

First Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	PC
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
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ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	PC
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 25, 2012

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.

Good afternoon, colleagues. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 11—The Criminal Property Forfeiture Amendment Act (Administrative Forfeiture and Miscellaneous Amendments)

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 11, The Criminal Property Forfeiture Amendment Act (Administrative Forfeiture and Miscellaneous Amendments); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la confiscation de biens obtenus ou utilisés criminellement (confiscation administrative et modifications diverses), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: This bill was developed with advice from the civil forfeiture unit, from our police and from Crown attorneys, and provides a suite of enhancements to Manitoba's very successful civil remedies.

These amendments would establish a minister of forfeiture process for specified cases and create a process to manage and sell property forfeited to the government under the Criminal Code. This bill also enhances the protection of victims and the ability to distribute money to the Victims Assistance Fund under The Victims' Bill of Rights. Further, the bill includes important technical amendments to assist asset management, disclosure and other areas needed to respond to court decisions and developments in forfeiture law. I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, on a

full range of improvements to this important legislation.

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

Bill 201—The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), that Bill 201, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act; Loi sur la protection des renseignements personnels et la prévention du vol d'identité, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: This bill governs the collection, use, disclosure and destruction of personal information by organizations in the private sector. It also establishes a duty for those organizations to notify individuals who may be affected when the personal information the organization has collected is lost, stolen, or compromised. This allows provincial oversight rather than having to refer any infraction to the federal privacy commissioner, making this a more friendly bill for businesses and individuals in Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill 203—The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 203, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act; Loi sur la responsabilité et la transparence en matière réglementaire, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: This bill, the regulatory and transparency act, is also known as the red tape bill, requires the government to develop procedures to make the process for enacting regulations more transparent. It also requires government departments to develop regulatory reform plans to eliminate unnecessary regulations and encourage restraint in making new regulations. Both the government

procedures and department plans should be made public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

No further bills. We'll move on to petitions.

PETITIONS

Personal Care Homes and Long-Term Care— Steinbach

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The city of Steinbach is one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba and one of the largest cities in the province.

This growth has resulted in pressure on a number of important services, including personal care homes and long-term care space in the city.

Many long-time residents of the city of Steinbach have been forced to live out their final years outside of Steinbach because of the shortage of personal care home and long-term care facilities.

Individuals who have lived in, worked in and contributed in the city of Steinbach their entire lives should not be forced to spend their final years in a place far from friends and from family.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Health ensure additional personal care homes and long-term care spaces are made available in the city of Steinbach on a priority basis.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by H. Bergman, S. Friesen, E. Enns and hundreds of other Manitobans.

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

Cellular Phone Service in Southeastern Manitoba

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

During early October 2011, parts of southeastern Manitoba were hard hit by wildfires. Thanks to the

swift action of provincial and municipal officials, including 27 different fire departments and countless volunteers, no lives were lost and property damage was limited.

However, the fight against the wildfires reinforced the shortcomings of the communication systems in the region, specifically the gaps in cellular phone service.

These gaps made it difficult to co-ordinate firefighting efforts and to notify people that they had to be evacuated. The situation also would have made it difficult for people to call for immediate medical assistance if it had been required.

Local governments, businesses, industries and area residents have for years sought a solution to this very serious communications challenge.

* (13:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the appropriate provincial government departments to consider working with all stakeholders to develop a strategy to swiftly address the serious challenges posed by limited cellular phone service in southeastern Manitoba in order to ensure that people and property can be better protected in the future.

And this petition is signed by D. Tétrault, P. Yin and H. Smook and many, many more fine Manitobans.

PTH 5—Reducing Speed Limit

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

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 Highway Traffic Board about the current speed limits on this portion of PTH 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-per-hour speed limit on a portion of PTH No. 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 better protect motorists' safety.

This petition is signed by D. DeVries, M. Luke, E. Beasse and many, many other fine Manitobans.

PR 227 Bridge

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I wish to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

The bridge on Provincial Road 227 was used by both heavy truck traffic and by agricultural producers to travel back and forth to their fields.

During the flood of 2011, the heavy use of the Portage Diversion resulted in damage to this bridge.

Due to irreparable damages to the structure, it was removed in February of 2012, leading to detours and associated challenges.

Because there is no natural flow in the Portage Diversion, water is only present when the provincial government opens the Portage Diversion gates.

Provincial government has no set timeline for the bridge replacement, nor has it indicated plans to establish a temporary bridge.

We wish to petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to recognize the safety concerns and the negative socio-economic impact caused by the loss of the bridge and to consider establishing a low-level crossing for farm machinery to cross the Portage Diversion a half mile north of Provincial Road 227.

Signed by R. Kontzie, R. Kontzie, S. Gerrard and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions? Seeing none, committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Yes, I'm pleased to table the 2011 annual report for the Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm proud to table the 2011 report of the Manitoba Law Reform Commission on limitation of actions in conversion and detinue.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Budget Government Record on Election Promises

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): As Manitobans are increasingly becoming aware, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) broke the promise he made in the election to not raise taxes on Manitoba families. Last week his Finance Minister brought in a budget, which every NDP MLA says they're going to support, which does the exact opposite of what was promised. They're going to bring in at least nine new punishing taxes on the families of Manitoba.

When he was asked about it this morning by Karen Black on CJOB radio, the Premier said and I quote: We're following through with exactly what we said we would do in the election.

Mr. Speaker, this is what he said this morning to Karen Black on CJOB: We're following through with exactly what we said we would do in the election. I always want to give the Premier the benefit of the doubt. So I had staff go back and comb through all their election promises and we couldn't find anything that made reference to nine new punishing taxes on the people of Manitoba.

Will the Finance Minister today table the NDP election promise to punish Manitobans with nine new tax increases?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Our commitment to the people of Manitoba was clear. We said we would come back into balance in 2014. We said we would do that without throwing health care under the bus, as we were advised by members opposite. We said that we would do that without throwing education under the bus, as we were advised by members opposite. We said we would do that without throwing family services and kids under

the bus, Mr. Speaker, as we were advised by members opposite.

We also made a—very much of a commitment to make sure that we invested in infrastructure because that's good for our economy, that's good for Manitoba families. We're coming through with what we said we would do.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier said in the election campaign, I quote: We're going to have future prosperity without any tax increases, and we'll deliver on that.

That's what he said in the election. He then, last week, brings in a budget with at least nine new tax increases that hit Manitoba families, especially those who can least afford to pay.

The minister now says that this is part of their election platform. I've given him an opportunity—we've given him an opportunity to table those commitments from the election campaign. He didn't do it. So let me give him a second chance.

Will he table those promises from the election campaign now?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, the facts of the matter are when the economy globally turned downward, governments all over this country, including ours, took a multi-year approach and decided to stand with the people, with the Manitoba families to make sure that we had a balanced approach.

We rejected the kind of deep cuts that members opposite not only talked about but came right into this House with a resolution going forward, and then, on the eve of the election, members opposite traipsed around the province of Manitoba talking about what? They—to get a vote—to get people to vote for them, they tried to pretend like they didn't say cut deeply and they proposed \$590 million in more spending. Mr. Speaker, that's not being honest with the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the promises that were made were in September of 2011, a full three years after the global financial crisis got under way, a full six months after the flood got under way. They made the promise in full possession of the information which they have today. They made the promise either knowing that they weren't going to keep it or out of utter incompetence.

Mr. Speaker, he has refused both invitations to table, to provide some honesty and some

transparency and table where in the election he said he was going to raise nine taxes. He still hasn't done it.

Mr. Speaker, he's either got to table those promises from the election or admit today that they've broken their promise. Will he choose either A or B and show that he's got some integrity?

Mr. Struthers: I would ask the—I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition get in touch with what economic realities are out there. These still are—these still are uncertain times.

All he needs to do, if he doesn't want to do the kind of research that we've done on this side of the House, is turn his television on at night and see what's going on around the world with some of our most important trading partners, who, indeed, even today—let alone three years ago, let alone four years ago, but even today—face unprecedented, uncertain economic times. And we need to work with those trading partners.

We can't stick our heads in the sand and play political games like I see happening across the way.

Budget Impact on Women

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Aside from the NDP breaking their promise to all Manitobans when they said they would not raise taxes during the last election, the NDP deliberately targeted women by extending the PST to include services that are primarily used by women.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Finance: Why did he break his promise to women in Manitoba?

* (13:50)

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point my friend across the way to the budget papers that were included with the budget that we presented last week: budget paper C, taxation adjustments. She can go to page C11 and get some real facts on what has happened with taxes over the course, not just of this budget, not just of Budget 2012, which carried through on the commitments that we made in the election, Mr. Speaker, but also what we've done dating back over the course of 12 years in government.

Take a look at—I'll just key in on one chart of the four for the members across the way—a one-earner family of four at \$40,000. And they can see quite

clearly, starting in '99 when they last had their hands on the levers of power in this province, Mr. Speaker, the bar graph is up almost to the 3,000 level and proceeds down—

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

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I refer the minister to page C6 of the budget documents where it has a listing of all the 'stakes' taxes that they are increasing for Manitobans, because that's where all of these are.

The—haircuts over \$50, spa treatment, nail services, facials—the list goes on. These are all services, Mr. Speaker, that are primarily used by women, and it's a significant industry in our province.

During the election the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said he would not raise taxes, and then seven months later he breaks his promise and introduces a whole range of new taxes which are primarily targeted at women in our province.

I want to ask the Minister of Finance: Why did he break his promise to women in our province?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, what has been clear in the question periods that have followed the presentation of the budget is that this government is very much committed to, as we've seen, to the farm community, to businesses. We've—we still remain the only government in the country that has reduced small business's to a big fat zero, much better than what members opposite could ever muster.

But it's very clear that what we need to do is come back into balance in 2014. We get there with the combination of expenditure reductions and modest revenue increases. Manitobans expect that we're—that we be responsible, we make good decisions. That's what we're doing.

Again, when you look at the big picture and see the kind of savings that Manitoba families have had, courtesy of our government—

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

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the only thing members opposite seem to be committed to is breaking their promises that they made to Manitobans in the last election.

Many of the businesses that offer these services are owned and operated by women. The 7 per cent tax hike on the services will force these business

owners to spend extra time away from delivering these services on unnecessary red tape.

So not only does it have a negative impact on women who receive the services, but it also has a negative impact on the women who deliver them. It's a double hit on women. Many women in our province went to the polls seven months ago and cast their ballots on promises that were made by this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance: Why did he break his promise to women in Manitoba?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Well, you know, I was fortunate enough to work with a lot of women in the '90s when the government—when the opposition was bringing in their government budgets, and let's talk about what a budget that punishes women looks like.

How about a budget that fires a thousand nurses, many of whom are nurses? That punishes women.

How about budget after budget after budget that refuses to increase the minimum wage? Two-thirds of minimum-wage earners are women. That definitely hurts women.

And let's just look at what they committed to in the last election. How many child-care spaces did they commit to build in the last election? Zero.

We are committed to building child-care spaces in this election and committed to making sure that women continue to get the benefit of services like health care and education on which they depend.

This is a government that stands with women, not a government that pays lip service.

Budget Regulatory Impact on Small Business

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, red tape costs Manitoba businesses \$945 million every year. That's money that they could be using to hire more staff and grow their businesses and their—the economy here in Manitoba.

But this government has no effective plan to reduce the regulatory burden in this year's budget. In fact, they've heaped other additional PST increases—expanded PST to other businesses here in Manitoba. And as we heard yesterday, this PST expansion is going to cause some businesses to fail, Mr. Speaker, something this government applauded yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, will this government commit to reducing the regulatory burden on small businesses, or will they simply tax them out of existence?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, reducing the small business tax to zero cannot be described as taxing them out of business; that is pretty clear.

Mr. Speaker, this budget continues this government's approach to working with small business to make sure that red tape is limited and reduced. We have worked together in such opportunities as BizPaL, which we initiated to make sure that the people of Manitoba can be better served through small business.

And I want to draw, particularly, the attention of my friend across the way to one of the, I think, very useful things that we did in this budget, and that was reduce the number of times that small businesses have to remit their provincial sales tax. So that means less red tape for small businesses, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 203 Government Support

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Well, Mr. Speaker, the truth is that this government promised before the election to increase the small business income threshold to \$500,000, but they broke that promise. That would have helped 3,000 small businesses get off the tax roll. They said that they would not raise taxes; they broke that promise and, in fact, they raised the corporate capital tax.

Today, I'm providing an opportunity to this government to reduce the red tape burden for Manitoba businesses by introducing Bill 203.

Mr. Speaker, will this government support Bill 203, or will it continue to tax and regulate small businesses out of existence?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Again, Mr. Speaker, we have moved very aggressively in terms of reducing taxes down to zero for small business. We've been working with the business community, small businesses and larger ones, in terms of thresholds and things that we can do that benefit their business and their ability to contribute to our economy and to hire people and keep our employment numbers amongst the best in the country.

Even through these uncertain economic times, Manitoba's unemployment levels haven't--have been

good compared to others because we have taken a co-operative approach with business. We have worked with business people to make sure their businesses can offer more in terms of services and employ Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

We're not going to take a back seat to people across the way who did nothing for business when they had their chance.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have to ask, if anything that that minister says is possibly true, then why did the Canadian Federation of Independent Business give this government an F when it came to reducing red tape? And why was it the CFIB could not find a single person on that side of the House to nominate for the Golden Scissors Award, Mr. Speaker?

If this Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his MLAs were serious about reducing red tape, they would commit to eliminating unnecessary regulations and show restraint in making new ones.

This government promised to increase the income threshold; they broke that promise. The general corporate tax is the highest in western Canada. They expanded the PST, not to mention nine other taxes, when they promised they wouldn't do that, Mr. Speaker. Other provinces have committed to reduce red tape, but Manitoba continues to get an F from the CFIB. Last year they put in 227 more regulations.

I want to ask this government: Will they support Bill 203 and reduce the regulatory burden on small businesses, or will they continue to regulate and tax them out of existence, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Struthers: Well, let's recap again for the members opposite.

We have worked to make sure that small businesses pay the zero rate in terms of the small business tax. We've worked with larger businesses in this province in terms of thresholds to make it certain that they have competitive positions as compared to other provinces. We've, on a number of occasions, taken steps to lower the red tape that businesses need to be affected by.

And, Mr. Speaker, but small businesses understand, too, that the bigger picture's important, and the affordability question's important for small businesses. We have small businesses that take advantage of the lowest hydro rates on the continent.

We—that is a real advantage. That is part of the Manitoba advantage that small businesses know exists for them, and I'm open to working, and to continue to work, with small businesses, just as everybody on this side of the House is.

* (14:00)

Regional Health Authorities Travel Expenditures

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, in the budget, the NDP said that they were going to reduce travel costs in every government department.

As the RHAs spent \$42 million in the last two years on travel, can the Minister of Health tell us if this travel cutback will also apply to RHAs?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): As the member has acknowledged, we are reducing regional health authorities from 11 to five. As I said yesterday, we have all 11 boards that have passed motions to do this. In the coming days, of course, we're going to have the appointments of new CEOs, board chairs and boards, and certainly we will be working with them to ensure that wherever possible we're able to streamline costs, through teleconferencing, through the use of teleconferencing technology that we have, to make sure that we're using every possible dollar that we can, Mr. Speaker, to convert that into supporting front-line care.

This will apply in the Department of Health and, indeed, across all government departments.

Mrs. Driedger: The WRHA spent \$5 million on travel last year; \$3.2 million was patient-related, but \$1.8 million was not related to patient care. It was for staff and bureaucratic meetings or conferences, just in Winnipeg.

So can the Minister of Health tell us: Will the WRHA be asked to cut back on some of their meeting travel costs?

Ms. Oswald: Again, as will be the case with all the newly merged regional health authorities, efforts will be made on multiple fronts to ensure that we can convert expenditures into supporting front-line care.

I caution the member, of course, that the WRHA is responsible for many front-line patient care issues, including the Manitoba Renal Program, for example.

I would also note for the member that one of the mergers that's going to be taking place is Winnipeg and Churchill. We view Churchill as a very

important and unique community and will want to ensure that there is good connectivity between Winnipeg and Churchill.

All of that being said, Mr. Speaker, we've continually worked to drive down the administrative costs in health care, which is why the Canadian Institute for Health Information ranks us now among the lowest for hospital admin costs in the nation. And we're going to continue on that path.

Mrs. Driedger: She's sure got her spin down straight, but she's got her facts all wrong.

Mr. Speaker, RHA admin costs have skyrocketed under her watch. They're \$159 million now, and I would remind her, in my last question, \$1.8 million of travel for WRHA was not related to patient care. And, in fact, last year almost half a million dollars was spent on WRHA out-of-province travel that was not related to patient care. Now, that seems like a lot of meetings and conventions to fly to, especially when finances are in a mess.

Can the Minister of Health tell us, because this happened under her watch, what was the reason for half a million dollars of spending on out-of-province flying to meetings and conferences? What was that all about?

Ms. Oswald: Well, off the top of my head, Mr. Speaker, I would say patient safety initiatives, infection control, advancements in cancer treatment, exploring the cancer treatment journey, presenting to other jurisdictions about the fact that we have the best home care program in the nation, exploring advances and innovations in health care, ensuring that we make sure that lean management initiatives are incorporated into our health-care system while at the same time protecting front-line care.

Mr. Speaker, these are the people that created 13 regional health authorities, including two in Winnipeg, at the same time that they were firing a thousand nurses, backing up people in the hallways, and driving doctors out of the province. All things in, I prefer our approach.

Child Advocacy Centre Project Status

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, since the year 2000, there have been 164,000 assaults in the province of Manitoba. Since the year 2000, there have been over 15,000 sexual assaults in the province of Manitoba. No doubt many of those involve children.

That is why we were supportive of the announcement that was made by the former minister of Family Services last June, with financial support of the federal government Department of Justice, to open a child advocacy centre in downtown Winnipeg to help children who've been the victims of these terrible crimes. That news release indicated that the opening would be in the fall of last year.

Can the Minister of Family Services update this House and tell us how many children have been seen by the child advocacy centre to date?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Certainly, the minister previous to myself was well known for his work, for protecting children, for his work—he was well known for his work dealing with children who had been sexually abused and sexually exploited. He is recognized—as I go around to meetings and talk to people, he's very well recognized for that work. And so I'm very proud of that.

The children advocacy centre is part of the work that is ongoing. We continue to work with partners on that to make sure that we are developing something that can serve children extremely well. These are children who have been traumatized, certainly, by sexual abuse, and it's well known in other jurisdictions that these centres can serve those children well, and so we continue to work on that project.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, this government announced a great media fanfare last June that the child advocacy centre would be open last fall. It's much needed. We supported it. My understanding from the federal government is that they're ready to flow their \$350,000 in funding right now. It's up to you to operate the centre, because that is what you wanted to do. And yet they're saying that you simply can't get your act together.

Mr. Speaker, they made a promise to have this centre open in the fall of last year to help children. Why is it this is not a priority to the Minister of Family Services?

Ms. Howard: Certainly, the protection of children is a extremely high priority for all of us on this side of the House, and I think you see that reflected in this budget where we have, again, put in place record levels of resources for the protection of children and for the care of children.

This centre is very important. It's an approach that has been proven in many other jurisdictions. We

want to make sure that we get it right, that those children are well served, that they can be in a comfortable environment that serves their interests. The purpose of those centres is to make sure that children who have been very traumatized by abuse aren't further traumatized by their interactions with the justice system and other systems. And so we are working very diligently on that and we'll get it right and we will open it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: You know, the minister says that she wants to get it right. I can show her the news release. It's her news release, from their government, saying last June that it would be open in the fall with much-needed—children needed this service. The federal government, they said, oh, we're ready to go, we've got our money, we think it's important, we're ready to flow the money. But this government just can't get its act together and get the centre open.

And yet, you know, to get an office open for one of their former MLAs, Bonnie Korzeniowski, at the tune of \$190,000, it took them less than 30 days. You got all of these children who need assistance, it takes seven to eight months past their promise date; for a former MLA, 30 days.

I guess your priority is to take care of your former colleagues and not the children of this province.

Ms. Howard: Well, I'm happy to speak to the priorities for children in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

This is a budget that invests in new child-care spaces. And contrast that with the plan they put forward in the last election that had no new child-care spaces.

This is a budget that continues to make sure that poor families get to keep the child benefits that come to them directly from the federal government. That was a government that clawed back every dime of that.

This is a budget that invests in foster parents, that invests in services for children in care. That was the government, when they had their chance in the budget, where they cut those kinds of services, Mr. Speaker.

This is a budget that invests in education. That was a government that cut services to education.

This is a budget that invests in nurses and doctors and emergency rooms to serve those kids. That is a government that cut all those services.

I will take our approach to funding services for children, to taking the time to make sure those services are well delivered and appropriate for traumatized children. I think that's the approach to take, not the approach that was taken through the '90s when services from program were cut mercilessly and relentlessly.

* (14:10)

Flooding (Lake Manitoba) Financial Compensation for Income Loss

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, during the summer of 2011 and leading up to the fall election, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and several Cabinet ministers promised the people in the Lake Manitoba inundation zone that they would not be left out of pocket for costs incurred fighting the flood. The NDP promised ongoing programs to address lost income. They said, trust us, we will be there for you. Unfortunately, once the election was over, the Premier and his Cabinet forgot their promises.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier show some integrity and today commit to honour those promises, or were those promises simply an election ploy?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Acting Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I remember and I appreciate the input from the member for Agassiz at the meeting in Langruth where we did meet with people in his constituency, people who faced a lot of water. Ranchers in that Langruth area and others wanted some commitments, and we've come through on commitments, both in terms of compensation and programs that we announced and programs that we're following through on and in terms of a long-term solution, which, I dare say, most people in that hall in Langruth were really looking for. And that's—is what we've been moving on in terms of infrastructure, in the terms of the channel to keep that water down.

Mr. Speaker, we made those commitments and we're following through on them.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, Darrel and Dee Dee Armstrong derive their income from renting pasture to cattle producers and renting lakefront lots to cabin owners on Lake Manitoba. Their cattle pasture's still mostly under water; what has emerged has been destroyed for some time to come. Sixty-eight of their 85 cabin lots were destroyed by the intentional man-made flood. The cottage area's still inaccessible. Their livelihood has been completely taken away.

They believed the Premier and the former minister of Agriculture when they promised ongoing programs for lost income due to the flood. Now they're being told there are no programs.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier explain to this House why he's broken his promise to the Armstrongs?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, we have flowed, on-just on the agricultural side alone, we've flowed in excess of \$300 million in terms of compensation at the Manitoba producers, whether they were producers, in this case, who have—whether they were producers, as in this case, who couldn't get to feed their cattle or whether they were producers who couldn't get to seed their land.

We worked in combination with the federal government to make sure there was an AgriRecovery program in place. I would encourage the member for Agassiz to talk to members of the federal Conservative caucus to make sure that they are totally on board and sign on to the rest of the AgriRecovery program that this government showed leadership in and signed and followed through on, Mr. Speaker.

And we continue to work with people because we understand that we're still dealing with people who've been impacted with that flood, and we announced those programs and will come through.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, Jonas and Lydia Johnson derive their income from renting pasture for cattle producers and from the sale of hay from their property. They live in the Lake Manitoba inundation zone. Their hay fields and pasture have been destroyed by the intentional man-made flood of 2011. There will be no income for the Johnsons this year and for several years in the future. They've been turned down by crop insurance.

The Johnsons believed the former minister of Agriculture when he said there would be ongoing programs for lost income. Now they're being told there are—is no program for lost income going forward.

Mr. Speaker, will the former minister of Agriculture today do the right thing and ensure the Johnsons and many others in similar situations that he intends to keep the promises he made in 2011?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): When we talk about the flood of 2011—it's now really the flood of 2012, as

well—I hope the member will recognize that we've had 30,000 claims filed. This is the biggest recovery effort since 1950, to put it in perspective. The 1997 flood, there was less than a third of the number of applications and much of the recovery occurred, Mr. Speaker, within a year of—in terms of 1997.

I want to stress to the member opposite that, just as we did in 2011, and again in 2012, our commitment is to work on that recovery. It's going to take a significant period of time before people in and around Lake Manitoba get back to normal, but until we get to that point, Mr. Speaker, we're going to work on each and every one of those 30,000 claims. We've already paid out \$600 million. We're not done yet, we will not forget any flood victim in this province, and I'd ask members opposite to support us in this massive recovery, this historic recovery effort.

Civil Service Politicization

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, last week I called on the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to depoliticize the delivery of immigration services, because his approach to politicization of the immigration services is one of the root causes of the federal government's decision to take over the immigration settlement services.

In an opinion piece in the *Free Press* today, we see this politicization is an ongoing problem, with civil servants acting as staff activists to enforce party policies instead of being an independent civil service.

I ask, Mr. Speaker: What action will the government take today to immediately return the civil servants to non-partisan status and end this politburo style of government?

Mr. Speaker: I want to caution all honourable members that the Speaker has taken this matter under advisement, so I ask you to be very cautious on the questions that are posed and the responses that are coming forward as well. So be very cautious and cognizant of that fact.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism): Mr. Speaker, this issue is about the economic development of the province of Manitoba. That's what the issue is about. It is not a partisan issue; it is about Manitobans standing together, making sure that we continue to move in the very positive direction that we have over the last 10 years.

Since 1999, we've seen over a hundred thousand newcomers choose Manitoba. That is a great honour. We have a retention rate of over 84 per cent in this province. We have a network of over 200 not-for-profit and institutional partners delivering settlement services in the province of Manitoba.

This member stood with us last week and now he's attacking settlement services, Mr. Speaker. He needs to get himself decided. He needs to get control of his own caucus and he needs to stand with Manitobans to build this province.

Mr. Gerrard: The problem is the way that this government deals with politicizing the civil service. The minister protect—protests, but, you know, it's widely known that the NDP style of governance in Manitoba, over the last 12 years, undermined democracy. The approach has been referred to as a politburo style of government where the NDP's ideologically charged policies are imposed through political commissars.

This approach threatens the very foundation of our democracy: an independent, non-partisan, civil servants delivering objective and responsible public administration.

I ask the government: What actions will be taken today to depoliticize the civil servants and to restore proper democracy and a non-partisan civil service to Manitoba?

Ms. Melnick: Our ideology is to build this great province, and we work with all partners, including the federal government, including municipalities, including businesses, including the business community.

We work with everyone who works with us to develop this province, to move forward with this province, to make sure that we are continuing to build this economy.

We are welcoming the world. Last year, people came from 137 countries. Today in Winnipeg, there are 120 languages being spoken; except for members heckling from the other side, 120 languages is a beautiful symphony. We will continue to welcome the world.

We will continue to build this province and, yes, we will continue to work with all partners.

* (14:20)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it's widely known that the NDP have been irresponsible in the way that they have worked with people in the civil service.

I ask the members of the government, through you, Mr. Speaker: How far has the government gone? Has any member of the government ever asked people within the civil servants, while they're on their job, to work on their campaigns? Has the government or members of the government ever been involved in recruiting civil servants for political activities while they were on the job?

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I'm really—you know, the Leader of the Liberal Party is all over the map, accusations here, whisper campaigns there.

We're very focused on growing this province, on growing the economy and growing the urban centres, the rural centres, the northern centres, Mr. Speaker. We are very focused on moving forward in developing industry, in working with for-profit businesses, not-for-profit organizations, welcoming the world. We have a focus here on this side of the House. Unfortunately, the member—the Leader of the Liberal Party is not as focused.

We will continue to move forward in this province for this province, because when we look at our children, Mr. Speaker, we know this is the way to go, this is the way to success, and this is the way we will build our incredible province.

Police Services Funding Increase

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans want and deserve to live in safe communities. We know that Budget 2012 continues this government's unprecedented commitment to policing, and that includes our support of the very successful cadet program that helps keep our streets safe.

Can the Minister of Justice provide us with an update on this government's efforts to provide police with the resources they need?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for Concordia, who listens to his constituents about what matters most to them.

Feeling safe in our communities and our homes is something that every Manitoban is entitled to, and that's why I was proud to stand today with Chief McCaskill of the Winnipeg Police Service as we announced new funding in Budget 2012 for more

police officers to do the job they do every day: keeping us safe.

Budget 2012 provides funding for 10 more officers for the Winnipeg Police Service, 10 more cadets for the very successful Winnipeg Police Service cadet program, two officers for the RCMP, an officer for the Brandon Police Service, and also another investigator for Manitoba's Public Safety Investigations unit.

We know, and Manitobans know, that reducing crime and protecting families requires a balanced approach: improved policing, having the right laws here and in Ottawa, and effective prevention. We're going to continue to make investments. We're going to keep adding police officers.

I know that my New Democrat colleagues will be voting in support of more police officers. I know the Conservative members across the way will, once again, as they have every year since 1999, vote against more police officers in this province.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Case Resolution Timeline

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, I was on the Crown corporations committee meeting last Wednesday night with the MPI, and during the long discussions I brought up a local constituency issue and it involved a single-vehicle fatality. And the family has been told that it will be six months—six months—before they will—the—MPI will decide on a case about the blood alcohol levels of the deceased.

I specifically asked MPI or the minister to come back to myself because of the grieving family in this. And I'll read from *Hansard* from that, and this is Ms. McLaren from MPI: We'll get—we'll have our—we'll have my vice-president of service operations follow through and we'll get back to you. And on a further question to her, she said: We'll follow up tomorrow.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's been a week, and I phoned that father this morning and he still has—not—he has not heard. I have not heard. It's a simple case here.

Is it just another broken promise from this government? When will the minister bring this case to resolution? When can we help bring closure to this family?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Obviously, this is a serious matter. It's not quite as simple as the member might

want to put on the record. I'm not going to speak about the particulars of the case.

The fact is that when there is a case where there's an—where there is a serious suspicion of impaired driving, as the member should know, the legislation in this province provides that there are different levels of compensation based on what individuals may or may not have done.

In this case, I agree that the member is entitled, and his constituent's entitled, to a better answer; we will provide that. But at the same time, it's important to remember that the determination is actually beyond MPI's control. I will make sure that MPI makes the necessary inquiries and, as soon as we can, we will get better information to the member opposite.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is not a simple matter. I just want that to be very, very clear.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manitoba's Outstanding Young Farmers

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour Dustin Williams and Laura McDougald-Williams, who were recently named Manitoba's Outstanding Young Farmers for 2012. Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers' Program is an annual competition designed to recognize farmers that exemplify excellence in their profession and promote the tremendous contribution of agriculture to society. Dustin and Laura own and operate Ash Haven Farms Limited, which is located southwest of Souris, Manitoba.

The Williams family is a fifth-generation family to farm these soils since the late 1800s. Mr. Williams grew up along—working alongside his grandfather and his father, and he hopes that someday his daughters will work alongside him in continuing the family business of producing healthy, affordable food for the world.

The Williams are champions of environmental stewardship and conservation. They have adapted their farming operation and production techniques to accommodate innovative land management practices, such as cover crops, biological soil amendments and diverse crop rotations, which are intended to promote a healthy soil biota and reduce chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

The Williams are also entrepreneurs in the farming business. They have sought to apply the latest ideas, technologies and equipment to improve their processes and output. They are truly a remarkable example of a traditional Manitoba business which has changed the way things are done over time but remain committed to traditional farming principles and values.

I would also like to recognize Donald and Jennifer Green of Fisher Branch and Ryan and Sarah Boyd of Forrest and wish them the best of luck in the future, since they were also finalists in this year's competition. These young families represent the next generation of the farming industry in Manitoba, and we admire and appreciate their passion for farming.

It is a great honour to rise today to recognize these important families, producers and servants of Manitoba. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Katimavik Program

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about a wonderful program that has benefited every constituency in Canada. In the recent federal budget, the government decided to end funding for Katimavik. I am standing up today to pay tribute to this historic program, which was designed to empower Canadian youth while enhancing community programs and services.

Since Katimavik was created in 1977, more than 30,000 Canadian youth ages 17 to 21 have participated in the program. Participants spend six to nine month volunteering in diverse communities, getting to know the different regions of Canada. Katimavik provides an enthusiastic army of volunteers, a veritable youth corps, who fan out across the country to improve the quality of life in Canadian neighbourhoods and the—enrich the lives of fellow Canadians.

My son Donovan is currently a Katimavik participant, and his experience is a perfect example of the multiple benefits that Katimavik provides. In January, he joined 10 other youth from across Canada to live and work at a food bank in Whitehorse.

In 1986, when the government decided to cut Katimavik, Senator Jacques Hébert went on a 21-day hunger strike to fight for the reinstatement of the program. It's easy to understand why Hébert cared so deeply about the program. Katimavik volunteers work with the poor, the disadvantaged and the disabled. They work for a clean environment, they

fight poverty, and they promote peace and social justice. They provide support and services to seniors, newcomers and Aboriginal Canadians, and they work with local residents to build communities. In short, Katimavik volunteers become active, engaged and informed citizens who value public service and public services. They exemplify the things that matter to Canadians.

This week, people gathered to protest the federal government's decision. It may be that those protests will save Katimavik once again. But in the meantime, I ask every member of this House to join with me in applauding what Katimavik has done for our country's youth and for all of us. Thank you.

* (14:30)

James Bezan

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): It's my pleasure to stand and recognize James Bezan, Member of Parliament for Selkirk-Interlake, for being awarded the Memorial Cross of Petliura in honour of his efforts to bring the Holodomor Memorial Day act before Parliament in 2008.

In 2008, James introduced a bill that would establish Ukrainian Famine and Genocide Memorial Day and officially recognize the Ukrainian famine from 1932-33 as an act of genocide. It was unanimously supported by all parties and quickly adopted.

For his role as one of the chief parliamentary architects of the Holodomor memorial act, James was publicly honoured in 2008 by the Canadian Friends of Ukraine, the League of Ukrainian Canadians and the League of Ukrainian Canadian Women.

In continued recognition of his efforts, the Memorial Cross was presented to Mr. Bezan on November the 17th, 2011, by Roman Krutsyk, a world-renowned historian, researcher and human rights advocate, behalf of the city of—organized—All Ukrainian Memorial Society of Vasyl Stus. In addition to operating the Museum of Soviet Occupation, the Kyiv City Organization advocates for the protection of human rights across the globe.

Symon Petliura was named—the award-led Ukrainian struggle for independence following Russia Revolution of 1917. The original medal was given to those who fought for Ukrainian independence. Today, it is presented to individuals

like Mr. Bezan who are promoting Ukrainian history and cultural abroad.

These events have now been consigned to history, like so many other events in our past are being at risk of being forgotten. The Holodomor memorial act ensures that six to eight million Ukrainians who perished during the famine are commemorated each and every year on the fourth Saturday of November.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly stand with the support of all members of this House when I congratulate Member of Parliament James Bezan for his contributions to bring awareness about the Holodomor genocide.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Selkirk and St. Andrews Regional Library

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): As members know, it's been a long-time dream of the community members from Selkirk, St. Clements, St. Andrews to build a new library in our community, Mr. Speaker. The current library was only 5,000 square feet. It was only a quarter of the size recommended by provincial officials.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognized the need for a larger, more modern facility, and in 2007 our government donated two—excuse me, two acres of valuable land on Manitoba Avenue in Selkirk and committed \$600,000 in financial support from the Building Manitoba Fund. The municipal governments of Selkirk, St. Clements and St. Andrews also made the—excuse me, substantial financial commitments.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, despite the best efforts of the library board, they were not—unable to secure enough funds to complete the \$5-million project.

There is, however, a happy ending to the story. Last year, the board informed our government that they'd been approached by a private donor who offered \$1.5 million to the project if the Province would contribute an additional \$1 million. Well, Mr. Speaker, our government decided that this was too good of an offer to say no to. So in January of this year, our government said yes to the additional funds. All the funds have been secured and the project will go ahead.

The key to the success of this project was a generous donation of \$1.5 million from Jim and Betty Anne Gaynor. They owned and operator—

owned and operated Gaynor Foods of Selkirk for over 24 years. Mr. Speaker, about 20 years ago they donated funds for the current library, and in 2010 they donated a million dollars to the Selkirk & District Community Foundation. Their generosity has helped make our community a better place to live, and it will never be forgotten.

I am pleased to report to the House that sod-turning for the new 17,000-square-foot facility is scheduled to open in September of this year, with a completion date of late 2013.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the library board, and in particular Chair Colleen Sklar, who never gave up on her dream. And I want to thank our municipal partners, my colleagues in government, the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) and the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), and to the Gaynor family who helped make this dream a reality. Thank you.

Flooding Financial Compensation

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, one of the big questions at the moment is: Will the Province step up to help farmers who have no income for a second year because their land is still flooded, or will it abandon them?

We must not forget about those who are still hurting and who are still suffering as a result of last year's flood. Those of us who live between Portage and Winnipeg or in Winnipeg have been the beneficiaries of the Portage Diversion and the water which flowed into Lake Manitoba, but many around Lake Manitoba who were sacrificed during the flood are still in a very, very difficult position.

People like Jonas Johnson and Darrel Armstrong are farmers who receive no income from their land, which was flooded last year. And because the level of Lake Manitoba remains high at 813.5 feet above sea level and because of drainage issues, it is looking as if they may not get any income from their land again this year. Last Sunday, when I visited with Jonas and Darrel and with Philip Thordarson, the reeve of the RM of Lakeview, the land in this area remained flooded, including many normally productive grain fields.

These fields are still wet and are now covered with saline silt and debris, which will make recovery slow and difficult, and it's very unlikely that there will be any crop this year. As Jonas said, farm, ranch and forage property lay destroyed, covered with salinity caused by months under flood waters. Many acres are also covered in silt, and debris is

everywhere; it is not pretty. As they look this year at their fields, they are looking at the almost-certainty that they may not have income from their land again this year and that they will have expenses relating to getting the fields ready for next year.

They are asking: Will the Province help them for a second year until they can get their land back to where it was, or will the Province forget about them?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE

(Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), and the proposed motion of the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Emerson, who has 20 minutes remaining.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): And I just want to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that I was asked yesterday, in my first 10 minutes of my address, whether or not a broken promise is a lie and, for the record, I believe a broken promise is a lie. And for the potential premier of a province to make promises in an election campaign is not unacceptable, but to not keep them is very unacceptable.

Many of these promises have aptly been pointed out by my colleagues. The member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) highlighted the 4 per cent tax on senior citizens; the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) highlighted the gas tax that affects all Manitobans; the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) highlighted the school tax was not kept—that promise was not kept.

You can see the pattern of broken promises, at least nine of them. This is totally unacceptable by someone in a position of the Premier of Manitoba. He has intentionally misled all of the good Manitobans. As if it wasn't enough, Mr. Speaker, they're raising hydro—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. I regret to interrupt the member, but I want to caution him to pick and choose his words very carefully. He's coming very close to the use of unparliamentary language and I offer this as a caution to you for the remainder of your speech, please.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and could you explain what language I was using so I don't use it again?

Mr. Speaker: I recall the member indicating that—using the words "intentionally misleading", and that has been ruled unparliamentary in the books and I can show the member after if he wishes to see that. But I caution him on the use of that language and others that may be unparliamentary to this Chamber.

Mr. Graydon: Well, thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

And as if it wasn't enough, Mr. Speaker, they're raising higher-hydro rates to feed their addiction to spend and to finance their complete mismanagement, as highlighted correctly by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer).

Mr. Speaker, we have heard member after member praise and cheer for someone who has broken so many promises, who has no intentions of filling any of those promises. Why does—what does that say for their respect of those that elected them? What a slap in the face of the good folks of Manitoba. When we see this type of behaviour by the top politician in Manitoba, it is little wonder so few people have good things to say about politicians in this province.

The fairy-tale budget continues with the merger of Lotteries and MLCC. The idea that this will save money is a fallacy. There is no way that it will save money. Only misleading the public puts this—will—plus this will create larger social problems and that—it's been demonstrated by other provinces that have merged these two services. The other two provinces that have the same type of a merger, Mr. Speaker, have the highest rate of gambling addiction of any place in the country.

* (14:40)

The online gaming announcement is another extremely risky investment to try and balance the budget. And, unfortunately, nothing has been proved to—or provided to show how much this is going to cost; another straightforward attempt to balance the books on the backs of the poorest Manitobans. And I would like to also point out, Mr. Speaker, that it's very risky management to try and balance a budget on 6/49 tickets. This fairy tale budget highlights the inability of the reckless NDP government to manage Manitoba's affairs. This is a distinct inability to prepare and protect Manitobans from disaster. They

have sacrificed the livelihood of Manitobans with a raft of broken promises.

Then we have a member for the Interlake standing up and commenting that it could be worse. The flood damage was man-made and completely preventable, Mr. Speaker. There was—there were things that could have been done 10 years ago in this area. They could have prevented some of the flooding, and just more and more broken promises. And, for example, there were the gates of the Shellmouth Dam; they knew what the conditions of the banks on the Assiniboine River was. We could have operated more water through the city of Winnipeg; the St. James level never got to the level it had been the year before or the year before that. So we diverted many, many more gallons of water into Lake Manitoba that weren't necessary. And the preparation that was made in Lake Manitoba was only after—after every time—after this disaster, after that house went under, after this municipality was flooded. Then we rushed out there. The army came to work on the Assiniboine, but they never went into the Interlake. They never went to help those people. And that's a shame.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is only a snippet of the broken promises and continued mismanagement of the NDP. They certainly live up to the concept of 'inoprurfacy.' You better believe that Manitobans deserve a heck of a lot better than this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and be able to speak on the budget for the first time in this House. I want to take a moment to thank my constituents for their tremendous support in electing me as their MLA. I am proud to represent the Point Douglas area that provided me with so many opportunities growing up.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad for the opportunity to speak in support of the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) last week. I'd like to congratulate the Minister of Finance for his first budget.

I want to let the House know that on January 18th, Point Douglas hosted a prebudget consultation meeting with the Minister of Finance at Win Gardner Place. Over 150 people turned out to bring their suggestions directly to the Minister of Finance. We showed our community strength and involvement by

hosting one of the most well-attended meetings in the province.

Mr. Speaker, this government's budget presents a balanced and responsible approach that focuses on investing in the priorities of our families while growing our economy. I am proud that we are strengthening health care by ensuring life-saving cancer drugs are free for all Manitobans, and taking steps to give every Manitoban access to a family doctor by 2015; that we are ensuring Manitoba families will play—will pay the lowest combined bills in Canada for electricity, home heating, and auto insurance; that we are providing new funding for firefighters, police officers, and cadets on the streets; that we're taking new steps toward increasing the supply of rental and affordable housing.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, early in January, I was honoured to take on the new role as minister of a brand new department of Children and Youth Opportunities. I look forward to working with all members of this House on behalf of children and youth of Manitoba. I'd like to highlight some of the investments we're making in Budget 2012 and highlight the momentum that we've been able to build in the last 12 years.

In the last 12 years we've made investments for children and youth of Manitoba. We established a Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, which bring 10 departments together with the focus on children, youth, and families, and making sure that we're all working together, Mr. Speaker—or Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are enhancing all of the programs that we're doing for children and youth.

We're also built this momentum for this new department in partnership with other levels of government, with many community organizations, with non-profit groups, with individual families, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, of course, the next logical step to continue to build this momentum was to create a department dedicated to children and youth that will maximize the potential of all young people. I've had the privilege of travelling the province, doing crime prevention consultation, has given me an opportunity to meet many, many people. Young people—we've been seeing turnouts from a lot of youth attending, families, non-profit organizations. Many people have been able to come, and what I can tell you—all of these people are very excited about this new department.

Often what we hear about and often what we've been able to invest in to help build this momentum, of course, was with Healthy Child Manitoba, that puts priority on evidence-based prevention and early intervention. We understood and we understand that supporting children and youth and families in the province of Manitoba starts with supporting pregnant mothers. And I can say the Healthy Baby program has touched tens of thousands of pregnant moms and families throughout the province of Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has increased connection to prenatal care and helped some of our most vulnerable families in the province of Manitoba.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Families First home visiting program also has touched tens of thousands of parents. My wife and I, we had our son, Hayden, 19 months ago and we—you know, of course, like all parents, our confidence wasn't there, and a public health nurse came to our house, asked us questions, provided the supports, built some confidence in us, told us about all the supports and resources and all the access that we had in our communities. Not only did it increase our confidence, of course, with us or—and many families out there, it supported our emotional well-being in having a new baby, it tied us to the social supports and resources, and I know that for a lot of parents that are touched by our Families First program, they get more connected to their communities and neighbourhoods which has a direct connection on supporting their families.

We also fund and continue to fund in Budget 2012, 25 parent-child coalitions all throughout the province of Manitoba. I would like to acknowledge the members of Lac du Bonnet and La Verendrye for spending some time with us up in North Eastman. As we talked about how these parent-child coalitions work, we bring together parents, early childhood educators, health professionals, people from schools, community organizations, and what do we do, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We all come together to share our services, our resources and our expertise to make sure that we're making the right decisions and providing the right services for children, youth and families.

I'd like to highlight an announcement that I got to be part of in my area, in Lord Selkirk Park, which is often challenged, of course, with some hardship and poverty issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we've made investments into truly affordable housing in Lord Selkirk Park area. It has been redeveloped—wonderful—it's touching people's lives in very

meaningful ways. As part of that investment, we opened up a new child-care centre—47 spots has been invested into that, and we understood that as a government, we had to do more.

The majority of young people, in fact, every single one of them that is going into that new child-care centre, their families are on social assistance and so we understood that often what happens is a lot of these young people may not be prepared to transition into school. So we did one of—a first of a kind based on a 35-year study called the Abecedarian Approach, where we actually added a curriculum on and did some training with the early childhood educators to support these children and their families.

And I got to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's—the short-term results have been phenomenal. We have seen an increase in literacy and language for these young children—zero to one, two and three years old. I highlighted—I got to spend a lot of time with these children there and I got to tell you, between my wife and I, we have five university degrees; my son, being 19 months old, these young children were at the same level in terms of their literacy and language as my son. So not only did we invest into affordable housing and invest into child care, we also invested into these young children.

And I got to say that not only does it help these young children in terms of transitioning into school, but we know from evidence based—from the research of 35 years, that high school graduation goes up for these young children, that their employability skills go up, and one of the great things that we see is parents become more involved in their child's educational career, and not only for their children, but they're inspired by watching their children learn in Lord Selkirk that you actually see them going back to school, particularly your teen mothers. And so these are great investments that we continue to make in Budget 2012.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was very proud to announce with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) the PAX program, also first pilot project in the country. I know CBC, *The National*, picked it up and called us leaders in the area in terms of early childhood development—40 years of research where it's in 200 schools throughout Manitoba, and it supports teachers that are teaching children in grade 1. We did a pilot project in Seine River School Division; teachers, parents, principals, superintendents were all very excited about that. They've seen immediate,

short-term results for these grade 1 students: improved behaviour, improved concentration, their abilities to self-regulate in terms of peer support and get along with one another, improved learning, of course. So the short-term results on it have been fantastic, and so we have it in over 200 schools throughout the province of Manitoba.

* (14:50)

We do know though because, once again, this is the first of its kind here in—as a pilot project in the country—we also do know the long-term results are fantastic. Once again, high school graduation goes up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, access, and then them attending post-secondary go. We know that it prevents and helps prevent addictions, prevents crime, prevents suicide attempts, and the cost-saving benefits are huge. For every dollar we invest in the PAX program it nets return of \$37. Once again, that's what you call a focused and responsible investment for children in Manitoba.

We also understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we're going to continue to support children inside of the classroom and outside of the classroom. And that's why I was very proud to announce with the Premier double the funding for Manitoba Mentors and Artists in the Schools. You know, this is going to help thousands more youth access programs.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we continue to make investments in funding like Green Team and we continue to build partnerships with non-profit groups to make sure that young people, if they're looking for a summer job, they're going to be able to find a summer job. We continue to invest in Brighter Futures, which helps low-income students access post-secondary through bursaries and scholarships.

And why do we continue to invest in children inside of the classroom and outside of the classroom, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because we understand that all young people want to belong to something positive. So we continue to make investments with our partners and as a government to make sure that young people have the opportunity to get a deep sense of belonging for something positive.

We also understand that young people should get a sense of contribution. You shouldn't have to be rich to get a sense of generosity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And a lot of these young people that are in mentorship programs and internship programs and get summer employment, we know that some of

them do come from backgrounds of hardship; and these summer jobs and these kinds of investments in terms of mentorship and internships gives them a sense of generosity and a sense of contribution.

And also our government has always been committed to making sure that we are developing the talents of young people of Manitoba. One of the things that we do know is when we make these kinds of investments and when a young person gets a sense of belonging, a sense of generosity, and we develop their talents, they become role models, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the more role models that we can have, we know that that is a first step into building strong, safe, resilient communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to highlight some very important developments and investments that we're making that has made a difference in my area, in Point Douglas.

As I've said, a-12 years of investment and it continues in Budget 2012. I'd like to commend, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and I've been able to do this through my first statement in the House last fall was about a community consultation working towards the redevelopment of the Merchants Hotel. The coalition hopes to transform the site into multi-use resource centre. I know that many people are looking forward to a new, positive development that reflects the local needs and dreams. There is an energy in Point Douglas right now, a sense that we appreciate our history, but we want to keep moving forward. The redevelopment of the Merchants Hotel is an important step in that direction.

Also, I was very proud to do an announcement in March. I was happy to emcee a press conference with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) that announced the first QuickCare clinic opened in Manitoba on the second floor of the Win Gardner Place, serving patients of Winnipeg's north end.

The MacGregor Street care clinic will provide easier, faster and more convenient access to high-quality, primary health care. This new clinic is about offering patients choice, with expanded evening and weekend hours. Families now have another option instead of going to the emergency room for non-urgent care.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've continued this momentum. After years of banks leaving our area and being followed by an influx of fringe banking services like payday lenders, the opening of our new Assiniboine Credit Union branch at McGregor and

College is a welcome development. This new North End branch will help provide accessible financial services for residents of the area and will assist local businesses and community development. I commend the Assiniboine Credit Union for their commitment to serving the people of the North End.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government made an important investment in the Makoonsag Intergenerational Children's Centre, which opened last fall on Selkirk Avenue. Makoonsag is an indigenous, culturally based early learning centre and child-care facility co-ordinated by the Urban Circle Training Centre. The centre provides many students from Urban Circle, the Inner City Social Work Program and community members with access to child care while they work to-work or attend school or further their studies. Our community looks forward to the grand opening of the centre at the end of May.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to make mention of the Provincial Nominee Program. I'd like to take this opportunity to show my strong support for the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, and to acknowledge how important this program is to Manitoba's continued economic growth. The successful program has connected many constituents of Point Douglas, the riding that I represent, to the services that help new Manitobans become active members of our society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, recently the federal government decided that they wanted to take settlement services from our newcomers away from Manitoba. The success of the provincial nominees and their families will be at risk with this decision imposed by the federal government. Today, I'd like to put on record that I'm proud to stand with the many newcomers to our province, with the business community, and with many service providers, with all—and with all Manitobans to fight to keep settlement services with the Province of Manitoba.

In conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since the opening of my constituency office on Selkirk Avenue, we've been able to help hundreds of constituents. I want to continue the momentum we've created through engaging our families to help access and maximize the resources that governments provide. Our government's budget makes important investments to protect the things that matter most to families.

In the coming months, I look forward to continue working with the people of Point Douglas

and all Manitobans to make sure that everyone feels they can be part of the political process and continue to contribute to our community's improvement.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I'm happy to have the opportunity to reply to this budget speech, but before I start that I'd like to acknowledge the table officers and the pages here that help us all to do our duties here in the Chamber and to assist us as required, back and forth, in and out of the Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is an egregious budget, a budget of broken promises is what I could say about this budget. We have a Premier (Mr. Selinger) that went out before the election and said he wouldn't raise taxes. He wouldn't raise taxes before the election. That's what he went out and said. He did that to get votes before the election, but what happens after the election? What does he do? First order of business—raise taxes. The Premier and all of the NDP MLAs have chosen to raise taxes on the people of Manitoba and the constituents that voted for them. I wonder if they will go back to those constituents and say look what I did for you. I raised taxes for you; I put your hydro rates up; I put your daycare rates up; I put the insurance—vehicle registration rates up; I put taxes on your haircuts; I put taxes on your life insurance policies. Would they go back out to the public, to the people that they elected them, and tell them that—\$184 million in new taxes in this budget?

And the gas tax—Mr. Deputy Speaker, the gas tax is especially hard on people. And, you know, wasn't it the Premier that was so outraged that he was going to fire off a letter to the Prime Minister about this prices of gas? And what—within a week, what does he do? What does he do? He raises tax on gasoline. That is absolutely hypocritical. Absolutely, you know, this is particularly hard on rural families, because outside of Winnipeg there's no public transit. And, you know, sometimes families have to have more than one vehicle, because there's no other way to get to two different destinations at the same time. Families that have students that are attending university and have to get in from out-of-town to the university—these taxes are incredible hard. But, of course, we know that this government does not really care about what happens beyond the Perimeter Highway.

* (15:00)

As I said, higher property taxes, higher hydro rates, higher daycare fees, more to register your vehicle, expanded PST for services, insurance premiums, salon services. We heard today, from the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), in question period, about how this government is imposing tax on women. Because these services are usually services that are used by women, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, you know, men over there, they might go for a pedicure or a manicure every now and then—I don't know. But, you know, these are normally services that are used by women and, quite often, these are services provided by women business owners. So it is a double hit on women. And I don't know why this government has chosen to tax women—in particular, to target women in this budget the way they did. I don't understand why they would do that.

Also, the idea of expanding the PST—of course, yes, that gets them more money into their coffers because they have a spending addiction; they have a problem. They have to go to the public to get more money. But to do that, to put that increased burden on small businesses in this province, is just outrageous. We heard yesterday about businesses that now are impacted by the—this expansion of the PST. And what that could mean to them, is that they would fold down their business. This is something that is just that final straw, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the regulatory burdens that small businesses have to deal with.

So why would this government continue to burden small businesses? Why would they not rather help businesses so that businesses can grow? They can use that extra money that would be wasted on regulatory burden, they could take all that money and they could hire more staff, they could grow their business, they could grow the economy, and that, with the growth of the economy, puts more money into the tax base. That is the way it should be done. With small business, medium-size businesses being the backbone of this economy, if we allow these businesses to flourish instead of overburdening them and overregulating them and overtaxing them, if we allow them to flourish, that's how the economy will grow. And these people are the backbone of the economy in Manitoba. And yet this government chooses to tax them out of existence, because that's the way they can feed their tax—their spending addiction, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But the thing is, Manitobans have to pay the price for the mismanagement of this NDP

government. Manitobans—people out there, in all the houses out there, all the apartments out there, all the job places out there—these are the ones that have to pay the price for this government's failed policies and their mismanagement of government resources, Mr. Deputy Speaker

They promised not to raise taxes before the election, and what was their first order of business? Nine new taxes after they were elected. They have betrayed the people of Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Increased fees, taxes—and, you know, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has the nerve to say, well they—we just did what Manitobans told us to do. I don't think that people on the street, if you went and surveyed and talked to people on the street and said, did your MLA come to you and say, would you please raise my taxes? I don't think we would find anybody that said, yes, I did that. I don't think there's any people, any taxpayers out there, working day to day, that actually went to their MLAs and said, please raise my taxes. Would you please put my hydro rates up? Would you please put my daycare rates up? And I just love to pay more for gas. Would you please put a tax on gas? I don't think that happened. So, I don't think that was a truthful statement, what he said.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this point, we have a billion-dollar deficit—over a billion-dollar deficit in the province of Manitoba—the highest in history in Manitoba—and that will be the legacy of this NDP government; that they created the largest, biggest, highest deficit in the history of this province. And they will leave Manitoba a billion dollars in debt to be recorded in the history books as the legacy of this NDP government.

You know, I have to wonder in speaking with some constituents of mine, they were asking me, you know, about the condition of the rainy day fund. You know, and I have to wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the government had put money into the rainy day fund when the sun was shining, economically speaking, over the last 12 years, do you think we might have weathered that flood, the proverbial rainy day? Do you think we might have weathered the economic downturn, another proverbial rainy day? We would have been able to manage that if this government had taken advantage of times when they were good to put money away, instead of continually feeding their spending addiction and spending, and spending, like drunken sailors, only to now have to go, with their hand out, to the people of Manitoba in the form of nine new taxes and increases in fees.

And, you know, I'd just like to remind this government that 54 per cent of people did not vote NDP—54 per cent of people did not vote NDP and these people are angry now. I don't know about you, but I've heard the recall—recall legislation suggested. The 46 per cent who did vote NDP, these people are even more mad, Mr. Deputy Speaker; they're angry. They said, we elected this government on the promise that they would not raise taxes. And what have they done? They've broken those promises; every last one of those NDP MLAs across the way, every last one of them, has broken their promise to Manitobans.

They stood with their Premier when he said, I will not raise taxes. And what did he do? First order of business, he raised taxes. Saying one thing to get elected and then immediately breaking that election promise is exactly what gives politicians a bad name. And I can think of a few over there that have a really bad name, particularly, for other portfolios they may have held in this House.

Not only have they raised taxes, but they have continued to download some of this to municipalities. And what that does, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is it only creates a situation where municipalities then must collect more taxes from the people. But, there's only one taxpayer—there's only one taxpayer. And if that taxpayer is going to have to shell out more money, pay more money out of their pocket, then there has been an increase in taxes and fees. But what this government wants to do is put up a smokescreen and pretend it's not them and put it onto another level of government. But, municipal governments and the people in communities see right through this. They know where it's coming from and it's not coming from their local government; it's coming from this NDP government who said one thing to get elected and promptly, once elected, did exactly the opposite.

This budget fails Manitobans in many ways. It breaks—it's breaking the NDP Premier's promise not to increase taxes. So why would we vote for a budget that increases taxes? We're often criticized for not voting with the government's budget. But, I ask you, how could I vote for a government that went to the people saying one thing, promising not to raise taxes, and then immediately after the election, breaks that election promises and raises taxes. How could I vote for that kind of a budget? I could not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I could not vote for a budget that makes Manitobans pay more just to feed the spending addiction of this NDP government: \$184 million in

new taxes on hard-pressed Manitoba families who are facing higher hydro rates and for property taxes, increased child-care fees and a range of other hidden taxes. I can't vote for that.

* (15:10)

Higher gas prices at a time when gas prices in Manitoba have already increased 12 per cent so far this year? Further increasing the burden on Manitoba families while cutting spending on Manitoba's crumbling infrastructure? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, no. We can't vote for budgets that do that kind of thing.

This is a budget that fails to take action to build safe communities, as Manitoba has become the violent crime capital of Canada with Winnipeg's murder rate reaching an all-time high in 2011. Who can vote for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

This budget fails to recognize the importance of agriculture, food production and rural communities. I certainly can't vote for that.

This budget fails Manitoba students who scored among the lowest in Canada on national and international reading, math and science tests. I could not vote for a government with that record in education, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This government creates an even bigger sinkhole of debt, now at \$27 billion and rising which, as a result, will force Manitoba families to pay higher taxes in years ahead. Who can vote for that, I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Failing to encourage greater trade opportunities with Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan by refusing to join the New West Partnership that would do a lot for the province of Manitoba, but this NDP government refuses to even explore that opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I could not vote for that.

Failing to undertake a review of program spending across all government services: that is something that all businesses do on a regular basis. It's part of a review process to ensure things that are going right are continuing on that path, and things that are going wrong need to be addressed. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government refuses to do that. They refuse to do that, and I can't vote for someone that refuses to look at what's good and what's bad and take appropriate action.

Failing to tackle the red tape burden that is hurting business and private investment in Manitoba, I've already spoken about that.

Failing to comply with the recommendations of the Public Utilities Board to carry out an independent review of Manitoba Hydro's capital program, that needs to happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why won't this government do it?

I could not vote for a government budget that won't address these serious issues that affect all Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and failing to offer a plan to encourage private investment to create opportunity and wealth so Manitobans can feel hope that our province will one day emerge from the hole of debt and dependency and see a brighter future. We need to look to the future. This is a very short-sighted, myopic government who only looks right in front of them, grab the money and spend it, no thought for future generations about saving that money, long-term planning. Think about your grandchildren and their children, what kind of legacy of debt does this government intend to leave to the grandchildren of this province of Manitoba?

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think it's any big surprise if I stand here today and say I cannot support this budget. I cannot support the idea of a government telling the electorate one thing before an election, that they won't raise taxes, and then immediately, first order of business, to impose nine new taxes and hike up fees on poor unsuspecting families in Manitoba: hardworking families; women business owners; seniors, seniors who have worked their whole life here in Manitoba, laid the foundation for this great province of Manitoba, laid the foundation. And now this group of people, the NDP, want to clawback a promise made to them as well, that they would take off the education tax off their property. Another broken promise.

You know, I know that they get a little bit upset when I keep saying broken promises, because I know some of them—some of them—might just think, yes, maybe I do have a conscience, maybe I shouldn't have done that. I'm sure there's some of them over there that do have a conscience and think, yes, you know, I did break a promise and I don't really feel too good about that. Maybe there's a few of them. Maybe there's a few of them over there that might say, maybe I'll vote—maybe I'll vote—with the Conservative amendment. Maybe. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they know—they know—and they have to live with themselves. They know what their conscience is telling them, and they're going to have to live with that when they stand up and vote for this budget that puts the tax increases on Manitobans.

So I'm not going to be voting for this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I don't think that's any big surprise. I could never vote for a government that tells the electorate one thing to get their vote and then, immediately, once they've given the vote, turns their back, takes it away and says, okay, yes, now I am going to raise taxes. And I'm not voting for a government that raises taxes on regular hardworking Manitobans.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel so fortunate that the people of The Maples continue to trust me, and they have chosen me to represent them in the Legislature once again. I'm honoured to rise on their behalf to speak to our government's most recent budget.

I would also like to take a moment to think back to the fall election and thank all of the volunteers who worked on my campaign. I would like to thank the honourable members from Logan and Tyndall Park who were very supportive last fall. I look forward to continuing our work in this House. I must thank my constituency staff. I have one of the busiest constituency offices in the province and a remarkable group of people working with me. We come from different countries and cultures, but we are all able to work together to achieve important goals, much like the members of this Assembly.

I thank my constituents for their eagerness to engage in our democratic process. They are very involved in our community and I am always grateful for this. I'm excited about the opportunity to continue working with all honourable members of this House, a group that benefits from a variety of backgrounds and diverse experiences.

As this budget demonstrates, our government had a plan in place to keep this province moving forward for the benefit of all Manitobans. It addresses the needs of my constituency and of citizens across the province—the young, the old, those born in Manitoba and those who have come from around the world to make Manitoba their home.

I grew up in then-agrarian India and first came to Canada when I was 20 years old. This country was strange and unfamiliar and I struggled to build a life in Vancouver, where I was often subjected to racial slurs and discrimination. I thought of returning to India, and my father even raised the money to bring me back home. However, by a twist of faith, I heard from friends who were on their way to Toronto.

They had stopped in Winnipeg and found that there was no reason to move anywhere else. They had all been able to find jobs and their lives seemed very affordable and they encouraged me to join them and I did not need much coaxing.

This is how I found myself in our wonderful Prairie province in the heart of Canada. I am proud that the things my friends told me are still true. Newcomers are encouraged to work and live in Manitoba and this government continues to ensure life remains affordable here. This allows businesses to invest in our province since there is no shortage of great people willing to come here and start their companies. Since 1999, over a hundred thousand new immigrants have come to live in Manitoba, and contributing significantly to our culture and economic development. This government has brought forth legislation to protect newcomers and recognized the importance of investing in Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, which has built a reputation across the country for its continued success. The Maples is well known for having one of the highest proportions of newcomers in the province. I am proud of the work I have done with the—with our Provincial Nominee Program to help hundreds of immigrant families settle in Manitoba.

* (15:20)

Unfortunately, the federal government has decided to end the settlement services half of our immigration agreement. This change will be a step backwards. It puts Manitoba's steady economic growth at risk and is worrying to many families in my constituency and across the province. The federal government does not understand the needs of newcomers in this province. There are people in Manitoba who have been working in this field for many years, who understand the policies and systems that allow families to come here together, to find employment, and to contribute to our communities—and to contribute to our communities. They need the opportunity to continue this good work, and all members of this House should recognize that.

Since November 2011, the federal government has stopped accepting sponsorship applications for parents and grandparents. The opposition claims to be supportive of immigrant families; if this is true, why would they support the federal government, whose policies are preventing families from staying together? The federal Conservatives are also insisting that immigrants have sufficient income level before they can bring their parents, even as

visitors, here from other countries. Canada should be inviting immigrants and their parents here according to need, not according to their income.

The federal government also introduced super visa. According to super visa rules, people who sponsor their family members have to pay medical insurance for them, which can cost about \$1,800 per person per year.

Another new policy proposal would affect immigrants trying to bring their spouses to Canada. Under this proposal, a spouse being sponsored by a Canadian or permanent resident would have to live with their sponsor for two years; only then, he or she will receive their permanent status. In many cases, this would not be a problem. However, it doesn't allow for the unfortunate situations where immigrants enter into abusive relationships. By forcing them to stay in these relationships for two years, the federal government could expose people to danger and put lives at risk.

I know many members of the opposition have stood in this House and claimed to be supportive of the immigrant community. Why, then, have they been silent on these important issues? Why have not they tried to convince the members who visited us last week from Parliament to change these damaging policies?

The people of The Maples elected me so I could represent their interests. In addition to protecting the rights of newcomers, this means working together to improve health care and education in our communities. These are top priorities for all Canadians.

This budget outlines how our provincial government will provide faster cancer testing and treatment and provide free cancer drugs for all patients. We will take steps to ensure that family doctors are available to each and every Manitoban by 2015.

We will also continue to invest in our schools. In The Maples, we are working to expand the curriculum at the Maples Collegiate to include optional courses in the history of India and the Philippines. We are building a new K-8 school in Amber Trails, which is scheduled to open in the fall of 2013. Personally, I will continue to work for parenting education programs and sports and ensure that the students in Manitoba are aware of the programs that are already available to them. Our government is continuing its commitment to create

more child-care spaces and build new facilities to ensure better access to child care, which will improve employment opportunities for all parents.

In terms of affordability, this budget confirms our commitment to reduce income taxes for seniors. I had a lot of conversation about this on the doorstep and I'm glad I can tell my constituents that we are moving forward with this pledge.

We will also continual work with the private sector to increase the availability of affordable housing across the province. I introduced legislation which encourages municipalities to help homeowners develop a secondary or granny suites. In support of this, our government created forgivable loans to help cover the cost of 50 per cent the costs of constructing these suites. Given the uncertain state of the global economy, I am glad that Manitoba continues to invest in reliable, long-term growth projects such as housing.

I moved here many years ago and I'm happy to stay that Manitoba is still a strong province, a place that is known for its high quality of life. Our government is continuing to protect what matters most to Manitobans.

In closing, I would like to relate a personal story: On my last day as president of the Sikh Society in 1978 my son was born. This fall, on the final day before the writ was dropped, for this election, my granddaughter was born. And I hope this did not mean it would be my last day as the MLA for The Maples. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my granddaughter proved to be a lucky charm and I won with an even greater majority than before. I am so glad she was born into a province that offers so many opportunities to children and adults from all over the world.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have quoted the Sikh holy book, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, before. But I believe it contains a message that is worth repeating, that says we should have such a society that all the people feel included and no one should be left out. And the 10th Guru said there is only one race—that is the human race.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): At first, I'd like to congratulate you on your appointment to Deputy Speaker position from your caucus. I'd like to recognize and welcome the table officers, the legislative staff, the pages that serve all members of the Legislature, and the interns that were chosen to

work in the different caucuses, in government and in opposition.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my wife Tracey and my boys, Brayden and Jarvis, for their love and support; my parents, Lorne and Lydia Ewasko, who are celebrating their 48th wedding anniversary today; my in-laws, Wilf and Sylvia Groinus; my brother, Greg, and his family, wife Monique, Owen and Sam, their two boys; my sister-in-law, Cheryl, and her two boys, Vaughan and Cullen; and my brother-in-law, Trevor, and his two boys, Kyle and Mike, and his daughter, Paige, for their continued support. You cannot do this job by yourself. You have to have a great team, and that I do, including my colleagues. My CA, Leanne [*phonetic*], who brings with her many years of experience—I have already learnt so much from her.

Of course, I couldn't go on without mentioning my two predecessors, Gerald Hawranik and Darren Praznik, who worked tirelessly for the constituents of Lac du Bonnet. My campaign team—hours and hours of volunteer time spent. One goal in mind, and we achieved it. I can't thank them enough, and I am proud to have all of them and the many volunteers I can call my friends.

* (15:30)

As a newly elected MLA, Mr. Speaker, I truly feel privileged to be able to finally work here and serve my constituents of Lac du Bonnet. For that, I thank them.

You see, Mr. Speaker, I was prepared to be back in the Leg. back in February, possibly early March—as were my colleagues—but April 17th. After seeing the budget presented last week, it is no wonder that this NDP government wanted to delay us coming back into the House. What an upsetting budget for all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot and will not be supporting this Budget 2012 presented by the Finance Minister. I can't help think how much of—out of touch with reality this New Democratic government is today when they put out a budget document that says we're focused on what matters most and that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) saying last week, and I quote: We gave Manitobans what they want.

Mr. Speaker, \$184 million in new taxes, none of my constituents wanted that. I'm sure not many other

Manitobans, beside the 37 across the way that wanted it for only one reason: but to pat themselves on the backs and be strangers to the truth, even to themselves, thinking that they did their best—Manitobans want a government that is honest with them, a government that will, in fact, tell the truth when it comes to making commitments and promises.

The Premier, just seven months ago in the city of Brandon, during a leaders' debate, September 12th, 2011, said, and I quote: Our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have future prosperity without any tax increases, and we'll deliver on that. We're right ahead of schedule. Broken promises, Mr. Speaker, broken promises.

Mr. Speaker, I have two young boys, as do many members of this House have children of their own. Some have grandkids. Why does this government want to saddle our future generations with debt? All this government is thinking about is themselves, no vision for the future—nine new taxes totalling \$184 million, \$504-million deficit for 2012.

I am very proud to have been given the critic roles for Advanced Education and Literacy, and Children and Youth Opportunities, as well as Healthy Child Manitoba.

Just to mention a couple points on Advanced Education. We saw the NDP sit idly by while the Brandon University strike inflicted ‘inmeasureable’ stress on students in Brandon last fall—and other Manitobans. They could have prevented it from becoming the longest faculty strike in Manitoba's history, but they sided with their labour friends ahead of students and their families. We know, Mr. Speaker, that Brandon University did lose some of their students, and the financial hit to the students and families during the strike will never be recovered.

We've also seen the NDP promise midwifery education in northern Manitoba, only to have the program completely fall apart, but not before they expanded that same program to southern Manitoba. Since they started the midwifery program-training program—in 2006, not a single midwife was graduated, not one. Government oversight has been severely lacking. When, Mr. Speaker, is this minister going to be—going to actually get involved?

The NDP's less than proactive approach to attracting students to Manitoba and keeping them here shows Manitoba has the second lowest

participation rate in post-secondary education in Canada. We also have the lowest post-secondary graduation rate in Canada, which was published in the StatsCan of 2010.

Mr. Speaker, it was promised by the minister to have the new computer access system up and running by June of 2011 for Student Aid. After questioning in the Public Accounts committee meeting, it doesn't look like the program will be up and running for this June either. How can this government say they care about students and Manitobans who want to go on to post-secondary study when they do not help to bring down their own government-made barriers?

Mr. Speaker, in regards to my critic roles for Children and Youth Opportunities, Manitoba remains the child poverty of Canada, a title our province has sadly held for the last five years running. Despite what the NDP tries to tell you, 43,000 children in Manitoba live in poverty. Manitoba's child poverty rate is almost three points higher than the Canadian rate of 14.2 per cent, and 68 per cent of Aboriginal children six and under are living in poverty in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, creating a new government Department of Children and Youth Opportunities seems to be the government's answer, but even the NDP cannot dispute that they are failing our poorest children. Between 2003 and 2009, nearly 40 per cent of Manitoba children lived in poverty for at least one year. In 2011, Food Banks Canada report showed that over 55,575 Manitobans accessed food banks in the month of March alone, an increase of more than 37 per cent from March 2008. Of the individuals that were helped, 50.4 per cent were children under 18, which is significantly higher than the 38 per cent national average. Mr. Speaker, the NDP have a dismal record, and we don't see them working to change it. Instead, we see more spending on government administration by creating a new department. That, in itself, is an admission of failure, an admission that what they are doing—what they were doing before was not working. With the honourable minister from Point Douglas at the helm, I at least see some light. Maybe the portfolio for Child and Family Services will open soon.

My question is why this government would—in their ever touting how financially responsible they are and how they are the people party, my question is this: Why would this Premier (Mr. Selinger) not have slid the member from Point Douglas also the

portfolio of Sport? It just doesn't make sense. Is it to make sure that the Premier continues to dole out raises for all of the MLAs where his money is saving initiative here? Or is it a ploy to keep Manitobans confused with which department has authority over which things?

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, I am a newly elected MLA. These next couple of points just doesn't sit well with me, and I know they don't sit well with other Manitobans as well.

Manitoba's envoy for military affairs, Bonnie Korzeniowski, has a mandate to support and encourage the well-being of military community in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, an example of the golden handshake. I mean, a time when the government of Manitoba is cash-strapped and then gives her an approximate budget of \$190,000, does this price tag even include her salary? If I was a backbencher in the government's caucus, I would take this as a slap in the face. Surely, there are members across the way that could do this job, possibly, even the member from Selkirk.

The second point I was taken back on was the fact that we have a minister whose department seems to have abused their power over their employees to force them to get involved in partisan politics. With that, I wait your ruling, Mr. Speaker. I truly feel that the government played—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

I understand that there may be members that wish to comment on matters that are of importance to this House, but I wish to caution the honourable member that I have taken certain items under advisement and I have yet to bring back my ruling to the House. So I express my caution to you. Be very careful on commenting on any items that I have taken under advisement until such time I have at least had the opportunity to bring back a ruling.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's what I meant by my last little bit of comment that I wait your ruling on the matter.

I truly feel that the government played the shell game in its—in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Number 1: amalgamating 11 RHAs down to five; \$10 million over three years of savings, they say. We are talking about a \$1.12-billion debt-deficit last year, and they want Manitobans to pat them on the back for saving them \$3.3 million. Manitobans are not going to be fooled, Mr. Speaker.

The second point: Sunday shopping. Once again, Mr. Speaker, this government is turning neighbour against neighbour and hoping that the people of Manitoba forget that the real issue here in Manitoba is that we have a government that broke its promises to not raise taxes.

* (15:40)

The flood, Mr. Speaker—there have been incredible delays and uncertainty in the actions taken by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to help victims of the flood around Lake Manitoba. I take exception to the comments from members across the way because my colleagues and I have been fighting the flood as well, representing constituents—not just behind desks and slowly moving papers and patting ourselves on the backs, as many of the members in the government did, or—and are still doing. Yes, the disaster is out there; people are still displaced from their homes. Many of us had lent a hand in the many communities that needed it and I commend the countless volunteers, Manitobans, who helped fight the flood.

I truly believe a lot of this disaster could have been avoided if this government would have listened to their experts. They couldn't tell that the levels from Saskatchewan were high and that the water was coming our way? I find that hard to believe, Mr. Speaker. We have preventative ideas and tools we can use, but this government wishes to constantly whine about the amounts of transfer payments that come from the federal government.

How about LiDAR mapping, which is extensively used to help map and target possible problem areas within the United States and in the Red River basin. This government is going to say that they are using this technology, Mr. Speaker, but the fact of the matter is that this technology isn't brand new. It should have been here already.

I know, I know—the members are going to use their usual line. All they want the opposition to do is deep cuts and then turn around and ask for more funding in your area or every other area. Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we believe that this government has a spending addiction and cannot, and will not, manage their funds properly at all. They have had more than ideal economic stability to do more positive things with Manitoban's hard-earned money than what they have been doing. Waste, waste, waste.

Do more with what you have, Mr. Premier, as opposed to taxing Manitobans more and doing less in

the meantime. Accountability, transparency, proper management of finances—I almost feel sorry for the Finance Minister, Mr. Speaker. I believe the Premier led the sacrificial lamb to slaughter. Manitobans are not fooled by the smoke and mirrors, they know they are paying more for less. They will not forget the broken election promises.

Many of my constituents are part of organizations who bring some wonderful talent to the eastern side of our province. The Fire & Water Music Festival in Lac du Bonnet; the Pinawa Birthday Celebrations; Beausejour celebrates their centennial this year; Great Woods Music Festival; Canadian Power Toboggan Championships; 4P Festival in Powerview and Pine Falls; various activities and events at the beaches; and family fun day in Tyndall and Garson. You see, Mr. Speaker, many wonderful events and attractions are to be enjoyed by Manitobans. Many people throughout Manitoba feel that the access to funds to help with these projects are often delayed due to the red tape created by the many layers of bureaucracy by this government; again, accountability and transparency.

Development of a Waabanong Anishinaabe interpretive and learning centre by Hollow Water and Manigotagan: for the members across the way, this interpretive centre is located outside of the city approximately one-and-a-half-hour drive, or for some of them, half hour by their usual aircraft. How are the tourists going to get there, Mr. Speaker? The road No. 304 is horrendous, as are many others within my constituency. If they do get there they will agree that it is truly a beautiful part of the province, but they will vow never to come back because of the safety of the road and the conditions of the travel. I'm not quite sure where the thought was when developing this interpretive centre.

Mr. Speaker, this government chooses to waste taxpayers' money. Perfect example is the Bipole III, west side of the province—what are they thinking?—the \$3.2-billion boondoggle by this government. Presently, an east-side road is being constructed to give much needed access to fellow Manitobans who, by this government, have been left in Third World conditions. This Premier, if he would have checked his ego at the door, would have realized that he could have saved Manitobans billions of dollars by putting the bipole down the east side, while creating much-needed employment for my constituents and the constituents of the honourable Minister for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, even though I

doubt I will be getting support on this matter from him.

Put in the east-side road for virtually no added cost. What is happening with this east-side road, Mr. Speaker? The construction crews with Manitoba Hydro are having to, in order to make way for the road, move existing power lines over a few metres or even yards so that the road can go in. What are these new added costs?

The power dams, Mr. Speaker: What percentage of workers are Aboriginal? Why does the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) not stand up to his government for the very people who voted for him and I? Help me, honourable minister. Help our people on the eastern side of the province. It's not just a federal issue. They are Manitobans too. Why is this government not helping? Again, management of funds doesn't seem to be in their vocabulary.

Just yesterday we questioned the Premier on the seniors education tax coming off of seniors property taxes, Mr. Speaker. The government came back and said, well, we are: we're helping out; we're coming up with \$1.6 million in tax savings for this coming year. That is a far cry from the \$35 million yearly promised in the pre-election campaign.

Conservation: Mars hills and the moose closure in game hunting area 26. We need more money for support staff. Asked—the support staff are being asked to do more with less. Again, this government is pitting neighbours versus neighbours instead of doing their jobs.

There have been hikes in gas taxes, motor fuel taxes, vehicle registration fees; the addition of PST to property, casualty insurance, to group life insurance; increased day care fees. And the list goes on and on: \$184 million in new taxes, \$504-million deficit, \$27-billion debt and growing, broken promises after broken promises by not only the Premier, Mr. Speaker, but by the government's whole caucus.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans cannot afford this government. Again, I cannot and will not in good faith vote for such a damaging budget. Thank you.

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): I'm grateful for the opportunity to stand here in the Chamber as the MLA for St. James, and I'm proud to highlight some of the benefits that our recent budget will provide to constituents in my area.

When I canvass in my constituency, there are four areas of concern that come up regularly: child care, affordable housing for seniors, youth issues and opportunities, and supports for new Canadians. While St. James used to be a constituency known for its high population of retirees, it has been undergoing rapid change. I came to Winnipeg as a newlywed seven years ago, and the difference between the St. James of 2005 and the St. James of today is visible on almost every street.

There are more young families and professional couples moving into the area, finding that the housing is affordable and that the neighbourhood is a desirable place to start out in life. There are more small businesses setting up in our area and there are definitely more immigrants who choose to live in St. James as they commit themselves to a productive life in Manitoba. And, yes, there are still many retirees in St. James, people dedicated to the area, and as they downsize and sell their homes to those new, young families I mentioned a few seconds ago, they choose to remain in the area in apartments or condos. These citizens of St. James want to stay in the neighbourhood where many of them grew up, raised families and now look to live productive lives helping St. James become home to a new generation. St. James is a home of—to people of all ages and from all areas around the city, the province and the world. That is what makes it so interesting to represent and what also makes it at times challenging. Yet, with the recent budget our government has presented, I can say there is something that speaks to every one of my constituents.

* (15:50)

As a mother of two children—to a five- and three-year-old, I experience the challenges of balancing family and career that many, many Manitobans do. This means we need quality child care—and I appreciate the work that this government has already done over the past 12 years providing better wages and pensions for early childhood educators, the people we rely on to care for our children in our absence.

For many of us who drop our children off at daycare, there is that moment of guilt as we leave for work or school. I doubt I'm alone when I say from time to time there is a flicker of concern. Will the child-care worker be patient enough to answer those lengthy questions, quick enough to change a diaper and kind enough to soothe hurt feelings?

I rely on the daycare to hire people who are qualified, caring and dedicated enough to do this work, work that the previous government undervalued to the point where the people looking after our children were among the lowest-paid in our society. That was unacceptable. And since 1999 our government has recognized the value and importance of these workers and understands that they need to be compensated in order to earn a decent living wage and remain in the field knowing a pension awaits them.

In Manitoba this is the Week of the Early Childhood Educator. This is the perfect time to show that we appreciate the work of these professionals. Our government understands the importance of quality child care, and when a crucial decision had to be made, we asked parents who can afford it to pay an extra 35 cents a day for school-aged children and \$1 a day for younger children. This, after freezing parent fees for 12 years while doubling the funding commitment to child care, still our parent fees remain the second lowest in the country and I am proud to be part of a government that puts our children first.

I, like many parents, rely on a government that recognizes child-care workers as important and values these workers in a way they deserve, in a way that I, as a parent, deserve. I want to know that the people who look after my children are appreciated, that child-care centres can increase the wages of those first-level child-care providers and retain them in the field for years to come. It also means that these positions will attract more of these talented people—the kinds of people we want looking after our children—who have the desire to do the work of caring for our children, and this work deserves to be rewarded.

How unfortunate that the people who care for our children have been so undervalued in the past. Personally, I think that undervaluing child-care workers is undervaluing our children. I am so proud that our government is putting our children first, and part of putting our children first is to assist those single parents, low-income families and families with multiple children to access quality child care. Our government has ensured that quality child care is accessible to all and that children do not suffer when their parents cannot afford fee increases.

In St. James we are fortunate to have quality child-care centres that draw people from other parts of the city. We have Discovery Children's Centre, for

one, which is one of the only daycares in the city that operates a program to accommodate parents who are in jobs that require shift work. And I've heard from several people who operate child-care centres, that by raising the parent fees a minimal amount they will be able to provide better care, retain their staff, and at the same time attract new people to this line of work.

I look forward to working with the daycare centres in St. James, the same centres that look after my own children. I look forward to giving back to my community and the people who are preparing children for the future.

Our government values people of all ages. We want to make our seniors lives affordable, and we are doing this. We are reducing property taxes for seniors by increasing the seniors' education property tax credit by \$75 to \$1,025. We are also improving home- and community-based care, increasing the amount of affordable housing and holding Pharmacare deductible increases to the rate of inflation.

In St. James people want to remain in the community. That's because St. James really is such a great place to live and many seniors have lived in our constituency all of their lives. And when seniors in the area sell their homes they want to find affordable housing that accommodates their lifestyle in St. James. And I'm proud to be a part of a government that is investing in affordable housing, which is making a real difference in the lives of Manitoba families.

And, in the middle, we have our youth. Many times I heard, on the doorstep, about the need to expand opportunities and programming for young people. And, in response, our government created a new Children and Youth Opportunities Department, which is built on the solid work that we have done for our young people over the past 12 years. Now we are engaging citizens through public forums around the province, to create a prime prevention strategy. We are reaching out to communities, looking for ways to capture the imaginations of young people and actively engage them. This is important work, as these are the people who are building the future of this province.

Investing in youth is one effective way of combatting crime at its roots, stopping it before it starts. And if we can engage our most vulnerable youth in healthy activities, with wise, supportive people guiding them, they are less likely to become

involved in the kind of lifestyle that may lead to crime.

Our government cares about the future. We care about the many young people who'll—who will be entering the workforce, and need the kind of preparation and supports to bring them and all of us success. We are preparing our youth for the future by providing \$25 million in funding for public schools, building and renewing schools across the province, creating smaller class sizes and improving curriculum. We are supporting them as they continue their education, holding tuition increases to the rate of inflation, and increasing the number of apprenticeship spots around the province.

As I mentioned before, St. James is a home to—is home to many immigrants who come here with their families in search of a better life. While their children get an introduction to what life in Manitoba can be through programs that may come from our children and youth opportunity department, for example, their parents, and other wage earners, are benefitting from our Provincial Nominee Program. This is a successful program that has them starting their new lives in Manitoba with appropriate work and the opportunity to thrive and contribute.

I remember speaking with a constituent by the name of Wine, a woman from the Philippines, who came to St. James less than four years ago. She came with her husband and their sons. Both she and her husband were engineers in their birth country. While her husband studies to get his accreditation here in Canada, he worked a night job, and she worked in hospitality, cleaning rooms. They both volunteer in the community, along with their sons, one of whom started university this past year. Wine will go on to get her accreditation as an engineer, once her husband has completed his course. And, amazingly, through hard work and saving, they already own their own home.

Our immigration policies and programs attract these kinds of people; people who are driven to succeed, and who appreciate the opportunities that Manitoba has to offer. These people are committed to their communities and give of themselves, despite, often, their long hours of work and study. We are working to protect what matters most to Manitobans: finding ways to support child care, increasing affordability for seniors, providing young Manitobans with new avenues to help them reach their potential, and encouraging many talented and appreciative immigrants to settle in our province,

which has already benefited us so much. I look forward to working with the individuals, businesses and organizations of St. James as the government implements Budget 2012.

And, in closing, Mr. Speaker, I, like other MLAs, am not alone in feeling a sense of pride in the unique qualities of the constituency which we each represent, and I'm very proud of my own constituency. And, in fact, I'm quite sure that there are members of other political parties that have a keen appreciation for St. James, as well, and would like to claim it for their own. I look forward to the coming months, and the many opportunities I will have to meet with people who live in my neighbourhood and in my constituency, to work with them to create more reasons to be proud of living in St. James.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this year's budget, which was delivered several days ago.

Let me, first of all, thank the staff of the Legislative Chamber, the Clerk and the—those who make sure that we're kept in order, and that things are working well. I want to thank my own staff, and those members of the campaign team last year, and others who are providing support to my efforts from around the province.

* (16:00)

The budget is an important document because, of course, it sets a stage for the expenditures this year. And, in my view, when we look at this document, and when we look at where the government is at the moment, we see a Manitoba at a time when there's a very large deficit of a billion dollars. But as well as a fiscal deficit, there's a very large social deficit because of poor NDP social policies. There's a substantial environmental deficit because of lax attention to environmental issues. And there's a growing credibility deficit because of the government's broken promises. And I will talk a little bit about each of these in turn.

First of all, the fiscal deficit. The \$1-billion deficit did not arise overnight. It arose because of poor fiscal management policies for the last 12 years. The cumulative effects of these mismanagement are the very high deficit that we see today. Now, of course, the government would want you to believe that the only real problem and the reason for the deficit is the flood. Notwithstanding that the majority

of the deficit is from other items. We need to start, though, by looking at the cost of the flood and the decisions which led to the fact that it was as severe as it was, indeed, the poor decisions by this government which led directly to the severity of this year's flood.

For 11 years, the government has followed a policy of drainage—drain, drain, drain, drain-only policy. This has resulted in much more water coming off the land that—and for it coming off the land much faster in southwestern Manitoba, and this directly contributed to the severity of last year's 'flood'—flood on Lake Manitoba. Indeed, the government over the last decade has spent 59–6 million on drainage and nothing on water retention. It was a policy which I've already described as madness. It was a policy which led directly to the devastating flood of 2011. Indeed, careful research on the Broughtons Creek watershed has shown that the policies of consecutive Conservative and NDP governments has led to, at least, 30 per cent more water coming off the land in southwestern Manitoba today than in the 1960s. Some would say a higher proportion. We also know that there's an alternative approach. For example, at South Tobacco Creek, 27 small dams have retained water, which has resulted in a 25 per cent reduction in the peak flow on South Tobacco Creek and a 75 per cent reduction in flooding of farmland and a drastic reduction in infrastructure damage. But, of course, this government has not been very interested in that kind of policy.

Let's put it in this perspective. Properly implemented policies which emphasized water retention as a major part of water management would, indeed, have dramatically reduced the water coming off the land, would have eliminated the need for the Hoop and Holler cut, and could've quite significantly reduced the damage on Lake Manitoba. Remember, the Hoop and Holler cut lasted only for six days and only released about 3,000 cubic feet per second. That's 0.6 per cent of the water coming down the Assiniboine. It wouldn't take a lot to decrease the water flowing with some water retention efforts like along South Tobacco Creek. Better ongoing maintenance of the dikes along the Assiniboine River might also have eliminated the need for the Hoop and Holler cut. This should not have been necessary if this government had undertaken basic flood preventive measures in advance instead of waiting for the last minute. The savings of flood prevention efforts would've been much larger than this, however, if a 25 per cent reduction in the peak water

coming off the land had been achieved as at South Tobacco Creek. The damage and costs around Lake Manitoba, and in many municipalities, would've been very substantially reduced. But, bluntly, the flood should not have been as bad, or have cost as much as it did, if the government had have been engaged in good water-management practices over the last 10 years—12 years, but sadly they weren't.

But it's not only in flood prevention this government has let the people of Manitoba down. There are many other areas where this government has shown very poor financial management; we all remember the Crocus Investment Fund fiasco.

There has been a deliberate decision, as we well know, to have unbalanced yearly budgets which only have to be balanced every four years, and even this only in the summary budget, not in the core budget.

There's been, recently, examples: untendered contracts like the untendered \$100-million helicopter contract, likely quite a wasteful one; there's been the taking of rocks, as we've heard from Stonewall to Hartney when there are adequate rocks near Hartney; there's the opening and funding of an office for a retired NDP MLA; there's been wasteful spending in many other areas, including as we read today in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on immigration services; and I could go on and on and on.

There is also, I would point out, a lack of attention to the diabetes epidemic, and I've raised this many times in the past. There's a lack of a plan to turn the epidemic around, even though it's been raging in Manitoba for more than 16 years. Once again this terrible epidemic has gone unnoticed by the government in the budget and the budget speech.

Curiously, it recent—at a recent diabetes reception where there was discussion of the alarming increase in Manitobans with diabetes to about 94,000, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) talked about the importance of diabetes, but once again did not use the opportunity to present a real plan to address the epidemic and reduce the number of Manitobans with diabetes and reduce the costs of health care. There's a similar story with many, many other preventable diseases. There is just not the plan which is carefully crafted enough and specific enough and tailored to the circumstances to keep people healthier and reduce health-care costs.

Instead, this governments keeps on spending like there's no tomorrow. The result, of course, of the government's poor fiscal management, has been that

their deficit has been going up and up and up and has, this year, reached the extraordinary number of just about \$1 billion.

It should be noted that if the government had provided the help that it promised to flood-affected Manitobans around Manitoba, then we would have actually seen the money allocated to help people around Manitoba actually spent which, of course, would have been wonderful. But it would also have increased the final deficit numbers before 2011-2012 and taken it well over the \$1-billion mark. Maybe that is why the government has worked so hard to reduce the deficit, sadly, on the backs of flood-affected Manitobans. And, of course, we are hearing day by day, hour by hour, the complaints of Manitobans who've been so poorly treated by a very badly managed program.

In addition to the fiscal deficit there is a large and growing social deficit. We can see this clearly in the increased number of children who are from such poor families that they must use food banks. This increase has been from 5,500 children 10 years ago to 29,000 children today, an increase of more than 500 per cent. One could argue that this is one of the biggest increases under this government, the increase in the number of children who are in families who are so poor that they need food banks. What a sad commentary. Many people would have thought that an NDP government, so called, might have done much better and might have cared much more for poor people in Manitoba.

This has quite an impact on other social problems, on crime. When you have so many poor families who are struggling, the children are at risk. They are at risk of getting into trouble, they are at risk of being pulled into gangs, they are at risk of causing social problems, including criminal activity.

If this government had seen fit to address even a little bit of this social deficit instead of having the social deficit grow and grow and grow, we might have seen things starting to turn around on crime, but we haven't.

* (16:10)

There are today about ten thousand children in care. Sadly, instead of supporting families, this government has decided instead that its role is to take children away from families, to break up families and put them in care. It's a sad testament to what's happening in this province that there's been this extraordinary increase in the number of children in

care, almost unparalleled around the globe. When you compare this to the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, New Zealand, we have five times as many kids in care, all because we have a government which is not supporting children and families very well.

We have 10 times as many in care as Western Australia, again, all because we are not supporting families very well in this province, all because the NDP government is not supporting families very well in this province. I have raised, on many occasions, concerns about Jordan's Principle and fairness in the treatment of children in First Nations communities. But sadly, even though we have a federal-provincial memorandum, there are all too many children who are falling through the cracks, and Jordan's Principle is certainly a long way from being implemented the way it should be.

We have problems in education. Sadly, for a government which prides itself in talking about education, our international test scores, our PISA scores, in math and science and in reading are going down. In mathematics there has been some particularly troubling issues raised with the curriculum being delivered by this government. Anna Stokke and others and the WISE Math group have been particularly vocal in pointing this out, in showing and demonstrating where the problems are. It is difficult to believe that this government could have done so badly for the last 12 years, could have so deserted the children of this province that we have children failing to learn math in an adequate basis.

I could speak of the 1,400 homes in Manitoba with no running water, in Third World conditions. What kind of a government is this which leaves so many homes—which leaves any homes—without running water, without the ability to wash their hands, to take a shower? This should have been ended years and years ago, but this government has been around for 12 going on 13 years, but still has not paid attention to this. Instead, what has been their focus? Their focus in this budget was putting together the Crown corporations responsible for gambling and for alcohol. That's kind of a toxic combination, putting these two together. I guess we'll wait and see what happens.

For a government which could have done so much to be a social leader, to have seen that it does so badly is very, very sad.

And the environmental deficit. Let me talk for a few minutes about the environmental deficit. We've

got worse and worse problems with algal blooms on Lake Winnipeg. People at Matheson Island went out to fish in a derby and instead of catching lots and lots of fish, as they should have, they only caught one fish, and there was a lot of problems with algae in that area.

They are not being careful about our provincial parks: they're licensing the development of peat mines. The problems in the fishery in Lake Winnipegosis continues and continues. The pickerel have never recovered and probably never will as long as this government is in power. There's a lack of an ecological goods and services program. This government still won't ban plastic bags in spite of the fact that Leaf Rapids and Thompson and, I believe, Snow Lake have already moved in this direction. And, of course, one of the first things this government did in office was to terminate the Manitoba Environmental Council—the watchdog—so that they wouldn't watch carefully while they did all these terrible things and forgot about the environment.

In addition to the fiscal, the social, the environmental deficits, there's a credibility deficit. The number of broken promises has gone up and up. The number of broken promises related to increasing taxes, or not increasing taxes, which was the promise, and then increasing them. The government promised to eliminate property taxes for seniors and then has broken that. The government made many, many promises to help people with flood assistance to have swift, effective programs which worked, to have a single application form, and many other things, and they failed and failed and failed to deliver on these, and there has been more and more frustration and sadness and disappointment and heartache and hurt, and it continues and continues.

And more than that, this government has now done everything it can, looking at how it can politicize the civil service. I talked about it earlier—I won't say more. But what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that I, and the Liberal Party, will not support this budget. It could have been so much better. It was not good enough for Manitoba. We will not support it. Thank you.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I'm proud to stand in support of the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) last week. It's a responsible budget, Mr. Speaker, one that responds to the things that matters most to Manitobans, and

one that matters most to my constituents in Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to be appointed the legislative assistant to the Minister of Finance a few weeks ago, and I want to tell you that the minister has shown incredible diligence, incredible discipline. He has been incredibly creative in pulling this budget together, and I'm honoured to work with him and proud of the work that he's accomplished here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my constituents have told me that they want to live in strong, safe, and sustainable neighbourhoods, and that's exactly what this budget delivers: smart, sensible, and strategic investments in health care, in education, in public infrastructure, in housing, in child care, in environmental protection, in clean and renewable energy, in business, in innovation, plus countless community projects—all of this—all of this—to make sure that our economy continues to grow and develop for the benefit of all Manitobans.

More than that, Budget 2012 maintains man afforded—Manitoba's affordability advantage. It's not only an instrument, a tool of economic growth and development, the affordability advantage safeguards our seniors, our newcomers, our youth and our families, those most vulnerable in our society.

In short, Budget 2012, like every other budget this government has tabled since 1999, continues to invest in people, continues to invest in communities, continues to invest in neighbourhoods, so that everyone, every Manitoban enjoys the full benefits of citizenship in Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I told you in my maiden speech in October, I'm a relative newcomer to Manitoban. And I—to Manitoba. I love this community, I love Riverview, I love Fort Garry, I love Winnipeg, and I love the province of Manitoba. I'm proud to be called a Winnipegger and a Manitoban. I'm also a Ph.D. in Canadian history, and so it helps me to understand the present by putting the past in context. So, if you'll forgive me for just a few minutes, I want to return to the 1990s to talk about the kind of Manitoba that I moved here with my wife and three children when we arrived here in 1996.

* (16:20)

First, and most importantly, when we arrived, though we lived in a nice neighbourhood with great friends and great things to do, the economy of Manitoba was in a mess. By every possible indicator

in the 1990s, the Province of Manitoba was considered to be an economic backwater, an economic basket case. So that was the first thing we had to do in 1999 when we were elected. We had to resurrect the economy of Manitoba, and we've done exactly that.

When I came to Manitoba in 1996, Mr. Speaker, health care was on life-support. When we arrived here, we heard this name, Connie Curran. And we really didn't know what that was, but that sounded pretty scary. There was something about frozen foods in hospitals, and that didn't sound very good at all. There were doctors—doctors and nurses were being fired. Doctors and nurses were being fired arbitrarily. It was crazy. And, oddly—oddly—there was a turnstile of Health ministers in the Tory caucus that we couldn't keep up with. Seems to me they had three in the last two years; we've had two in 12 years. Says a lot about the competency on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, we talk a lot about the infrastructure deficit today, but those—this government on that side of the House, during the 1990s, created the infrastructure deficit. They didn't call it that. You know what they called it? They called it deferred maintenance. And in the early 1990s, deferred maintenance was put off for a little bit of time. Just this much. And little by little it grew to this much. And then little by little it grew to that much until, by 1998, we had a full-fledged infrastructure deficit on our hands. And so when we came into government, we 'gan' to—began to address that as well.

When I came to Manitoba in 1996, valuable public assets were being sold. I think we know what that is—certain phone company in town. And valuable public services were constantly being threatened with privatization. We've said no to that approach, because that's the wrong approach.

Housing in 19—by 1996 was abandoned by that side of the House. No housing was built. Nothing was happening. Like the federal government, like the provincial government, no action taken.

My kids—I had three kids under the age of eight when we came in 1996. We loved our public school at École Riverview, but when we went to talk to the teachers they said, you know, we don't have enough funding. We don't have enough resources to do the job to teach our children. And so when we came into government in 1999, we fixed that problem too.

In 1996, when I came to Manitoba, people—especially young people—were leaving the province in droves. In 1995, 5,000 people left Winnipeg and left Manitoba. The same thing happened in 1996. Since 1999, over a hundred thousand newcomers have come and settled here in Manitoba and enriched our life.

Mr. Speaker, when I came here to Manitoba in 1996, tuition for students was out of control and enrolment was dropping each and every year. When we came into government in 1999, we fixed that problem too. Hospitals, schools, universities and colleges were all terribly underfunded in 1996.

In 1996, on that side of the House—in the Conservative caucus they were in denial about climate change—didn't exist, wasn't going to happen. And we see the results of that now. And so, in 1999, when we came into government, we started to address that problem as well.

Mr. Speaker, when we—I moved here in 1996, rapid transit was just a thought from another era. Stephen Juba, I think, was the last one to talk openly about it. Last week—last week—we celebrated the launch of the first stretch of the rapid transit system in Winnipeg. New day—it's a new day. We dealt with that problem too.

Mr. Speaker, when I moved here in nineteen ninety 'thicks', things like active transportation and child care and Home Care and Healthy Living were all considered to be a frivolous expense not worthy of a cent of investment from the Tory government.

And sadly, Mr. Speaker, in 1996, when I moved here, the Bombers were in a tailspin and broke and the Jets were leaving town and we dressed that problem as well.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, is that in 19—during the 1990s, the Conservative government broke faith with Manitobans. They didn't believe in Manitobans. They didn't have any faith in Manitobans. The narrative of the last years of the Conservative regime was one of abandonment, abandoning the people of Manitoba. And so, not surprisingly, in 1999, the Conservative government was given the pink slip. They were fired. And for the past four year—past four elections and 12 years, the people of Manitoba have said to them, don't call us, we'll call you. And I don't think you've got a call.

Failure of leadership, Tories breaking face with Manitobans, and a failure to stand up for the good people of Manitoba. Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't do

that, but when the Wheat Board was going down last fall, and we stood shoulder to shoulder with Manitoba farmers and with the workers in Manitoba, where were they? They were missing in action, MIA. When the federal budget came along and people were being laid off in the aerospace industry and the National Research Council, where were they? Missing in action, MIA.

And then, last week, we had that incredible display that was beyond belief, unprecedented. And I'm a Canadian historian and I can say that—unprecedented. But, you know, I was caught by surprise. I walked in, I saw the MP from St. Boniface walk in. I thought it was great. Here we have—all MLAs are going to stand—and MPs from that side of the House were going to stand shoulder to shoulder with Manitobans and defend a program that wasn't broken. Wow, what a surprise to find out that instead the opposition is nothing more than a puppet regime taking direction from the loges.

We stand up for Manitobans on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We stand shoulder to shoulder with Manitobans. And since 1999, it's obviously clear, it's visibly clear, that Manitoba is a much better place today than it was on any day during the Tory regime in the 1990s.

And so what's the evidence for that? Well, let's talk about it. We have one of the most diverse, best performing economies in Canada, with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. We weathered not only a global recession, but a flood of the millennium, and still we are outperforming most economies across Canada and around the world.

Budget 2012 keeps that momentum going. You remember that health care in the 1990s was on life support. Now it's been stabilized, and now, as a result of the improvements we've made, we'll be ensuring faster cancer testing and treatment and provide free cancer drugs for all patients. Wow, what an accomplishment. We're training and hiring even more doctors and nurses and physician assistants and nurse practitioners and health technologists. You fired them; we hire them. We're taking steps to ensure that every Manitoban has access to a doctor by 2015. You might have thought about that in your—during your days. Yes.

Another thing: Investments in public infrastructure have been unparalleled since 1999. Even with the flood of the millennium we keep doing a great job—\$589 million in investment in public infrastructure in Budget 2012. Too good to be true,

they say. Public sector assets and public services have been strengthened by our government. Because the people of Manitoba are the shareholders of our Crown corporations, Budget 2012 ensures that Manitoba families will pay the lowest combined bills for electricity, home heating and auto insurance. We would have added the phone company, but you sold that.

Housing, not on the agenda in the 1990s—front and centre in the year 2012, and in our budget, thanks to the Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross), we're going to fulfill our commitment to build 1,500 new, affordable units over a five-year period.

* (16:30)

Public schools have been transformed outside and inside the classroom, thanks to our Minister of Education (Ms. Allan). Budget 2012 maintains that momentum by sustaining funding to our public schools, while reducing class sizes in grades 1 to 3. Wow, another fantastic idea—tuition rates, once out of control in the 1990s, now the second lowest in the country for colleges and third lowest for universities. I have three in university; it's an affordable thing—it's the affordability advantage. Our pledge to students is to keep tuition affordable and our pledge to the institutions is to keep funding growing at a predictable rate, and that's exactly what we've done.

We've addressed climate change head-on by investing in green jobs and green technologies and green energy. Budget 2012 continues that trend by creating an energy opportunities office and fund to help Manitoba businesses take advantage of Manitoba Hydro's growth and development. Thanks to our many partnerships, the downtown, once hollowed in the 1990s, now has the Red River campus on Princess Street; the MTS Centre and the new Hydro building on Portage Avenue; the redevelopment of the Bell Hotel, the Union Tower, the United Way, the WRHA on Main Street; and the University of Winnipeg is transforming Portage like never before. The Exchange District is humming and more and more people are living downtown every single day. Budget 2012 continues that momentum as well.

On child care: once considered a frivolous expense by that side of the House, 6,500 new spaces will be completed by the end of the this year, and we continue to support child-care workers in every way we can. Active transportation—I don't know that these guys actually get on their bikes at all; it seems unlikely, but perhaps they do. We now have the most

incredible active transportation network of trails and byways and bike lanes in Winnipeg, and we're going to do that for the whole province. And, to top it all off, Mr. Speaker, unlike when I moved here in 1996, the Bombers are not only thriving—they were in the Grey Cup last year. The Jets are back where they belong, and we now have a new stadium being built.

We have achieved so much in the last decade. We have restored order in the economy, restored hope in ourselves, restored balance in our public finances and restored fairness in our community, and we have done it by investing in Manitobans.

So, Mr. Speaker, as the former leader of the federal NDP said, let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. I urge every member of this House to be loving, hopeful and optimistic, and vote for this budget. And let's get on with the job of building Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's an honour to rise to speak on behalf of our honourable Leader of the Opposition's (Mr. McFadyen) motion of amendment.

First off, I'd like to thank some of my constituents for their great support in the last election. In particular, I'd like to thank all of the volunteers that worked so hard for me and performed very well for me. I also like to thank the table officers for their hard work and their patience with us all, because sometimes I'm sure we try their patience, as was just done.

Also a pleasure to be able to address a few comments to this House regarding the 2012 budget. As is my first budget to be seen from the floor of the Legislature, I can assure you it is quite a different perspective as to watching these in the gallery. And I have watched a few in the gallery over the years, and sometimes there were things in them that you kind of wondered what was going on. But now, being on the floor, you can certainly get a much different perspective. And I'd also like to thank the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) for the last 15 minutes' worth of entertainment. I certainly hope he won't be called on to write the history book for Manitoba, because I think it would be long ways from the truth.

This spring's budget presented this government with—

Mr. Speaker: Order please. Order please. Order please.

I want to caution the honourable member that all members in here are honourable, and that the words the member is using with respect to—or reference to other members, are coming very close to being unparliamentary. So I caution you in that regard, to pick and choose, please, your words—pick and choose them very carefully.

Mr. Wishart: This spring's budget presented the government with the opportunity to show Manitobans that they are serious about dealing with their out-of-control spending habit, as exhibited by the ballooning deficit of 2011, totalling about \$1.2 billion. Even with extraordinary costs for the flood stripped away, the deficit for 2011 was in the range of exceeding \$500 million. Mr. Speaker, this is right on line with this year's projected deficit of \$500 million. This is not, however, in line with reducing the deficit by 2014 as they would have us believe, but in fact, more in line with a growing debt of \$27.6 billion by the end of 2012. This is making—sorry—this is taking place during a time of massive federal transfer payments and record-low borrowing costs. Even the most creative of accountants could not look at these books and honestly say they are on track to be balanced by 2014.

On top of this, the NDP government has had the nerve to add at least \$184 million in new taxes and fees for Manitobans, and I will only touch on a few examples. But the retail sales tax has been expanded to many more services and to a variety of insurance premiums which will be passed on to individual consumers. The gas tax is being increased by two and a half cents a litre, adding another \$44 and a half million to Manitoba families. Particularly hard hit are those in areas with no public transport options exist. This is particularly appropriate when we were looking at reduction in bus services in rural areas at the same time.

Further, the government is changing the dividend tax credit to gain \$16.9 million in revenue that will hurt seniors hardest and vehicle-registration fees are being hiked by another \$35 per vehicle. And, in fact, the other day at MPI committee we couldn't even get a straight answer as to whether this covered all types of vehicles or what it was specific on. On top of these fees—on top of this, fees will increase for a broad range of government services, everything from the issuing of birth and death certificates to child-care costs, to child abuse registry checks and many others. In fact, spending is still up in departments by 3.1 per cent, down slightly from last year's estimated 4.8 per cent increase, but, this is still

a long way from the 1.9 per cent increases the Premier (Mr. Selinger) promised in his five-year economic plan.

Now, picking up on the glass-half-full theme from the other day, I would like the House to clearly note that I am pro development and energy-energetically and actively pursue any opportunities that will benefit, not own—my own constituency, but all of Manitoba.

But we do occasionally get slandered in regards to saying, well, we're against everything. That is long ways from the truth, but the specifics often escape the other side of the House. As such, I was very disappointed to see the term "rural development" was completely absent from the budget speech. Without vibrant rural and northern communities our entire provincial economy suffers.

Now, sometimes this government and our party actually do agree on certain goals, things like taking steps to improve water quality in the Manitoba lakes and waterways, including Lake Winnipeg. Accordingly, we do recognize the new nutrient management tax credit as a kind of incentive we have been calling for on behalf of agricultural producers. The details will show just how successful this is, and I strongly expect that the budgeted amount will be way too little.

Also in regard to environmental issues, it was initially said that the NDP government would be eliminating the riparian tax credit. This is a good initiative and one we long supported. It now appears—despite the confusion—that this may, in fact, still be out there, and as such, we would have to applaud it. But stakeholders have been suggesting for a long time that there needs to be significant changes made in this tax credit and nothing has been done to solve that. Why not fix it instead of eliminate it?

In Budget 2012 this NDP government has also promised to develop a long-term comprehensive environmental strategy. Frankly, it's incredible that it's taken this long—that this government has taken so long to come to obvious conclusion that we need this in Manitoba. I hope this is—this time they will not only complete the task, but it will lead to some meaningful action. Very often we've seen a number of times when there's been discussions, there's been consultations and it has led to nothing but inaction.

Clearly, this government is long on making promises for the environment but short on acting, including missing their legislated target to reduce

greenhouse gases by 6 per cent below the 1990 emissions. This is actually a tactic that our former liberal–federal Liberal government used for many years; make lots of promises, talk a lot but take very little action. Look where it got them.

* (16:40)

I cannot leave this subject without touching on the impacts of the 2011 flood. Not only did it have severe financial implications for the province, but it also highlighted the very poor planning and the condition around water management in this province.

Being from the constituency of Portage la Prairie, and further, being the critic for Water Stewardship, I hear nearly daily from people suffering from the various flood compensation programs. I can list these endlessly in terms of specific cases but instead have chosen to work hard to try and resolve these by working within what system is there. But it is very frustrating for people when they are deferred endlessly: Well, we can't do that yet, and actually it's beginning to look more and more like we're not paying simply because we haven't got the money at this point in time.

Flood victims are facing uncertainty, and they are frustrated with the speed of delivery of the compensation programs and the amounts being offered. This is, in fact, in sharp contrast to what's going on in the US city of Minot, North Dakota, which was impacted heavily by the flood as well, where rebuilding is occurring and the US Army Corps of Engineers is already beginning to construct both levies and diversion to make them safe from a repeat event.

The human impact of this disaster is only being extended by delaying compensation settlements further. Let's stop revictimizing the victims of last year's flood.

Recently, we have heard a lot of rhetoric around the Provincial Nominee Program. Portage la Prairie has benefited greatly from this program and from the temporary foreign workers program. Now, I know we're a very small centre and we have relatively small numbers of immigrants compared to Steinbach and Morden-Winkler and many places in Winnipeg, but I would relate to you a call I received last weekend from a new Canadian in my constituency. He wanted to emphasize that he had chosen to come to Canada and had only settled in Manitoba because of his skills in the nursery trade were in huge demand here. He did not understand what all this

fuss was about. He had certainly appreciated the services supplied to him by settlement services, but it did not matter to him whether they were of federal or provincial origin. He did want to emphasize, however, that he was a Canadian.

During the last seven months, as elected MLA for Portage, I have dealt with a number of cases—immigration cases through our constituency office—some generated from the Provincial Nominee Program and some separate. In all these cases, I got no significant aid from the provincial department when I had to turn to them. In fact, in every case, I had ended up going to my federal MP's office to find solutions, and these were all accomplished—some in as little as 24 hours. I can only say that given my experience, there is little doubt in my mind who should be administering these settlement programs.

To move to the reduction in regional health authorities from 11 to five may yield efficiencies. It is, however, very necessary to follow up closely to make sure there are—that these are accomplished. Past experiences with school districts do not leave us confident that any significant savings will occur.

The concept of regional health authorities was to centralize administration but, at the same time, to leave input for local management. Let's be sure we do not lose those local input. In fact, I suspect with an estimated saving of only \$10 million, by the time they reprint all their forms, they'll have used all that.

Mr. Speaker, the morning after the budget was presented, the phone calls began and emails continue to come in. This is not a budget that the citizens of the constituency of Portage la Prairie can support. They are unhappy about the new taxes and the increased fees. They are looking for a government that prepared to take steps to deal with their overspending habit. They did not get that.

Many are concerned that this is just the beginning of an even—even more tax grabs in the future if this NDP government can't get its fiscal house in order. As such, I will not be supporting the budget.

In fact, a constituent, who operates a local light industry, sent me an email to express his outrage and he stated, and I'm quoting for you: I'm just letting you know that the mess that our province is in and getting worse on a daily basis, i.e., taxes. I and a lot of my—of business owners that I met with—that—I'm sorry—meet with every week are thinking about moving out of the province. I will not hesitate a

second to move out of this province if I see one more tax increase.

I would like to note that the proposed increase in minimum wage in this province will also make us tied with the—to be the highest in Canada, at \$10.25 per hour. Many businesses use large numbers of employees to produce fruit and vegetable crops here in Manitoba. Concerns have been raised that this increase will put them at competitive disadvantage that will discourage production. If government is sincere in helping low-income families, adjustments to personal income tax exemptions are a far more effective way, leaving dollars in families' pockets and less likely to chase small business away with high labour costs.

Though these tax increases will reverberate—altogether, sorry, these tax increases will reverberate throughout our economy, adding costs to Manitoba families and adding costs to Manitoba businesses. This is hardly the time to add disincentives to our economy. What does this mean for Manitoba? Make it harder for Manitoba families to manage their finances. It will discourage small business from hiring more and may cause some to relocate and will certainly add debt to many households.

Our debt-servicing costs also will increase at least \$51 million, to a total of \$850 million annually. Instead of being on track to balance our books by 2014, it looks more like a—the deficit will continue to grow. Perhaps this government will have underestimated the revenue increases as well, leaving some chance that the deficit, in fact, will only be \$504 million at budgeted, but I think it's likely that even great number will be exceeded. Even that number will be exceeded.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the members on both sides of the House for their help and with my adjustment to my new role. In particular, I'd like to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and several of our senior MLAs on this side of the House. They've gone out of their way to make my—me and other members of our new caucus very comfortable. They have listened to our questions and our opinions.

But I would like to close with one further statement, and reflect the flood of 2011, the flood which continues even as we speak. Many individuals still cannot return home and many cottage owners will not have the use of their cottages this year or for some time to come. Damage around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin is horrific. Buildings are

damaged and many of them are mould from floor to ceiling. Damage to the environment, that is a horror to behold. There is little doubt in my mind that the largest environmental disaster that this province has ever seen has been and is being perpetuated on Manitobans last year and this year, and so far, not one single step has been taken in cleanup or rehabilitation of these damaged areas.

Now, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Well, Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here representing Burrows. I do apologize for my voice. I have a little bit of a cold so normally I can project a tiny bit better than I'm going to be able to today, so I apologize if you can't hear me and you lose some of it. Hoping that won't happen.

The last time I got to speak, I had been here, I think, about three minutes. That's how long it felt. So now I feel like I've been here maybe a day or so. *[interjection]* Thanks. Thank you, member of the opposite side. Very kind of you to say.

And I am less often lost as I wander through the halls, and that is a very good thing. And I am no less disturbed by the pictures of men all over our walls, and I do want those changed in the next hundred years, okay. So nothing has changed there.

Like many of the other people who spoke today and over the last few days, I would like to do a couple of thank-yous, too, to our MLAs, our amazing ministers. When you first come in here, you do kind of wonder, you know, are they going to be any good, and I found that, yes, they were.

An Honourable Member: They are.

Ms. Wight: They are good, and so we have some fabulous ones in here today. Whew, it was a relief, I have to admit. And all of them have proved to be committed, dedicated people, including our leader, and we're all very grateful to them and to our other MLAs—actually, many on both sides of the House, who have proven to be quite committed and dedicated people.

* (16:50)

So I would have to agree, though, with the minister—with the—not the minister yet, sorry, but the member who just spoke, and acknowledge that in 1996 the only good thing that I recall happening was the birth of my daughter, and I think that was kind of it. He sort of covered everything else. And it is difficult—*[interjection]*—I hope not—it is difficult to

follow the member from St. James and the member from Point Douglas and the member from The Maples and all of the others, because it's going to get a little repetitive and I hate to be repetitive. I'd really like to find things that they haven't said, but they all said it so well that it's a little bit difficult for me to get in all of the things that—anything that's going to be too different.

One of the things I've really noticed is that the members opposite often speak as if this government has not been fiscally responsible. And yet our credit rating agencies don't seem to agree. I don't understand it. They reaffirm year after year that we are A-high and A-1 and AA ratings. So I'm not sure if they're just confused, or what's going on there. They often speak of our government of having an addiction to spending, usually followed by a request for more spending, which is very interesting. And yet, the Manitoba's per capita spending over the last five years has been actually the fourth-lowest of all provincial governments. And I would like to get some of those things into our record.

Our debt servicing cost here—1.4 per cent—*[interjection]*—it is wow; it's amazing. The replacement value of Manitoba's investments exceeds \$38 billion in public capital assets, things like schools and hospitals and universities and infrastructure. And did members opposite benefit from any of those things? Yes they did. They did. They did because we govern for all Manitobans. I have to admit that I did have someone I knew who was up in the northern regions and they—although they were a little bit on the conservative side, they mentioned that they would never be able to vote that way up the north, because if they did, no money would flow there and nothing would happen. That is not true for our government and I'm proud to state that.

Since 1999-2000, the debt servicing cost rate has dropped by 53 per cent—53 per cent. *[interjection]* I know; it's amazing. We went from 13.2 cents on every dollar to 6.2 cents in Budget 2012. That is good government. *[interjection]* Exactly. Good government; good management.

The gas tax, which happens to be still the second lowest in Canada, will raise about \$296 million, but we are spending on infrastructure, roads and bridges about \$580 million, so that is what our Premier (Mr. Selinger) calls a twofer. You get double for what you put in. And interestingly, private developers seem very confident. From 2006 to 2011,

the private capital development has increased by 34 per cent, compared to the national increase of about 14 per cent. So I don't know if the developers are just confused; I assume that they're pretty smart people and they know what they're about, and that's why they keep wanting to put more and more money into Manitoba.

Our retail sales have grown third fastest amongst the provinces. Our automobile sales are up seven per cent, and Manitobans have, Mr. Speaker, the lowest personal debt per capita in Canada. Our mortgage arrears rate is lowest amongst the provinces. So—*[interjection]*—that's true; it's all true. So I just wanted to throw a few of those things in because they seem to be frequently missed when the members opposites are speaking.

And I would like to speak about some of the things that other members here did and that was—one of them is education. They have often spoken—the members opposite—about the failing Manitoba students, which I am very disturbed by. My students are not failing. I have been in schools all over my district and in a few others as well, and some of us actually were at—oh, I guess they're not here right now, the ones that were with—oh, yes, one over here is. But we were recently just at a beautiful music ceremony in the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I want to draw to the attention of all honourable members that we're not to make reference to the presence or absence of any member of the Assembly. So I wish to draw that to the attention of the honourable member for Burrows. Please refrain from that reference.

Ms. Wight: Oh, at an event, okay, at an event. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I didn't know we couldn't say that at an event. So I apologize.

But many were there, and what we saw was fabulous students and that's what I have seen in every one of my schools. So they're just doing incredibly well. And in Burrows we happen to have two of the largest schools in Manitoba, Sisler and the Maples, and I am frequently invited to events where we have again—I don't want to brag—but, again, won another event. So it's not unusual for me to be attending things.

We—recently we were at an event with Margo the lady from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and while I was

there I met a woman who had just come back from California, Mr. Speaker, and she mentioned that in California due to budget cuts that they had cut out all of the art programs and all of the drama programs and all of the music programs. Has anybody else ever heard of that? Yes, that's what had happened, and I am just so grateful that I live here in a province where education is not one of the things we choose to cut. It's not something that we won't fund.

Recently, I was at one of the schools in my area, Mr. Speaker, Andrew Mynarski, and the band instructor, David Heilmann, said that they have a little over 400 students, and in his band program there are almost 390 in that program—absolutely fabulous.

I'd also like to speak a little bit about our health care. I'm a little bit sorry that the member from Kildonan is not here because I really was hoping—*[interjection]* I'm not allowed to say the member from Kildonan?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. I wish to draw, again, to the attention of the honourable member for Burrows that it's incumbent upon all members of the House not to make reference to the presence or absence of any member of the Assembly in this Assembly. So I ask the honourable member's co-operation, please.

The honourable member for Burrows has the floor.

Ms. Wight: I apologize. Thank you so much for reminding me. I'm not sure how to say this next part without getting this in.

I wanted to bring into my speech the lean mean Tory years and there's no way I can say it properly. So I'm asking for help from all of the members here as needed. You could just jump in. I don't have any script, can't you tell? Really. So, as needed, if people could just jump in as needed with the right calls. Okay, so here, I do have a bit of a script here.

Okay, so moving on, I'll read from the *Winnipeg Free Press* because I did wanted to get—*[interjection]*—the *Free Press*. I did wanted to get to the oral cancer drugs, because I'm sure all of the members here have knocked on doors—

Mr. Speaker: When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows will have 19 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 25, 2012

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