding for the development of Assiniboine Community College on Brandon's North Hill. They were against and voted against funding for the recreation and redevelopment of 1st Street in Brandon, for the rebuilding of 18th Street in Brandon. They were against and voted against funding for Neighbourhoods Alive!. They voted against funding for affordable housing. They voted against support for taxation initiatives. I expect in this budget they will be voting against the dedication of a point of provincial sales tax to help Manitoba's municipalities build and maintain infrastructure in our province.

We are confronted in this House, Mr. Speaker, with two visions for Manitoba, one that supports the building of this province and one that opposes building in this province. And it really couldn't be much clearer than that. Every single initiative taken by this government over the last 12 years, every single nickel, every single penny of support that has gone into projects throughout the province over the

last 12 years has been opposed by the members opposite.

*(12:00)

Today, as we head into an election year, Mr. Speaker, the major platform that members opposite bring to the table is opposing initiatives that will help Manitobans. It is—it's against investment in Manitoba, against communities' development in Manitoba, against the provision of health-care infrastructure in Manitoba, against higher education in Manitoba, against, Mr. Speaker, virtually every Manitoban. I dare say, but for those in my—the former Premier Gary Doer used to like to use this phrase—it's a little bit off colour, but it does speak to an essential truth—the only people the members opposite seem to support in this province is the lucky sperm club, the people of—the Charleswood-Tuxedo family compact, those who would buy the Manitoba Telephone System, those who would be potential buyers of Manitoba Hydro. The member—the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) party has made a career, first of selling off Manitoba Telephone System in the province of Manitoba, he was chief of staff for the former premier, then, under the—working for Mike Harris to sell off Manitoba—or Ontario Hydro in Ontario, and then coming back to Manitoba, being crowned the leader of the provincial Tories to sell off the Manitoba Hydro system to the same folks, the same cast of characters that bought Manitoba Telephone System a number of years ago. This is a party that is only supportive of a narrow segment of the people of the province of Manitoba, those who would own and those who would buy all of us.

And, for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I dare say they never deserve to be in office again and lead this province. But, certainly, this year, an election year, when the only thing on offer from members opposite is negativism and being opposed to building a better Manitoba, the choice is quite clear for Manitobans. You have an option to support those who build this province along with you as an inclusive—inclusive—vision for this province and those who would only serve themselves and their cronies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, Mr. Speaker, indeed, it's a pleasure to have the opportunity to debate this year's provincial budget as laid out by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk).

And, it's certainly—thank the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) for putting those kind words on the record regarding our members that are going to be retiring. And, certainly, the member was, you know, quite gracious in laying out those comments.

And I, too, want to pass on my best wishes for those members that are going to be retiring and moving on to other career items and agendas down the road.

You know, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) made a couple of interesting comments during his speech as well and, certainly, talking about the provincial election that's coming up here, and clearly the budget, I would say, is a budget with a view to the coming election. And, certainly, the government of the day laid out some ideas in there that would look to benefit a lot of Manitobans with a view that we're six months away from a provincial election.

You know, obviously, a lot of Manitobans are not maybe focused on the provincial budget as, you know, as we as politicians in the Legislature are. Manitobans have a lot of issues before them right now and, currently, you know, the flooding issue that's occurring throughout Manitoba is a significant event and will impact many Manitobans and will impact the pocketbooks of many Manitobans, you know, as well as disrupting their lives. And I know we talk about the flood quite often. We were good—quite focused on the Red River Valley.

But, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to let you know that it's a significant overland flooding event that's occurring in southwestern Manitoba as well. And I have a—quite a number of municipalities and towns that, you know, are fighting on an hourly basis to keep the water at bay. So those municipalities and towns are severely impacted. And there's going to be a significant loss of municipal infrastructure in terms of culverts and roads that have been washed out and have been severely impacted by this particular season of flooding. And, obviously, it's going to have a tremendous impact on the provincial budget going forward. And, certainly, hopefully, the federal government will come to the table as well when we do fully realize what kind of financial impact that we're looking at here in terms of this year's flood.

I do want to commend the municipal officials that are doing great work in terms of the flood protection, also the volunteers that are out there

doing the sandbagging and doing whatever they can to mitigate the loss.

And, you know, I want to make a comment going back to member for Brandon East and talking about the election, and I know a fellow by the name of Mike Waddell out in Brandon East, who is going to be running against the member for Brandon East. Mike—you wouldn't contact with Mike over the last few days and he's busy working out in Brandon East in that area. He's busy sandbagging, and, you know, he takes his commitment very seriously there and he's out trying to protect the property of his neighbours. So I certainly commend Mike for the work he's doing out there.

It's unfortunate that the Premier took the opportunity of a nice photo op out in Brandon a couple of months ago when they delivered that sandbagging unit there that the Province bought that we all thought would be of use for people out in western Manitoba, and it's unfortunate that the government, you know, didn't follow through on that commitment. You know, it's one thing to have the photo op and have the machinery there, but the significant part of it is have the ability to have people on the ground to actually get the process working, to get the bags filled, the bags delivered where they're needed. And, unfortunately, the government didn't get that job done.

So we've got people like Mike Waddell out there volunteering their time, making their own sandbagging system, putting it in place, you know, to fit the bill on the local area. So, again, hats off to those people that are doing the real work out there.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the budget today, obviously, there's some issues in the budget that, you know, we certainly can support. There's a lot of initiatives in there. In fact, I think a lot of Progressive Conservative ideas found their way into the budget, and, obviously, that's a sign of an election coming up in the next few months that, you know, if the government wants to cover off any of those potential areas that, you know, there might be an issue for discussion or for debate during a provincial election. So we're certainly happy to see some of those, you know, investments in our communities around Manitoba and some positive ideas there.

But the concern that we have on this side of the House, and I hope the members opposite will take a long, hard look at the amendment that we are proposing, because it really—the amendment speaks

to the issues that we have with the provincial budget, and there's really two items there that are fairly—laid out fairly clear in our amendment, and I hope the members will seriously consider it during their debate of the bill. So, when we come time to vote for this—our amendment, you know, they have a real good look at it, and I think it's an amendment that Manitobans are looking for.

Manitobans understand the government has to spend money and invest money in issues related to Manitobans. They have a hard time dealing with waste and mismanagement with government, and our motion and our amendment really speaks to accountability in terms of government spending. Under the NDP government, since 1999, we've seen the core government spending almost double. You know, we've gone from a \$6-billion budget to this year, you know, around \$11-billion budget. It's a significant increase in terms of the spending that the Province is undertaking.

In addition, what we're seeing in this particular budget is the Province going to spend again this year more money than they're taking in. We've had very high transfers from the Government of Canada—unprecedented transfers from the Government of Canada over the last few years. Yet this particular government still maintains the idea of spending more money than they're taking in. We're looking at a deficit, you know, in the past three quarters of about \$500 million, and then we're looking at, you know, another significant deficit for this particular budget, very significant, and at the same time that provincial debt is growing substantially. In fact, if you look at this particular budget, we are spending \$807 million to service the debt we have now. That's \$807 million that cannot be used for any other services here in the province of Manitoba.

* (12:10)

The government is quite fortunate right now that we're in a period of relatively low interest rates, so once interest rates go up—which we're pretty sure they're going to—the government will be faced with even higher interest payments on the debt we have now.

And there's no sign, there's no sign that this government is going to be turning around deficit budgeting over the next few years. We had the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) provide us with what she called a five-year plan last year at budget time, and here we are a year later and the Minister of

Finance isn't even following the rules she laid out for herself last year.

She indicated to us that they were going to keep spending within 2 per cent, year over year. Well, here we are, a year later, we have the provincial budget, the expenditure on the provincial budget has gone up over 5 per cent. So the minister has missed her own mark in the course of less than 12 months. So Manitobans have reason to be concerned where this particular government is headed.

And Manitobans are obviously concerned about the money that they have left in their pocket after this government is done taxing them. We are the highest taxed province west of Québec. And I know the members don't like it when we compare Manitoba to Saskatchewan. So many good things happening over there in Saskatchewan. And if you look in Saskatchewan, if you have a two-earner family of five, making \$75,000 a year, the taxes paid in Manitoba: \$4,165; in Saskatchewan, \$1,470. Now, I know the members opposite talk about the cost of living, but that is almost a \$3,000 difference in terms of the tax level, comparing Saskatchewan to Manitoba. It's a very significant difference.

And, Mr. Speaker, if you have a look at our amendment, and which I hope the members do, we're just talking about, you know, controlling the debt, controlling deficit spending, in one clause. The second clause is calling on the provincial government to reduce waste and mismanagement even further and was talking specifically about the largest infrastructure program this province is facing, and that's the Bipole III project.

What we're saying is, if the government was really serious about reducing waste and mismanagement, they would take a real hard look at that particular decision that they are telling Manitoba Hydro to do. In fact, we're talking about \$11,748 for every family of four here in the province of Manitoba, on that one decision alone, Mr. Speaker. That's why we are putting this amendment forward to the government of the day, hoping that they will look at our amendment, and it's a simple amendment. We hope that they will have a very serious look at it, and I think if the government would vote for our amendment, Manitobans would be a lot happier with this particular budget.

I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this important document, and I certainly look forward to further debate on this budget.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): It's my sincere pleasure to rise and offer some comments on, something on this side of the House we call the budget. It seems to have disappeared from the lexicon of members opposite, because this is a very good budget, and they just don't seem to quite know how to handle that.

I have a number of comments to offer, but before I get into that I want to add my thoughts, as well, to—and thanks and deep appreciation to all of my MLA colleagues on both sides of the House who have elected not to return to this very austere Chamber for the next term. These would include, from the opposition benches, of course, the members for Russell (Mr. Derkach), Pembina (Mr. Dyck), Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou), Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) and, of course, the member for Lac du Bonnet has already left.

And on my side of the House, my honourable colleagues from Burrows, Flin Flon, St. Norbert, Lord Roberts and you, Mr. Speaker, have elected to pursue a well-deserved retirement from the Chamber. As an assistant Deputy Speaker in the Legislature, it has been my honour to serve with you, and with all the officers of the Chamber, I'm sure, share that view. You have brought fair and balanced and stable reasoning and decision making and some interesting times that we have all shared down here, and you will, in particular, certainly be missed, and we have big shoes to fill on that front, all of us as MLAs.

I also certainly want to offer congratulations to my former roommate down the hall here in the Legislature, the honourable member for Southdale (Ms. Selby), now our honourable Minister for Advanced Education and Literacy. I know from first-hand experience she brings enormous passion and energy and intelligence to her work here in the building. She hit the ground running and she hasn't stopped since. And I can't wait to see the exciting measures that she is able to bring forward for the benefit of all Manitobans.

Of course, university-aged students and college-aged students in our minds, most often, are young people, but this government recognizes that education should be accessible to everyone and available to them at any stage of life—life-long learning. And, with her additional duties on the literacy front, it will be very exciting to see the type of potential that she is able to bring forward for all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, one of the topics—I'll pick up where my honourable colleague from Turtle Mountain just left off. One of the topics that the opposition is trying to make an election issue out of is the Bipole III issue. And he just repeated, if I heard correctly, this very interesting figure of \$11,000, \$11,748 apparently, according to Tory math—which is always interesting—per-family cost of the bipole. Now, that is what they are claiming is the additional cost of the bipole because of the decision to send it on the west side of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, let me say once and for all that is a completely fictitious, made up, inaccurate figure. The real Tory agenda was revealed for all of us today on CJOB radio, when the Leader of the Opposition was asked a question about the future ownership by the public, for the public, as a Crown corporation of Manitoba Hydro, and he refused to answer the question.

This is yet another very clear indication of what the real Conservative agenda is when it comes to this issue. It is a repeat of what they did to the Manitoba Telephone System. First, you discredit it; then, you undermine it; then, you chop it up, privatize it and sell it off to your friends at bargain-basement prices.

They are not talking about an east versus the west side. They're talking about no hydro development in the north. They're talking about no \$21 billion of revenue for all Manitobans which we would earn through the hydro projects this government is steering through. And they are talking about the privatization of Manitoba.

Now, Manitobans may not be familiar with the track record of the Leader of the Opposition in terms of privatization. I've got a few little moments from history here which I might share in the off chance that anyone reads it. I don't know how many people outside of this building read *Hansard*, but it will become part of the historical archives of our province.

In the 1990s, when the Conservatives were promising not to privatize the Manitoba Telephone System and then doing it and phone rates doubled, who do you think was advising then-Conservative Premier Gary Filmon on how to do that? Well, it would happen to be the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) right now. That was his job.

Not to be outdone by that, the Leader of the Opposition then went to Ontario and advised then-Ontario Conservative Premier Mike Harris on how to do the same thing with the formerly publicly owned Ontario hydro corporation, Hydro One.

And back in the day when he was seeking the leadership of the Manitoba Conservative Party—wouldn't you—was in that very intense competition with the intellectual heavyweight from Springfield, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) thought it would be appropriate to tell his own people why they should vote for him to be party leader. He made no small secret of the pride that he took in taking formerly publicly owned Crown corporations and turning them over to the private sector at bargain basement prices. It was all over his website. It was all over his campaign material, and now he would like us to believe that he actually has Manitobans' pocketbooks at the centre of his concern. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are out to get rid of our future. They're out to get rid of Manitoba's equivalent to Alberta oil, which happens to be clean, which happens to be ready to help us make some enormous transitions in our economy, some of the most important ones ever, such as the electrification of our transportation sector with the new electric vehicles now becoming available on the market.

* (12:20)

And this presents such an incredibly stark contrast between where our government is headed and where members of the opposition would take us. I hope they keep talking about the bipole. I hope the Leader of the Opposition continues to go on CJOB and not promise to keep it a public corporation. I think we will be back on this side of the Chamber with even more seats than we have right now because Manitobans do not share that greedy, self-interested perspective when it comes to the public good. Manitobans want good, sound government. They want government that provides the important services that all of us are entitled to, no matter which part of the province we live in, and they are not going to fall for the MTS trick yet again.

In this budget, Mr. Speaker, we have so many initiatives which are moving our province forward, which are improving the welfare of citizens no matter where we live or the types of challenges and opportunities that we may face and want to take advantage of. And we only have to look on the front

page of the local section of the *Winnipeg Free Press* today to see what it is that Manitobans are going to be seeing, thanks, not exclusively to our government's work but, in large part, to very significant projects which are changing the way our province views itself and the amazing accomplishments that we have to date.

The eight topics that were picked, and I'll point out, it's a mix of public sector initiatives and private sector initiatives. It's not just government that believes in this province. It's not just the private sector that believes in this province. All of us are working together to accomplish some great things for everyone. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights is cited on the front page. The economic injection and value of this, \$310 million. The new improvements to the Assiniboine Park Zoo, that's \$45 million of that will go just for the world-class polar bear centre and a total project of \$200 million. Waterfront Drive, further condo development is coming there, along with a hotel, I see. This is a place in the 1990s, I don't have to tell you, was completely abandoned, had no public amenities whatsoever, and it's now becoming a very modern and viable, vibrant community, \$17-million investment in Manitoba there. The new airport terminal and out at Richardson International Airport, the largest capital project in Winnipeg's history, \$585-million injection into the economy. The new stadium, Blue Bombers and the Bisons and community groups which will use it as well. Price tag there \$190 million improving our economy.

The University of Manitoba's very innovative Project Domino. As someone who used to work in the Physical Plant Department at the U of M, Mr. Speaker, I have a special spot for that one. An additional \$150 million there. University of Winnipeg, which I am proud and honoured to represent now as the MLA for Wolseley, \$105 million of a wide range of projects which have greatly expanded that university's capacities, and, of course, the upcoming investment being made by IKEA. It's a \$400-million development happening there.

All of that, Mr. Speaker, would tend to speak to a vision for this province which Manitobans are excited about, and wouldn't you know it, you turn to just the inside page of the very same section of the paper, in the very same issue where I happened to be speaking on the budget speech today, wouldn't you

know it, there's a headline there saying the latest poll claims that we are no longer saying, I hate Winnipeg. That optimism and our perceptions of our province, of our capital city, have done a one-eighty according to this newspaper article, and again, I think a balanced understanding of that would not be for any one party to claim that they are solely responsible for that. Our government is certainly playing a very important piece in it, and I can't wait to be on the doorsteps, Mr. Speaker, in the upcoming election contest and asking the young family, you know, the—couple or the single parent with kids, which would you—which vision would you support? Do you like the fact that we now have over 8,000 more child-care spaces in Manitoba than we did when we came to office? Do you like the fact that child-care workers' wages have more than doubled compared to the pittance that they were being offered under the Conservatives in the 1990s? Do you like the vision which says, we are going to build, according to this budget, an additional over 2,000 more child-care spaces, or do you want to support a vision which says that you and your kids do not deserve the public services that will make it possible for you to go to work and for your kids to have a fantastic early childhood education experience, because that's the Tory vision?

They do not believe, at a fundamental level, in the role of government making a difference in everyone's lives. They are elitist. They are only in it for a small segment of the population, and they cannot be trusted with anything resembling a public vision for the future of this province.

Look at—I would love to be there when the Tories try and sell their vision on the university campus and on the university colleges and the colleges here in Manitoba. I will have an enormous amount of pleasure asking students, would you like to have your tuition doubled, more than doubled, 132 per cent increase, which is what happened when I was going to school in the 1990s under the Conservative Filmon government? Oh, and guess who was sitting, not just advising the Premier, guess who actually sat on the Board of Governors at the University of Manitoba when that was happening? That would be the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

These are not—you know, I only wish that the opposition could acknowledge and apologize to Manitobans for the atrocious mess that they left us

and for the enormous progress that we have made. I look forward to asking students, do you like the fact that when you count all of the different tax credits that we've brought in, you now get to go to school and it's almost cost neutral for you? When you add in the graduation tax benefit that we have in there, when you add in the regular, annual credits that students get when they fill out their income tax forms and you can put in the number of months that you've been a student and the amount of tuition that you paid, you add all of those different pieces up, students are paying almost no tuition in Manitoba when it comes out to balancing the costs that they pay upfront and what they receive after they graduate, should they choose to stay here in Manitoba.

When I was going to school, wasn't even remotely close to that situation, and I'm very, very proud that we've managed to turn that ship around. Every single generation should have as its full goal is to make sure that the next generation has a better time and more opportunities, not less than what we had when we came through. That's what our government is accomplishing, Mr. Speaker.

I also think that the environment is an issue that is of enormous importance to Manitobans. It's of enormous importance to our government, and the highlights in the budget spoke to a good number of very good initiatives that we have pledged to implement.

I mentioned briefly, earlier, the electric vehicle work that we are going to be doing. I also think I should clarify that when we for, what is it, the third or fourth year in a row now, had said that visits to provincial parks will be free. That doesn't mean that provincial parks are being abandoned. We have \$5 million going into provincial parks, according to the budget, and that will be very worthwhile investments. And I'm honoured to be the legislative assistant for the minister working on those very important issues.

I'm equally proud of the work I get to do with my honourable colleague, the Minister for Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross), and the enormous number of affordable, new housing units that we've built. Under the Conservatives, no affordable housing units were built from 1995 on. They don't believe in building the public good. It's not a surprise. It's a consistent thing throughout history.

And, Mr. Speaker, I very much look forward to continuing my argument in the—at the next available opportunity because there is just so much—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 14 minutes remaining. And the hour now being 12:30, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 15, 2011

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