

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

Vol. LXIII No. 32 – 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 19, 2011

ISSN 0542-5492

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.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 19, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 21—The Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Day Act

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Howard), that Bill 21, The Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Day Act; Loi sur la Journée de sensibilisation aux dons d'organes et de tissus, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Oswald: This new act will establish Tuesday of the last full week in April as Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Day in Manitoba to promote awareness, education and discussion about becoming an organ and tissue donor, arguably the greatest gift that one can give. Reminding people, sign your organ donor card today. I know I have; I hope we all will too.

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

Bill 217—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Expanded Grounds for Early Termination)

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski), that Bill 217, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Expanded Grounds for Early Termination); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation (nouveaux motifs de résiliation par anticipation), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, this bill enables a tenant to terminate a tenancy early in the following cases: domestic violence or stalking, declining health that adversely affects accessibility and a changing of posting for a member of the Canadian Forces or Reserves.

In addition, The Residential Tenancies Act currently has a provision that enables early termination when a tenant is no longer able to live independently or is accepted into a personal care home or a residential care facility. This provision is expanded so that it also applies to other persons who are named as occupants in the tenancy agreement.

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

PETITIONS

PTH 5—Reducing Speed Limit

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Concerns continue to be raised about the number of motor vehicle accidents at the intersection of PTH No. 5 and PR No. 276 and at the intersection of PTH No. 5 and PR No. 68.

The Rural Municipality of Ste. Rose and the Town of Ste. Rose have both raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about the current speed limit on that portion of Highway No. 5 in the vicinity of Ste. Rose du Lac.

Other stakeholders, including the Ste. Rose General Hospital, Ste. Rose and Laurier fire departments, East Parkland Medical Group and the Ste. Rose and District Community Resource Council, have also suggested that lowering the current 100-kilometre-an-hour speed limit on a portion of PTH 5 may help reduce the potential for collisions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider the importance of reducing the speed limit on PTH 5 to 80 kilometres an hour in the vicinity of the town of Ste. Rose from

the west side of the Turtle River Bridge to the south side of the access to the Ste. Rose Auction Mart to help protect—help better protect motorist safety.

And this petition is signed by D. Woods, G. Anderson, L. Brook and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

On December 11th of 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.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by K. Stanick, K. Goodwin, M. Palk and many, many other Manitobans.

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 A. Martens, B. Wilson, C. Satheran and many, many more fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): In addition to the many municipal staff, volunteers, non-governmental organizations and contractors, approximately 700 provincial staff are currently working on the flood response across southern Manitoba and in The Pas.

One of the many places they're working at today is at Melita, where staff are setting up aqua dam tubes on top of the existing community dike to provide additional freeboard. They're also setting up a secondary line of defence along PTH 3 and 83 to ensure the community is protected from rising river levels on the Souris River. Melita declared a state of local emergency yesterday.

I can also advise the House that work continues to raise a section of the dike at St. Lazare by one foot as a precautionary measure to handle flows from the Qu'Appelle River. Approximately eight homes outside of the ring dike are also being sandbagged to forecasted levels.

Further precaution evacuations have also taken place in several RMs around the province. There're currently a total of 763 evacuees, up from 693 yesterday.

There are also now 32 states of local emergency in effect.

As was noted yesterday, Highway 75 has now been closed in addition to the hundreds of other provincial and municipal road closures.

Despite these disruptions, Manitoba remains open for business, and we will continue to work to ensure closures and inconveniences are minimized. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to some of the flooding conditions in the province, and I thank the minister for his ministerial statement.

A number of communities have declared states of emergency and a significant number of people still remain out of their homes. Although only a few homes have taken on water to date, it by no means diminishes the impact of the flood on those affected by it. The flood's expanse is broad, and it will be some time before we move beyond the preparedness stage to the recovery stage.

Work continues to ensure communities can handle the water coming at them. We know that work is being undertaken in Melita on the dike to ensure it's high enough to address rising water. As well, a portion of the ring dike at St. Lazare was being raised in anticipation of high flows from both the Qu'Appelle and the Assiniboine River. There are only two examples of the ongoing—those are only two examples of the ongoing flood preparations under way across the province.

Again, our thanks go out to the staff from all levels of government working on this flood as well as the countless individuals lending a hand to their fellow Manitobans to help them deal with the evolving situations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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, people in communities in a large number of areas of Manitoba are very concerned about what is happening with the flooding, what is happening with the high levels of water in their areas. A particular concern at the moment is the Souris and Qu'Appelle and Assiniboine rivers in southwestern Manitoba, but there are many others, as we well know, including effects on many other First Nations communities, and, of course, there is a major concern now with the

closure of Highway 75, the major route to the United States.

I want to say a personal thank you to all those who are working in this fight, this battle with the water in Manitoba, and I also want to emphasize once again that the many problems that we're facing and the many evacuees emphasize the need for improved efforts at water management into the future as we plan for the years ahead. Thank you.

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 from Christ the King School, we have 24 grade 4 students under the direction of Ms. Susan Enns. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Education (Ms. Allan).

And also in the public gallery we have with us from Gladstone Elementary School, we have 34 grade 5 to 8 students under the direction of Ms. Susan Salmon. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Budget

Proposed Amendments

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I would like to add my thanks to the many hundreds of Manitobans who are working hard to deal with the flooding situations in various places around the province today and our good wishes to those hundreds of people who are currently under evacuation.

Mr. Speaker, last week we tabled two improvements to the budget, last Wednesday. Those amendments will save Manitoba families thousands of dollars while protecting front-line services into the future. Members opposite have now had six days to consider that amendment. We're disappointed that some of the members seem to be negative about the idea of being fiscally responsible and keeping hydro bills down.

But I want to ask the Premier today: With the benefit of six days to consider the amendment, will he be supporting that amendment? Will he be voting yes to save Manitoba families thousands of dollars

and voting yes to protect front-line services into the future, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it was just nine months ago that the members opposite wanted to cut a half a billion dollars of front-line services—to cut a half a billion dollars of front-line services out of the budget. Now when that became absolutely clear to Manitobans, they retreated to a spending review process, which would also cut a half a billion dollars out of front-line services in the province.

We aren't fooled on this side of the House about what their intention is. They want to shrink services to Manitoba. They want to roll Manitoba back to the '90s when nurses were laid off instead of hired, when police were laid off instead of hired, when teachers were laid off instead of hired.

They want to move Manitoba backwards in the '90s; we want to move it forward, and that's what our five-year plan does.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier obviously hasn't read the amendment that was put forward. The amendment contains two improvements to the budget. One will save Manitoba families thousands of dollars on their hydro bills going into the future, and the second one calls on the government to implement efforts to lower the deficit, control spending through a spending review that will reduce waste. It will reduce waste, protect front-line social services and bring a more balanced fiscal approach to ensure that we have a budget focused not just on the next five months but a budget focused on how Manitoba will look five years from now.

And, Mr. Speaker, rather than engaging in this 'meaningly'—meaningless rhetoric, will he stand up in his seat and vote yes to these important improvements to this year's budget?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I gave him a clear answer in my first response. The reality is their concept of a spending review equals Connie Curran decimating the health-care system and laying off nurses. That's their concept of a spending review. Their concept of a spending review is laying off teachers. Their concept of a spending review is putting people out of work in Manitoba. That's where they want to take the province, back to the '90s, back to the days when they thought Connie Curran would solve all the problems by earning a big contingency fee for laying off nurses and putting them out of work.

We are doing the opposite. We're training and hiring more nurses. We're training and hiring more teachers. We put more police officers on the front lines. We're investing in education. We're investing in apprenticeships. Another 1,200 spots have been announced today so Manitobans can have the opportunity to train and work and grow the economy in Manitoba.

* (13:50)

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, none of the desperate rhetoric of the Premier changes the fact that this budget increases debt-servicing costs to being the fourth largest department of government and threatens front-line social services into the future. It'll add thousands of dollars to the bills of regular Manitoba families on their hydro bills. It'll result in a massive tax increase after the next election, which is what they're laying the groundwork for.

The Premier has a chance, with the budget amendment put forward today—which contains two very good, common-sense improvements to the budget—to vote yes to fiscal responsibility, to vote yes to lower hydro rates for Manitoba families and to protect front-line services.

To turn it into a desperate—turn it from a budget that is a desperate focus on the coming five months to a budget that will serve Manitobans for the coming five years, will he vote yes to that amendment, Mr. Speaker, or is he going to vote to raise the hydro bills of Manitobans and threaten their services down the road?

Mr. Selinger: The biggest single risk to hydro rates in Manitoba is the reckless approach of the Leader of the Opposition. His cancellation of Bipole III, his cancellation of converters would cancel Keeyask and Conawapa. They would cancel future expansion of hydro exports out of this province to our neighbours to the south, to our neighbours to the west. It would drive up hydro rates for every single Manitoban, just like he promised he would do in the last election.

If we want to keep hydro low, we build Keeyask; we build Conawapa; we build the bipole; we build the converters; we build the future of this province on clean energy. The member opposite wants to shut it down, put it back in moth balls, lay off Manitoba employees and put the Manitoba economy on a track back to the '90s.

The economy next year will be \$56 billion in Manitoba and the member wants to risk it all for a

half a week's economy, expenditure on increasing reliability for Manitoba Hydro.

**New West Partnership Agreement
Manitoba Participation**

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. McFadyen: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, again, it was the former vice-president of Hydro who used the word "deceptive" to describe this Premier when he talks about bipole, when he talks about hydro.

And speaking of deceptive, when we look back at the history of major trade agreements that have an impact on the economy of Manitoba, we know that this is a province that is built on trade. It is a province that has moved forward every time we have embraced free trade with our neighbours. When we look back, Mr. Speaker, and free trade came forward, the NDP fought it, only to flip-flop years later and support it.

When NAFTA came forward, the NDP fought it at the time, Mr. Speaker, and now they claim to be in favour of it now that they see it working for the benefit of Manitobans. And now they're fighting the New West Partnership of free trade agreement with the rest of western Canada.

I want to just ask the Premier: Rather than doing what they've done on previous trade agreements, will he just admit today that they're wrong on the New West Partnership, save themselves a lot of time and embarrassment, admit today that they're wrong and get on with joining the New West Partnership?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): The member opposite needs to explain why he wants to stop trade in electricity in Manitoba. He wants to cancel Keeyask and Conawapa. He doesn't want one of our major exports to be able to flow anywhere in the province, because he won't build the infrastructure to support it. He wants to move Manitoba backwards.

That's his approach to trade: Stick your head in the sand; cancel everything; move us back to the

'90s; lay off people and run Manitoba down so he can privatize Hydro. That's his approach to trade: Privatize it and sell it off just like he did with the telephone system.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, with rants like that, it's no wonder the former vice-president of Hydro calls him deceptive. With rants like that, it's no wonder that the mayor of Winnipeg, today, says that his budget is totally inaccurate. With rants like that, it's no wonder the people remember that he said that Crocus was a good investment. With rants like that, it's no wonder people remember the stadium was only going to cost \$115 million and that he was going to have a private partner pay for the rest. People remember all the false information he's put on the record in the past, and they're going to hold him to account for that.

Rather than being distracted by desperate falsehoods, why doesn't he address the issue at hand? Why doesn't he say yes to the New West Partnership? Is he in favour of free trade or is he against it? Let him give a clear answer to Manitobans today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I want to caution all honourable members here, because it's starting down a little slippery slope here. The word "deceptive" has been ruled unparliamentary by other Speakers, and, also, if you're quoting from another source, unparliamentary language still cannot be used.

And so I would caution members to pick their words very carefully here because every member in the House is an honourable member. So let's treat each other with respect here.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: And the member's opposite misleading statements are exactly what the problem is with his policy position on any public policy question.

He doesn't actually want to declare his position on where he stands on anything other than to raise the rates on hydro, other than to stop the possibility of trading it because he won't build it, other than making sure that Manitoba does not have a strong economy that can lead to greater exports based on good, affordable, reliable and reputable energy in this province. That's his approach: run down one of the key assets which allows for a strong economy in Manitoba and then say that he had nothing to do with it on his road to privatization, which is really what he's all about.

We'll increase trade in Manitoba because we will allow the Manitoba economy to be competitive, which is why there's zero taxation on small business up to \$400,000, which is why we've eliminated the capital tax, which is why we've reduced corporate taxation from 17 to 12 per cent and which is why we're committed to building hydro so we can have the lowest rates in North America.

Every single one of those policy initiatives the member opposite has voted against, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I have now asked the Premier twice for his position on the New West Partnership and both times he's given evasive responses to the question.

Mr. Speaker, the premiers of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia have gotten together; they've recognized the need to have a strong western Canadian trading bloc. For some reason, the Premier of Manitoba has chosen to oppose that New West Partnership and to keep Manitoba outside of that western trading bloc.

Mr. Speaker, our economy, our social services, our quality of life is built on trade with our neighbours. They've opposed every other trade agreement that's come before. They now seem to be opposed to the New West Partnership.

I wonder if he can give a clear answer to this question, Mr. Speaker, since he's evaded it now twice. Does he think that he is wiser than the three premiers to the west of us who have said we need to get together on trade? Does he think it's in Manitoba's interest to leave our province isolated from major regional trading agreements?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it is Manitoba which has led in developing the internal trade agreement for Canada. We've been one of the co-chairs of that, along with the Province of New Brunswick. It is this government that has forged the first-ever two Cabinet meetings with the government of Saskatchewan, which has led to a memorandum of understanding to share electricity to the west of us. We've worked with the government of British Columbia on clean energy initiatives as well, and we've worked with the government of Alberta on trade issues as well as securities regulation.

We have excellent relationships with the western premiers, and the members opposite know that, and we will continue to develop those relationships to the advantage of Manitoba and, at the same time, develop our hydroelectricity so that the people to the

west of us can take advantage of it and people in our export markets can take advantage of it.

What we won't do is put it all at risk with the intentions of the members opposite to run it down the east side, destroy the boreal forest and privatize it by not letting any development occur in Manitoba.

* (14:00)

Highway 75 (Morris) Redevelopment

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, the closure of Highway 75 due to flooding again has begun. There will be significant costs associated with this closure, particularly for the trucking industry due to the detours and for businesses and industries in the valley whose day-to-day operations are affected.

Highway 75 is our major trade corridor, yet access has been frequently curtailed in more recent years, including 37 days in 2009 and 18 days in 2006.

Mr. Speaker, when is this government going to put a plan in place to maintain this major trucking route and to keep it open during these high-water events?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the member opposite has forgotten the open house that took place in Morris last year, the detailed consultation that took place where we identified the two main options that would significantly reduce the number of days on which Highway 75 is closed. I note, by the way, that the mayor of Morris stated on the public record that: we are confident we've gone further than we have ever gone before, and they, as in the Province, are really actively looking at a solution.

There are no simple solutions, but we have identified the goal of achieving interstate standards, Mr. Speaker. We have already done that on Highway 75 with an investment of nearly \$80 million; that's this government that's done that. It's not an easy issue to resolve, but we are committed to—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, looking and studying is not a plan to put into action. When the trucking industry has to take a lengthy detour around Morris to travel Manitoba's leg of the international trade corridor, it costs time and it costs money. It disrupts the travelling public and has a major impact

on the economy of the town of Morris. Vehicles use more fuel and more emissions are produced.

Since 2006, Highway 75 has been closed for at least 55 days, and we are uncertain how long it will be closed this year. Promises have been made to fix the situation. Many studies have been done. They've been looking at it, studying it, but for 12 years, Mr. Speaker.

After 12 years, when are they going to have an action plan on the table?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's not forget in 1999 when this group opposite, when they were in government. At that time we had an effective capital budget on the highway system of about 85 to 90 million dollars. This year we have, for the second year in a row, a record expenditure of \$363 million. I can tell you it was an embarrassment arriving back into Manitoba and hitting Highway 75 in 1999.

We've invested \$80 million, Mr. Speaker. We have interstate standards now right up to St. Jean. We are committed. We're not studying. We've prepared two alternatives that were presented to the committee last year, and I'd suggest the member opposite talk to the mayor of Morris who said that this government's really committed, and we are working on a solution. Perhaps she should talk to the mayor of Morris and that her constituents have seen a difference under the NDP—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Trucking Association is deeply concerned about this latest closure. They estimate that each week Highway 75 is closed it costs their industry \$1.5 million. CentrePort is in development and uninterrupted truck access to and from that inland port is essential, and yet the NDP are still dithering about what to do with Highway 75. We've repeatedly asked them what is going to be done to address this, and, yes, last year the minister said he's working diligently, but they still don't have a plan on the table.

If he has a plan, why doesn't he announce it today, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the member was last year when an open house attended by hundreds of local residents, including representatives from the town of Morris, from the RM of Morris and surrounding communities, two options were presented. We narrowed it down from 37 to two. One is build a bridge over the Morris

River; the second is move the Morris River bridge north requiring the Morris River to be moved. She would've heard that it's a complex hydraulic question and that many of the local residents there urged that we proceed with caution on the hydraulic study, get the hydraulic study done, make sure that we don't have unanticipated consequences.

I don't know where that member opposite gets her sense of the engineering of this. I trust our staff. I trust the experts, and I, by the way, trust the people of that area who came out with constructive ideas, not the kind of typical Tory opposition politics. Every time we do anything on the highway system, by the way, Mr. Speaker, including 75, for the last 10 years, they voted against it. It's the NDP that's—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Provincial Debt Servicing Costs

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the debt-servicing department is the fourth largest in Manitoba and well on its way to becoming No. 1 under this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, economists and banks—the Canadian banks are largely forecasting a Bank of Canada rate increase this summer and an increase by some 100 basis points by the end of this year. Rising NDP debt coupled with rising interest rates will lead to record increases in debt levels in our province.

Mr. Speaker, when will the minister realize the seriousness of this issue and put a plan in place to reduce the debt in our province?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): And, again, I will tell the member opposite that we do have a plan. We have a five-year plan on how we will meet our debt servicing. We are no different than other governments across the country who have made a decision that they will make the investments in stimulus in order to keep the economy going, to keep people working, and that's why we spent about—budgeted about \$1.8 billion for infrastructure and stimulus in this budget.

I would tell the member opposite to look back at history, as well, because our debt-servicing costs—debt-to-GDP is 26.2 per cent of the budget in 2011. In the 1990s it was 32.9 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

And I would ask her to look at the records, Mr. Speaker, where, in fact, in 1999-2000 it was a billion dollars that was for debt servicing—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the governor of the Bank of Canada recently indicated, and I quote: At some point interest rates are going to move higher. They're going to go back to more normal levels. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, if interest rates rise, so does the cost of servicing the debt, especially with a Minister of Finance who continues to pile more debt each and every year onto this province. The fact of the matter is the Minister of Finance has taken money out of front-line services for health care, education, family services in order to feed her insatiable appetite for debt in this province.

Mr. Speaker, at what point will the Minister of Finance recognize the seriousness of this issue?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the members opposite that I take seriously what Manitobans have told us as we prepare this budget, and I can assure the member opposite that Manitobans did not say remove \$500 million out of the budget, as members opposite were going to do to cut front-line services, to take nurses out of hospitals, to take teachers out of the classroom, to take police off the street. That's what the members opposite would do. We would never listen—do—implement their plan.

But we do have a plan. We have a five-year plan on how we are going to meet the needs of Manitobans and still come back into balance by 2014.

And I'll tell the member opposite, she was wrong on her numbers last year when she said we didn't budget enough for—to cover our debt-servicing cost, Mr. Speaker. We came in under budget and I trust the people in the Department of Finance to be prepared for when interest—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

*(14:10)

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the NDP government has doubled the debt in this province since they came to power. The cost to service the debt has skyrocketed to \$807 million, representing the fourth largest government department in our province.

The governor of the Bank of Canada is warning that interest rates are on the rise, Mr. Speaker, yet this NDP government refuses to take action. Do they

not recognize that by refusing to get the debt under control, they have jeopardized front-line services in health care, education and family services?

Why are they jeopardizing these services that Manitobans need and deserve?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we have, in fact, gotten spending under control and our debt-servicing costs compared to the Conservatives when they were in power.

Our debt-servicing costs under their administration was 13 per cent. Our debt-servicing costs are 6 per cent, less than half, Mr. Speaker.

But the members opposite would go, in one year, and take \$500 million out of the budget just simply to balance the budget without any respect for Manitobans. They say they want health care; they would cut nurses out of health care. They say they believe in education; they'd take teachers out of the classroom. And they would take the police officers off the street.

We know what the Conservatives did in the 1990s. We will never do that to Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III Environmental Impact

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Well, Mr. Speaker everyone knows that the NDP government is way off track when it comes to meeting its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, and even the former premier, NDP premier that is, said his government should be noted—or should be voted out of office if that target can't be met.

Even positive announcements like the one made today don't get the credibility they deserve because of the NDP government's stubborn refusal to reverse the route of the Bipole III and to run it down the east side of the province, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro do her part today to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the Bipole III project? Will she reverse their wrong-headed decision and commit to running the line down the east side, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): When the members talk about greenhouse gas emissions and hydro, Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member of the number of coal plants and the

amount of coal that has been reduced in this province at Hydro.

I would ask the member to think about where our hydro goes. All of these sales that they're opposed to, Mr. Speaker, all of these sales, it is replacing hydro—or power that is produced by coal.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have to look at a much bigger picture than just look at what our greenhouse gases impacts are in Manitoba. There is greenhouse gas impacts from Manitoba Hydro throughout North America where we export our power.

But what would the members opposite do, Mr. Speaker? They want to focus on very—one issue, and that is on Bipole III, and they would cut the line through a boreal forest that is one of the best lungs of the world.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the rhetoric, this government knows that an east-side bipole would have a reduced environmental impact.

The west-side line runs through more forest. It runs through more marshland. It emits as much as 40,000 cars on top of what an east-side line would produce in emissions, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: Will she commit today to taking the equivalent of 40,000 cars off the road by running the bipole line down the east side?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know what the agenda of the members opposite is, and we know what our agenda is. Our agenda is to build Manitoba's economy by producing more clean energy that will benefit all Manitobans and keep our power rates low.

But the members opposite would have no respect for the people of the east side of the province, who have said, Mr. Speaker, they want to develop a UNESCO Heritage Site, a UNESCO Heritage Site that will store 200 million tonnes of carbon, the same amount that is produced each year by 144 million cars.

The boreal forest of the east side of the province is very significant in capturing greenhouse gas. It really is one of the unique lungs of the world, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite would not think about that with—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder Manitobans don't believe her with statements like those.

This NDP government is on track to miss its emissions target. Their former leader said they should be voted out if they can't keep that promise, yet they stubbornly refuse to do the right thing when it comes to reducing emissions associated with the bipole project, Mr. Speaker. That is running the line down the east side.

We've put forward a budget amendment calling on this government to end its mismanagement of the bipole issue, Mr. Speaker. By supporting our amendment, not only will it save hard-working Manitobans money, but it'll also significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with the bipole project.

Mr. Speaker, will the government support our budget amendment? Will the NDP support reducing the amount of bipole-related greenhouse gas emissions by voting for our positive bipole budget amendment?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we know what their agenda is. Their amendment would result in the bipole line being cancelled, the converters being cancelled. It would result in Keeyask being cancelled. It would result in Conawapa being cancelled. All of the things that Manitobans—that will help the economy of Manitoba, have partnerships with First Nations, increase our economy, the members opposite would cancel. They said clearly they would cancel it, and that's the intent of their amendment.

But specifically to the member's question, I want to ask the member if he's aware that in 2010 alone, hydro exports have resulted in emission reductions of 7 million tonnes of CO₂, Mr. Speaker. That's equal or—to more than twice what our Kyoto target was.

The members opposite can't just think about their goal to kill hydro. They have to think about what hydro—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

St. Lazare Flood Mitigation Strategies

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid the minister's math not only doesn't add up but neither does her logic, so I'm going to try a different approach with a different minister.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister responsible for the Emergency Measures and infrastructure what work has been done with the community of St. Lazare, who is experiencing now the high waters of the Qu'Appelle River because of the added overland flooding that comes from the man-made drains in Saskatchewan, that being added to by the Assiniboine River that is going to see Saskatchewan water added to it.

And I'm wanting to ask the minister what preparedness has been put to work in St. Lazare, which will undoubtedly be overwhelmed when the two rivers crest in the next few weeks.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, I did identify in the ministerial statement earlier the situation in St. Lazare. The dike at St. Lazare has been raised by a foot as a precautionary measure to handle flows from the Qu'Appelle River. We're certainly aware of the situation with the Qu'Appelle River.

I think it's important to recognize—and a lot of focus traditionally is on the Red River, but we're seeing very significant pressures on flooding both in western Manitoba and also eastern Saskatchewan. So that is why we have, as a precautionary measure, raised the dike at St. Lazare by a foot, and we've also taken precautionary action with eight homes outside of the ring dike. They are being sandbagged to the forecasted levels.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, in each of the recent five years, St. Lazare and its communities downstream have experienced high water levels, and there's been flooding in the St. Lazare community because of the additional drainage coming from Saskatchewan.

And I want to ask the minister who is responsible for infrastructure and is also responsible for preparing communities in the event of a flood what preparedness he has entered into with the community of St. Lazare, knowing that there is still an enormous amount of water that has to come from Saskatchewan and is going to be entering the Assiniboine River and the Qu'Appelle River and which will undoubtedly overwhelm the community of St. Lazare.

We have seen permanent flooding repair work done in southern Manitoba, but nothing has been done on the west side of the province, and this is a community that is going to be facing flooding year

after year, especially with the government of Manitoba agreeing to bring even more water into the system with the Fishing Lake issue.

*(14:20)

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I point out that we've been working around the clock the last number of months. When I say we, the entire province; we have about 700 employees who have been working around the clock. We have identified areas. I mentioned the Assiniboine dikes yesterday.

It's really important to put into perspective that those dikes—we work 24/7. We had 38 staff, 28 pieces of equipment working on that particular area.

Right now we're working in Melita. We're working in St. Lazare. We're working throughout the province. We are working with a combination of existing infrastructure, rapid deployment I mentioned earlier in terms of the current situation on the Souris River. We take it very seriously.

But I can assure the member, as we do after every flood, as we did after 2009, we will also look at areas where we can make further improvements in terms of permanent mitigation. And I point out, since 2009 one of the reasons we're having lesser impact in many areas of the province, we've had buyouts. We've already started in terms of—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not criticizing the minister nor his staff for the amount of effort and work that is going into fighting this flood. This is a huge—a huge undertaking, and I commend the minister for the action that he has taken and for providing the briefing that he did to all of us who have concerns in the west side of the province as well.

And I raised with him at that time the possibility of the Qu'Appelle River being higher than what we anticipated, and, in fact, that, in fact, is happening today.

And so I'm asking the minister, we know that the Assiniboine River can charge into that St. Lazare area very quickly and unexpectedly, and I'm wondering, because of the kind of situation we have emerging on the west side of the province, whether or not he and his department have prepared the community of St. Lazare in the event that the riverbed can no longer handle the water and the

community is swamped by both the Assiniboine and the Qu'Appelle rivers.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, you know, the municipality and also the EMO working with the municipality does have an emergency plan. Every municipality does. We've required it under our legislation for the last number of years, and I can tell you we're certainly aware of the situation in St. Lazare. But our key focus, as it has been throughout the province over the last several months—and this is not something we started working on today or last week or the week before—has been to identify areas where we could face additional challenges.

And I want to indicate we are working in St. Lazare as we speak, and our goal there is to protect those communities, just as we did with the Assiniboine dike. And, by the way, if that Assiniboine dike had not been reinforced—and we will probably have invested about \$20 million when this is all over—we would have seen significant impacts on homes in and around the Elie area. It would have had a very significant impact, and I can tell you we're still working on repairing some of those dikes as we speak.

So whether it be at the Assiniboine, whether it be in terms of the specific situation in St. Lazare, whether it be at the situation in Melita, we have 700 staff, we're working around the clock, and we're doing everything possible to protect Manitobans and Manitoba communities.

Senior Abuse Prevention Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, as we know and was emphasized by an incident yesterday at the Seven Oaks Hospital of alleged senior abuse, the problems of abuse of seniors in personal care homes and hospitals in Manitoba under this government has skyrocketed.

In contrast, for example, to Manitoba—where abuse and reported abuse has gone up in a huge way—in Alberta, since 2003, they have put in place a more comprehensive approach. They have seen the reports of abuse decrease by 50 per cent.

I ask the Minister of Health: Why has she failed so badly to protect Manitoba seniors and to ensure that our seniors are able to live with the dignity and respect that they deserve?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Families in Manitoba are absolutely right to expect that their loved ones are treated with dignity and respect, they are cared for with medical expertise and that they are safe. These are important expectations and we take them very seriously.

There was, indeed, as the member mentioned, an incident at Seven Oaks Hospital yesterday where one individual inflicted harm on another. This was a very unfortunate situation, and I want to ensure for everybody in the House that they're aware that this incident is being investigated. The individual who was the victim of that harm has been removed from the situation. The individual is safe and being cared for. The individual that perpetrated the violence is also secluded and being observed.

We want to ensure that everyone in our system is safe and we're going to ensure that this continues to be protected, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister, but I want to say that when we had a forum recently, seniors sharing their stories, that they came out and many, many stories were heard and told about abuse in personal care homes and the problems of lack of prevention. The problems of inadequate staffing came up time and time again.

Indeed, let us review the facts, Madam Minister. Alberta has almost three-and-a-half times the population of Manitoba and, yet, Manitoba has three times the number of reports of abuse of seniors in personal care homes.

I ask the minister why it is that she has so badly failed to prevent these problems of abuse, so that they don't even have to be investigated because they're not occurring. Why is your preventive strategy so poor?

Ms. Oswald: On the subject of wanting no incidents to occur that cause harm to our seniors, this is a point on which I feel certain we can all agree. We do not want this to happen, Mr. Speaker.

It's why we created standards for our personal care homes. For the first time in history, we upgraded them. It's why we have brought more staff to the front line, upgraded those staffing guidelines for the first time since 1973. It's why the Protection for Persons in Care Office was created in the first place, and, indeed, when you create an office that is designed to field complaints and to hear stories that are happening, of course you are going to see numbers in that regard go up. Because they are not

being reported doesn't mean that they are not happening. The first way to solve them, Mr. Speaker, is to report them.

I want to let the member know that our new investments in long-term care, over \$200 million, will include speciality areas for challenging, complex patients with behavioural issues, so we can wrap around those patients, keep them safe, keep the others in personal care homes and hospitals safe. That is our goal, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, if the minister and her government had done what had happened in Alberta, on a per capita basis we would only have one-tenth the number of reports of abuse as we do now. The situation here is extraordinary.

Look, in 2002, this government said that they were going to do something about Alzheimer's and dementia, and nothing has been done virtually for nine years.

An Honourable Member: That's wrong.

Mr. Gerrard: It's true and we're seeing it.

Look, as the minister well knows, 70 per cent of reported senior abuse in personal care homes and hospitals is patient-to-patient abuse, and the recent sad, disturbing and very tragic events that have occurred in our province highlight the fact that the minister has been totally unable to prevent such incidents.

I ask the minister: When is she going to try and stop to score political points and make promises and actually—actually do something about preventing abuse in personal care homes in Manitoba?

Ms. Oswald: For the member's information, for the information of all members of the House, I'll correct the record by saying that doing the work in partnership with nurses and doctors and families, to do the discussion concerning raising the hours-per-day direct staffing for the first time since 1973, we are working on dealing with all patients in personal care homes, including those dealing with the complexities of dementia and Alzheimer's.

At the same time that we did that, Mr. Speaker, we engaged with the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba to implement the P.I.E.C.E.S. dementia education program, in co-operation with our RHAs, to give our hard-working front-line staff the tools to work with these patients that present with these complexities. So what he's saying isn't true.

And finally, one thing I can promise, Mr. Speaker, is that I will not hold press conferences while other members are on their deathbeds and then refuse to apologize for it.

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

* (14:30)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

River East Kodiaks Girls Volleyball Team

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a group of girls who continually don't disappoint. Of course, I'm speaking of the River East Kodiak Varsity Girls Basketball Team who had a fantastic season winning again and again.

March 21st was their crowning moment when the River East girls were victorious over the Oak Park Raiders to become the Girls 2011 Milk Provincial AAAA Basketball Champion. The Kodiaks defeated the Raiders 64 to 39 at the University of Winnipeg's Duckworth Centre in a stunning game.

The game's Most Valuable Player was River East's Neesha Esmail. Neesha led the Kodiaks to victory with 18 points, including a solid four shots from the three-point range and a perfect six-for-six from the free-throw line. Of course, there were other notable players in the championship games. The Kodiaks' Brittany Koop scored 14 points, and Emily Loewen chipped in with 12 of her own.

The Kodiaks had a very impressive season as the girls won 27 of the 29 games they played.

This win is the school's first AAAA championship since the 1996-97 season and third provincial basketball championship since 1967-69.

This fantastic group of girls has had a strong history of excellence and championships, as all of the grade 12 players won the championship in the grade 9 provincials and grade 10 provincials.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my personal congratulations to a team that has worked very hard for their success. This is a memorable way to finish high school for those who are graduating this June.

However, at this moment, I want to wish them all the very best in all of their future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Pas Rotary Club

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, The Pas Rotary Club has been at the forefront of a number of great initiatives in the community for many, many years. The club members devote a lot of their time and energy into fundraising to support a variety of projects. They are definitely making a difference in our community.

Their largest event is the Bill Bannock Classic Ice Fishing Derby. This year the derby attracted over 900 fishers. At the end of the day only seven fish were caught, but that didn't stop everyone from, you know, having a great time. It was truly a beautiful day out at Clearwater Lake, one of the true blue lakes in the world. Thought I'd throw that in.

Bill Bannock Classic Ice Fishing Derby started in 1994, and with only one exception it has been held annually for 17 years. The funds raised from the— from this year's event totalled an astounding \$60,000. All of this money will be put right back into the community and to help make improvements to the local arena so that it can be used for all types of community events.

This derby is just one example of the great projects that the Rotary Club is doing in The Pas. Just a small sample of things that the club has supported over the years is the Friendship Centre, the cadet program, the Trappers' Festival, a student exchange program, the local handi-van, scholarships for young people, a walking path and other investments to support tourism to the area.

They also do a lot to support other organizations in the community as well as important initiatives abroad.

There would be—there would never be enough time to talk about everything as the club has supported so many projects over the years. It's clear the Rotary Club has been a guiding force of great things in the community, and I know that this is true for rotary clubs serving our communities around the province. Thank you for all the contributions they have made.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Carman Blizzard Fest

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): On February 12th, the inaugural Blizzard Fest was held in Carman as a way to get people out and enjoy the community after being restricted to the indoors during the winter.

The event was put on by the Carman Chamber of Commerce and featured numerous winter activities for the whole family to enjoy.

Local businesses and committee members worked hard to organize the winter fair. The purpose of the festival was to give members of the community something fun to do locally in the winter, to promote local businesses and to bring awareness to the different winter activities that families can participate in.

The Blizzard Festival featured a wide variety of events and activities, including dogsled rides, street hockey, skating on the Boyne River, snow bowling, jam pail curling, cross country skiing, hayrides and snow sculptures. There was also a music concert series featuring local-grown talent and a visit from Olympic hockey player Fiona Smith-Bell and world wheelchair rugby champion Jared Funk.

Businesses offered various fun challenges for customers as they earned passport stickers by visiting the businesses and events in an effort to win the grand prize draw of a \$2,000 trip voucher. My constituency office also participated during the day with an open house, and we had over 150 visitors during the day. The weather was perfect and the day ended with a fabulous show of fireworks, followed by a family pyjama party with popcorn and a movie. People of all ages, from small children to families and seniors, participated in the day's events.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the committee, the local businesses for their hard work in organizing this event. The Blizzard festival was a success, enjoyed by all those who attended. Next year's event is sure to be bigger and better, and I wish the committee well as they prepare for Blizzard Fest 2012.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Joe McCormick

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my congratulations and gratitude to an individual that has no doubt contributed to the quality of life in northern Manitoba.

We have come to know Joe McCormick as the voice of the north over the past 40 years through his dedicated service at CFAR 590 Radio. Thankfully, he is not yet retiring. Joe was born and raised in Flin Flon. Aside from a brief departure to Calgary, where he received training in television, stage and radio arts

at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, he has been up north his whole life.

Upon his return to Flin Flon, he started his first radio job at CFAR on December the 1st, 1970. The nature of the job has made him visible in the community, often travelling to Cranberry Portage, The Pas and the surrounding area for various events. Over the years he has become active in the community through his work with the Lions Club, of which he has been a member for 26 years. Joe and his wife also taught a catechism class at the Roman Catholic church for 25 years.

Forty years is a lengthy stay in any career, and it just goes to show that Joe must surely love what he does. He credits his enthusiasm for the job to the variety of people he has had the pleasure of meeting over the years. He enjoys researching the background of what is happening in the community. For years, Joe has covered important events such as the Trout Festival. He was there reporting back in the days of the Gold Rush Canoe Derby. This is in addition to decades of city council meetings, conducting interviews, attending parades and many, many other community events.

The on-the-hour news reports are just not the same if the voice is not Joe's voice. He has been bringing us the news from the north and around the province, country and world, for 40 years. For northwestern Manitoba and northeastern Saskatchewan his clear voice and 'pre-nice'-precise enunciation has become legendary. He is the authentic voice of the north and the radio personality all of us have come to know, respect and love.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Averill Whitfield

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for the Minnedosa constituency, I would like to take this opportunity today to recognize one of my constituents for their hard work and dedication to the community through volunteerism. Congratulations to Averill Whitfield of Souris for receiving a Woman of Distinction award and Volunteer Manitoba's Investors Group Arts and Culture Award for Volunteer Excellence.

Averill has served the community of Souris with dedication for the past 51 years. Active in a variety of areas within the community, she has been an educator and businesswoman, all while serving on various committees in Souris and the surrounding areas. Through her countless hours as a volunteer,

Averill was influential in the success of the Hillcrest Museum, the Plum and the creation of the Souris chapter of Girl Guides, Brownies and Sparks.

These are just a few of the ways that Averill has helped improve and enrich lives in Souris. Averill knows the importance of music to people of all ages, and especially school-age children. In 1963 Averill asked the school board to incorporate music into the school's curriculum. She's volunteered her time teaching music in grade 1 through 8 classrooms as a demonstration project from January to March. The entire school, including parents, teachers and kids, were convinced this was an important endeavour.

In September 1963 the music curriculum was integrated into the classroom and a music teacher was hired. This is just one of Averill's many projects and is a perfect example of her dedication and her community-minded spirit. Averill Whitfield is truly a woman of distinction. I would like to once again congratulate Averill on her achievements and recognition of them with these awards.

I am very proud of you, Averill, and wish you all the best as you continue to advocate for the town of Souris.

* (14:40)

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS BUDGET DEBATE (Sixth 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 it's in the name of the—standing in the name of the honourable member for the Interlake, who has 27 minutes remaining.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I will try and jam it all into 27 minutes, will do my utmost.

I'm going to focus my remarks on something that's near and dear to my heart today, and that's the whole issue of water, the whole issue of water management and drainage. And I would like to focus on my constituency, the Interlake, which has been under duress for a number of years now. I feel all

sorts of empathy for people south of the city, the Red River Valley that floods.

But the Red River comes up and three weeks later it goes down, and the flood in the Interlake is much more chronic than that. It's a long-term scenario. We have been under water in the Interlake for a period of years now and, you know, I am pleased to see, in reference to the budget, that this year we're going to be virtually doubling the capital budget to invest in drainage works, in crossings and so forth.

In comparison to the record of members opposite, this is a giant leap forward. I think back to the bad days of the '90s when three-quarters of the staff in the Water Resource Branch was laid off and the budget was reduced to a paltry two to three million dollars a year, I think, for the entire province—[*interjection*]

And the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) may comment on that, but I recall the words of the late Harry Enns, who acknowledged that fact, that under their term in office their record was rather pathetic, to say the least.

Now, I do want to pay tribute to a lot of the municipal officials that have been working so hard on the ground for a number of years. I can name a number of them, particularly on the west side of the Interlake where there is a shortage of infrastructure. And I have been working very closely with reeves such as the reeve of Coldwell, Brian Sigfusson, very knowledgeable man, owner of Sigfusson Northern, one of the most famous construction companies in the land, I would say. And even further north I look at a new reeve in Eriksdale, Arne Lindell, a very knowledgeable man, a farmer, a rancher himself, hunter, trapper, following in the footsteps of the previous reeve, Brian McKinnon, who passed away recently, really turned that municipality around. And we have accomplished so much under the good leadership that these two men have brought—much better than the previous reeve, I have to say, and I will leave him unnamed. But just a clue for members opposite, he happened to be the president of the Interlake conservative association, and had to be physically ejected from the polling station in the last election for 'prostelytizing' inside the poll. And when they ejected him from inside the poll, they actually had to go and shoo him away from the sidewalk because—quite determined.

And it's—a good example is the Star Lake drain, and I think the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms.

Melnick), very familiar with that project. What an utter fiasco that was, trying to jam a big drain into a 90-foot road allowance without due consultation with the adjacent First Nation, upon whose land they ultimately encroached. And, at the end of the drain actually bulldozed over the sign of the First Nation community, the Lake Manitoba First Nation. Imagine that, at the end of their drain they flattened the reserve sign. That goes to show the respect that Conservatives have for First Nations people in our province.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And when I look to the First Nations in the Interlake, I represent eight First Nations communities and, of those eight, I was just looking over the other day and seven of those eight First Nation communities, coincidentally—or maybe not coincidentally—happen to be located in either flood plains or downstream of extensive municipal drainage works.

The injustice that was perpetrated upon these people is shameful. This is a black stain on the history of our country and, of course, now it is incumbent upon us, as the politicians of the day, to try and rectify these—this situation. And it's a difficult row to hoe—[*interjection*] Yes. Right. A difficult row to hoe, to say the least, largely because of the fiduciary responsibility of the federal government to address challenges on what is, technically, federal land. The Province, particularly under this government, has endeavoured to work around that, to be creative in coming up with solutions and ways to get involved, and the government is to be commended for that, and the corresponding federal governments, of course, not commended for their inaction and ignorance and just uncaring attitude toward them all. We realize that this is how the country is trending, that the federal governments are giving up powers to the provincial governments. It's been the trend right since Confederation. But federal governments do have the fiduciary responsibility to supply services to the First Nations people and, in this regard, they are sadly lacking.

So we are doing what we can as a provincial government. We've tried to come up with the solution at Lake Manitoba. I look to the communities of Lake St. Martin and Little Saskatchewan, who were inundated again this spring with high water levels coming out of Lake Manitoba, which are augmented by waters coming out of western Canada through the Portage Diversion, which was put in

place, of course, to divert water away from the city of Winnipeg. The greater good was the mindset, but small consolation to people in these communities downstream of the Fairford control structure where they have to bear the brunt of it. Not just those two communities but, of course, the larger community of Pinaymootang in that immediate area also. And I look to—further north to the community of Dauphin River, which is at the end of the Dauphin River at the mouth of Sturgeon Bay, or Anama Bay.

Every year, as we try to run Lake Manitoba down, to get it within its range of regulation, we're running water well into the fall. And last year was a good example of that, where frazil ice caused ice jams. And you'd think that flooding was just a spring thing, that the snowmelt and the runoff was pretty much it, but that isn't the case. First Nations communities can experience floods right into freeze-up, into winter. And, of course, heavy rainfall events as well.

And when I think of that, I think of the communities of Peguis and Fisher River, as a good example. Peguis can be flooded two to three times a year, Mr. Acting Speaker. Every time there's a heavy rainfall, the drainage works that were put in place by both federal and provincial governments in the RM of Fisher adds to the speed of the flow of the Fisher River. And that's where it ends up is on Peguis and the Fisher River Cree Nation.

And, imagine, there are still people who were evacuated last year, who haven't returned to their homes, yet, in Peguis. And, of course, this year, once again, probably in—well in excess of 600 people, I heard that it was over 700 people, were evacuated once again from this community.

* (14:50)

So how do you resolve these issues? It's not easy to turn back the clock. You can't go back and fill in all of this municipal drainage. It does serve a purpose for the agricultural community, but it's a double-edged sword, and these people are bearing the brunt. So it's incumbent upon all of us, not just the federal government, but provincial governments as well to do their utmost to see that the pressure put upon these people is relieved to the best of our collective ability.

I know that I look further south. The Icelandic River, of course, was one of the hot spots in the Interlake this spring identified as an area for potential flooding in the communities of Riverton

and Arborg, and I have to say that this government has really stepped up to the plate in regard to that community, the work on the Crooked Lake drainage system, both north and south Crooked Lake, something that's well under way verging upon completion. This was a project in excess of well over a million dollars.

But I also want to draw attention to the basic proposal. This was a unique idea put forth by a group of farmers in the Bifrost area where they actually put some of their own money on the table to put toward a capital project that—

An Honourable Member: Really?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Yes, their own money. I think they're going to contribute close to \$3 million to what could be a \$15-million project, which, hopefully, will get under way in the not-to-distant future. But a project of this magnitude, of course, has to be done right the first time and it has to be engineered properly.

It's not just drainage that we're talking about here. We're talking about water management as well, which means staging release, which means identifying areas of potential retention, which means identifying some areas that might not necessarily be best suited for agriculture, that possibly could be left to wildlife instead, which would, again—or also serve to reduce that wildlife interaction with the agricultural community where crops are preyed upon by elk, for instance. You have to have a good mix of land available to the wildlife, as well as for agriculture.

This basic project—and I do acknowledge the federal government in this regard, as well, through the AgriInvest program. They did agree to cost-share the project with the provincial government, and amongst the two levels of government we've leveraged over \$800,000 to do a comprehensive drainage analysis of that entire area which will be a precursor to moving forward to improving the system.

And I have to say that this area in my constituency, around the community of Arborg, is probably the best grain land in all of the north Interlake. I would say that the area around Fisher Branch is quite productive as well, and when I'm speaking of my constituency, the Interlake, further south others can speak of that, but this definitely goes to show the attention that this government is paying to solve some of these unsolvable problems.

Part of the challenge that we face in the Interlake region are there are a number of lakes that are essentially landlocked, that have no good outlet to them, and, you know, previous governments and municipal governments have been building drains into these bodies of water with really no solution as to how to get rid of it when the water gets a little bit higher, and we find ourselves in quite the bind these days to now try and address some of these challenges.

And I can list a number of lakes that fill the bill in this category and, of course, the big one is Shoal lakes. We all realize the problem that the people are facing there, huge problem with that lake, probably in excess of eight feet above normal levels, and the solution to that is not cheap, Mr. Acting Speaker. We had a study done and estimated cost to go down the Wagon Creek run is well in excess of \$20 million, 10 times what members opposite spent on drainage across the entire province when they were in office.

That's the challenge we face to address one issue here. And, of course, members opposite sitting in opposition have the luxury of calling upon us to step up and just pull the \$25 million out of the air and get her done, but it ain't as easy as that, Mr. Acting Speaker. We need all levels of government to play a role if solutions like this are going to be implemented.

The municipal governments themselves, who are the proponents for projects such as this, who are the governments that levy taxes on the land, have to put some of their money on the table if they're serious about this. It's easy to call for capital and not to offer any of your own equity. That's not going to fly here.

And the federal government in particular, they've been talking the talk, to a small degree, about investing in mitigation as opposed to paying for damages after the fact, and I would commend the MLA for Thompson, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton). He has been absolutely tireless in lobbying the federal government to start investing some money in mitigation, putting in place cost-sharing with the provincial and municipal governments, to put in place infrastructure that would prevent these disasters from happening, as opposed to paying damages after the fact, and, you know, we haven't seen much in that regard.

We've heard a lot from Mr. Bezan, the MP for Selkirk-Interlake, about Shoal Lakes, but we haven't heard a single dime offered by him on behalf of the

federal government toward this project. That's what I'd like to see. Instead of talk and rhetoric, let's see a serious commitment to this. We are waiting. We are waiting with bated breath, but we're not very optimistic.

Shoal Lakes—I go a little further north into an area—Dog Lake is another scenario. Big Dog Lake really doesn't drain into Little Dog Lake, and, you know, the drop to Lake Manitoba is only three or four feet, very difficult gradient to dig a drain two to three miles over. That is our challenge, though, and we're looking at it. Members opposite never gave it a thought in all of the years that they were ever in office.

I look to the RM of Armstrong, which I will be surrendering to the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) in the next election. There's a landlocked lake in that area. It's called Dennis Lake and it's ironic that the reeve—the current reeve of Armstrong, Gary Wasykowski, had vacated his seat several years ago to run against me provincially—unsuccessfully, obviously. This was a lake within his boundaries, as it was in mine, and this government stepped up to the plate and invested in infrastructure to solve this problem.

And it was the late Oscar Lathlin, who was Minister of Conservation, who got this project off the ground. We came to him, I said, Oscar, we need \$275,000 to solve this problem. He says, you got it. The municipality cost-shared it and we dug a drain that draws water away from Dennis Lake. It's not the ultimate solution, which would've been to go down the Netley Creek, but downstream municipalities were opposed to that. And I believe DFO, the federal Department of Fisheries, had some issues. So we found a solution. We went around that and we put it into the Bass Drain instead, and it's working. Water levels are still high but they're better than they would have been otherwise.

Oak Lake, just to the west of Poplarfield, where I live—again, another lake that has no outlet, farmers draining into it, others getting flooded out. These are the challenges. And, of course, one of the main concerns of mine right now is Sleeve Lake, which is between Grahamdale, Fisher and the Eriksdale municipalities, causing a lot of flooding, a lot of hardship for the people in the Kilkenny area.

* (15:00)

I want to acknowledge the Premier (Mr. Selinger), who, with the Peguis chief, flew over that

very area last Friday in a helicopter to check it out. I do want to say most emphatically that the MLA for St. Boniface, our Premier (Mr. Selinger), has really paid attention to myself and to the needs of the people in my constituency. He has given direction to our government that we will address the challenges that we face from a drainage perspective, so I thank him most sincerely on behalf of the people that I represent.

This government has stepped up to the plate in terms of beaver control, something members opposite have ignored. Beavers, wonderful engineers that they are—and I have the utmost respect for them—do cause us a lot of problems, and we will be enhancing the subsidy to remove problem beavers and that should help as well.

So, on a water front, I am proud to be a member of the governing caucus because this is a caucus that knows what to do.

We have to—as I mentioned earlier, it's water management, that's what we should be focusing on. We can't just drain all the land because it will dry up ultimately. I recall most clearly the drought of 2003 when we had BSE hit simultaneously. The Interlake region was in dire straits. It was amazing how quickly you could go from flood and monsoon and endless rainfall to desert-like conditions from one year to the next, but that is what happened, a good example of how we have to manage our water resources as intelligently and as carefully as possible.

There's a whole range of issues I'd love to discuss if I had more time. I still have five minutes; maybe I can jam as many as I can in here.

The wildlife management areas, something that is very near and dear to me, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, and we will be looking to expand some of our WMAs in celebration of this fact. And I am working on a project in the north Interlake in this regard.

Members opposite, we know what they would do; they would probably dismantle them and turn them over into pasture, even though they're very marginal.

Not this government. We feel very strongly that a surplus of Crown land, an abundance of Crown land—and that doesn't mean just parks, but it means WMAs or just Crown land in general—that is the very essence of our freedom. That's what defines us as Canadians, that we can wander vast tracts of this land that is in the hands of the Crown, that belongs to

all of us collectively. And we will celebrate that, as we will celebrate the UNESCO World Heritage Site once it's constituted on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Something that members opposite have made vividly clear to all of us and all of Manitobans: They have no respect for the forest. They have no respect for wildlife. They have no respect for First Nations people—[interjection]—no respect for First Nations people whatsoever. And I say that specifically to the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), because he seems to have a lot to say when he's off the microphone, but I'd like to hear his defence of his government's action in regard to First Nations people. And I think the people speak for themselves: When you look at the vote, Conservatives might get 1 per cent, maybe 2 or 3 per cent at the absolute most, of the vote of First Nations people in our province, and that is clearly indicative of the disregard and disdain that members opposite have for our First Nations people.

I want to acknowledge the Building Manitoba Fund that we have now committed to funding to a level equal to 1 per cent of the PST in our province. This is something that the AMM has been asking for incessantly. This government has delivered on it.

If you want to talk tax credits, how about that Education Property Tax Credit? When Tories were in government, they cut the property tax credit, which is something that goes directly into the pockets of our seniors, our people who deserve tax breaks the most, who have worked all their lives.

When we came to office, it was \$250; now it is up to \$700, and for seniors up to \$900. That virtually eliminates the property tax bill for the vast majority of seniors in our province—a wonderful endeavour. I thank the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) for that, on behalf of all seniors.

And also I want to thank her for the farmland school tax rebate which she brought in as Minister of Agriculture, which is now 80 per cent; 80 per cent of the school tax collected on farmland is rebated back to farmers.

How much did members opposite give? How much? Nothing. Nothing. They are the ones that suggest: Oh, we're the defenders of the farming community. They gave nothing back to the farmers.

In fact, I recall they cancelled the rural stress line—even something—a couple hundred thousand dollars for a stress line for farmers who were in the

dire straits. Those members opposite couldn't even afford to throw a couple hundred grand for people who were bordering on suicide when they were in office.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I am proud to have put my thoughts on the record in regard to this government's performance. So much more to talk about. CentrePort—I could talk CentrePort for 30 minutes alone.

But—infrastructure. I haven't even mentioned highways. Highway 17 is going from Poplarville to Fisher Branch this summer—this summer.

My time is up, Mr. Acting Speaker. I'm sorry. Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Acting Speaker, it's a pleasure to say a few words on the budget, to follow the member for the Interlake. I'm not sure if he was giving his farewell speech. Perhaps it'll turn out that that will—will—be his farewell speech—*[interjection]*

He clearly needed all 30 minutes. Perhaps he's still debating internally and within his caucus whether or not to support the amendment. We hope, as a caucus, that he will come around and realize that the amendment that was brought forward by the member for Fort Whyte, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). It is an amendment that is fair, that's reasonable and that improves a budget that needed improvement in certain areas, in terms of longer term direction.

I want to begin by, again, as many others have, welcoming back those who serve us here in the Legislature—our table officers, pages, those who are staff of the Assembly, congratulate those who have taken on new positions—our new Deputy Clerk, Mr. Yarish, who now faces me in the House. He's assumed a position on the other side of the House. I actually hope to join him in a—on the other side of the House. Our process is a little bit different, so we'll allow people to decide in the October 4th election.

And it's a great democracy, that we can go to the people. Unlike the member for the Interlake, who's already presumed how many people of certain backgrounds will vote for the Conservatives or vote for other parties, I believe that we shouldn't be so arrogant. We should actually go to the people and let them decide, bring forward our ideas and never take it for granted, never take it as though we presume their votes. You have to earn their votes, not unlike their funding. If you were looking for support

financially as a party, you would earn it and not presume it and try to take it through a vote tax like the NDP have brought in.

But I'm—I diverge a little bit from what I wanted to say, Mr. Acting Speaker, is—I want to also, to those who are running again on both sides of the House, and I know there are a number—want to wish them well as they go on into other endeavours in their life. Not all of us—not everybody who runs for political office gets the opportunity to leave on their own terms and to leave by their own wishes, and it's—I'm glad for those who are, who've made that decision, that they want to go on and do other things. Often, it's for family reasons and certainly we respect that.

* (15:10)

We know that whoever takes on positions in elected life, regardless of their political party, does so with sacrifices: time away from family, time away from other things, often putting a career on hold. And all members, on every side of the House, I want to wish well.

I've often said publicly, and I'll say it again, that I believe that everybody who runs for office does so with the right intentions, that they start off wanting to make a difference in their community or in their province or in the country. And I want to say that everybody who is going to be leaving this Chamber, either voluntarily or involuntarily, has—deserves recognition for the services they've put in.

Also, Mr. Acting Speaker, I know the Speaker himself is not going to be running. He's one of those who's decided to move on. I want to thank him for the even hand that he's often governed this House with. I've always tried to adhere to decorum and to make his job as easy as possible, but those few times where I've slipped and gone astray, he has—he's been firm but fair, I think, with me. And I appreciate the fact that he's guided me back onto a correct path when I've taken myself off of the right path.

When it comes to the budget, I'm reminded of—I know members opposite don't like to hear about the former member for Inkster, they've spent so much time trying to defeat him and weren't able. But he often said in this House that when a government spends 10 or 11 billion dollars, you're going to get some things right. It's hard not to. When you're spending that volume of money, there are going to be things that are positive in a budget that puts in 11 or 12 billion dollars into our government, whether it's

schools or whether it's in the health-care system. And, certainly, all of us can find reasons to support those individual initiatives and those particular items that are within the budget.

But there's also room for improvement, and I would hope that the members opposite would put aside some of their partisanship, would set aside some of the hardened views that they might have, some of those extreme partisan positions that they might hold, and look to a more balanced perspective. And, really, that's what the amendment is about.

And I think that Manitobans, you know, when we leave this—it's a distinguished Chamber, Mr. Acting Speaker, but, sometimes, when we get caught up in the individual debate that happens within here and when we go outside of the Legislature, we find that people have a very different perspective. They want us to look for compromise. They want us to look for ways where we can improve things and work in a bipartisan way. And I know that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), he's had some harsh comments over the last number of days about the amendment, and I would say, if he would go and speak to the good people in Kildonan and other good Manitobans that they would say—*[interjection]* Well, he should go speak beyond his association meeting for the NDP and talk to them because I think what they would say is that we want you to work together, that we send people from different political parties to come and work together, and that's really what this amendment is about. But before the ink had even dried, before it was even tabled, I think, in the House, the member for Kildonan and those within his caucus had already decided that they were going to vote against whatever amendment came forward. That that sort of hardened view that is, our way is the only way, is the sort of things that people are getting tired of in political life.

And I would say—and I'm not here to give advice to the member for Kildonan, he doesn't need my advice— but I would say that if he wants to take it, that he would do himself a favour not a disservice by looking at the amendment in that view and saying, maybe, people would actually appreciate that we worked together in voting in favour of it to improve the budget and give it a long-term perspective instead of a short five-month perspective.

Certainly, there are times when, you know, you question what's in the budget. We heard today from the mayor of Winnipeg some very strong words. I think the councillor, or the former campaign

manager for the leadership candidacy for the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), said some very strong words about the budget in opposition to this particular budget. And I think that those are things that we need to look at and to consider, given the fact that these are representatives of the largest city in the province of Manitoba, and they were joined by a number of municipalities representing other areas of Manitoba.

But there are things often within the budget that you think are positive and then you find out later on aren't as—are not what they seem to be. I remember in 2007, the government announced the expansion of the emergency room at Bethesda Hospital, and there was a good feeling about that in my community, in the city of Steinbach. The announcement happened. I had a good discussion with the former Premier Gary Doer about it, and we thought that this was going to move forward, and then it didn't happen.

And then the next year, in 2008, the government announced, again, the budget, and the member for Kildonan and others said, well, you're going to vote against your own expansion of your hospital if you vote against the budget, and then, of course, it didn't happen after the budget passed. And in 2009 they announced it in the budget, and the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux) shouted from his seat, well, if you don't vote for the budget, you're voting against the expansion of the hospital, and then, of course, it didn't happen in 2010.

And even the member for La Verendrye, who I consider to be a political friend, even though we're political adversaries with different parties, but I think we are—we have a friendship that goes beyond the House, and even he was sheepish when he heard in the budget that they reannounced the Bethesda ER. He kind of looked over at me with a bit of a grin. He knew that even this was beyond the pale, that a government could actually announce the same project for three straight years, in five separate announcements over three years, and not actually get it done.

So, when members on the opposite side say things like, well, this is a particular project you should lack at—this is another one you should look at, and this is the one you should support, quite often it doesn't happen.

And, you know, we've had to set up a website in Steinbach. It's—I see some members are already on their computer. The member for Burrows, who I—is

also leaving, and I would encourage him to go to www.getbethesdabuilt.com, and he's on his laptop now, he could go to that website even as I'm speaking, and he could send a message to the Premier (Mr. Selinger) who he may not have a lot of discussions with, I don't know, Mr. Acting Speaker, but he could go to that website, www.getbethesdabuilt.com, and send a message to the Premier telling him to get the ER built and get it expanded.

I know more than 700 people have already taken the opportunity to go and send that message to the Premier to try to get this project built. And it's unfortunate that, you know, after an announcement has happened, we have to, as a community, go and beg to have something that was already announced done. But that's what often happens when it comes to the NDP. They make announcement, but there's no follow-up, there's no follow-through. They have the big, grand—you know, they bring out the cake and they blow up the balloons, the minister comes out and it's a great big thing, and then it goes dark, and then it goes dark for four years.

So I want to just conclude, Mr. Acting Speaker, by encouraging the government not to take that hard left-wing view of everything and to try to look at working with other political parties to not have that hard, hard perspective about how things are done politically, to realize that people send us here to work together and to try to improve things, and I would ask them to vote for the amendment under that same spirit.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Mr. Acting Speaker, it's always an honour to have the opportunity to speak in this Chamber. We are all truly blessed for the support we've received to allow us to be here to speak on behalf of our constituents, and I know that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and others feel the same way, that we are really privileged to have an opportunity to be here and selected to represent our constituents.

I would just like to say that, prior to making comments on the budget, I just want to say that for the MLA for Lord Roberts, Flin Flon, Point Douglas, Burrows, St. Norbert, Portage la Prairie, Russell, Brandon West, Pembina and Lac du Bonnet, to many of you that won't be returning to this Chamber, you've made decisions to go on to another part of your life and see more time with—spend more time with your family, and do other endeavours, and you

should be congratulated for the time you spent in this Chamber. Truly, you should be congratulated for all your hard work, the time you've spent away from your families, the time that you—many, many countless hours you've spent on behalf of your constituents and on behalf of Manitobans trying to make this province a better place. You should be congratulated for that, no matter what side of the Chamber you sit on. Congratulations to you, and we wish you all the best.

Now, there are many of us who wish to return to this Chamber, and we'd hope that what we've done for our constituents will enable us to return here. But that's their choice, and that's democracy, you know, and we look forward to that. And we look forward to a good campaign, and a lot of good issues debated, and Manitobans will make the right choice, the wise choices they always do. And so we look forward to that.

* (15:20)

Now, let me focus my comments on the budget, Mr. Acting Speaker. And I want to touch on a few things that—and possibly clarify the record with regard to some of the comments that have been made.

Indeed, this is a tremendous budget, and the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) should be congratulated, the member for Swan River. She went around the province of Manitoba having consultations with Manitobans to see, what do Manitobans want? What do they want to see in their government, what do they want to see their government deliver, and what are their priorities? And this Minister of Finance has delivered on that exact commitment that she made to them when they came forward and proposed and made suggestions on what should be in the budget.

Let me begin by just saying that *Maclean's* magazine made the comment that it's—during this recessionary period, this economic downturn, they called it the Manitoba miracle—the Manitoba miracle. Why? Because for the longest time we had the lowest unemployment in the country, tremendous economic initiatives taking place in this province—and I won't spend too much time on CentrePort and other initiatives, but I will certainly endeavour to touch on some of those, and—but the Minister of Finance has done a tremendous job, following in the footsteps of another great Finance Minister that had great respect all over the country, now our Premier (Mr. Selinger) of this province, who has a steady

hand, wants to keep the province on the right track and making sure we're going in the right direction. And the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and this Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) won't hack, slash, dice the budget to the tune of about a half a billion dollars.

And, you know, members opposite don't want to address that, because last year when they made that amendment, we asked them, where exactly is this going to come from? Are you going to cut amount of highway projects that are going to be put forward in the province? Are you going to cut back on schools? Are you going to cut back on health-care initiatives that we're putting forward? Maybe the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) never thought about the fact that Bethesda might actually be taken off the capital list, but, you know, those are the kinds of realities that governments have to deal with, and when you're talking about that kind of a cut to a budget, members opposite may not have initially thought about it, but now we're trying to remind them of the drastic measures they would have had to take by doing that.

Minister of Finance in this province has put forward a tremendous budget, and we don't hear the members opposite talking much about it, you know, and that is really regrettable. They talk about wanting to look at spending initiatives. They're going to review—I can't remember the exact term they use in their amendment, but, you know, it's code word for cuts and what are they going to slash from the budget, and, you know, Manitobans won't be fooled by that kind of language and nor will we, Mr. Acting Speaker.

And so I just want to say that this budget is really a budget that is forward-looking, trying to take a look at the initiatives that this province needs, whether they be looking at more child-care spaces, 400 more nursery spaces, 2,100 more child-care spaces, and expanding the online child-care registry province-wide. Those are the kinds of things that as MLAs we hear knocking on the door from our constituents. They want more health care. They want better child care. They want a better system of education in this province, and that, of course, deals with the future of this province. And, you know, investing in programs to make it easier for families, that's what this budget is about. It deals with families, the needs of families, what families want, and the Minister of Finance through her consultations, and I would indeed say many and all MLAs in this Chamber, have heard this from their

constituents on what Manitoba needs. We certainly don't need a half-a-billion-dollar cut.

Just one item I'd like to speak to directly that I am certainly knowledge of and know of with regard to what's in this budget, it's an increase of 5 per cent to the municipalities in the province of Manitoba. Once again and every year we've increased the amount of monies that municipalities receive. Indeed, total dollars, apples to apples, matching what Saskatchewan gives, we give about \$67 million more to our municipalities than Saskatchewan does. You know, other provinces have to make decisions on where they put their monies and, granted, Saskatchewan is a tremendous province, great people, but their government decided to put the kind of monies they want to municipalities and they made that decision. And we are making a decision to put a great deal of money to municipalities, \$249 million, almost \$250 million in total, one point of PST. This is a 53 per cent increase since 2006-2007, Mr. Acting Speaker, and it's a tremendous amount of money. We know it and municipalities understand that it's a good first step in moving in the right direction to funding municipalities.

And, you know, of course, municipalities receive about \$103 million in grants. They receive a lot of other dollars, whether they be VLT monies, Community Places grants and other funding from the Province. But just dealing with monies they receive from the Province directly to them, dealing with infrastructure and transit, it's been a tremendous increase over the last number of years.

We—I'll give you an example, Mr. Acting Speaker. We hear members of the opposition making comments during question period and other times about, you know, you've got to give more money to the municipalities. Now the question I guess I would have for them is that, you know, they want—well, it's not even a question. We know what they would do is they want to raise the provincial sales tax by one point, in order to give the mayor of the city of Winnipeg, and others who are demanding that, an additional 1 per cent. But we were able to do it within the budget we have, and the members opposite want to increase the provincial sales tax.

At an event that the Minister of Finance and I attended in Brandon, I asked the question to the delegates that were there from AMM. Would any of you that want to raise the PST please stand up or raise your hand. Not one—not one single person wanted to raise the PST, and so there lies the

question. The members opposite, though, want to raise the PST by 1 per cent, and when they ask the question about the kind of money that's being funded to municipalities in the province, I will certainly remind them of this and that Manitobans absolutely do not want the PST raised—and this government is not going to raise the PST to the demands of the opposition.

We were able to do it, we were able to provide tremendous amount of funding to municipalities and to AMM, as well as the city of Winnipeg and the city of Brandon and others. And—now we know it's a good first step. Municipalities are saying they having a deficit, infrastructure deficit, then they want to deal with transit. We understand that; it's a good first step. We just said we want to keep the door open. We'll keep talking and have a discussion and keep working towards trying to address the infrastructure deficit. Actually, there's a huge infrastructure deficit across the country.

But this government has addressed highways, a plan that was put forward a number of years ago to address highways, billions of dollars put towards—\$4 billion over 10 years, a plan to address our infrastructure deficit. And, as was pointed out today in question period, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) commented on the comparison, going back to the 1990s, how much money was spent by the previous government in infrastructure and transportation compared to what's being spent today.

A drop in the bucket, Mr. Acting Speaker, and this is something that our government wants to continue investing in this province. Now members opposite have a different view, and they're entitled to it. I mean, you know, they were elected to bring forward the views of their constituents. They want to hack and cut and slash the budget. They want to balance the books. I mean, even their federal leader understands in a time of recession that you had to put money towards infrastructure, and you had to try to deal with creating jobs.

And their cousins in Ottawa, many of them, including my Member of Parliament, Provencher, has said that even recently that a deficit—they don't like it but, on the other hand, they're in a recession and they had to try to stimulate the economy through the stimulus plan and Building Canada plan to address infrastructure.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, members opposite want to have it every which way. They're telling

Manitobans, oh, trust us and we'll get rid of the waste in government—waste in government spending. We will balance the books today but we'll give you a new school tomorrow. We will balance the books today but we'll give you a new hospital tomorrow. Trust us and we'll give—we'll put more daycare spaces in place.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the reality is that's an absolute falsehood. Members opposite are trying to spin it across this province that they can balance the books tomorrow but yet they can deliver many of the projects and many of the initiatives in this budget that they should vote for. Now members opposite have a difficult time with this. I can understand why. This is a tremendous budget with many, many different initiatives coming forward, whether it's dealing with water, whether it's dealing with child-care spaces, health care, helping seniors, investing in programs for families. And, you know, it's not going to be easy for them. So they try to muddy the waters and throw a red herring in by making an amendment, and Manitobans can see right through it as we can.

* (15:30)

Now, the challenge, I think, for Manitobans looking forward and taking a look to see, you know, if the government of Manitoba is on the right track, to see if these initiatives address what they want. Are you a family that wants more child-care spaces? Are you a family that wants improvement to health? Are you a family that is concerned about university—cost of university for your child? Are you a family and individuals that want better roads in this province and better infrastructure? Are you a family that is concerned with the well-being of the environment in this province? Are you concerned about greenhouse gases? Are you concerned about clean water? Are your concerns dealing with these issues? If they are, you're looking at the government of the day that has addressed all of those initiatives and we will do more, and we made commitments to improve. This government's not perfect, but we're on the right track and Manitobans feel we're on the right track, Mr. Acting Speaker, and there will be more initiatives coming forward in the days to come.

As I mentioned previously and in a sincere way, members here—before I conclude my comments—there are many members that are leaving the Chamber and will be retiring and not returning here, and there have been many great suggestions come from a lot of those members, whether they be on the

government side or the opposition. I know that I've had the opportunity to work with a number of members closely, member from Brandon West, member from Pembina and member for Lac du Bonnet as well, and, of course, receiving input—*[interjection]*—and I'll save the last for best—the best for last. But the member from Russell I've known well for many, many years and his heart is absolutely in the right place and always has been, and many of the suggestions he gives, I may not totally agree with them all the time, but you have to believe that he is a sincere Manitoban, and we wish him all the best in retirement. Whether he's making comments on the environment or making comments on education or health care, we know that he's sincere about what he speaks and he's not just doing it in a politically crass way.

To not take away from the members on this side, many of the members on this side I met for the first time 12 years ago. I've really enjoyed the camaraderie with them. The member for Fort Rouge—Lord Roberts (Ms. McGifford), I should say—

An Honourable Member: Burrows.

Mr. Lemieux: —Burrows (Mr. Martindale), Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen). We've had the opportunity to share a lot of ideas together and, as a new MLA coming in and a brand-new Cabinet minister in 1999, I really appreciated the counsel and the advice I've received from them, sincerely. They were in the Legislature before me. They knew the Legislature from the opposition benches. They were extremely helpful, I know, not only to myself, but many of my colleagues in the Chamber, on their devotion to the province and their straightforward way of passing on suggestions. And I have had the opportunity to tell them in person, but I just want to make sure I put it on the record that you have served the province well.

You have made sure that Manitobans, when they look at the Legislature and they take a look at a politician, that it is an honourable profession, and because of people like you Manitobans know that politics is an honourable profession and that many, many things can be accomplished, whether you're a minister or whether you're an MLA working hard on their behalf, and I just want to say to you that many of your suggestions to me have been very valuable and also quite insightful based on your experience. So we wish you the best, and, I believe, well, I know you will be missed. And we always look forward, of course, to new people and great, energetic people

taking your place, and we know they can't replace you. They can't do that, but they will have their own style and they will have their own passions that they bring to this Chamber. And we will welcome them with open arms as a new government, come this fall, and we look forward to their ideas, as well.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there are a number of issues that we talked about earlier, and many, many of my colleagues have talked about. And there is a message being perpetrated by the opposition that, somehow, that, oh, we like what you're doing, we don't necessarily like the way you're doing it. The budget is great but, you know, ah, we're the opposition, so we have to vote against it.

You know, there are many great initiatives in this budget and the one I touched on briefly was the one point of PST. The AMM asked for improved predictability, they asked for more growth and they asked for greater accountability with regard to funding to municipalities. This is an area that I'm currently dealing with, and the AMM has been very great to work with. They have been very open to suggestions, and they've passed on great suggestions to us. And as I mentioned before to Mr. Dobrowolski, that, you know, this is a great start for us, and we look forward to continue working with him into the future.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The improved predictability is that by tying municipal infrastructure and transit grants to the point of PST, communities will be—will have a predictable and growing source of revenues each year. Approximately, the PST grows by about 5 per cent, as I understand it, that I've been advised, to 6 per cent. So you have a real growth revenue there for municipalities. And that's what they've been asking for in many of my discussions with many municipal leaders. That's what they want to see: some predictability with regard to funding for them.

As I mentioned, more growth: Manitoba's forecast for PST would see grants and infrastructure increase by approximately, let's say, \$50 million or greater in the next four years. So the rate of 'graith' for municipal infrastructure and transit grants is forecast to nearly double what it would have been under the old formula.

A greater accountability—our government, the first, I believe, in Canada, to put it—this into legislation. And this is something that doesn't receive a lot of coverage, but is truly important, because no

matter who the government of the day is, I would argue it'd be very, very difficult for any government to remove it from legislation, the one point of PST to municipalities. So we're very proud of the fact that Manitobans can be assured that these funds are being used to support their priorities and, by putting it into legislation, it will be there for all to see, and we're very, very proud of that.

Just wanted to comment a little bit on building municipal capacity, and we've heard members and the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) commenting about green communities and dealing with greenhouse gases. Today, I was pleased to join a number of others at Providence College and the announcement was around our CLER program which deals with reduction of greenhouse gases in Manitoba.

Three communities, or three municipalities, have joined together. One was the RM of De Salaberry, working with Providence College, to find a way to make better use of biomass, make better use of waste product from lumber companies. But again, it's not only dealing with the environment to better provide a fuel source for them and an energy source to heat their buildings and cool their buildings, but it's also rural economic development. There are many companies in rural Manitoba that would benefit from looking at our CLER program and, in particular, the RM of De Salaberry recognize this, along with CDEM, which—an economic development arm of the francophone community. That is a tremendous investment for Providence College, and we know that they will be a leader into the future, showing how biomass and other energy sources can be used to heat and fuel their particular campus.

* (15:40)

Also, there is the RM of Thompson and Winkler, Morden, and their organization is looking at, how do you take more vehicles off the road? They want to end up having a transit service that they can put on the road to take people to the mall, take people to health-care facilities. And, by that, literally removing the tire print or the—from greenhouse gas emissions that are produced by the many vehicles on the road.

Also, St. James school division should be congratulated as part of this announcement. John Taylor Collegiate is looking at a different way of reducing the greenhouse gas emissions and we're pleased to work with them as well.

So today there was a very good announcement with making municipalities greener and helping our communities, so local governments are critical partners with regard to our efforts. They either have a direct or indirect influence over activities accounting up to 50 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada, including waste management, transportation, commercial and residential building design. So we really appreciate the co-operation that we're getting and the partnership that we have with municipalities in the province of Manitoba trying to address greenhouse gas emissions. And I want to say to them and municipalities that are partnering as part of our CLER program that we thank you very much for the great co-operation that we have with regard to try to reduce greenhouse gases from a municipal perspective, and we know many of them are trying to do even more and we look forward to that. We are looking forward to making and having more partnerships with municipalities to really look at what we can do to improve the emissions and dealing with emissions province-wide.

Budget 2011, as I mentioned before, there's key initiatives in rural and northern Manitoba, and I'd like to touch on a couple of them if you wouldn't mind. And Budget 2011 builds on the province's successes with a balanced approach.

You know, there's been a lot made about—some members opposite, not all, some—making comments about how, you know, there's a rigid government, the government is not wanting to be open and looking at different suggestions. I would argue—I would differ to—on that particular point, because we have really taken their suggestions and we've taken suggestions of all Manitobans, and, indeed, the Finance Minister has gone around the province having consultations with Manitobans, asking them what they want.

With regard to supporting families, just to mention a few, putting \$65 million back into the pockets of Manitoba families and business throughout—with tax cuts; child's arts and cultural activity tax credit; increasing the basic personal exemption by \$1,000 over four years, starting with \$250 this year; increasing the farmland tax—school tax rebate to 80 per cent from 75 per cent; and also providing better health care.

I know that in my own constituency and other constituencies in the province, we look forward—indeed, even Steinbach, as the member from Steinbach took it upon himself to have a website, to have people to register a complaint that they want to

see something happen to Bethesda Hospital. It's quite ingenious on the member—I'm not sure if it was his suggestion or his idea, but—because when the Bethesda Hospital expansion takes place, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) will stand up and say, well, I forced the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), I forced the government to do this. Absolutely wrong. The Department of Health has been working on looking at tenders, looking at what the cost would be. Costs have increased over the last number of years and they've been doing so in my constituency as well, in the Ste. Anne Hospital and increasing the size of the Ste. Anne Hospital and making improvements there.

I can tell you in 1999 when I ran for the first time in La Verendrye, the government of the day was going to turn the Ste. Anne Hospital into a Red Cross tent. They were going to put a bandage on the people and then send them to Steinbach. You know, the hospital in Ste. Anne serves a geographical area that is multilingual, and it's not just a bilingual hospital, not just a francophone and English hospital. There are many people from Steinbach, many people from Morden, there are people from Winnipeg, people from Transcona go to the Ste. Anne Hospital and receive excellent health care there.

Thanks to the member from Kildonan—when the member from Kildonan was the Minister of Health, he recognized this from the consultation he had in—as a critic in Health prior to that election and realized that that is not going to happen. The Ste. Anne Hospital is not just going to be there as a Red Cross tent. The Ste. Anne Hospital is going to grow. The Ste. Anne Hospital is going to improve health-care services for Manitobans, and, indeed, there is a place for Bethesda Hospital, there's a place for the Ste. Anne Hospital in the southeast as well as in Beausejour and other communities.

So it's not one or the other. This government is balanced in addressing the concerns of the people and residents of the southeast, and I would argue, stay tuned for the member from Steinbach because you will be seeing something happen in Steinbach with regard to Bethesda. And I'm pleased that the Selkirk, Ste. Anne, Flin Flon, Pine Falls, Oakbank and Springfield, Lac du Bonnet, Stonewall, Vita will certainly see improvements with regard to health.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you directly, as a Speaker, a Speaker doesn't have always an easy job and you have been able to do such a great job as Speaker. And I know that you've made

the choice not to seek re-election, and I just want to say that you've done a tremendous job in this Chamber. You have received the respect of all of us. Many decisions are not easy. And you have had your own challenges outside of this Chamber with health. So I, and I know on behalf of everyone in this Chamber, we wish you all the best not only with regard to your health, but also with regard to your retirement. You've served this Chamber well and with a great deal of dignity and class.

And being an Aboriginal person in the Chair, in the Speaker's Chair, you've served not only yourself well, but you've served your roots, your family roots, your family ties in a way that you should be proud and many people of Aboriginal ancestry will be proud. They will look upon this day and the day that you leave this Chamber with a great deal of sadness. So congratulations to you.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would just say thank you for the opportunity to speak once again with regard to this budget, and it's a tremendous budget and I look forward to see how members opposite are going to vote this week with regard to this tremendous budget that we have. Thank you.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to address the budget that was tabled by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), and I do want to put some comments on the record as they relate directly to the budget.

But, before I begin speaking to the budget, I want to, first of all, extend my congratulations to our new Deputy Clerk in our Chamber. And it's good to see him in the chair, but I'm just hoping that he'll still stay with us in Public Accounts for the duration of the session because he truly is an asset to me as Chair in Public Accounts. But I do want to congratulate him and wish him the very best as the Deputy Clerk of this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank you as the Speaker of this Chamber for the work that you do on a daily basis when the House is sitting. And you have certainly brought an impartial air into the Chair, and that, certainly, is something that is a credit to you. And the programs that you have started are certainly going to go down in history as being innovative and progressive, and I want to say thank you to you. But we'll have another opportunity to do that down the road.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say thank you to the table officers, to the—to our pages, to the people who

assist us in the Chamber, to our Hansard staff for the work that they do on a daily basis here in the Chamber. We certainly respect that and thank them for that.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate our new Opposition House Leader (Mrs. Taillieu), who has taken over the reins since the departure of Mr. Hawranik, and I want to wish her well as she continues on the road of leading us and our activities here in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to my constituents for their ongoing support to me as their MLA because that is always important. Without their support, I am nothing, and I could never do my job, and to them I say thank you for the ongoing support.

And how quickly time goes, you know, Mr. Speaker, it just seems like yesterday when I first entered this Chamber and addressed this Chamber for the first time, and here, 25 short years later, I'm looking at one of my last speeches in this House. But the last speech—I'm studying a bill right now that I really want to speak on later this session, and certainly I'll put some comments on the record with regard to how we process bills in this House and my experiences there. So I look forward to that.

* (15:50)

Mr. Speaker, in the short time I have, I want to just address the budget. This is, indeed, a different budget, in that it does address some of the concerns that Manitobans have. But, at the same time, it misses some important elements that are facing Manitobans today. And so, although I have been looking now for almost 12 years to support the budget of the current government, I haven't found a good reason to do that at this time.

And, Mr. Speaker, so, hoping that before I leave here I can still offer some support, I am hoping, I am hoping against odds, that the members of the government are going to look very positively at the amendment that was put forward by our side of the House, and by our leader and that, indeed, they will find that the amendments are, indeed, meeting the needs, and the desires, and the hopes, and the dreams of Manitobans in this current year.

Mr. Speaker, what I found curious also in this budget was that the New Democratic government has finally had an awakening. We have been calling for some of these measures now for a number of years. And, finally, on the eve of an election, the government has said, yes, the Conservatives were

right. And we have to acknowledge this—and the NDP government has said we have to acknowledge this by including some of the things that they have been calling for in the last budget, before we go to the people of Manitoba.

And, Mr. Speaker, whether it's on police services, and the quest that we have had about more police services needed in the province of Manitoba, or whether it's support to advanced education and the deteriorating issues that have been taking place there, I say to them that, yes, finally you have addressed some of those issues that we have been calling on for a number of years.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we—how many times have you heard the critic for Health talk about administrative costs. Now, in her speeches, in her questions, she has addressed this on numerous occasions. Finally, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has listened to the critic for Health, on our side of the House, and has included some of those measures in her address—in the Budget Address.

Mr. Speaker, I hear the issue of municipal grants. I want to remind this government that when we came into government in the late '80s, that one of the issues municipalities had was the very issue that we were talking about today, and that was the need for more funding. And we solidified that funding back in 1988 to the municipalities, and I am glad that after this many years the government has really said, you know, it's time to revisit that issue and see whether or not we are current.

Now, we want to know, at the end of the day, whether, in fact, this funding that is being allocated to municipalities is going to be real or whether it's just window dressing. Because, Mr. Speaker, if they are simply going to take away the funding under the old formulas and replace it with a new approach to funding, which says one point of the PST, then the gain that is going to be made by municipalities is really not going to be very much. And I was really concerned when I heard the mayor of Winnipeg address this issue and indicate that this was not the real number and that, in fact, it wasn't going to do what was anticipated and expected by municipalities, that, indeed, it's going to fall somewhat short in the funding that is going to be addressed to municipalities in the budget.

When I think about health care, I don't know how many budgets the dialysis unit in Russell was mentioned. I think it was mentioned in about five budgets of the current government, in terms of them

building a dialysis unit in Russell. Finally, I have to give credit to the current Minister of Health who did address this issue, and we now have, ready for opening, a brand-new dialysis unit in the community of Russell, something that has been needed for a long time, something that was announced way back in 1999. Finally, it took this many years, and we have a dialysis unit that is ready to open its doors, and I look forward to the opening ceremonies of this unit because it's truly been so long in coming.

And I don't blame just this government for it because, indeed, it was something that we had promised, weren't able to get to, and it takes some time. But I do say that we are more than happy in our community to see the doors of this unit finally ready to open and accept those people who are in need of those services in the province of Manitoba.

And, Mr. Speaker, in this budget the government did acknowledge the diabetes issue with youth in the province. And if you go into my constituency—I have five Aboriginal communities in my constituency who will avail themselves of these services, and that's where many of these issues are indeed a problem and need to be addressed. And so I'm happy that we are going to have a state-of-the-art unit. I have to say, it is a beautiful addition to our hospital, a beautiful unit, and I know that the services there are going to be first class.

Mr. Speaker, many years ago when I was Minister of Education, one of the first child-care spaces attached to a school was done under my watch as Minister of Education, and it happened in my own community, for that matter. We were building an addition to the school, there was a need for a child-care space and the thinking in those days was that you had to have child care separated from the school, which to me didn't make any sense. And so I have to say to the government, it's not a bill that we need to make sure that this happens; we need to have a philosophy of the government that says, yes, this is the right place to attach child-care spaces, and I congratulate them for that.

Mr. Speaker, the issues that we have issue with are with, first of all, the bipole transmission line. And I've heard from constituents and Manitobans right through, but from the west side of the province people are saying this is the wrong-headed decision and Bipole III should not be built on the west side of the province; Bipole III should be built on the east side of the province.

And, when you talk about, you know, the boreal forest, well the analogy was given to us by an expert and an engineer in Hydro who said, if you were to lay a dental floss on a football field, the entire length of the football field, that would be the approximate impact that a hydro line would have on the boreal forest. So, Mr. Speaker, the arguments that are being put forward by the government today with regard to, you know, somehow impacting negatively on the boreal forest are just bogus. They are bogus. And how can you have any credibility in saying that a hydro line is going to have an impact—a negative impact on the boreal forest, but a road won't. It just doesn't sell. It doesn't sell to Manitobans. It doesn't sell to us. As a matter of fact it doesn't sell to a lot of supporters of the NDP. So we ask that common sense and practicality prevail and that they look at this amendment on the Bipole III as being a logical amendment that is going to make this budget indeed a good budget.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue, the last issue I'm going to address is the issue of the deficit and the debt. Now, you cannot continue to run deficits and not plan for how you're going to eliminate them down the road. We saw nothing from the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) in terms of how she is going to address the deficit in the long term and how we're going to curb that deficit and start reducing the debt of our province.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I say to them, there are many good things in the budget, but the shortfalls really occur when you talk about balance in terms of deficit and in terms of debt, and in terms of the Bipole III. Those are the three issues that were addressed in the amendment. And I'm hoping that before we vote on this budget, the government will indeed consider the amendment as a positive one that adds to their budget, and, indeed, we can then go out of this Legislature this year having a budget that is supported by both parties, because we have a party that has not only supported the good initiatives of the government but a party in opposition that has added to, improved on, and indeed enriched the budget that was presented to us by the Minister of Finance.

So I call upon the government to take a look, turn the page—turn the page, look anew at the amendment that was presented to you and vote favourably for it so that indeed we can go out of here with a unanimous support of an amendment and a budget that indeed improves issues for the people of this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:00)

Ms. Diane McGifford (Lord Roberts): Mr. Speaker, it isn't often that one arises to applause, so I'm very grateful to hear this today. And it's also an honour, of course, always, to follow the member for Russell (Mr Derkach), even if he is a little apocryphal in what he says. But, anyway, I am very pleased to rise today to respond to the recent budget speech and, as well, to add a few personal reflections on my time in this Assembly.

First, the budget: I congratulate the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) on this excellent budget—excellent because it responds to the priorities of Manitoba families. It's an excellent budget, as well, because in the wake of the worst economic downturn since World War II, the budget, like its 'predecessor,' the 2010-2011 budget balances the deficit over a number of years.

This common sense approach, Mr. Speaker, means that our government can invest in education, both K to 12 and post-secondary, invest in health, social services and housing, public safety and justice initiatives.

In an earlier incarnation, Mr. Speaker, I was the Treasury Board Minister and so I know intimately the difficulty of decision making. Consequently, I have all the respect in the world for the Minister of Finance. She is really quite a wonderful woman.

Of course, she had another option, the one proposed in last year's budget, in the budget amendment of last year by the official opposition. She could've cut \$.5 billion, a decision that would have devastated health care, education, justice and social services. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, our minister is a progressive thinker so this option was roundly rejected. The NDP's reasonable and balanced perspective prevailed.

Now, I gather this year that the opposition's views may have moderated, or so their more modest amendments to the budget speech implies. One might question the credibility of this change of heart. Is it really credible that the reckless Tories, folks who, only months ago, were eager to cut \$.5 billion from the budget? Is it credible that there's been a change of heart, that there's been a genuine metamorphosis of sensibility into a kinder, gentler kind of folks?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe—I believe a change of heart is possible, and miracles do happen. So I am reserving budget—pardon me—I am reserving

judgment and, in keeping with my mood today, I'm reserving budget.

Mr. Speaker, today I'm feeling somewhat nostalgic, remembering my years in this Assembly, remembering back to 1995 when I was first elected and thinking forward to 2011 as I complete my term and plan for retirement.

Indeed, I recall that during my first budget speech—1995, and I see some of my 1995 folks are here today. During my first budget speech of 1995, I recall that everyone was on extremely good behaviour, according me the respect that the Assembly traditionally reserves for newly minted MLAs. I remember, as well, being deathly afraid of doing this first budget speech and bringing in all kind of voodoo trinkets—a ring from my mother and a locket that was supposed to bring good luck.

But, anyway, those were the salad days, Mr. Speaker. The first speech was quaintly called, I think, the maiden speech, which is really quite archaic. I hope the name has changed, but I don't know for sure that it has. But no matter. I don't really want to talk about the maiden speech. It's just that I—discretion.

So going back to '95, good behaviour and then gradually the climate changed and we launched into turbulent times and tones. And now, Mr. Speaker, I can honestly say that I haven't experienced another quiet day in this Legislature.

Question period has been and will, I'm sure, continue to be lively, spunky, sometimes just plain wild. I think there's an understanding here among ourselves—one that the public doesn't always understand—an understanding amongst us, that a good part of what we do is theatre, and not necessarily good theatre all the time, but theatre.

So my thanks to all members that I've worked with, including—[interjection]—I'm not even going to respond to the member from Springfield today. So my thanks to all members, all the members I've worked with, including those who have left before me. I'm particularly—[interjection] Well, that would be a change. I am particularly grateful to my colleagues opposite—to my colleagues opposite I'm particularly grateful for your training me as an actor and serving as my audience, though not always an appreciative one, I'm sure. I'm not sure how this training will translate into my retirement. Perhaps I could spar with other retirees as we walk around the track at the Reh-Fit Centre, including some former

MLAs, or perhaps I could do voice for skits for my grandson, who I'm sure would be a very appreciative audience. Seriously, I do thank members of the opposition for their—and, I suppose, for their opposition. Opposition is important.

As well, I am equally indebted—perhaps, more—indeed, more so to my caucus colleagues, many of whom have left the Legislature to retire or to work elsewhere. I remember with great fondness my legislative assistant, Linda Asper; Becky Barrett, who schooled me in the our 'arcanada' of the legislative life; the member from St. Johns, who immediately after my first election shared his ideas with me and involved me in many of his plans, usually working along with him—he's famous for his hard work. A mere thank you to my caucus brothers and sisters who were working in the struggle for a better world is hardly adequate, Mr. Speaker, yet I do say thank you, and, even better, I promise my help in fall 2011.

Mr. Speaker, I've often said that my parents—and here I use my mother's word—would be gobsmacked to know that their daughter had been elected to public office, become a minister, called the Premier by his first name, represented Canada at UNESCO and, best of all, goodness, met the Queen. My mother was British and came to Canada as a war bride and always loved the Queen. This would have absolutely astounded her.

My parents died before my elections, but the point I want to make is this: many of us here today have roots in working-class families, and it's a tribute to democracy that we were able to seek political office and be elected. I'm as pleased as punch in the knowledge that my caucus represents a broad spectrum of Manitobans. This itself is another tribute to democracy and, I think, to the maturity of our Manitoba democracy, and, if at times our debates here are more like wrangling spiced with a tad of vitriolic and faulty logic, why, that too is fine, because the people of this province—as the member from La Verendrye observed—can always get cross and at the next election toss out all of us or any of us. This is because we serve at their pleasure. Serving at the pleasure of the public is at the heart of parliamentary democracy, and I think it's a very good system.

Mr. Speaker, I join the member from La Verendrye and thank you for your excellent work. As Speaker of the House, you are fair, judicious, patient as Job and endlessly good humoured. Every

member of this Legislature respects you. I metaphorically take off my hat to you and wish you excellent adventures up there in the frozen tundra with the dog teams, polar bears and your family members. I know you'll have a good time. And, of course, Mr. Speaker, to your health. Thank you for your personal kindness and your warm friendship. You are, as they say in German, ein echt Mensch, a real person.

While thanking you, I'd also like to acknowledge your mother, Jenny Tootoo. I know she shared your passion for visiting Manitoba schools, speaking with the children, playing her squeezebox and sharing her culture. She was a fine lady, and you are justly proud of her.

*(16:10)

Last year when former Premier Doer received two honorary doctorates, I twice acknowledged his role in political life. I don't know that he was always that pleased about it, but, anyway, and trotted—because I trotted out a few of his prime expressions. Those of us on this side of the House will know exactly what I'm talking about, and perhaps the opposite members of the opposition have heard some of his colourful expressions. He was certainly a force to be reckoned with, a flamboyant character. Today, I'd like to publicly thank him and, on the record, for welcoming me to caucus in 1995 and welcoming me to Cabinet in 1999. When he first called about my Cabinet responsibilities, he presented a long list: Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism; Minister responsible for the Status of Women; Minister responsible for Seniors; minister responsible for the administration of the liquor act and the lottery act.

I felt terrified and—but he made it very clear that this was, in his mind, a perfectly logical mix and only an idiot couldn't understand. So I understood. Apparently, my colleagues agreed, dubbing me the minister of wine, women and song.

These heady days, Mr. Speaker, did not last long. In January 2001, I became the Minister of Advanced Education and Training and basically retained this portfolio with some variation until March 28, 2011, and now we have a wonderful new minister.

Of course, I owe a debt to the second premier of this mandate, the member from St. Boniface. For years he was the Minister of Finance and I was on Treasury Board, as I said earlier. The breadth of his knowledge, his retention of detail, creative thinking

and skilful policy making are widely acknowledged. He is a smart man. I am just thrilled to see him so capably fill his office. He is a fine credit to our party and to Manitoba. But equally valid, Mr. Speaker, are his attention to his people, his personal diplomacy and goodwill. I'm honoured to have served him in Cabinet and to have benefited from his humanistic way of running government.

Mr. Speaker, I haven't yet mentioned my family, and my husband, Ed, is up there in the gallery. I think he's still there. He's waited since 2:15. That's loyalty.

As I said, I hadn't yet mentioned my family. Without them my political career would have been impossible. My daughters, Lisa and Elona, have slogged it out in all my elections. Lisa served as an office manager and canvasser. She cooked and badgered countless friends until they weakened and joined my team.

In 2007, Elona on e-day flew home from Peru, fell off the plane dead tired and came to work election night. A couple of days later she began her articling years. My daughters, Mr. Speaker, are real troopers. I am proud of them and their commitment to social justice and the NDP. Most of all, I'm heartened by their faith in me, and sometimes wonder what I did right.

My partner, Ed, as I said, up in the balcony today, is the archetypal political spouse, the very model of political excellence. Everyone loves him, and I often wonder why I became the politician and not him. He's really much nicer than I am. It's true. He's chaired my EPC, put up signs, drafted budgets, organized fundraisers, withstood both tears and temper tantrums and been the go-to guy for just about everything. At times, I'm almost embarrassed by his faith in me; at others, I find it a little frightening. His support has been steadfast, remarkable and essential to my success. And he's been there for so many of my colleagues. Unabashedly I put him, Mr. Speaker, in the same category as yourself, a real person, ein echt Mensch. Thank you, Ed.

As my colleague from Burrows made clear a few days ago, a politician needs a strong constituency association. I am debted—I am indebted to so many brilliant, generous supporters: Muriel Smith; Murray Smith, now deceased; Cecil Muldrew, now deceased; Ben Levin; James Allum; Carolina Stecher; Mark Cohoe—and these are only examples.

I want to thank our—and this may surprise some people—I want to thank our former mayor, Glen Murray, who first suggested I run for political office, and I want to thank my friend, Tom Moody, who insisted that I do. Then there are those countless committed persons who fundraise, canvass, put up signs, motivated by their desire for social justice. Without them, I would never have become the MLA, first for Osborne and then for Lord Roberts.

Then there's a string of top-drawer officials, people I worked with, people from the civil service. When I hear about the fat in the civil service, I'm just agog, Mr. Speaker, because all I've seen are hard-working, intelligent, positive folks.

I remember Roxy Freedman and Tom Carson from my Culture days. Both were superb, and Roxy is the best-dressed woman I've ever met.

I remember Ben Levin from Advanced Education who was not quite so well-dressed, but he was a fabulous DM.

I remember Pat Rowantree who was my DM, the very incarnation of electric energy. I know the memory—member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) would agree with that.

And then there was Dwight Botting who had great ideas for technical-vocational education and for accessibility. We were, and we continue to be, great buddies.

My most recent deputy, Heather Reichert, was and is a financial wizard. I always just took whatever she said about money on faith.

I want to mention Elaine Phillips, who acted as deputy between Dwight Botting and Heather Reichert. Elaine is one of the most gracious people I've ever met. She's as smart as a whip and cares about young people.

Then there's Sid Rogers from the council on post education, who has a wonderful, laconic sense of humour, but he isn't just funny. He's, as well, very committed to his work, and very committed to his minister, which is what I really liked.

I also acknowledge colleagues across the way and colleagues in my caucus who are leaving. I've known the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) for many years. He welcomed me to the Legislature in 1995. He gave me some free file folders, I remember very clearly. I remember sharing office space with you, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, the member from Flin Flon and I were elected together and I have

spent a lot—well, I spent some time, very positive time, canvassing with the member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick).

I want to acknowledge the member from Portage la Prairie for always remembering the strawberries. What are we going to do without that? And for other things, of course.

And the member from Russell, I believe, is also retiring, and, of course, the member from Brandon East. So I'd like to acknowledge—[interjection]—Brandon West, I'm sorry. Oh my goodness. Don't tell the—yes, a terrible mistake.

It's been a pleasure serving with you all.

Now to the people of my constituency, I spoke earlier of faith. What a leap of faith they take in the voting booth. I thank them for taking a chance on me. My people are incredibly loyal, and I have been very lucky. I ran four times and won four times. I assure my folks that I've tried to represent their interests and concerns, to be principled, respectful and intelligent.

The American poet, Audre Lorde, writes: When we don't speak, our silence is heard as assent and is used against us.

I assure my constituents that I've spoken the truth as I know it in the Chamber, in the caucus, and in Cabinet. I've been grateful for their constant amazing faith. I will welcome the new MLA, the person who will take over from me. I've got a good idea as to whom it will be. But today I'm saying goodbye and not hello, Mr. Speaker, so no names are mentioned.

* (16:20)

Just a final word. During my time in office—this is my advice time—during my term in office, I kept a journal, and I'm considering writing a book. Now the good news for everyone here is that the session is continuing for a couple more months so you all have good—a good two months to redeem yourselves, to turn over a new leaf, and to look good in print. You can still change your ways.

And, for my colleagues opposite, I have a special message for my colleagues opposite. I do have a special message. I have a membership book in my purse and later you could meet me in the parking lot and sign the form and take the pledge. There's still time to do the right thing. No one's clapping over there. Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, I'm only kidding.

Thank you everybody. You've been a fascinating crowd, and it's been a great experience.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, that's a hard act to follow, but I do welcome the opportunity to put some words on the record in regard to Budget 2010 and the amendment proposed by the official Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), I think, a good, balanced, reasonable amendment that we should be considering here.

But, before I get into that, there's a few things that I would like to say. First, I, too, want to add my congratulations to those members who are not returning by their own choice. They have decided that they are going to retire for whatever reason that may be, personal reasons, just decided that this is what they want to do, and there's members on both sides of the House that I can name. There's the member for Burrows, the member from Lord Roberts who just spoke, the member from Flin Flon, who we have enjoyed some times together, member from St. Norbert, member from Point Douglas, Mr. Speaker, yourself, and do also want to just wish you all the very best. I know that the job of being Speaker is quite an interesting job, and you are the one that has to hold us all in our places, and when we sort of get a little bit out of line and you either gently nudge us back into line or with a little bit more force sometimes. So we all want to wish you the very best and appreciate your command of the House and what you do for us here.

Also, on our side, we have the member from Brandon West, the member from Portage la Prairie and the member from Pembina, member for Russell. And, of course, I do also want to mention the former MLA from Lac du Bonnet, Gerald Hawranik. I can say his name now. And, you know, it's difficult to—I can never say I can replace him. I'm only just taking his place because we thought he was just a fabulous House leader.

I also want to congratulate all of the table officers on their positions and congratulate everyone and just, the pages as well. Thank you very much for doing what you do, and I want to just as well mention Karine Martel from St-Pierre-Jolys, who is from my constituency, so we'll be speaking a little bit more about her next week, I hope.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just to get to the budget itself, you know, we're quite pleased somehow to see some of the things that have made their way into the budget this year, things that we have been talking

about for many years and making suggestions to the government. So I know that many times people think you can't affect any change in opposition, but I think that we can because we bring forward ideas and those ideas then get adopted by the government and taken as their own idea. You know, I think there is credit to be given where credit is due, though, that some of these ideas were initiated from our side of the House, but we're pleased to see that they've taken some of these ideas and incorporated them into a budget.

Just a couple of examples: I mean, we've been talking about increasing police services for many years. It's one of the things we've actually asked for and pleased to see that there are more police officers going to be cracking down on violent crime in this city, because we know that Winnipeg still does hold a moniker, which we would like it not to hold in terms of violent crime, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I think they could have done this a little differently. I think they—rather than sit on the \$14 million that came from the federal government three years ago, I think they probably could have put that money in place three years ago and we would have had those officers three years ago. Perhaps some of the crime that we have been seeing would have been prevented, Mr. Speaker.

Another thing that I think is one thing that we have been advocating for for quite some time, I even remember asking questions about it in the House last year, and that is the long-term funding plan for universities, Mr. Speaker, and I think that is critical. If we're going to have centres of excellence in our advanced education institutions, our colleges and our universities, then they need to be able to plan for that, and we recognize that. And we're certainly happy that the government has recognized that.

And when I—I just want to pause here for a moment because I did also want to congratulate the new Minister for Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. Selby). I meant to say that in my opening and I—just talking about advanced education now reminded me to congratulate her on her appointment. I look forward to working with her.

Also, in terms of health and education, we've been talking about the need for new schools because of overcrowding in schools. I don't know how many times members on this side of the House have brought that up and talked about that. So we're happy to see that the government has listened, particularly in new areas like Sage Creek, where you have new

areas that are going to have growth and young children, particularly important.

You know, I have to say that the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), our Health critic, has constantly talked about bloated health-care bureaucracy and the need to reassign some of that money into front-line services. And I think that now, perhaps, the government is actually listening to her and taking some of these things seriously. We've talked about insulin pumps for young people with diabetes, and we're happy to see that they have looked at that. And keeping the Grace Hospital open, we know that there was the ER at Grace Hospital open. I know that there was a little bit of a problem there that, you know—and I think that they've actually listened to our encouragement on that, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things. Certainly, with water management strategies, we recognize there needs to be an overall 'waterment'—water management strategy for all of Manitoba. We were certainly happy to see them recognizing the drainage issues and trying to address some of the backlog there.

And, as well, in Family Services, we recognize the need for more nursery spaces and—but, of course, doesn't go that far enough because we also need to have the people trained to be in those spaces so that children can be actually filling those spaces.

But, Mr. Speaker, there's—there are a couple of things that I think we've proposed in our amendment that would actually make this a better budget with a reasonable—it's a reasonable amendment; it's a balanced approach. It's a—just a very balanced and reasonable amendment that we are proposing, one that would say yes to saving money for all Manitoba families. And, when you think about the increased costs of running the Bipole III transmission line down the west side of the province over the east side of the province, there's going to be an additional cost to Manitoba families, over \$11,000 for every family.

So we're inviting the government to take another look at this and say, perhaps, they would like to be on the side of Manitoba families, saving money rather than costing them money, Mr. Speaker. So we're inviting them to have a look at this. And I know that many of you must have been going into your constituencies and hearing—and people asking questions about bipole, and it must be pretty hard for you to explain to people why you want to continue to run it down the west side rather than the east side.

* (16:30)

But, Mr. Speaker, it's a reasonable amendment that we're putting forward here to save Manitoba families money. And we're also advocating for a balanced fiscal approach which we need to get this debt under control. It's doubled, I think, since 1999. If we're going to be able pay down this debt, it's going to be necessary to look at a very balanced approach. When you think about the debt-servicing costs ballooning to over \$800 million and interest rates, if they go up are—and certainly it looks that it might be the case—that is going to create a huge problem.

So we invite the government to look at our amendments. They're reasonable. They're balanced. They're an improvement. We invite you to stand and vote with us for our amendment.

With that, I'd just like to thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): After hearing a fantastic speech from the member from Lord Roberts, one wonders, you know, how to really make this speech on the budget which is so good that I understand even the opposition is thinking of.

So I'm going to take the approach, Mr. Speaker, that I would say that let's support this Budget 2011, and I appeal to all my colleagues from all sides of the House to support—which is in true sense, a very responsible and good budget.

I'd like to thank all of you to be here in the session and some of the members may not run. But, in particular, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for doing an unbelievable job, as some of my colleagues have said, as the presiding Chair for the Legislative Assembly, in moderating our, at times, very rowdy debates. You have made tough choices on several rulings on the matters of procedures and points of order and your acumen in being a real judge makes my head bow to you ten times more than I usually would do to pay respect to the Speaker. I say humbly *namastey* or *namaskaar* to you. That means, in the true language, that I bow my head.

And this is remarkable for me to see, in the Manitoba Legislature, a Speaker who's elected from a party that, at times, you have to rule against that party's procedures and things that you value as a judge. And this speaks volumes, Mr. Speaker, of the value of democracy.

In this Chamber, which I remember the member from Kildonan once said, dignified way—that this is a Chamber that we are all dignified members. We come here representing people, getting their trust in us and then trying to do our best to deliver something that is good for society.

So today I will take some of my own emotions and feelings and philosophical view on issues which face us all as MLAs representing people of our constituencies, Mr. Speaker.

I chose to join politics for one and only one reason. It was not plastic but passion of politics, Mr. Speaker, that led me to join here. I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to contribute in building a better Manitoba, helping our NDP team and supporting, fundamentally, our strong values.

Mr. Speaker, I come from a family of very varied background. My father was a scholar of literature and he had a doctorate in social justice system and literature. Based on ancient philosophical ideologies, he taught me a lot of things when I was growing child. He valued education as No. 1 in his life. My mother came from a landlord family. A very rich landlord that had huge, vast farmland and a lot of labourers.

So I saw the, you know, contradicting rules and regulations being in these two families. And it was amazing for me as a young child to question. These families were helping my wife. Raj comes also from the same type of landlord family. And I was—when I was growing up, I saw certain things in this society that made me really alert to see, what am I going to be.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think I have shared this once, or maybe twice, but I have shared with many of my constituents, when I was walking to a school—to my junior school, I saw a young mother beating a child, four-year-old child, and I asked, why are you beating him? And she said, I fed him yesterday, and then he wants food again. So his crime was he was hungry. And that feeling, Mr. Speaker, has yet to go away from my head and my heart, because I felt that the creation, the world God has created, need not have a child hungry.

So I took an approach at that time, very deeply, to say, I am going to do something which will be little different than just go and get educated, get a job. So I chose to come here to Manitoba, and I fell in love with this province. It's a beautiful province I saw from the sky. It was Christmas Eve I landed, and

it was a bicentennial year in that beautiful city, and I really felt that this was the destined place for me to rest of my life and work here.

In childhood, I studied at St. Xavier's College, and my warden, Father Proost, was like a second father to me, and he—we used to go to tribal villages and help feed the poor children and poor families from the college charity fund. These experience made me, again, change more and more inside to see that we need to build a better world.

When I came, after my engineering education, it was some new challenges I saw. I saw Canada, a land of opportunity, a country with all kinds of values that we all enjoy, as civilization teaches us to be equal and have social justice.

I had a unique, immediate impression of Canada, a country of opportunities and universality for all. And, yes, Mr. Speaker, some 40 years back, a young student I came to Manitoba, and Ed Schreyer was the premier at the time. I heard him speak on several occasions, and then I joined NDP, the party founded by greatest Canadian, Tommy Douglas, who became my hero. His vision to have universal health care and education for all was my dream as a child, and it will remain my dream as long as I live.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I also like to say that the modern times tells us that only emotions and dreams and desires will not deliver. We have to work; we have to create wealth. And I remember some long time back at one of the NDP conventions, some of my colleagues were talking about distribution, and I took the mic and I said, let's create some wealth council. And how do we create wealth is not by exploitation, but by being entrepreneurial, by working hard and creating jobs.

Eighty per cent of jobs in Canada and Manitoba are created by small businesses and entrepreneurs. And I am proud to say that my colleague, minister of Entrepreneurship, Trade and Training, understands that value, and he and I are working together to make sure that our entrepreneurs in Manitoba prosper in creating that wealth which is going to look after the society.

So, I think, Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear, that I am from the business background, and I know that several large businesses, whether it is private or public, they create opportunities for jobs which creates revenues, which gives people their quality of life. But the policies, but the values of governance is what we decide here in this Chamber.

So I—later on I am thankful to Premier (Mr. Selinger) to appoint me as a special envoy for international trade. I had some experience before that. I had a manufacturing company, and after that I took international trade and investment in field, and I've travelled all over the world and I have a tremendous experience and tremendous connections and relationship with several business people who respect me because I have always taught them that, if you are a corporate giant, look after your people because human resources and mineral resources are two different things.

*(16:40)

You can take a planet, suck the earth and take some oil and it's gone. Human life will create something else, but human beings are not material resources that you can abuse, use and dump. Therefore, the value of looking after workforce—and I can give you examples of it. It's not a rocket science and don't have to go to Harvard. We can study here, right here in Manitoba, look at businesses which are doing well. They treat their employees well.

In my factory, Mr. Speaker, I had, at one time, 51 employees, and I must say that those employees were much more partners to me than I would have believed. And I gave them an example of another big, multinational, giant corporation in India that calls—the CEO calls himself chief worker. He said, we're all workers. I do my job. Accountants do their job. You do this job. You do the machining. You do the welding. We are all workers. So we need that value to see how we make our society better by responsibility and by sharing, not by exploiting.

So, therefore, Mr. Speaker, I say that this budget, which has certain features of amounts that we need to say that it's important for us, I have no doubt that we are all accepting that reality that, yes, we have all those important elements in the budget.

Having said all that, Mr. Speaker, let me come back to my constituency. I was elected in 2003 and, since then, I have worked very hard and lot has been accomplished and, as the word goes, a lot more to do. I am giving this assurance to people of Radisson that I stand for them 100 per cent. I know they are very hard-working families who are doing their best to raise their family and children and to still contribute so much to our community in building projects.

Winakwa Community Centre has received over a million-plus dollars from us. We have funded Prendergast seniors centre, where we have several daycare centres and children who go there, and they are supported by the community workers. We have supported several school grounds in Transcona and in Windsor Park. I have visited several schools; I would say most of the schools in my riding. And I have talked to students, and many students send me good emails asking questions. And I went—I was in Immanuel Christian School during Christmas and some of the children asked me some very unique questions, very inquisitive about the religion, about some of the values. And I'm very honoured to say that I have received such a great caring responses from them.

I'd like to share something very personal. Very recently, I have shared that with the Premier (Mr. Selinger), that email. A family called me about bullying a child, young child, and I went and talked to that child and the mother. And I just gave them examples of my own son who's a Rhodes Scholar, a brilliant guy, and literally doing extremely well. He was chosen as 25 Transformational Canadians by *Globe and Mail* and Cisco, which includes David Suzuki and peak personalities like that. And I said when he was going to school he had rough time with some of the kids. So I talked to that kid and I have received an email from his mother's counsellor complimenting me to say, it was nice for you to visit that family and be a counsel and a friend.

So we have differences in society, but I said our school system is doing very well. We have education and fundamental values and we are promising that. We are doing our best to improve on what we can do.

So I think that Radisson is a constituency I'm proud of, and I want to make—and I want to continue for next four years, I want to give in building what I have been doing for last eight years and, before that, we have been working for another, you know, previous four years.

So we are going to be talking on some of the projects which I am going to commit, as I have committed in the past, and I am very proud to say here my colleague from Transcona and I, we share one office. We share our values, we work together, and when the hog plant issue came, it was a tough one, Mr. Speaker. We all know that. But I stood up and I stood up with my people and guess what, I—my votes were doubled. It was just because people saw

that I stand for their cause. And somebody, I think you were with me in Bernie Wolfe School, I think, 2005, when we were teaching the kids about parliamentary democracy. And one member from the audience asked, what happens if there is a constituency issue that conflicts with what your government wants you to do? What would you do? And I, extempore, said I will support my constituency's provided two things: (a) it is not against the ideals of my party, and (b) it is not against my inner conscience.

So hog plant issue came and, guess what, Mr. Speaker, our party unanimously had passed that. So I was not against my party. I and member from Transcona stood with our people, and they loved us for that. So I'm saying that tomorrow if something like that comes for Radisson, I will stand for them because it is they that send me here. And I appeal to all our—you know, constituents and MLAs here. Let us bring our ideals, let us bring our values, but we must stand for people who send you, that their cause, their relationship, and do not bring the politics of power to really override what is needed to help people who elect you.

So I think that these are some of the things I wanted to put on record, that I wanted to say recently in door knocking, I have several things that are coming up. And one of the crisis came, as you know, Mr. Speaker, about the Plessis Road crisis. And I think I, and my colleague here again, we stood up and said, yes, we are ready. We have our one-third funding. We have our one-third funding, and, yes, tomorrow I'm committing here in this House that Manitoba is ready to give one-third funding for that Plessis Road underpass which has been passed, which has been mentioned in the budget.

Now if that is—does not satisfy, it is difficult for me to say how else can we say that we are ready. So the politics is not at times easy, as I have experienced, and now after eight years of working, but I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, still this is a very good feeling for me to work in the system here that makes me feel very proud, very happy.

Coming back to Radisson, I think that the new population which is coming in the Sage Creek area, past Fermor area and the Mint, that area is growing and Fermor Road, which is Highway No. 1, and Lagimodiere corner, that corner needs to be fixed. And I have casually talked to both ministers, and they say, yes. I had a meeting with the city councillor, Dan Vandal, who also said that he is

going to put engineers to see how to make sure that the traffic in that area is looked after.

One of the issues, Mr. Speaker, is at times, we in politics look at short-term issues that looks okay, but we forget the long-term issues. And this budget reflects the long-term values. We can fix and balance budget one year, but second year there may be hospitals closed and schools closed—we don't want that. We want to make sure that our society is sustained with the value that we do. So we are looking at some infrastructure funding. We should look for 10 to 20 years what will happen, where the city grew or the population grew, and Mississauga mayor is great, that she has been planning to make sure that her part of the city does not have these problems of zoning, of city and that is not up to us. That is up to the city laws, city people to do that, but we are prepared to work with them to make sure that they listen to the people and work together on these issues.

* (16:50)

So I would say that we need few projects in Windsor Park. One is one of the things that I'm—I think I mentioned this to the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) that we need Access Windsor Park. We have built Access Transcona, which is very, very good, very effective. We want to build Access Windsor Park in that area. We have some recreational facilities that we need to build in that area, and I would encourage P3 participation, which is public and private partnership which can be good for those areas. Young children, rather than go and, you know, be engaged in crime, they go and play sports and they participate in recreation, theatre, arts, and they make themselves much better citizens. So I would say that these are some of the issues that I would like to continue to build in my constituency.

Now, I would also like to say something that is very personal to me, Mr. Speaker, when I spoke in the beginning, that I do not want to see us being satisfied that we have done our job. We will not be satisfied because the job will take lot of more years to build on the ideals that we are working on. I don't want to see a single child hungry in Manitoba. I don't want to see our Aboriginal community up in north living in third-world conditions. I don't want to see our—a child up in north not having drinking water. But, I'm saying to you, if we unite here, if we work together here and talk to Ottawa and say that this is not acceptable, this country cannot be divided in three types of regions, one which is—which has no

windows in the winter and the kids—they've got seven families live in one small house. The Aboriginal people who belong to this country, they are suffering. No drinking water, no running water. Not acceptable.

I chose Canada because this is a country of affluence. But when I read that in the paper and I talk to my friend here from The Pas and I said, let us not accept the reality that this is okay. What can we do? We can do a lot. We will do a lot and we have to build it, but Ottawa should have to be given the answer that they have to come up with a plan. It is a national plan. It's the big investment we're talking about, but one cannot be—at one time, people would say, well listen, we can't build railways up there because it's not going to make money. There are lot of things we do as a society that's not related to return on investment only. It is return to the service.

So I am absolutely going on record to say that I will not personally be rested, Mr. Speaker, till I see that the Canadian society, at least Canadian society, if not the world, is not having two types of class; one, we enjoy, another suffers. Not acceptable to me. I would say we need to build our society, that our youth are well educated, they are healthy and they are enjoying good, good quality of life. They have good jobs, economic prosperity, bring investments from all over the world, make Manitoba better. We have huge resources. We have land. We have power. We have hydro and I think we can do that.

So, with this—these, some of these thoughts, I would like to say that I'd like to thank all members here who are going to be retiring and wish them best and I will list here that we have from Brandon West, Pembina, Lord Roberts, St. Norbert, Flin Flon, Portage la Prairie, Russell, Lac du Bonnet. They will be missed, particularly the member from St. Norbert was my mentor. She—I used to ask her all the time questions about what does that mean? What does that mean? And she, being a Deputy Speaker, wealth of knowledge, she always guided me at times. She gets irritated, but she says, you don't know this? I said, no, unfortunately, I don't.

But she has been a great help to me, Mr. Speaker, and I told her once that I saw her in your gown, the Speaker's gown, and I said, my God, it would be so nice to see a female Speaker here. But she has decided not to run, and I hope that we'll see how the next time comes when you're not here. But I'm pretty sure that the Speaker's Chair will make that person as good as you are.

So this is what I'm very happy to share this, that I had very good time with some of these members that may not be here. And particularly with my friends in opposition, I'm saying that they are also a great number of good people that I've enjoyed sharing with them several times some of the thoughts that we all trying to work together—differences little bit of how we want to do things.

But I bet that they are equally dedicated to make Manitoba better, as we are. For we are not absolutely different, we are different only on the approach, how you do this. You may take 20 years; we want to do it in two years. You may try to fix only one part; we want to fix the whole part. So there is a difference between how approaches but, yes, intentions are same. We are all working to make sure that we build a better and a beautiful society in Manitoba.

In parting shot, I would like to say, my grandchildren, they live in Washington, DC, and Toronto. And I have a grandchild who was born in Washington, DC; one was born in St. Boniface here. And when somebody said that, what happens if there is a tussle, a war between Canada and USA—Sophie's Choice. I said, well, Anjali and Chandini both will fight. Anjali's born in Washington, and she is born in St. Boniface here. So we don't need wars, Mr. Speaker. We don't need—we need a better world. We need the world which will be peaceful, which is the Gandhi's thought. So I am trying to say, if all politicians, particularly in Canada, the country which I call heaven, if we can put our brains together, if we work together with harmony and make this country so ideal, so beautiful, that nobody will try to say, yes, we cannot copy you. And that will make the world far, far better.

As a grandfather, I get at times so scared of this terrorism going all over, and wars going on, and refugees coming and democracy not surviving. Not acceptable. We need democracy, Mr. Speaker; we need to sacrifice some of our own greeds in name of

democracy. And I'm requesting us to have that passion to build a democracy at any cost and build our society, build our own communities with a passion.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I see I have couple of more minutes, but I will, perhaps, like to end it by thanking you once again for the great job you have done and wish you best in your retired life, in your family life. And, once again, I wish all those members who are not going to be here one of the best. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I rise today to put a few words on the record with respect to the amendment brought forward by our leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). But, before I do, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the table officers in their new roles here, their respective new roles in the Manitoba Chamber, to welcome the pages back and also to take the opportunity—I know that there are a number of MLAs who will be retiring this year. And I just want to say to them we wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

I know there's members on both sides of the House, members on both sides that I've sat on committees with. And I know sometimes we can get into heated debate here in the Manitoba Legislature, but we are all MLAs and we all, I think, there is a general amount of respect for the jobs that we do in our communities. And I just want to congratulate them for all they have done—again on both sides of the House as well as to you, Mr. Speaker, because I know you have announced as well that you will be—

Mr. Speaker: The time now—when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 28 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 19, 2011

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		St. Lazare Derkach; Ashton	851
Bill 21—The Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Day Act Oswald	843	Senior Abuse Gerrard; Oswald	853
Bill 217—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Expanded Grounds for Early Termination) Blady	843	Members' Statements River East Kodiaks Girls Volleyball Team Mitchelson	854
Petitions		The Pas Rotary Club Whitehead	855
PTH 5—Reducing Speed Limit Briese	843	Carman Blizzard Fest Pedersen	855
Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches Goertzen	844	Joe McCormick Jennissen	855
Convicted Auto Thieves—Denial of MPI Benefits Pedersen	844	Averill Whitfield Rowat	856
Ministerial Statements			
Flooding and Ice Jams Update			
Ashton	844		
Briese	845		
Gerrard	845		
Oral Questions			
Budget McFadyen; Selinger	845		
New West Partnership Agreement McFadyen; Selinger	847		
Highway 75 (Morris) Taillieu; Ashton	848		
Provincial Debt Stefanson; Wowchuk	849		
Manitoba Hydro Maguire; Wowchuk	850		
		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
		Budget Debate (Sixth Day of Debate)	
		Nevakshonoff	856
		Goertzen	861
		Lemieux	863
		Derkach	868
		McGifford	870
		Taillieu	874
		Jha	876
		Stefanson	880

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>