

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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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
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 17, 2013

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 and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 20—The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act
(Various Acts Amended)**

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Struthers: This bill will—would ensure stable, transparent and dedicated funding for Manitoba's Building and Renewal Plan, as well as making amendments to The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act related to federal transfers, the net income of major Crown agencies and the duration of the economic recovery period.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Order, please. Order.

The question before the House is first reading of Bill 20.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Pettersen, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wight.

Nays

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Mitchelson, Pallister, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Wishart.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 35, Nays 18.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* (13:40)

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none, we'll move on with—

PETITIONS

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the reasons are as follows:

The St. Ambroise provincial park was hard hit by the 2011 flood, resulting in the park's ongoing closure, the loss of local access to Lake Manitoba, as well as untold harm to the ecosystem and wildlife in the region.

The park's closure is having a negative impact in many areas, including disruptions to the local tourism, hunting and fishing operations, diminished economic and employment opportunities and the potential loss of the local store and decrease in property values.

Local residents and visitors alike want St. Ambroise provincial park to be reopened as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider repairing St. Ambroise provincial park and its access points to their pre-flood condition so the park can be reopened for the 2013 season or earlier if possible.

Signed by R. Bazin, L. Bazin and S. Labossiere and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Vita & District Health Centre

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Vita & District Health Centre services a wide area of southeastern Manitoba and is relied on to provide emergency services.

On October 17th, 2012, the emergency room at the Vita & District Health Centre closed with no timeline for it to reopen.

This emergency room deals with approximately 1,700 cases a year, which includes patients in the hospital, the attached personal care home and members of the community and surrounding area.

Manitobans should expect a high quality of health care close to home and should not be expected to travel great distances for health services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health consider reopening the emergency room in Vita as soon as possible and commit to providing adequate medical support for residents of southeastern Manitoba for many years to come.

This petition is signed by L. Boychuk, G. Boychuk and S. Korotash and many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Road 433 Improvements

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Provincial Road 433, Cape Coppermine Road, in the rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet has seen an increase in traffic volume in recent years.

New subdivisions have generated considerable population growth, and the area has seen a significant increase in tourism due to the popularity of the Granite Hills Golf Course.

This population growth has generated an increased tax base in the rural municipality.

Cape Coppermine Road was not originally built to handle the high volume of traffic to—which it now accommodates.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation recognize that Cape Coppermine Road can no longer adequately serve both area residents and tourists, and as such consider making improvements to the road to reflect its current use.

This petition is signed by D. Henry, L. Lousier, C. Campbell and hundreds of other fine Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

This is the background to this petition:

The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited while not providing any real cost savings—improvements in cost savings.

Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local municipalities—or local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force amalgamations—or municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

R. Twretsky, R. Ziprick and S. Liske signed this petition and many, many other Manitobans.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba Hydro is mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

The \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent Needs For and Alternatives To review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

And this petition is signed by R. Marginet, T. Simpson, R. McCallister and many, many more fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Justice Vehicle Impoundment Registry Annual Report for 2011-2012.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from the Heart and Stroke Foundation Amber Mamchuk, Heather Carroll, Kathy Gutheil, Susan Punter, Lila Lewis and Dorothy Sawchuk. These folks are the guests of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady). On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

And also seated in the public gallery we have from Tec Voc High School 30 grade 12 law students under the direction of Ms. Amy McBride. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan).

And also in the public gallery we have from St. John Brebeuf School 50 grade 4 students under the direction of Ms. Natasha Viselli. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PST Increase Request for Referendum

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget made it perfectly clear that the NDP is no longer the NDP; they are now the spendP.

They ran on no tax increases. Every member opposite went to the doors and said, elect me, no tax increases. The Premier had no right to raise taxes a year ago. He had no right to raise taxes yesterday either. That's 400 million fewer dollars, Mr. Speaker,

in just two years, 400 million fewer dollars in the households of Manitobans who work for their money, struggling families struggling to make ends meet, seniors on fixed income, small-business people, the working poor, and these are the two largest increases back-to-back in Manitoba history.

Now, the taxpayer protection act requires that Manitobans be asked to approve personal, corporate or business tax rate increases before they are imposed.

So my question for the Premier is: When will Manitobans have the chance to vote on his spendDP sales tax hike?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Every single tax rate in the province of Manitoba is lower now than it was when the member opposite was *[inaudible]*. One point two billion dollars of tax relief has been offered. When the members opposite were here, the small-business tax rate was 9 per cent. Today it is zero in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. The property tax credit for homeowners was \$250. Today it is \$700.

* (13:50)

Yesterday the members opposite got up and asked for \$112 million of infrastructure investments in the province of Manitoba. And in today's—in yesterday's budget, we promised \$10 million for Victoria Avenue in Brandon. I hope the member of Brandon West will be supporting that when the budget comes for a vote, Mr. Speaker, and other examples to come.

Mr. Pallister: The Premier spends an inordinately large amount of time talking about yesterday, Mr. Speaker. He sure as heck can't see the future of this province, that's for sure.

The Premier goes out yesterday and he claims that he has a mandate—he claims he was given a mandate. He claims he has the right to increase taxes, but the mandate was based on a promise: no tax increases. And his mandate was based on that promise, and a real mandate is based on keeping a promise, Mr. Speaker, but a broken promise means a counterfeit mandate, no real mandate. This government's addicted to spending, and addicts will beg, they'll borrow, they'll steal, and their mendacity knows no bounds. Now he says he has a mandate; he doesn't. He says he can raise taxes; he shouldn't. And he thinks he can tear up the taxpayer protection act, and he doesn't have the right to tear up the taxpayer protection act.

When will he call a referendum and let Manitobans decide what kind of mandate that Premier has?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, yesterday members asked for \$112 million of infrastructure investments in the province of Manitoba. We gave them a budget—we provided a budget that will invest in Victoria Avenue. We provided a budget that will invest in Provincial Road 340 for \$1 million this year. For the member in the constituency of Spruce Woods, we've got \$10 million in the budget. Fourteen million dollars for Winnipeg roads, we've doubled the money for Winnipeg roads in this budget. We've doubled the money outside of Winnipeg. We have additional money in southwest Manitoba where heavy trucks are travelling. The future of Manitoba will be much brighter if we invest in infrastructure.

And the future of Manitoba will be much brighter if we do not follow the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and cancel all the hydro projects. Manitoba's future is bright if we stimulate the economy, train our young people and create jobs. And that's what this budget does; it grows the economy of Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: Well, grasshoppers in charge of the garden, Mr. Speaker.

They had a prosperous decade—they had the most prosperous decade in the history of the province. They had the highest increases in revenues, they had the highest increase in transfers of any government in Manitoba history, and they have the lowest interest rates in modern history, Mr. Speaker.

If the Premier wants to examine history, take a look back at this last decade and describe it as a missed opportunity. I think he would; I know Manitobans do. They had a decade to prepare for floods and they didn't do a thing. They had a decade to pay down debt, and the grasshopper spendDP over there doubled the provincial debt. They had a decade. Manitobans have had a decade to see the NDP in 3D, crystal-clear 3D: debt, deficit, and now desperation, Mr. Speaker.

Does the Premier realize that in his pursuit of higher taxes he has not only broken his word, he's put the price of his integrity at 1 per cent?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged the last decade as one of prosperity in Manitoba.

And it started the day we came into office, because what we did, we learned the lessons when he was in office, when he slashed welfare rates, when he cancelled the capital program for health care, when he refused to build schools, when he slashed the program for roads in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. We're doing things that build roads. We're doing things that build personal care homes. We're building hospitals, we're building schools and we're building infrastructure.

Just today, Mr. Speaker, the economic forecast for Canada came out with a dramatic reduction in the growth of the economy this year, to 1.5 per cent. The International Monetary Fund said yesterday that Canada should continue to grow the economy.

This budget grows the economy. It puts people to work. It educates them. It builds hydro. It builds a bright future for Manitoba. And the debt load in Manitoba, the cost of servicing the debt in Manitoba, is half of what it was—

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

PST Increase Request for Referendum

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): This budget does one thing: It taxes hard-working Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the past we've seen the arrogance of this NDP government when they changed balanced budget law so they didn't have to balance the budget. We saw their arrogance when they changed the legislation to protect the salaries of their ministers after they were incompetent. Yesterday we saw their arrogance when they decided that 1.2 million Manitobans wouldn't have the say not only that they deserve but that they are entitled to under the law in Manitoba. The law says you have to ask 1.2 million Manitobans before you increase the PST.

Will they put aside their arrogance today? Will they follow the law? Will they allow 1.2 million Manitobans to have their voice? Will you call the referendum as you should, sir?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, perhaps they didn't notice it in the budget yesterday, but 5,500 Manitobans were removed from the tax rolls in this province.

Manitoba has the largest free—largest tax-free zone in Canada for small business at \$425,000, zero tax on small business in Manitoba. Seniors saw their

property tax accredit increase yesterday to \$1,100, Mr. Speaker, the highest it's ever been in the history of province of—in the history of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we are bringing forward a program that will invest in schools, personal care homes, roads. Even the members opposite asked yesterday did we make those investments. And we have people that are facing the third major flood risk in the last five years, a \$1.2-billion event in the 2011, and we are going to invest money to protect Manitobans to ensure that they have safety, they have security, they have good roads—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Minister's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans, they need protection; they need protection from this government.

This is a government that is led by a Premier who broke his election promise. It's supported by a Cabinet that protects its salaries, and it's upheld by 36 NDP MLAs who believe that they know better than 1.2 million Manitobans. Manitobans have been guaranteed in law that they would be given a say about whether or not a PST increase would occur, and this Premier pulled that guarantee, that right, out from them under in yesterday's budget.

Despite all the excuses, Mr. Speaker, will the government confirm the only reason they won't allow this to go to a referendum is because they know that Manitobans would overwhelmingly say no?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the members opposite will let us know whether they really supported those requests for \$112 million of additional investments yesterday. Did they want those roads or not? Did the member from Steinbach want that personal care home or not? If he wants it, we've provided a budget that'll allow those things to happen in Manitoba. We will provide that to Manitobans right now.

We cannot afford to lose this year's construction season, Mr. Speaker. This construction season will allow thousands of Manitobans to have jobs. It will allow Manitobans to go to work and build a stronger province. It will allow apprentices to be trained in the province of Manitoba. We have a commitment to 75,000 more skilled workers over the 'nate'—next eight years.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: You know, Mr. Speaker, Bill Blaikie may have been able to remove socialism from a party constitution, but he couldn't remove it from these NDP MLAs. This is a government that believes it is better and smarter than the people that it purports to govern. We reject that.

We believe in the wisdom of the family who's trying to make ends meet. We believe in the wisdom of those new Manitobans who are trying to build a better life, and we believe in the wisdom of those small businesses who are competing locally and against our American friends. We believe in the taxpayer accountability act that was put in place to protect Manitobans from this kind of government.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier please listen to the wisdom of these Manitobans and give them the referendum that they are legally entitled to, sir?

* (14:00)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we have listened to Manitobans.

Manitobans told us they want better roads in this province; this budget delivers on that. The members opposite do not want to build any roads in Manitoba, we've discovered today, even though they asked for \$112 million yesterday.

This budget builds more schools for Manitobans. Members opposite asked for schools, but they always vote against it when it's put in the budget, Mr. Speaker.

This budget builds more hospitals. The members always vote against that when the budget comes up, Mr. Speaker.

This budget reduces taxes for low-income families, takes 5,500 people off the rolls and increases tax credits for senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, this budget grows the economy. It keeps people working. It stimulates the economy. It creates employment at a time of economic uncertainty. And it puts resources in place to face the third major flood risk in five years in the history of Manitoba.

Those things are what Manitobans asked us to do. This budget delivers on that, Mr. Speaker.

NDP Election Promises Tax Increase

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this Selinger government promised no taxes, no new taxes, in the last election—

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

From the comments I just heard from the member for Charleswood, we're to refer to members of the Assembly by their constituency names or ministers by their portfolio.

So I ask the honourable member to ask her question with respect to the constituency name or the minister him or herself. *[interjection]* I stand corrected.

My apologies to the member for Charleswood. I should wait for her to finish her comments before I would make a ruling in that regard, so my apology to her, and I'll let her continue with her question here. And we'll make sure that the time is adjusted accordingly.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government promised no new taxes in the last election, which was only a year and a half ago. A few months later, they hit Manitobans with the biggest tax grab in 25 years. Yesterday they hosed Manitobans with an even bigger tax grab.

So I have to ask this Premier of Manitoba: Did he make that election promise only to get elected?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, our commitment to Manitobans, when they face the flood, is to stand with them, and we have done that. And we continue to do that.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear, it's absolutely clear to everyone, except, I guess, the people across the aisle, that we face some real threats right in front of us in this province, and that is in the form of three floods in five years. They're extremely stressful events for Manitobans. Members opposite should not make light of that.

Mr. Speaker, we had a decision to make, and we made the decision not to put our heads in the sand and ignore those threats, those flood threats, and not to ignore the investments that we should be making in infrastructure.

We're going to stand with Manitobans on this; you're not.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, in the election, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) 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. That is what the Premier of Manitoba said.

So I would like to ask the Premier: Why did he mislead Manitobans by saying no tax increases, then turn around and hit them with the biggest breach of trust this province has ever seen?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to taxes, we were very clear to the seniors of this province that we would remove them from the education portion of their tax bills. We did that in yesterday's budget.

I'm voting for seniors in this budget. What are you going to do?

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, lies, lies and more lies, broken promises, breach of trust, lack of integrity and lack of credibility.

So I would like to ask this Premier: Why should anybody believe anything he ever has to say again?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, because our Premier works very hard on behalf of the people of Manitoba, our Premier works very hard to protect Manitoba families who need that protection from what could be—and just look out the window and see what you see—what could be the third major flood in five years. Our Premier works very hard to protect Manitoba families. Our Premier works very hard to provide the seniors' tax credits. Our Premier works very hard to take people off the tax rolls: 5,500 Manitobans taken off the tax rolls yesterday.

I guess you're going to vote against that, are you?

Tax Increase Impact on Families

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Yesterday Manitobans witnessed an arrogant NDP government who made it tougher for families to make ends meet. What we learned was that an average family of four will now be paying over \$1,200 a year due to increases and additions to the PST brought in by the NDP in the last two years.

It is clearly evident that the NDP hiking taxes every chance they get, those extra living costs look more and more unaffordable every day. A local blogger said, and I quote: As a young professional,

this province continues to push out west. I have been working for two years now at my current job, but the western provinces just look better and better every day.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have an arrogant NDP government whose slogan says, focused on what matters to families. However, today's news headlines read: New 8 per cent PST tax. No wonder our young generation are heading out west.

I ask the Minister of Finance: What part of enough do you not understand?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, our population in Manitoba continues to grow and grow and grow.

This same member just stood just a few minutes earlier today and asked us—in the context of her petition—she asked us to provide stable, predictable funding for infrastructure. That's what the budget did yesterday. She should be voting for it. She should stand up for her constituents and say, here's a good budget. Here's some investments in infrastructure for that family of four she just mentioned who needs that protection from their government, and we're going to give it to them.

Child Poverty Rate

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, according to the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, the child poverty rate in Manitoba has gradually increased and remains at 6.4 per cent—points higher than the national average.

Marla Somersall of the Samaritan House in Brandon indicated that the 1 per cent increase in PST will have a negative impact on the working poor in Westman. This sector of the Westman population are the highest users of the Samaritan food bank.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance: While the rest of Canada is improving the rates of poverty, why is the NDP government intent on driving more and more Manitobans below the poverty line?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, that's just not accurate. That's not correct. Yesterday's budget was very clear. We're increasing the—by a significant amount the rent aid that goes towards people that she claims to be concerned with. Yesterday's budget increased the number of social and affordable housing that Manitobans—by 500 units—in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, it is—it seems very rich for any Conservatives to stand in this House after they

clawed back the National Child Benefit when they were in government. When their idea of poverty—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

* (14:10)

Mrs. Rowat: I'm asking the tough questions for Manitobans who want answers, Mr. Speaker.

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg reports that Manitoba has the second highest child poverty rate in Canada in 2012, with over 20 per cent of our children—that's about 54,000 children—living below the poverty line as defined by Stats Canada's low-income measures after taxes.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, David Northcott of Winnipeg Harvest was asked if he saw anything in the budget that addresses the needs of those who often do without. His answer was no. One per cent increase in PST, I understand, that's to pay the bills. Every low-income family in Manitoba knows what it's like to run deficits and pay bills. They do not—they cannot do it and they struggle. A society is judged by the way it treats its most vulnerable citizens.

Why has the NDP, Mr. Speaker, abandoned the most vulnerable Manitoba citizens—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Struthers: Well, first of all, the dean of the University of Manitoba's Asper School of Business, Mr. Michael Benarroch, said that the—that spending, Mr. spending—Mr. Speaker, spending is primarily focused on lower income Manitobans. That's absolutely counter to what the member opposite just said.

I said in my speech yesterday that since the year 2000, between 2000 and 2010, there were 16,000 fewer people in Manitoba living in poverty. Yesterday's budget built on the successes that we've had in the past in dealing with this. We saved Manitobans money by moving forward yesterday in the budget. Again, members opposite have a chance to join with us—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

PST Increase Government Promise

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): During the 2011 election campaign the Premier (Mr. Selinger)

said, read my lips: no new taxes. Mr. Speaker, that was his commitment and this government's commitment to the taxpayers and the voters in Manitoba.

Well, Mr. Speaker, \$184 million in new taxes last year, and yesterday a 1 per cent PST hike was rammed down the throat of Manitoba taxpayers. Today Frank, an angry Manitoban, said of the Premier, and I quote, he lied to us again. End of quote.

Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: I want to caution all members. I understand the—these situations can be highly charged for the debate that occurs in this Chamber, and I want to caution all members in the Chamber, please, in asking your questions and in choosing your answers, to pick and choose your words very, very carefully.

Most members in here are very, very experienced and they are aware of the rules of the Assembly, so I'm adding this as a caution to all members. Choose your words very carefully, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, thanks, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate your comments and your cautions. These were Frank's words and they were quoted. They were on CJOB this morning, and so I was just quoting an angry Manitoban.

Mr. Speaker, what does the Premier say to Frank and to many other angry Manitoba taxpayers that believe that they have been lied to once again by this NDP government?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago we received a report that said to us, for the price of a billion dollars, you need to move forward and protect Manitoba families, including Frank. We need to protect Manitoba families from an imminent threat, which is the—possibly the third flood in five years.

Mr. Speaker, a month ago we were presented with a federal budget that said, we're going to put money on the table to build it—necessary capital, necessary infrastructure in this country, and we need to have some money for that too.

We are moving forward in a fair way to make sure that we have money to be able to take advantage of those programs, to be able to protect Manitoba families from imminent flood danger. We're not going to stick our heads in the sand and ignore this. We're going to invest in flood protection. We're

going to invest in capital infrastructure, and you should be there too.

Request for Referendum

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago and even just yesterday—as a matter of fact, right now, Manitobans have a law in place, a law that indicates that Manitobans have the democratic right to vote by referendum to say yes or no to a PST increase.

What makes this arrogant NDP government think that they know best, that they can strip away this democratic right from hard-working Manitoba taxpayers?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, maybe across the way they just don't understand the urgency of what we face. Two weeks ago that report came forward—maybe they're just not interested.

Mr. Speaker, we need to move quickly to make sure that we're in a position to protect Manitoba families from floods, we need to move quickly to make sure we can take advantage of federal dollars to provide infrastructure, and we need to do—move quickly to make sure our economy grows and we provide jobs and we provide good services that Manitobans come to rely on.

We're seized of this undertaking. We know we have to move quickly. We're not—

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Speaker, we can't deny what Frank said. Frank's an angry Manitoba taxpayer who said of the Premier (Mr. Selinger), and I quote, he lied to us again.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know I've already cautioned members of the House already, but I want to specifically address this to the member for River East with the greatest of respect. You cannot quote from a document and indicate things that are unparliamentary in the rules of the Assembly. So I caution the honourable member once again, and I ask her please do not reference that again. So I'm offering this as a quote directly to the member for River East.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll quote from Jennifer who said this morning: I'm angry this government said they wouldn't raise my taxes, but, Richard, they're robbing me again. End of quote.

Mr. Speaker, can this government tell Frank, tell Jennifer and many other angry Manitobans why they want to strip them of their democratic right to vote on tax increases and turn this province from a democracy into a dictatorship?

Mr. Struthers: I don't know—I—Mr. Speaker, Manitoba families expect that this government is going to move quickly to protect them and their families. They expect us to protect health care. They expect us to protect education; we're doing that. They expect us to protect them when there's an imminent flood threat, and we're going to do that.

We have to move quickly; we cannot let a construction season go by. We have earmarked \$100 million this year for flood protection, Mr. Speaker. That flood protection, that \$100 million will go a long way to provide security and to provide a little bit of relief for Manitoba families who are up against, again, quite—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

PST Increase Infrastructure Spending

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, they expect this Finance Minister to take his foot off their back, let them have a true choice. That's what Manitobans want.

Mr. Speaker, this government has broken its promise to Manitobans time and time again since the 2011 election, firstly by promising not to raise taxes and then this NDP government did raise taxes in last year's budget by record numbers. They stated that the gas tax would all go a hundred per cent towards infrastructure. They were sick and tired of the public I—being lied to.

I ask the Minister of Infrastructure to be honest with the people of Manitoba, admit that the fact his government has misled all Manitobans.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday in anticipation of the budget, I was really pleased to answer questions about infrastructure in this province. And, you know, I was inspired today to go in my closet and bring out a cup, Yes Winkler!, because we were asked yesterday by member after member for initiatives that were going to deal with infrastructure issues in the budget. And I'm very pleased to indicate that we're addressing the needs of Winkler. We're addressing the needs of Brandon.

We're addressing the needs of members opposite, all members in this House, with a record investment, \$622 million.

* (14:20)

And, Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite who spent 85 million on capital, we're spending 468. That's the truth. That's the honest truth and members opposite should admit to it—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Eichler: Maybe if the minister yells a little louder they'll hear him in Brandon as well. Just more rhetoric, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) stated that 1 per cent sales tax is going into infrastructure. The reality is that CAA and the Free Press' Bartley Kives get the fact the numbers don't add up. This government has to come clean with the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Minister of Infrastructure to stop the rhetoric and tell the public that not all 1 per cent of the sales tax increase is going into the infrastructure budget. Come clean, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Ashton: I'm not sure if my voice will be heard in Brandon, but our action as a government will be when this year, Mr. Speaker, we work on Victoria Avenue.

And, Mr. Speaker, members opposite may be proud of the fact they spent \$85 million on capital. We actually, at that time, raised more money on gas tax than we spent. Well, we spend more money than we raise on gas tax and we're going to spend even more as part of this budget.

The real question here, Mr. Speaker, is: Will the members opposite support a record investment in highways infrastructure?

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, we will make sure he's hoed through—heard throughout the province as well, by this province's government and the rhetoric they put on the record each and every day.

The 1 per cent sales tax raise \$198.5 million this year according to the government's numbers, and yet the infrastructure budget only shows an increase of \$28 million over 2012. Clearly this does not add up. CAA states it, well, it's a shell game. Well, the minister should get some basic math lessons from CAA, the Free Press, to get it.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve the truth. I asked the minister two times to tell the truth about his budget.

Will the minister stand up, apologize to all Manitobans for misrepresenting the 1 per cent sales tax increase is not all going into infrastructure?

Mr. Ashton: You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely shocked that this member, who knows the impacts of the flood of 2011-2012, will completely ignore the fact that, in addition to a record investment in our highways in this province, we're addressing in this budget the kind of challenge that the Roblin government in the 1960s addressed with the floodway; that our government, in the early part of our mandate, addressed with a billion dollars' worth of investment in flood mitigation infrastructure; the fact that we will not let the events of 2011-2012, the major flooding that took place, go unaddressed. We'll be there for those flood victims, whether the members opposite support us or not.

Infrastructure Renewal Government Expenditures

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is misleading Manitobans. The budget delivered yesterday brings in a 3 million—\$300-million-a-year tax grab, and yet the planned deficit at the end of this fiscal year, \$502 million, is virtually the same as the \$504-million deficit budget this time last year.

The Finance Minister says the \$300 million a year will go all to new infrastructure, but the new money being spent in this budget is in operating funds for health and education and justice.

I ask the Premier: Will he table today the complete list of all the new infrastructure on which he plans to spend the new \$300 million?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): We will spend \$1.8 billion on capital this year versus \$1.4 billion last year. That list of priorities will be identified. There will be estimates. The full discussion of that will occur.

The member needs to know that when we put that money out there it will make a difference. It will build new social housing units. It will build new schools. It will build new personal care homes. It'll build new roads all across Manitoba, regardless of the constituency. It will do those things that protect Manitobans from floods at a time of imminent risk, when we've had the third major risk in five years.

One point eight billion dollars in the budget this year, Mr. Speaker.

PST Increase Government Expenditures

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): And yet still a deficit this year of \$500 million.

Each year since the NDP came to power in 1999, the government has tabled an expenditure budget. Each year at the end of the year, the NDP government has spent more than it budgeted, and this year it was \$130 million more.

The Premier said the 1 per cent sales tax increase will be temporary.

Does the Premier mean that it will be temporarily 1 per cent and then permanently something else, like 2 per cent?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the sales tax is going to be the third lowest in Canada and, just like the unemployment rate, will be among the lowest in Canada, and the participation rate of working Manitobans will be among the highest in the country, at 69 per cent.

This budget will create jobs in Manitoba at a time of sluggish economic recovery and economic uncertainty.

This budget will protect Manitobans from the threat of a third major flood risk in five years; \$1.2 billion was spent in 2011.

We will be there for Manitobans. We will not leave them alone at the time of peril during another flood risk in Manitoba. We will be there to support them. That's the promise we made. That's the promise we will keep.

Constituency of Morris By-election PST Referendum

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the NDP have brought in legislation to allow them to bring in a sales tax increase but depriving Manitobans of a democratic referendum, which they should have. Manitobans are outraged. But the Premier now says a referendum is too expensive.

Mr. Speaker, as a litmus test of public opinion, the Premier could call the Morris by-election and add a question to the ballot: Do you, as a voter, approve of the increase in the sales tax by 1 per cent?

I ask the Premier—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the question trying to be posed by the honourable member for River Heights. I'm asking co-operation of the House to allow the member to ask his question.

Mr. Gerrard: I ask the Premier: Will he commit today to calling the Morris by-election this month and to give Morris residents a chance to vote on having an increase in the sales tax?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I was very pleased to be in Morris, Manitoba, last Friday, Mr. Speaker, and I complimented the mayor, Gavin van der Linde, on the excellent work he's done, providing leadership in that community against racist commentary by a very small group of people, by the homophobic commentary by a very small group of people, and the excellent leadership that community has provided with their citizens in fighting floods.

And one of the things we saw in Morris, Manitoba, we saw a brand new Main Street. We saw brand new sidewalks through that community. We saw very significant investment in infrastructure in that community, and now we're working on a long-term solution for that community. That community has a ring dike around it that never existed 12 years ago. That ring dike is to protect the people of Morris from the possibility of a serious flood risk. We toured that community. We saw the materials necessary to protect that community. We saw the new Main Street. We saw a community that's got prosperity because we've invested in that community, Mr. Speaker, a growing community, with good citizens.

Infrastructure Protection Investment for Flooding

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, today the Premier announced a new infrastructure funding plan for Manitoba. As the MLA for the Interlake, I and the people that I represent bore personal witness to the widespread and devastating impact that the flood of 2011 had on the infrastructure that serves the people of our province. I was especially gratified to see that PR 513, the road to the Dauphin River First Nation, was on the list in the budget speech yesterday for repairs.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation please inform the House of our government's plan for investment and how it will help Manitobans addressing the infrastructure needs of flooded communities in our province?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, as we prepare for the third major flood in five years, it's important we in this province not forget those that were so significantly impacted in 2011-2012, in fact, Manitobans who are still away from their homes.

* (14:30)

I had the opportunity to meet, along with the member for the Interlake and our Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), with representatives from around the lake earlier this week. And if there was one thing they said, Mr. Speaker, they said, we know the kind of work that's been done in other areas, like the Red River, to protect those communities after past major floods. They pleaded with us to ensure that we did not forget them and forget what happened.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what this budget does is not only does it not forget, it puts in place the kind of investments in flood protection infrastructure that are going to make sure that the people of Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin and other flood victims in 2011 will not only be forgot—they will not be forgotten and we will be there to meet their challenges in the future.

I hope members opposite will stand with us to support flood victims in this province.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

PST Increase Request for Referendum

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, this government tries to say that their plans are guaranteed by law, but we know that those laws are only good—they're only last as long as they're convenient to this government.

A referendum is required by law to increase taxes such as the PST. Did this government break that law yesterday? Will the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stand up in this House today and admit that this NDP government has lied to Manitobans about raising taxes?

Mr. Speaker: I've cautioned honourable members during this sitting here today about the use of that particular word just used by the member for Brandon West. So I'm going to ask the member for Brandon West to please withdraw that word.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw it, but I understood a ruling previously that you did say the government could. I will withdraw the remark, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It was—to add some clarity to it, if it's directed at a particular member of the government. I'm asking the honourable member not to use that word with respect directly to someone, nor can we quote from a document that someone may have provided to a member through email or some other source.

So I'm asking the honourable member to be very cautious when using that word, please.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, I will continue. I understood that the government did indeed lie to Manitobans.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know, on this side of the House we are very proud of our veterans. We're very proud of those veteran Manitobans that fought in two world wars to defend our right to vote.

And what's going to happen here, Mr. Speaker? This government wants to take away that very right through this legislation. That should not be allowed. Manitobans should be allowed to vote on this legislation.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) and I had a very good morning with the folks of Brandon talking about our budget, and do you know what they said?

First of all, they were so glad that the member for Brandon East and this government delivered on infrastructure for Victoria Avenue, Mr. Speaker.

You know what else they said, Mr. Speaker? They said they remember the pressure they were under two years ago when they had 18 feet worth of super sandbags along 18th avenue. They remember those days, and they understand that this government needs to move forward quickly in the city of Brandon in co-operation with the mayor and the councillors to make sure that we deliver on that kind of protection, that kind of flood protection for the Manitoba families living in the second city of Manitoba, living in Brandon, Mr. Speaker.

They get it. I only wish the member for Brandon West would get it.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Hayden Tolton

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today to recognize the work of Mr. Hayden Tolton who was recently inducted into the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame. Hayden grew up on a family farm near Otterburne west in Manitoba, graduated from the University of Manitoba with a BSE–A, sorry—in 1949.

Always committed to soil conservation and good crop management, Hayden accepted a position as a soil specialist with the Manitoba Department of Agriculture in Winnipeg. During this period, his interest in the subject led him to obtain his masters of science in soil fertility and statistics from the University of Manitoba in '57.

In 1962 Hayden was hired as research director for the newly-formed Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation. As Manitoba was the first province in Canada to offer crop insurance, Hayden consulted with his American counterparts to learn from their experience. Hayden's major contribution during this period was his work on soil productivity mapping and geographic risk areas, utilizing soil type data, precipitation statistics and a farmer's cropping and yield history. His main focus was to improve the accuracy and dependability of crop production and management records as the base for establishing insurance premiums. His methodology is still being used today and copied in many other jurisdictions.

Later, as manager of MCIC, Hayden generously shared his expertise with other provincial insurance corporations. His mentoring extended internationally in the later stages of his career, to work with countries such as Indonesia and Trinidad through his contacts with the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

From Manitoba grain farmers—or from grain farmers in Manitoba to vegetable growers in Trinidad, there is a large debt of gratitude owed to Hayden Tolton for his groundbreaking work with crop insurance. It has provided many Manitoba—it has provided Manitoba farmers and thousands of others with risk protection insurance options vital—today's high-tech agriculture.

Hayden also contributed to his community. He served as leader of the Boy Scouts, a board member for both the Portage Industrial Exhibition and the Rotary Club international. He was a canvasser for the

United Way and CancerCare and is active in his church.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Heart and Stroke Month

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, every year, February marks Heart Month in Canada. Today, heart disease and stroke take a life every seven minutes and 90 per cent of Canadians have at least one of the risk factors that can lead to these chronic diseases. No one is safe from heart disease or stroke, conditions that cause 30 per cent of deaths in Manitoba every year and that can be devastating, not just to individuals but to entire families.

There is much that we can do to protect ourselves and our loved ones. The Heart and Stroke Foundation, thanks to its dedicated volunteers and donors from across Manitoba and Canada, continues to make a real difference in reducing death and disability from heart disease and stroke. They are leading the way in promoting prevention of these diseases through healthy eating, physical activity and better lifestyle choices, because Manitobans have the power to make health last by addressing controllable heart and stroke risk factors in their daily lives.

This past February, people across Manitoba got involved in promoting Heart Month. Heart and Stroke staff and volunteers held tag days in Safeways across the province, collecting donations and distributing resources on heart health. Volunteers also visited homes across the province to raise funds and help promote healthy heart choices.

Two of these hard-working individuals are in the gallery today. Mrs. Dorothy Sawchuk has been a volunteer with Heart and Stroke for 11 years and Mrs. Lila Lewis for 25. I am proud to say that they, along with 44 other Heart and Stroke volunteers, are from Kirkfield Park.

The foundation also works to increase the number of people who survive cardiac arrest. And research shows that using a defibrillator can increase survival rates by 75 per cent, and they are—and they—so they are partnering with the Manitoba government to make sure that automated external defibrillators, or AEDs, will be installed in high-traffic public places, such as community centres and airports, over the next year.

Mr. Speaker, by promoting heart and stroke awareness, we can create communities that make the healthy choices the easy choice. Working hand in

hand, we can make a real difference for all Canadians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Park West School Division

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): In celebration of Education Week, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Park West School Division and their outdoor education pilot project team. They are—they were awarded the Parks Canada 2011 ambassador of education award for Manitoba this year. The team created a multidisciplinary outdoor education program targeted at students in grade 6 that takes place in Riding Mountain National Park in May and June of each year. Students from multiple schools are grouped together for two and a half days, allowing them to interact with people in their peer group from nearby communities and work with local experts.

The students are engaged in activities that are a part of their grade 6 curriculum. They participate in activities such as macroinvertebrate identification, making pre-contact traditional pottery and take part in geocaching exercise that utilizes global positioning satellites.

The division's partnership with Parks Canada, the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve and the Friends of Riding Mountain National Park, along with local conservation districts, has resulted in a program that engages students with their environment in a meaningful way.

Again, I would like to recognize and congratulate the Park West School Division for spearheading this program and the youth in their division who excelled at an initiative that was well received.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:40)

Peguis Juniors Hockey Team

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, involvement in sport is a great way for young people to get to work as a team, learn discipline and, most importantly, have fun.

Today I would like to recognize one group of talented, hard-working young people for an extraordinary achievement. The Peguis Juniors hockey team from Peguis First Nation will represent Manitoba in the Western Canadian Junior B hockey

championships held in St. Malo this week. They will compete for the Keystone Cup alongside the teams from BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and northwestern Ontario.

The Peguis Juniors have played hard this season and their dedication has paid off. They swept the Manitoba Keystone Junior Hockey League with a record-breaking 35 consecutive wins and defeated the Selkirk Fishermen in the final to win the Baldy Northcott trophy. They deserve congratulations, but I also want to recognize all the hard-working coaches, parents, volunteers and fans that have helped make this season possible for the Peguis Juniors.

Mr. Speaker, hockey brings communities together. In Peguis, hockey has brought families, friends and elders out to watch games and cheer on these dedicated, young men, and with the development of the new Peguis multiplex, partially funded by this provincial government, even more people will be able to get involved in the near future.

Sport also forges connections between communities. The boys on the Peguis team come not just from Peguis and Fisher River, but from Winnipeg, Norway House, Ebb and Flow and Pinaymootang.

I invite all honourable members to join me in congratulating the Peguis Juniors and their supporters on their success this year, and in wishing them luck in the 2013 Keystone Cup.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Before I get to honourable member for River Heights, the honourable member for Interlake.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave, with the consent of the House, to submit the names of the Peguis Juniors into the record.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to submit the names to—for Hansard to be included? *[Agreed]*

Shane McPherson; Aaron Sinclair; Dallas Cochrane; Ralph Cochrane; Cole Murdock; Matthew Cameron; Preston Folster; Spencer Sutherland; Cody Zulyniak; Waylon Neault; Evan Spence; Tyler McKay; Jordan Anderson; Patrick Kirkness; Joseph Sutherland; Ryan Delorme; Alex Sutherland; Skylar Tait-Reaum; Dwight Sutherland; Wayne Folster; Grant Sutherland; Jarrett Cochrane; Presley Kirkness; Head Coach, Farron Cochrane; General Manager, Doug Daniels; Assistant Coach, Martin Favell; Assistant Coach, Trainer, Troy

Cochrane; Trainer, Amie Lafreniere; Treasurer, Linda Sinclair.

The honourable member for River Heights, thank you for your patience.

PST Increase

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The NDP have got themselves and us as Manitobans in a pickle with a very large deficit and a growing debt. They needed in this budget to confront the situation head on and provide a pathway forward; they didn't. They're raising the provincial sales tax from 7 per cent to 8 per cent, bringing in an estimated \$278 million annually from the pockets of Manitobans, and they still plan to have a budget deficit this year of over \$500 million.

One of the NDPs problems is their poor financial management. In the most recent fiscal year the NDP spent \$130 million more than they budgeted for. This continues a pattern in which the NDP, every year they've been in power, have spent more than they budgeted. Cumulative overexpenditures have now reached more than \$2.8 billion.

A fundamental principle of sound budgeting is to craft a budget that you can manage within. It applies to a household budget, a business budget. But, sadly, the NDP don't understand this principle and have, as a result, run up large deficits, and Manitoba's debt is growing as well.

Indeed, in the last five years Manitoba's provincial debt has grown very substantially. Manitoba's debt-to-GDP ratio has also grown significantly to reach almost 29 per cent at the end of this year. This means that our debt's growing much faster than our economy; it's not a good sign. There should be a plan to address this and turn the situation around so our debt-to-GDP ratio decreases, not increases. Sadly, the NDP didn't include such a plan in their budget this year.

The NDP are not only doing a poor job of financial management, they're also depriving Manitobans of their democratic right to vote in a referendum on any sales tax increase. This democratic right's been enshrined in law for almost two decades. The NDP are making a big mistake in removing legislated democratic processes. Though this government may succeed in its efforts to 'undermine' democracy today, Manitobans will remember and will vote against the NDP the next time they have a chance.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, traditionally, after the budget is introduced, on the second day the Official Opposition Leader gives his address, his remarks to the budget. As often is the case, there is a scrum that's happening regarding comments, both with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) prior and now with the opposition leader.

I would ask the will of the House if we could have a five-minute recess with the bells ringing a minute prior so that the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) could conclude his business with the media.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to have a five-minute recess to include a one-minute bell ringing to encourage members to return to the Chamber. *[Agreed]*

So we're—recess for five minutes.

The House recessed at 2:45 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. House will now come to order.

BUDGET DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: For adjourned debate, on second reading of the budget, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's an honour and privilege to stand and speak to the budget. Regardless of our views on it, we respect the process and we respect our members and colleagues and friends opposite in their responsibilities and role.

It is quite possible, Mr. Speaker, to love people that you have trouble respecting—it is possible. It's hard sometimes, but it's possible. Thirty years ago this week, my uncle passed away at the age of 60. He

was a very easy man to like. He was fun, he could joke with the best of them, he was musical, he played bass in a country band all his life, he was an enjoyable person to be with. Unlike many of our older relatives, he always showed an interest in his nieces and nephews. He asked us about our lives, asked us where we wanted to go with them, asked us about our dreams and our hopes. He endeared himself to other people, especially his brother, my dad. I never saw my father more depressed than the week that my uncle passed on. But in spite of all his wonderful qualities, my uncle was a hard man to respect, because he was a person who didn't have control of his life—his addiction did.

And as I listened to yesterday's Budget Address by our Finance Minister, I recalled my uncle. I have to say, the addictive behaviours of this government reveal and repeat many of the most common traits of addicts. To satisfy their cravings, addicts will do anything, and this government appears addicted to a continuous behaviour despite adverse consequences as a result of that behaviour. The spendDP are creating such adverse consequences, not only for themselves, but for Manitobans as well.

Classic hallmarks of addiction, Mr. Speaker, include impaired control over substances, and in this particular government's case, the substance is other people's money and spending it is what they're addicted to. Now the habits associated with addicts are typically characterized by putting immediate gratification ahead of long-term delayed costs, and so it was with my uncle when he passed at 60 years of age. None of us doubted that he was at least partially responsible for the fact of his early passing.

The NDP's inability to control their spending has created an almost \$30-billion consolidated debt in our Province. This year alone, the interest cost to service that debt will add up to nearly a billion dollars, and those funds cannot be used—not a penny of those funds can be used for infrastructure; not a penny for health care; not a penny for educating our children; not a penny to protecting the people of this province; not a penny can go to anything that's helping today's Manitobans, that's focused on what matters most to families—not a penny.

So what's the long-term consequence? The long-term consequence—that's what we have to think about. That's what responsible people think about—not addicts, but responsible people do. What's the long-term consequence for Manitobans when interest rates start to rise? Not good.

Old habits are all hard to break, and old spending habits are also very hard to break. But this government has overspent its budget every year since it came to power—every year, and as a consequence has doubled the mortgage—the Manitoba mortgage that our children and we ourselves, as we are older, will be responsible for repaying.

Yet each year this government breaks its word, promises not to do it again, and then does. Just as my cousins grew to understand and sadly expect their father's broken promises, so too does the Manitoba family have reason to doubt the word of this government. Just one and a half years ago, a solemn promise by our Premier (Mr. Selinger): I promise not to increase taxes. Weeks later, the largest tax increase in over a quarter of a century. Manitobans understandably are skeptical.

Another promise the Premier made: We are on track to balance the budget by 2014-15. Add two more years to that goal and the result, Mr. Speaker, is doubt. People doubt that they are being supported by the actions of this government. It is not words, it is deeds that matter.

The heartbreaking broken promises of an addict who cannot or will not change cause frustration and anger and fear in those closest to them. And so it is understandable that we here in this House who are witnessing this, who are witnesses to this annual betrayal, are profoundly concerned and we must make an intervention on behalf of the people of our beautiful province. Withdrawal is a challenge for an addict, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the government claimed it was going to reduce its spending at some point. Later we'll encourage the government with some additional ideas, tomorrow I will outline in detail a number of ideas that this government I hope will consider. We may disagree with the administration's specific cost-cutting proposals in certain departments—we do. But we are in agreement with the broad intent of some of their words around making services more effectively available to Manitobans, increasing the availability or rapidity of services to Manitobans.

We want to make sure that government services is no longer an oxymoron in our province. But the reality is that moving to a balanced budget is a form of withdrawal for this government and that psychological dependence means that as they move towards—and they didn't yesterday, but they claim they will—reducing their spending, that change will produce symptoms within them, symptoms of

anxiety and irritability and intense cravings to return to old habits. Well, yesterday, Mr. Speaker, they returned to old habits.

Hier, le gouvernement a prétendu qu'il va réduire ses dépenses - plus tard. Nous encourageons et incitons le gouvernement de considérer d'autres idées additionnelles. Arriver à un budget équilibré sera comme une retraite pour le NPD : cette dépendance psychologique pour des déficits budgétaires doit produire, par une réduction de ces dépenses, des symptômes d'anxiété, d'irritabilité et des besoins insatiables pour revenir aux vieilles habitudes.

Translation

Yesterday, the government claimed that it would reduce its expenditures at a later date. We encourage and urge the government to consider other additional ideas. Achieving a balanced budget will be like withdrawal for the NDP: this psychological dependence on budget deficits must, through expenditure reduction, result in symptoms of anxiety, irritability and the insatiable need to fall back into old habits.

English

Physiological symptoms of withdrawal may also produce nausea, hallucinations, headaches and cold sweats. Just the thought of returning the vote tax money to the rightful owners of the money would produce all of those symptoms in the members on the opposite side all at once.

What is the nature of this NDP beast, Mr. Speaker? Well, I tell you, I love dogs personally. I really do, in spite of years of canvassing and door-to-door, I've—I still love dogs. But I make an exception in the case of our neighbour's dog. I grew up southwest of Portage la Prairie and about a mile from our place, a good friend of mine and his family had a dog—NDP dog. I'm pretty sure it was an NDP dog, it was—not just because it was orange—it was an orange dog. But it was a dog that lived for one single-minded purpose. Its purpose [*interjection*]—orange dog, yes, it's different, and I'm not suggesting it had any resemblance to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton)—I'm not. But this dog would noisily intrude into the lives of everyone who went by that lane—every single person. It existed for one purpose and one purpose only: to bring attention to itself. Right? And it—like this government, however, that dog, had it ever caught the bumper of any one of those vehicles it was chasing, wouldn't have known what to do with it any more than this government

understands what to do with the power it's been given by the people of Manitoba. And it's not likely going to change.

* (15:00)

A few years ago, just the week before our marriage—or, I know that I can't refer to people in the gallery, but somebody might have—might be up there who I am currently married to. I know that the reality of her visit with her mother was this: Her mother told her, don't expect him to change, okay. Don't expect him to change.

Now, all of us know, especially the men, that we're improving on a daily basis in this place. We know that. But the reality is that it's hard to change. Change is hard. It's difficult. We know that. And the reality is this government's got to change because it is a bottom of the barrel government.

In every respect, we see major challenges facing this government and it seems they are finding it very, very hard to change their old habits, whether it's being rated 10th out of 10 on fiscal management or 10th out of 10 on red tape by the CFIB; child poverty ranking—bottom of the barrel; public safety—too many examples, really, Mr. Speaker, sadly, to get into. Attractiveness to mining—well, here's the good news. Attractiveness for mining and exploration, we're ninth. We're ninth. Yes. BC, of course, BC's got 140 per cent of its land mass under dispute, so it's kind of natural to be behind us, but we are behind Botswana, which is not good for our ability to create jobs and wealth in this province, and I'm sure the Premier (Mr. Selinger) would agree. We were first for a long time, but now we're ninth of the Canadian jurisdictions survey, and that's all of them.

The NDP consumes—despite the rhetoric, they consume our future security. One of the major failings in this government is that they are preoccupied, not with income creation, but with income redistribution. They see themselves as the primary protectors of our society. They see their principal means of protecting as spending and they get their money from our taxes. And their high spending problems have become our high tax problem.

They are wrong when they say they are our protectors. Manitobans are our protectors. Manitobans are the most generous people in Canada. Stats Canada 2011 data published in February shows that 25.9 per cent of Manitoba tax returns reported a charitable donation. No other province showed a

higher rate. In each of the last—this is remarkable, Mr. Speaker, and something for all of us to be proud of and encourage. In each of the last 20 years, Manitoba has been the most charitable province in our great country, something to be proud of.

Charitable donations come from the work of registered charities. They work hard; they solicit donors. Manitobans know that their donations matter. Whether it's support for health or social services or education or churches or overseas development work, Manitobans are willing to give to help good works happen. And they do that all without the hand of the government forcing them to do it. They do it of their own free will. In 2011 eight and a half billion dollars was given to charities across Canada.

So I have two questions. In spite of the fact the NDP takes more from our citizens than almost any other province in taxes, we continue to give, to volunteer and to care. But how much harder will it be, with yesterday's budget announcement, on Manitoba charities as the result of the last two years of record tax increases? Will Manitoba, as a consequence of that government's decisions, lose its No. 1 ranking as the after-tax income of donors is eroded by \$400-million-plus? When the numbers come out next year, we'll see. We'll see. But it would be a shame if our high spending and taxing spendDP caused that to happen.

My second question's this: If these worthwhile groups can raise their own money, why can't the NDP raise its own money?

The more the NDP take from us, pretending to be protectors, the less able we, as Manitobans, are able to help. And they aren't getting the results. We have a great province. We have great assets. We have dedicated, hard-working people. We have a strong and loyal small business community, but we are being forced to run our race against our competitors with a handicap, and that government is the handicap.

Cependant, le plus que le NPD prend de nous autres, le moins est notre capacité d'aider. Et il n'a réalisé aucun résultat. Nous avons une province remarquable avec des ressources formidables, un peuple diligent qui travaille dur et une communauté de petites entreprises fortes et loyales. Le Manitoba est obligé de parcourir la course contre les rivaux avec un handicap : c'est ce gouvernement NPD qui est l'handicap.

Translation

However, the more the NDP takes from us, the less we are able to help. And they have not produced any results. We have a remarkable province with extraordinary resources, diligent people who work hard and a community of small businesses that is strong and loyal. Manitoba is forced to compete with a handicap, and that handicap is the NDP government.

English

The NDP doesn't get it. You know, on Sunday they may have duct taped over the word socialism in their constitution, but they do still believe in central planning of the entire economy, despite the duct tape.

They are insistent that they want to put Manitoba Hydro at risk to export power at a loss. They've even politicized Manitoba Hydro to encourage three quarters of a million dollars' worth of advertising so that we in Manitoba can all get behind their plan to raise our rates by 80 per cent. Seems to me that if a product's that bad, it doesn't matter how much you advertise, people aren't going to buy it and I don't think Manitobans are going to buy it either.

We had a small-business man in our area a long time ago who had a truck—he had a one-ton truck and he produced a good at \$3 and then he took his truck to a marketplace quite a distance away and sold it for two. He couldn't figure out why he was losing money, Mr. Speaker. So he brought him—his neighbour's neighbour was a financial adviser and an NDP supporter. His neighbour said, you know, I've looked at all the facts and figures, I've looked at all your data and I've solved your problem for you: you got to buy a bigger truck.

Yes, well, you know what, Mr. Speaker, that didn't make much sense, but neither does it make much sense to make a massive life-long decision that commits our children and our grandchildren to it, that says, let's spend 20-plus billion dollars and buy a bigger truck.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his colleagues need to realign their priorities. Manitoba Hydro doesn't belong to them; it belongs to all Manitobans. And we have to make a decision as a province whether we want Manitoba Hydro to be for us or for the US, because this plan that the Premier is advocating claims that US energy—because we don't need these projects for domestic purposes, we—not right now, not for years to come. The Premier keeps

claiming that US customers will pay premium prices, but the five-year average price is less than half the estimated cost of production and the current spot price is less than a third of the cost of production. And, to make matters worse, the additional–alternative energy sources and supplies in places like North Dakota, the fastest growing economic state in the United States of America, are flooding the market and their supplies are expected to last for decades to come, and that affects the price of the commodity. The Premier understands he has a monopoly to produce. He does not have a monopoly to sell, and he does not have control over the world price for energy any more than he has control over his ability to restrain his own spending habits.

The spenDP wants to gamble Manitoba Hydro's future on a 20-plus billion dollar supersizing and they're hypnotised about it, they're in a trance and they won't snap out of it—they won't snap out it. The green network now says, conservation not construction. The PUB keeps asking for numbers that isn't being provided with those numbers.

We say, what's the big hurry? Why not put the future of our province ahead of the vanity of the NDP? Former NDP Hydro ministers say it's a mistake, they're putting all our eggs in one basket, they say. When's the Premier (Mr. Selinger) going to start to understand that when even his own supporters are marching in the opposite direction, it's perhaps him that's out of step.

This is a massive risk, and we have a Premier and some of his colleagues running around like riverboat gamblers, telling us we should throw this money up there and it'll really help, but they don't provide evidence to Manitobans about the fact. They say, let's go all in, it's a high-stakes game, let's put our future at risk by exporting hydro at a loss to the United States of America. And while he's telling us to double down, that riverboat gambler could be selling us down that river, into a saturated United States energy market where everything has changed except the NDP's fixed position.

* (15:10)

Energy markets are dynamic; this government is not. Alternative sources are driving down prices, the climate's changing, the increasing costs and the risks to Manitoba are enormous and this government does not get it. They're at a loss, and so is Manitoba Hydro.

The same day that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was pushing hydro sales at a loss on a US junket, Hydro was posting a \$38-million loss for the first three quarters of 2012. And the Premier's quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press as saying, quote: We have strong US customers and none of them understand why we—anyone would oppose the expansion of hydro production in our province. Well, that's what his customers say, but I've got a little business acumen and I understand that if my customers, who don't invest a dollar, a nickel, in my project, are advocating for me to produce more, it's probably because it's not necessarily good for us, it's good for them.

Our friends in the US, who we love dearly, are certainly happy to see this naive group, who lack business acumen, going ahead into an already flooded energy market where the demands are going to be at least partially met, but not to the degree they anticipate, by our sales at below the cost of production. That's good for the US, bad for us—bad for us.

The Premier says US customers agree with his government developing more cheap hydro export. That makes sense—that makes sense, he says, as if they were allies in the argument that we should go ahead with 20 billion of investment here without a nickel coming from any of them. The Premier says—he says that the US customers—and this gets better—he says that the US customers like our cheap hydro because it helps them diversify their energy sources. Right, so it helps them, but how's it helping us? How's it helping us? How's it helping us? When will the Premier understand, whose degree from the London School of Economics is most certainly not in economics—when will he begin to understand that his first responsibility is to the people of this province, not to our US customers?

Manitobans are right to ask, where is the plan? They don't know the Premier's plan because he doesn't know his plan either. On infrastructure, they—this claim that they are going to enhance the infrastructure of our province somehow, magically, with an increase in taxes—it never holds true because they don't keep their promise on committing the dollars to infrastructure. They want MPI to backfill for them. They want MPI to do the speed bump projects now. They cut nighttime snow plow shifts on main highways in the transportation centre of central North America.

An Honourable Member: There was no snow this winter.

Mr. Pallister: No—no. Squandering a Manitoba advantage, whether it's hydro or our infrastructure, that's why Manitobans are asking the question, where is the plan? In public safety, in health care, in social services, in poverty reduction, the problems persist or worsen and all of us keep asking, where's the plan? Where's the consultation? Where are the innovative approaches? Where's the respect for the people of this province? Where is that? Where is the plan?

There is a difference between that party and this party on this side of the House, and it's an important one. We have a plan, and part of that plan rests on the fundamental understanding that you have to balance your books, because that's the right thing to do.

We have a number of ideas—I'll be outlining a number of those in detail tomorrow, and I just have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I believe that innovative approaches to governing better are what we're here to try and do—all of us. And we are willing to work with the government to offer our suggestions, but I certainly hope that they get away from this defensive mentality, this siege mentality of saying they're not listening; not listening to ideas on bills, they're not going to listen to the people of Manitoba, they discount people when they cite concerns from concerned Manitobans, angry Manitobans, about issues on social services, on infrastructure, on health-care delivery—they discount those concerns.

We will work for social justice. This is a party that claimed that it was working for social justice some years ago. It's lost that mandate a long time ago—a long time ago. We will—we will—fight to raise the basic personal exemption to the Canadian average for the people of this province; we will fight for that. We believe very strongly that the rental allowance for social allowance recipients is a good thing and needs to be increased, and we all believed it. But it's better to put a good, strong, safety fence around the top of the steep hill than to wait for problems and pay for an ambulance at the bottom—we understand that.

See, Mr. Speaker, we'll do these things given the opportunity and more, because they—not only because they're the right thing to do, but because we have the discipline and the will to do them and because we base that discipline and that will on the

fundamental philosophies that guide us as people. And we believe certain things. And one of the fundamental things we believe in, on this side of the House, is the empowerment of individuals and that our role here is to empower individuals in the achievement of their financial independence. As a political party, we're dedicated to that principle. But the NDP is not, nor can it be. I submit to you that no political party that is itself dependent on a vote tax can claim to be dedicated to the independence of the citizens of this province.

There is a difference, and it's an important one; it's a difference of attitude as well as beliefs. This past weekend, the NDP decided to change their constitution, and that's the—as you know, the constitution that governs this party opposite. They decided to remove the negative references to profit. You know, Mr. Speaker, you know—you know—that that's a lot about perception—a lot about perception. It's an ongoing problem for this NDP government, their greater concern with perception than with reality. They may have removed the words, but the flawed philosophy beneath remains—it remains intact. Actions speak louder than words.

Shut down the hog industry regardless of all scientific evidence to the contrary, and then pretend that you're cleaning up water and air. Not really. Not really. Despite all evidence to the contrary, preen for the cameras at the Hoop and Holler, and then draw attention away from the man-made disaster a few miles to the north that's still hurting thousands of Manitobans and their families.

And talk, as the minister did yesterday again, for months on end about how much you care about people, but don't follow through. Make promises, programs without consultation with the federal government, and commit to them without assurances from the federal government, and then go out to a hall and blame the federal government for the promises you made that you broke. Doesn't make sense.

I don't mind words, Mr. Speaker. This is a place that has a lot of words said in it. I don't mind words, but I like actions. I like deeds. I base my relationships with other people on what they do more than what they say. My old dad used to say when we were in election time—he wasn't that philosophically aligned with any party—he said, don't listen so much to what they say, but look at what they've done. What this government's done over the last number of years isn't commendable. It is not. It is not.

Members on this side of the House care about the people who were flooded, too, Mr. Speaker. And collectively they've travelled over 100,000 miles visiting with the families who've been affected, listening to their stories, gathering information and data; that's real empathy. That's not pretend empathy. That's real empathy. Good for them for putting that deed to reality. We listen. We're there to listen.

Drafting an antibullying law without a definition, without consequences for the bully, without any thoughtful consultation and then claiming that you care about students—that's a perceptual piece of legislation [*inaudible*]. That defines it. Then go out and claim that you'll consult in the fall. Claim that the federal government is making dramatic cuts, which are this year \$37-million increases—actually, increases. Not really. The PC Party believes that actions matter. The government believes that words matter. There is a fundamental difference there, I think.

The biggest whopper, the biggest terminological inexactitude, since I can't use that other word, I understand that's inappropriate—terminological inexactitude is borderline, too, is it? If truth was an island it'd be uninhabited by the members opposite, how's that work for you?

Claim you're protecting front-line services—when this minister and this government claim they're protecting front-line services that is a terminological inexactitude, because what they mean is themselves. They mean themselves. Not only the private sector, but people in the public sector understand just as well. Protecting front-line services, what does that really mean?

Everyone in government knows there is no security in a money-losing operation. A half-billion-dollar deficit this year alone, a doubling of the provincial debt, how's that protecting front-line services? How is that giving a sense of security to civil servants? How is that protecting the people who work in government, let alone the people who don't? No, Mr. Speaker, there is no security in a money-losing operation.

And this party can claim, by removing a sentence in its constitution, that it now doesn't despise profits. But the reality is, it does. And it loves losses. And that's why the record of this government is one of running up losses year after year after year.

* (15:20)

You know why they do that, Mr. Speaker? Because they like a dependent society, that's why. Because they don't want to fight for independent people. They don't want to fight for strong-willed people. Anybody that would refuse to let Manitobans vote on a tax increase based on a piece of legislation been in place for a quarter of a century isn't telling Manitobans they respect them. It isn't telling them that they respect Manitobans' rights to decide on their own taxes. It's telling them it doesn't.

How many backbenchers—put up their hand—were consulted on the 1 per cent tax increase, the 1 per cent sales tax? Good to hear. [*inaudible*] Put it on record. Note them, okay? Three? Good. Those three, and perhaps four or five here. That's maybe eight or nine people in the province outweighing the input of a million-plus people. They think they're more important than the whole province put together, Mr. Speaker. Unbelievable—unbelievable. So much for protecting front-line services.

And you know, this is another one, Mr. Speaker, speaking of funny: praising themselves for reducing the out-of-control growth in that Pac-Man department, health care. Praising themselves, oh, we've reduced the out-of-control spending. This year the spending in the Health Department alone will use up the cuts in many other departments combined and this Finance Minister knows it. He's shrunk every other department. That Pac-Man department, he can't get a handle on it.

And the growth this year in the Health Department will be over double the rate of economic growth of the province of Manitoba yet again, 3.8 per cent with a 1.85 per cent growth in the economy in this province, double the rate of economic growth. Deer in the headlights, Mr. Speaker. Deer-in-the-headlights approach to delivering health care, which means that workers are burning out, nurses and doctors feel shut out, Manitobans feel left out. And despite massive injections of capital taken from Manitoba taxpayers, taken from other government departments, the unprecedented generosity of federal governments to transfer money in here from other provinces, this government doesn't buy change.

They're not protecting front-line services, Mr. Speaker. What they're doing is endangering front-line services. The fundamental difference between our two political parties is this: The NDP view themselves as the protectors of Manitobans, and we view Manitobans as the protectors of Manitobans.

We just recently had a really enjoyable—I know members opposite enjoy these too—with the caucus—understand they were in Swan River, where they haven't had services to—they've had to have—a number of women have to go to Saskatchewan to deliver babies, but they made it up there with, I think, a couple of dozen of their communication staff to have a—kick up their feet and enjoy the visit to the good member for Swan River's country. So awesome, excellent. Good for them for going. Too bad they didn't listen to the people when they were there.

Now the reality is, we went to the Interlake and toured around. We had a really good tour. We met a lot of folks and we got a lot of good input and we talked to a lot of people. One group we met with was in Arborg, and some of you, some of the caucus here, were at that meeting. It was really interesting. Community representatives, good—great riding in the Interlake there, not great representation, but a great riding. And certainly the—we met with a number of people: municipal leaders who are told that they're useless and dysfunctional and should, you know, be forced to amalgamate; people waiting for weeks at a time for health-care services that they used to be able to get before the NDP came in. Anyway, it was a great series of discussions.

One of the groups we met with was a group of employers up there representing three companies. Mr. Speaker, I know you'll be interested in this because these three companies employ, I believe, just over 400 people currently. Four hundred jobs—400 jobs provided by this, and it's amazing, because Arborg—is where my wife's from, you know, it's a small community, very thriving, very creative people, hard-working people. And just a few miles north of town, here is this enclave of businesses that do tremendous job producing products not only for national export but international export—international.

An Honourable Member: Wake up, Tommy.

Mr. Pallister: And so we—I'm glad that the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) is awake and listening, Mr. Speaker, because actually the discussion turned to this: They wanted eight miles of road built. They thought it made sense. They had a lot of folks that work there, safety of the people working there, ease of transport for the goods that they produce to points all around the world. They met with their MLA and their MLA gave them this insight. He actually told them that they built in the

wrong place. I guess, with his—I don't mean to be disrespectful of his international investment experience, Mr. Speaker, but I do think that his input was not well received. I think the request was a reasonable one and I think that it shows the reality of circumstance. You know, they built in the wrong place.

This is just a fundamental thing the government needs to understand. See, labour is mobile. Capital is also mobile. No one is forced to put their labour out here in Manitoba. They shouldn't be and we wouldn't support anybody that tried to make that happen. The reality is you have to appeal to people if you want them to work for you and in your province. And if you want capital to flow to your province, you have to make it feel welcome.

And that kind of attitude, that they built in the wrong place, that's the kind of thing that, I think, is indicative of the attitude of any political party doesn't understand the need for profits. They don't understand the profits.

See, the real saviours, the real protectors of this province and its future, Mr. Speaker, are working people. They are the people who provide the money to governments, to this government to spend. Those are the people that are the protectors of our future. Those are the ones that deserve to be respected. Those are the ones that deserve a vote on whether they want to protect to the tune of another \$400 million or not; those people.

The real front line are Manitoba seniors who've given their lives, in some cases risked their lives to protect our freedoms. Those people; they deserve a better government. And those people long for a better and more sustainable health-care system, and they know that when a government is running half-billion dollar deficits, that isn't what they've got.

The real front line of our province, Mr. Speaker, is people like the people you used to be before you came here—and so did I—working people, labourers, people who put their lives on the line to put their skills up for sale and try to support their family and give back to their community. Those are the real people who want a higher standard of living and want some security, and they want some job security too.

And on the issue of average weekly earnings, since '99 we lag the nation. That government is failing to give Manitoba workers that kind of security that they deserve to have.

The real front line is Manitoba farmers. It's Manitoba families. It's small-business owners whose willingness to take risks in the hope of profit, which we believe is a good thing. Those profits, Mr. Speaker, they create jobs.

All these people I've mentioned and many others, Mr. Speaker, through their taxes, through their fees, these are the people who pay that government to pretend that it's the front line when it's those people that are the front line. These are the people we stand for. These are the people we believe in and these are the people who we believe deserve a better government.

Mr. Speaker, my uncle was a lovely man, but he couldn't fight his demons. He remortgaged his house. He borrowed money from his 85-year-old mother, just as this government steals as surely as we are here today is stealing from our future right now. And the damage my uncle inflicted was limited to himself and his immediate family, probably, but the damage this government's inflicting on our province is much broader than that. It goes much deeper than that. It is essential to our future as a province that this government learn from its failures, that it admit it has a problem, that it stop blaming others, that it reach out for help.

And today I commit to the government that we will work with them. We have no dislike for our colleagues. We believe they mean well. We believe they are doing their best. But after years of mismanagement—after years of mismanagement—it is increasingly hard to believe in them and to believe that they mean what they say and to believe that they will keep their promises. We'll offer our suggestions genuinely, our ideas, our encouragement and, some of us, our prayers for their success, Mr. Speaker, because we see that as our role. We will encourage them, but we fear that this government cannot keep its promises and that once again those promises will remain unfulfilled to the people of our province.

* (15:30)

This government seems so caught up in the deepening hole of their own making, this great debt construction that they are prepared to leave to our children and grandchildren that they cannot see the sky. They cannot see the bright, beautiful prairie sky above them. They are so busy digging us deeper into a hole. And the broader horizons that can be our future are achievable if we work intelligently in a disciplined manner on the principles that we believe

in, to make them the reality in this province. We need to do that. We can achieve our goals.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I admit to you that we would like to replace them. We would be honoured to have the opportunity to lead this province, and we believe that it's time for some tough love. It's time for some intervention. It's time for a change. We want them to aim high.

And so I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House" and substituting:

therefore regrets this budget fails to address the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) ignoring the taxpayer protection laws that safeguard Manitoba families; and
- (b) saddling Manitoba families with crushing and unnecessary taxes that don't allow them to prosper and save for the future; and
- (c) failing to tame a \$500-million structural deficit created through 13 years of overspending; and
- (d) failing to promise a full and transparent review of all provincial government spending; and
- (e) failing to control growth of low spending priorities such as advertising and vote taxes; and
- (f) stifling economic growth and prosperity through excessive red tape and unwarranted taxation.

As a consequence, the provincial government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

It's been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo,

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "House" and substituting:

therefore regrets this budget fails to address the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) ignoring the taxpayer protection laws that safeguard Manitoba families; and
- (b) saddling Manitoba families with crushing and unnecessary taxes that don't allow them to prosper and save for the future; and

- (c) failing to tame a \$500-million structural deficit created through 13 years of overspending; and
- (d) failing to promise a full and transparent review of all provincial government spending; and
- (e) failing to control growth of low spending priorities such as advertising and vote taxes; and
- (f) stifling economic growth and prosperity through excessive red tape and unwarranted taxation.

As a consequence, the provincial government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

The amendment is in order.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured again to be able to rise in this House to address one of the most important debates that we have. We obviously have a very important debate with the debate on the Throne Speech. But this, in many ways, gets to the heart and soul of what government is all about. It's about choices. Budgets are very much about making, in some cases, very difficult choices. Fundamentally, it's about our economy. It's about social justice as well because we are very cognizant whatever we do in this House—whatever we do as the government makes a very significant impact on Manitobans.

And I must say, Mr. Speaker, I always look forward to this debate, but I'm a bit of a loss, where—to say where to begin after the previous speech by the Leader of the Opposition. I was struck by the fact that we have pretty broad debate on the budget, but there's two things that really stood out from that speech: No. 1 was the degree to which the Leader of the Opposition went out of his way to talk about Manitoba Hydro and to defend a position that would freeze construction of new Hydro dams—and I'm going to get to that in a few moments. Nothing in the budget itself, but he clearly put on the record what he said outside of this House, that he'll continue with a pattern we've seen from members opposite for decades in terms of shutting down hydro development.

What also struck me, too, Mr. Speaker, and, you know, there'll be time to have a full debate on this, but I was shocked when he actually stood up and started talking about Bill 18. Now, we're—we have a bill in this Legislature; it's about bullying. We're going to have a chance to debate that, but I know it's been rather difficult for some members opposite,

particularly the Leader of the Opposition, to get away from their obsession with Bill 18. By the way, I'll put on the record I support Bill 18. I support protecting our students against bullying and I have no problem in the year 2013 allowing students to organize gay-straight alliances. There are lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered Manitobans, and there are many other Manitobans who want to join with them to make sure that we don't have homophobia in this province and we don't have bullying.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, it struck me that that's been one of the issues that members opposite have had a difficulty with. You know, I—and I understand why. I understand why. I mean, they, you know, the member opposite talked about our federal party. I mean, I know what goes on at, you know, Conservative meetings. First of all, by the way, they don't have much debate on policy. They do it behind closed doors. They're usually too busy actually either putting knives in their leader's back or pulling the knives out of their leader's back. And I notice the Leader of the Opposition spent a lot of time addressing his comments to his—to the members of his caucus. The—I think the body language said it all.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know, I do want to put on the record that this is budget debate, and if the members opposite want to get into debating Bill 18, we on this side are glad to do that. But, you know, in a way, it shows the degree to which those two debates that they brought forward show how out of touch they are with Manitoba today because I can tell you this is a province in which people are socially tolerant and they also believe in hydro development. So on those two scores alone you see how far out of whack the members are.

What's particularly noticeable, if you look at the Leader of the Opposition's speeches, I think you'd also put on the record the degree to which this Conservative Party has moved dramatically away from the Conservative Party up until around the 1960s in this province. Now, Duff Roblin, by the way, brought in the sales tax, and Duff Roblin built schools and he built hospitals, and Duff Roblin built hydro dams. And I always ask this, Mr. Speaker, it's—I know it's a bit of a trick question—but I ask people when I go around the province to name a single dam that members opposite built in—from 1969 on. And it's a trick question because the answer is, none. What they did when they were elected in 1977 is they mothballed Limestone; we built Limestone.

What did they do when they got into government under the Filmon government, of which the leader opposition was a lead minister, minister of Emergency Measures, minister of Government Services at the time? They cancelled, Mr. Speaker, they mothballed Conawapa. And what did we do? We built Limestone. We built the Wuskwatim Dam, and we put in place the plans that can build Keeyask and Conawapa and harness our gold: our water, our hydro development. And once again, what are members opposite doing? They're saying they would shut it down. History is repeating itself.

Mr. Speaker, but this is not only the only area where they're so dramatically different from their party historically. Let's talk about what the Roblin government did. They undertook one of the toughest challenges that you can imagine, and that was the aftermath of the flood of 1950. Now, the flood of 1950, for members opposite who perhaps have forgotten some of their history, and they should talk to some of the people who went through it. It led to 100,000 people being evacuated all up and down the Red River Valley and here in the city of Winnipeg. It led to 10,000 homes being destroyed. It created millions and hundreds of millions of dollars.

And what came out of that was a study of alternatives. But what came out of it really was a political will to change things. And, Mr. Speaker, if anybody doubts the value of that, in 2009 we had a flood that was a greater flood than 1950 and we didn't have 100,000 people evacuated and 10,000 homes destroyed. We had one home affected by water seepage. That showed the value of the Red River Floodway and the wisdom of the people of the—of Manitoba and the politicians who took on that challenge in the 1950s and 1960s.

* (15:40)

Well, I can tell you, I was very honoured to be a minister who was able to work on the flood river—the Red River Floodway expansion. And there's another generation of politicians and leaders in this province who've undertaken that tremendous challenge, because when we came into government in 1999, we recognized that flood mitigation had to be a top priority. Mr. Speaker, how much have we spent on flood mitigation in the last decade plus—a billion dollars. But out of that we now have the city of Winnipeg protected to one-in-700-year flooding, and all throughout the Red River Valley, as we face a flood that could very much be in the level of 2009 this year, we have those dikes, the \$130-million

worth of dikes, to protect those communities and to protect those homes.

So we undertook that challenge and we worked with the federal government. We obtained specific targeted funding for both of those major initiatives, and I want to put on the record that that's very much what this budget is all about.

It's fine to get up and ask questions, as members opposite do on occasion, on flood issues. It's fine to go around to meetings, Mr. Speaker, and I know the Leader of the Opposition had a meeting, I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) was there, and, you know, a lot of colourful language, a lot of really incorrect information as well, which are repeated on the record today. I suggest he read the flood report about the Hoop and Holler cut, which the flood report said was entirely defensible.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to go out and try and stir up the very real frustrations and concerns people have, but you have two choices: (1) is you can go that route, or you can choose the route that we've gone. And what did we do? After the flood—and a flood in which we invested a—\$1.2 billion—we put in place two studies, two task forces, both of which I have said publicly on behalf of our government, that we have adopted each and every one of the recommendations—126 in the case of the task force in terms of overall flood protection and water-related issues, and also in the case of Lake Manitoba.

And I can tell you what it all comes down to—earlier this week—you know, I know the member opposite, again, as part of his aim-high strategy, was taking shots at the member for the Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff). Well, I met with the member for Interlake and our Agriculture Minister with representatives of First Nations municipalities from around the flood affected areas, and I can tell you what they said, Mr. Speaker. They said that they recognized, obviously, a lot of the work that went into the flood, but they said, our concern is that we not be forgotten. Well, not only are they not forgotten—we not only adopted the recommendation of the reports to focus in on the billion-dollars-plus worth of potential ways to reducing flooding—we could have just said, well, we're going to look at it, we're going to—you know, we're going to see if we can afford it. We could have put in all sorts of qualifications—you might want to call them weasel words. You know, I—when I look at members opposite, I think of weasel words, because, you

know, I don't see much commitment of—from them in terms of this. But what we did in our budget and what our Finance Minister did, was put in place the fiscal framework, put in 'place'—place the fund that can fund the flood protection for those flood victims. That is leadership.

Now, I can talk a lot as well, and I will talk loudly, I know. But, you know, the Leader of the Opposition talked about—I loved it when he talked about action speaks louder than words, because nothing typifies that more than our investments in infrastructure, in particular investments in highways.

And I know the members opposite don't like talking about the '90s, but I can tell you—basically, Mr. Speaker, what you saw from the Leader of the Opposition is that this is the party of the '90s—I would say the economics of the 1990s and the social perspective of the 1890s; they are stuck in the past.

And it doesn't—shouldn't surprise you, I mean, the Leader of the Opposition is on record, I think—I don't know if he called Gary Filmon, you know, the greatest leader, but maybe, as part of the government, he was proud of their record and I think he's gone out of his way to see himself as the heir to Gary Filmon. Now, he was a minister—he was a minister, by the way, when they sold MTS.

But I—to use the phrase of our Finance Minister, who earlier said, that's a bit rich, well, nothing is more rich coming from the Leader of the Opposition, who was part of the Filmon government, talking about poverty. Mr. Speaker, the word P in PC doesn't stand for poverty reduction, believe you me. When they were in government, when they faced some of the uncertainty that they faced at that time, similar to the uncertainty we face today, what did they do for low-income Manitobans? They cut welfare rates. They even put in place the snitch line and they cut everything from friendship centres through to pretty well any agency you can imagine that works with many of the people affected. That was their first target—was the poor. Their second target was northern and Aboriginal people. They shut—they cut off roads. They shut down organizations.

So, when the Leader of the Opposition gets up and wrings his hands and claims some new-found interest in poverty in this province, I'll match our record on poverty against his record when he was part of the Filmon government any day. And I'll refer members to the budget, because our budget actually includes a whole section not only on what we've done in terms of poverty and social inclusion, but

what this budget does—the increase in rent aid—probably one of the best examples—the increase in the minimum wage. Mr. Speaker, we went from the highest minimum wage in the country in the 1990s to one of the lowest. With the recent increase announced by our Finance Minister in the budget, we will have the highest level of minimum wage in the country. That is about poverty reduction too.

So—and I know the member opposite, he even got into talking about small business. I love PCs when they talk about small business, because I'll refer them to the budget, by the way, and they can find a little column—it's called the small business tax. And they can check every province across the country; there's only one that has a zero in that column—it's NDP Manitoba, no corporate tax on small businesses.

But, you know, if you read between the lines, you know, the member opposite, he was talking about a Pac-Man approach on health care. Well, first of all, that's a bit of a flashback. Pac-Man, I think a lot of video gamers in this province are probably checking Wikipedia right now and trying to figure out what that was, Mr. Speaker. You know what, that being having said, I'd suggest people check out what that really indicates, because did you notice how he took us to task for increasing the spending in health? I call it investment in health at a rate greater than the rate inflation. So what does that mean? Just—I just want to get this straight. The Leader of the Opposition basically said we're spending too much money on health care. Now, if that sounds familiar, by the way, I hate to take them back to the 1990s, that was their same philosophy then. That's what brought us Connie Curran, the efforts to privatize home care, patients in the hallway, frozen food. They haven't learned their lesson. It's an investment—an investment.

Now, I also was struck that—by the fact that members opposite—you know, what a difference 24 hours make. You know, I loved question period yesterday. I know our Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) came in, and he said he was losing his voice. By the end of question period, I was probably losing my voice too. And we did a calculation, you know, overnight of what they were asking for, because I'm going to hold them accountable to this, Mr. Speaker. We calculated in one question period alone you could almost hear the ka-ching every time they stood up. It was spend, spend, spend. And, of course, today he comes in and he says, oh, the government has a spending problem. Well, I know

it's been said that oppositions can have it both ways; they're trying to have it both ways. But, you know, you want to be in government, you can only have it one way.

We made the tough decisions. We made the dedication to infrastructure funding, and what's interesting is we're actually doing pretty well everything they asked for. The member for Brandon waist-West, in particular, be careful what you ask for; you might get it. I'm looking forward to seeing him walking up and down Victoria Avenue as the construction takes place. I'm sure he's going to come into the House and probably complain that—too many construction delays, you know, given his approach, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:50)

And I, you know, did bring a—Mr. Speaker, I know we're not supposed to have exhibits so I won't display it, but—my Yes Winkler! mug. Because, you know, the City of Winkler—the member opposite got up yesterday, said, well, there's big issues with Highway 32. Well, we said, yes, Winkler, when we paved the main street.

But we also announced today a new program that's going to provide funding to municipalities in terms of highway improvements within urban areas outside of the city of Winnipeg. Why? Because there's growth in Winkler and Morden, and there's growth in Steinbach.

So I wonder if the member opposite—be careful what ask for, you might get it—will actually vote for the budget based on that, Mr. Speaker?

An Honourable Member: And we're building schools in both of those communities.

Mr. Ashton: Oh, we're building schools.

You know, I mean, I refer members—you know, they might want to do a—I know that the member opposite, you know, who's in the Pac-Man era of computers, but, you know, he can—we can probably take his speech and search—despite the sort of suggestion there—come up with positive ideas. I didn't hear too many.

But Mr. Speaker, to search through in terms of some of the comments that were in his speech, they're actually really reflect what they really stand for, because you know, the bottom line is, check what their petitions say. Check what their questions say.

I mean, what great about question period yesterday, apart from the spending theme, you know, the theme of their petitions and their questions was, we're growing; we have all these needs. Well, Mr. Speaker, where have they been since 1999? I mean, what planet are they living on?

We, Mr. Speaker have had the second highest rate of growth of any province in GDP over the last five years, and we're aiming for No. 1.

And why, Mr. Speaker, have we done better than virtually every other province? Why have we got one of the lowest rates of unemployment? It's because of our balanced approach.

There are a lot of provinces across the country, the first thing they've done is they've—when they've reacted to kind of difficult circumstances they've dealt—we've been dealing with, first thing they did, I'll tell you what they did, they cut health care. Let's talk about education. You know, we are investing more money in education than any other province in the country—highest increases in terms of public school funding, I think pretty well the highest increases in terms of post-secondary funding.

And you know, you always want it to be more. But tell the people of Alberta about funding for post-secondary education; a 7 per cent cut. They've got university—we have universities across the country facing 18 per cent cuts. And why are we doing it? Well, it's the right thing to do.

I can tell you, our teachers remember the days of the 1990s, you know, the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) was a teacher then. It was, you know, like the CNN weather map, right? Like, you know, zero, minus two, minus two. That was the funding level.

In the middle of an economic crisis, we're investing in education. We're reducing class sizes. And I—you know, I know the member opposite even mentioned seniors—and we're getting rid of the tax, the school tax for seniors in this province, something they never did.

So how do you pull together all the themes of this budget? I really believe by the way—yes, it's about some tough decisions. But, you know, we're backing up some of those tough decisions. Yes, the one cent on the sales tax, time-restricted, ten years, going straight into this fund, ensuring we can match any federal infrastructure funding, there for flood victims, there for infrastructure, and not just highways—for our hospitals, for our schools, Mr. Speaker.

But how would you classify this? In many ways, it's a growth budget because if there's two key elements that you need for growth—one is you have to invest in infrastructure. And that's what we're doing. The second is you have to invest in your human potential. So that's why we're investing in education and training.

And, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, to members opposite, that they look at what's happening around the province. Because despite some of the most challenging circumstances, even in the last 48 hours, we've seen the wisdom of the kind of tough choices we've had to make in this budget, the stock market dropping dramatically, warnings from the Bank of Canada that the growth rate across the country is slowing down, and indications that around the world, that once-stable economies are becoming increasingly unstable.

Now, we could have gone back to the 1990s. Been there, done that, Mr. Speaker. Didn't work then, won't work now.

But what you can do is what our Finance Minister brought forward in the way of the budget yesterday. And, you know, I really have a tough time getting lectures from members opposite about our budget circumstances, or even about the balanced budget bill, or about fiscal targets, because, let's be very clear, by the way, that in the last election, they ran on a platform of opening up the balanced budget legislation so that we would not have a balance on our books until 2018. I mean, it was convenient, actually, because their target was so far out it would have taken them out a full election.

Now, does anybody doubt that—God forbid they had been elected—that they might have been pushing it out 2019, 2020, 2021? I mean, they have no credibility whatsoever when they talk about the balanced budget bill or when they talk about fiscal balance. They ran on a promise of, basically, not in the foreseeable future ever bringing us back into balance. And what we've done, as every jurisdiction across the country has done, we've moved prudently. Yes, we've recognized some of the changing circumstances, but we're still committed to bringing our books back within balance, no thanks to members opposite, Mr. Speaker. Because that's what this budget does.

And I want to stress one thing. I—when I talk to people in my constituency, as we all do, we know that anything and everything you do has an impact. And I know that this budget will have an impact; it

always does. And it does mix in, you know, a number of revenue items: yes, the sales tax, the one cent, and I think we've demonstrated what we're going to be able to do with that one cent. There's some breaks as well, particularly targeted for seniors. I think that's positive.

But I can tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker. The governments that have led this province, that have the most significant difference, have really been governments that have undertaken one thing: to show leadership in tough times and to have a long-term perspective.

I mentioned the Roblin government. You know, I'm not a Conservative, but I have a lot of respect for Duff Roblin for what he did. I'll mention the Schreyer government, the work it did to build this province, particularly our hydro development—*[interjection]*—but, yes, the Pawley government. Again, Limestone, a lot of work that was done throughout the province.

And members opposite didn't have a chance. Did you notice at the end, towards the end of the speech the Leader of the Opposition was saying he's going to come up with positive suggestions? You know, I kind of heard the motion. I didn't see any of them in the motion. I'll be waiting. I suspect, by the way, that they're going—they're right now going through their files from the 1990s and, you know, they'll probably get their—actually, I was going to say Xerox machine, but after the Leader of the Opposition's speech, probably the Gestetner machine out and make copies.

But, anyway, I digress; the bottom line is he had an opportunity, particularly on the hydro issue, to take a different approach. He could have said, you know, Sterling Lyon was wrong on hydro development. He could have said Gary Filmon was wrong hydro development. He could have said, you know, if you have customers who are willing to buy it, you know, that makes sense. But what I noticed, by the way, we managed to turn around, he actually admitted we have customers, but he says it's a bad thing.

Well, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, why? I mean, the absurdity the Conservative position on hydro is that they actually got to the point in the 1980s where instead of building Limestone, you know what they proposed? Importing power from the US. If we'd listened to them in the 1980s, right now we wouldn't be exporting power to the US; we'd be buying it.

That is how short-sighted they are. And I realize there's a certain amount of jealousy that, perhaps, goes with the fact that we have a reputation for building hydro. Quite frankly, I think if there's one thing that defines us as a government, we're a building government. It's not just hydro.

You know, here's another trick question. Name me one thing the Tories built in the 1990s. *[interjection]* Okay, well, even they don't have an answer to that one, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is I talked about hydro, but, you know, I can talk about the True North centre. They opposed that one, by the way. I could talk about the stadium that we're building, the Blue Bombers be open this season, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure they'll be there with their beer and popcorn cheering the Bombers on. I wonder if they'll give us any credit for it.

I can point to the hospitals, the schools that we built throughout this province, the roads, and including expanding all-weather road access in northern Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've apologized already again this year for delays, construction delays on our highways because we're going to have a lot of them. But that is what distinguishes us from the Tories.

I mentioned before that PC didn't stand for poverty reduction. Well, it doesn't stand for construction either. The party that's building this province is the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker. This budget is making sure that we can continue that, especially for the flood victims, but for all of our communities.

* (16:00)

And I will say, Mr. Speaker, yes there are some tough decisions, but, you know, how you show leadership? You undertake those tough decisions. You get out, as we will, throughout this province. You sell those tough decisions, and what you do is you don't just focus in on the latest opinion polls. You don't just focus in on the next week or two or three. What you do is you focus in on the next decade, because my message to members opposite—and this is the message, I think, from all of our caucus—you know, if you were to consider how far we've come in the last 10 years, the growth in this province that we're all so proud of—really, I always like quoting my favourite Manitoban, Randy Bachman, because what this budget says, it says if you are willing to make the right decisions, the tough

decisions, and invest in the long-term future of this province, if you've seen a lot in this province the last decade, you ain't seen nothing yet.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, and after the—it's always enjoyable to go after the—to speak after the member for Thompson, because he's very passionate about things that he believes in, and he tends to show his passion in this House, and that's great.

But he talked about making tough decisions, Mr. Speaker, and making the right decision, and I would caution him that now is the time to make the right decision for Manitobans. Now is the time to listen to Manitobans. It's the time to go back to Manitobans, to abide by the laws of this province. Go back to the Manitobans and ask them what they think of this PST hike.

So, I know the member for Thompson loves to rant and rave about all the broken promises they've made and all these supposed projects that they've delivered supposedly on time and on budget. Well, most of them haven't even been delivered yet, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of talk, a lot of rhetoric about various programs over the years, but many of those programs have not been delivered to the Manitobans who need, want and deserve them. So, I would caution members opposite.

I am proud to stand on behalf of the constituents of Tuxedo and speak to this budget today, Mr. Speaker. We know that the budget has been introduced—the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) and our leader, the Leader of the Opposition, has introduced an amendment. And I would hope that members opposite would have a serious look at that amendment and seriously look to support that amendment.

Obviously, this is not a budget that we on this side of the House can support. We do not support increases in taxes to Manitobans. We do not support breaking the law in Manitoba either, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this NDP government is proposing to do. They're proposing to break the law. They believe they are above the law, and that is the arrogance that is showing through in this NDP government. No longer do they stand for the New Democratic Party; they stand for the no democratic party or no democracy party. They stand for the new dictatorship party. It is extremely unfortunate that they have chosen this path for Manitobans.

And we believe and we've been hearing from Manitobans across this great province of ours. We've received emails and letters from Manitobans asking and begging that this government abide by the law, that they want a say in this PST hike.

And I would say to members opposite, what's the problem with listening to Manitobans? What are they so afraid of? Are they afraid that perhaps if there was a referendum in this province that those—that Manitobans would vote against that? Well, of course, they would, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this government is—but why are they afraid of that? Why not let Manitobans have a say in this PST hike?

But, before I get more into the depths of the budget and the despair of this budget, I do want to say that—I want to go back to why I ran politically and, you know, Mr. Speaker, constituents in my community are concerned about the future of our province. They're concerned about the direction that this government has—taking. This government had an opportunity yesterday to step up to the plate and provide hope and opportunity for young people in our province. Yet, regrettably, instead they chose again—once again—and for 13 years, I've sat here—I've stood here in this House and watched this government continually, year after year, mortgage the future of our young people in Manitoba. It's extremely unfortunate.

They have doubled the debt of this Province since they came into power, Mr. Speaker, and who is going to be left to pick up the pieces in the end? Who's going to be left to pay for that, that debt burden? It's going to be our children and our grandchildren and probably even our great-grandchildren with the direction that this NDP government is going with their spend, spend, spend ways. It's extremely unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, this really hits at the heart of why I got involved in politics. I got involved so that I could try and make a difference for young people in our communities. Unfortunately, it's very difficult to try and make positive changes for young people when this NDP government continues to pass budgets like the one introduced yesterday that erode the very future of their opportunity in this province. They have not provided our young people with a positive future. In fact, they have jeopardized their very future in this province.

I think if we look at the expenditures the government from back when they first came into power in 2000–1999, but the first budget in 2000–

was \$6.4 billion in expenditures and it's now over \$12 billion. It's almost doubled. So they've doubled the size of government overall, but when I ask Manitobans, do you believe that you've got double the number of services? Is the—are the services that you are receiving today double? Is it double what you were receiving when the NDP came to power? And they say, no, as a matter of fact, it's worse than that.

Unfortunately, children continue to fall through the cracks in our child welfare system. Wait times for health-care services continue to rise. They've doubled the debt, Mr. Speaker, and in doubling that debt one of the problems is, of course, the cost of servicing that debt, almost a billion dollars at \$838 million.

And that is one thing that is very concerning to me because this government has had a great opportunity to reduce the debt. There was a plan in place under the original balanced budget legislation to retire the debt in 30 years. We'd almost be there had the NDP government not governed in their tax-and-spend ways.

We would have been close to retiring the debt in this province had they stuck to the original balanced budget legislation. But, no, instead they had to open up the act several times in order—and each time they opened up the act they did something to further erode that fiscal responsibility that we had in this province. And each time they did it because they needed to feed their spending addiction, and so it was extremely unfortunate when they chose to go down that path. And, of course, the only people that are going to be hurt by that are the young people in our province, and I think that is extremely unfortunate.

We care about our young people. I know when I go out to hockey rinks and the soccer fields and when I go to the track meets and so on—and I know members opposite, many of you do that as well with your kids—I sit there and I think about where they—where will they be in 10 years? Will they be here? You know, what are they going to be forced to pay in this province? And if they look at their neighbouring Saskatchewan and their friends in Saskatchewan and in other provinces across this country, Mr. Speaker, they're—look, they're mobile. They can move wherever they want, and I think it's unfortunate because they will probably make the choice and I hope that they don't. And I hope that we have a change in government as soon as possible so that we can start moving in the right direction to try and

encourage those young people to stay here in Manitoba.

Because right now, Mr. Speaker, we have gone so far down a path that is so dangerous for the future of our province that we're dangerously close to the last person left can just shut out the lights—*[interjection]* Thank you. It's close to that.

* (16:10)

But I always—as the optimist that I am, I know, I always believe that there's a hope for the future of our province. Unfortunately, I don't think it's going to happen under this NDP government. But I think over the course of the next little while, as this government has introduced this PST hike and the retail sales tax hike, 1 per cent, that they are going to—I'm sure the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) has already received a number of emails about this, and I'm sure he's received a number of phone calls about this, people who are not happy, people who are not happy about the hike itself, the people who are not happy about this government wanting to take away their democratic right to have a vote on this. That's what the law says in our province. The law says that the government cannot introduce a bill in this Manitoba Legislature that requires an increase in the retail sales tax—is one of those; there's other taxes as well. But they cannot introduce a bill in this Manitoba Legislature calling for an increase in the retail sales tax without first going to the people of Manitoba and asking them if they agree.

But, rather than do that, Mr. Speaker, rather than do the right thing and abide by the laws in Manitoba, once again, the NDP government is going to change the law and not abide by the existing law. It's unfortunate when members opposite don't like the law, when it doesn't suit their needs and their spending addiction, they just change it, and they don't, you know—they're afraid to go back to Manitobans and listen to Manitobans in what they want to see happen. They believe in a future of this province. We believe in them. We believe, on this side of the House, that they know what's best for their families. We believe that the—that more money in their pockets—because we should be putting more money in their pockets, not less money in their pockets, because we believe they know how best to spend their money. We don't believe that the NDP government knows better how to spend their money.

And I would suggest that over the course of the next little while, members opposite are going to be receiving a lot of emails from their constituents.

They're going to receive a lot of phone calls from their constituents, and there's going to be friends and probably even family members of theirs that will be really upset about this, and I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that for once this NDP government listens. We know time and time again that this government loves to go out and introduce legislation in this Manitoba Legislature because, you know, they've come up with some idea. They think this is what's best for Manitobans; they know what's best for Manitobans; Manitobans don't really know; we've got to tell them what's best. That's what—that's their mentality.

So they go out and they introduce legislation, and we've seen it time and time again over all the years I've been here. Every time I look at a piece of legislation, the first thing I ask, I wonder if they even bothered to consult the third parties who will be affected and negatively impacted as a result of this. And time and time again, we sit in committee meetings, and time and time again I've asked people who come to committee and they—they're presenting at committee and they say—and I ask them, were you consulted on this, on this piece of legislation? And time and time again, what we heard from Manitobans is, no, we were not consulted on this.

And then the NDP says, well, it's okay, you know, we'll leave it up to regulations; we're going to just pass the bill first and then we'll leave it up to the regulations and we'll consult then.

Well, why not get it right the first time, you know, before they introduce legislation that, you know, the—where the perception is that it's a, you know, a good piece of legislation and this sort of thing? Why don't they just do the proper consultation in the first place before they go down that slippery slope of, you know, just so they can get it right the first time, Mr. Speaker? I think the unfortunate thing is that, time and time again, they don't do that.

And then we're left with a piece of legislation that somewhere down the road has to be amended again because they didn't get it right the first time. And, of course, that's what's happened with, you know, the balanced budget legislation as well.

It was a great piece of legislation. It was a great law in this province that was passed by a great government who had the foresight, Mr. Speaker, to be, you know, who—they were extremely concerned about an NDP government coming in and doing exactly what this NDP government has done. And they tried to prevent that by introducing the balanced

budget legislation when it—when they first came up with it. And at the time, I believe, actually, members opposite had supported it at the time and then what they do they—when they get into office, when the laws don't suit them anymore, they continue to open up the act time and time again just to suite their own political agenda.

I think Manitobans are starting to see through this, Mr. Speaker, and I think they want a say, especially when it comes to something that is going to have a negative impact on their own families. And this PST, they will go out to the stores when they're purchasing goods. They'll see it when they pay their home insurance. They'll see it when they go for a haircut. They'll see it when they go to all sorts of things. When—last year the government expanded the PST by some \$184 million last year, and that's—that doesn't even include the fees and so on that they expanded last year and the fee hikes that they had last year. But now they're going—it's going to impact—negatively impact them even more. It's over \$400 million in the last, you know, in the last two years, and it's unacceptable. And Manitobans want a say.

But, Mr. Speaker, when we go through the list of things, when you look at the fact that the government has essentially doubled the size of government since they came into power, and I asked earlier, you know, I asked Manitobans and my constituents: Do you feel that you're getting double? They've doubled the size of government. Do you believe you're getting double the services? And they say time and time again, no. And what they refer to, again, is the children falling through the cracks in the child welfare system. Wait times for health-care services and diagnostics are—continue to rise and are out of control. Gangs are running rampant on our street where the violent—Winnipeg's the violent crime capital of Canada and it's the murder capital of Canada. These are not things to be proud of. In so many instances we're dead last in our country, and these are things that the government should be ashamed of, okay.

Mr. Speaker, we also have the lowest graduation rates in Canada and Winnipeg is the poverty capital of Canada as well. And with all of these things I know members opposite love to talk about X number of dollars or X number of millions of dollars more that they're putting into another government program. But do they ever stop once and ask whether or not that program is working for the Manitobans that need, want and deserve those services? They don't.

And I introduced a bill in this Manitoba Legislature last—in the fall session that was The Results-Based Budgeting Act, and we debated that bill in the Manitoba Legislature. And I really thought that members opposite—why would they have a problem with this? What is wrong? They should be doing this already, but they're not. But it should be—unfortunately, we have to look at this kind of legislation because it's members opposite, when they get into government, they just continue to pour money at programs that aren't working and that's the unfortunate part here. We need to ensure that if there are programs out there that are working for Manitobans, then, fine. Let's put some more money into those programs. But if there are programs that aren't working and if they're not achieving the results that they should be achieving, then maybe you should think of another way of trying to deliver those services.

And you need to start looking at results and that's the unfortunate part about this government. They're all about inputs, but not about outputs and—pretty much everything they look at. I mean, if we look at the whole Lake Winnipeg debate, Mr. Speaker, and how they forced, you know, the City of Winnipeg to remove nitrogen in the treatment facilities, and all the scientists came out and said this is ridiculous. It's a waste of money. It was some \$500 million, but members opposite, oh no, no. This is what we have to do. And they forced the City of Winnipeg to unnecessarily spend some \$500 million on that project.

But never once do they talk about what that has done. Where are the results? Where are the results? And—but they don't like to talk about results because they're afraid of results. The results may prove that their programs are not working and that they're a waste of money. Heaven forbid that they would come to that sort of a conclusion and stop the waste of money and the flow of money to programs that are no longer working for hard-working Manitobans.

* (16:20)

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back and just talk a little bit. When I first heard the words out of the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Struthers) mouth yesterday, when it's their—when he said that it was their decision to raise the retail sales tax in this province by 1 per cent, I just—the first thing that came to my mind was, wow. I just—I couldn't believe it. I just said, are you kidding me? I can't believe that they've actually done this, and I—I'm hoping that

maybe someone can just pinch me and that I'll wake up from this nightmare, because this is an extreme nightmare for Manitobans.

And, Mr. Speaker, the problem with this government is that they don't have a revenue problem. Revenues are on the rise, as the Minister of Finance likes to talk out of one side of his mouth. Yes, revenues are great. Oh yes, we're—you know, things are going really well in Manitoba, and the other side, well, we got to run a deficit because it's tough economic times.

Well, which is it, Mr. Speaker? You know, he talks out of both sides of his mouth all the time when it comes to these things, and he's sending mixed messages to the—to Manitobans, to the point now that they don't really trust what this government is saying anymore because they say one thing and do another.

And our leader spoke very eloquently earlier about actions speaking louder than words, and we've seen time and time again all these government programs that members opposite have introduced. And they stand and they do their press conferences and, you know, never ever do we see what we're getting from those announcements. And often they'll make those announcements and they never actually take place. And then what they do is they sort of dust off their old press releases from a few years back, and they say, oh, you know what? We never delivered on that so we better re-announce it.

And I think for the Selkirk mental hospital, I think it was about five re-announcements before they actually did something there.

And you know what? It was just—and I know that. It was—before every election, they dust off all their old press releases and say, ah, what did we not deliver on? And it's a lot of it. It's probably a stack, like, this high, and you know—and, Mr. Speaker, before the election, all of a sudden, when they dust off all these old press releases, it comes out, and there's a flood of announcements before the election.

Which reminds me, Mr. Speaker, that one of the biggest announcements and one of the biggest promises made before the last election was made by the Premier (Mr. Selinger), and he 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.

He also said: We're ahead of schedule right now.

Well, clearly, you were not ahead of schedule. Now, you got to go back into the balanced budget legislation. You got to change it again because you're behind schedule. How could you be ahead of schedule just prior to the election and then all of a sudden it's 'doomsville' right after the election, Mr. Speaker?

It was dishonest what they did and what they told Manitobans. They knew full well that they had every intention of raising taxes. The first year they came back into—the first year after the election, they raised taxes by some \$184 million. They broke their promise then. They've broken their promise again this year to Manitobans, and they raised the taxes, raised the PST by 1 percentage point, some \$227 million, Mr. Speaker.

The difference between last year and this year is that this year requires the NDP to abide by an existing law. It's not just a broken promise; it's a broken law. They broke the law, Mr. Speaker, in announcing what they announced without having the mandate of the people to do so. They told the people before the last election that they would not raise taxes. The Premier said, read my lips, no new taxes.

Well, we have—these are a lot of new taxes, but not only did he break his promise, he has taken away the democratic right of each and every Manitoban to have a say on this PST hike, by way of a referendum. And that is a very serious issue.

And that's why people are coming forward now and they are—they have serious things to say about this. It is not right. They should go back to the Manitoba—to Manitobans, and ask them their opinion on this. And I think if they do, that Manitobans will come out in droves against this. And even if they don't, I mean, at least they've had their say. But what are members opposite afraid of? They're so afraid that they may not have that mandate by the people to raise the taxes in order to pay for their spending addiction.

So if they can't pay for their spending addiction, what are they going to do, Mr. Speaker? So it is extremely unfortunate, and just, again, my initial reaction was wow. I mean, are you kidding me? This is the craziest thing I've ever seen in this province and we've seen a lot under this NDP government.

But, Mr. Speaker, we've seen people—and I know in question period today, some of my colleagues talked about some people that they had heard on CJOB who brought forward their concerns about this

issue. You know, there was Matthew who said: I believe that this government is completely irresponsible in its fiscal actions; Jennifer: I'm angry, this government said they wouldn't raise my taxes, but; Richard: they're robbing me again. There was Don who said: I think we have to take a look at this government, their promises in their election, and then they turn around and my question is, you know, they put a 25 cent per—well, he goes on, but he's very upset about this. And Jerry and Frank and there's so many people who are so upset about this.

And, you know, members opposite laugh, because they don't want to listen to Manitobans. They are afraid to listen to what Manitobans are saying on this issue. They are afraid that if they do go to a referendum that they may not get the result that suits their spending addiction and feeds their spending addiction and helps feed their spending addiction. And so, that's what the unfortunate part is here, Mr. Speaker, is that Manitobans once again are being forced to feed the spending addiction. They are the ones that have to pay for the spending addiction of this NDP government.

And rather than look at ways—this government, rather than look at ways of spending within their means, that each and every Manitoba family has to do—when we do our own budgets at home, we try and figure out how do we make ends meet. You know, if it's a tough year financially, we have to make some tough decisions within our families. We may not be able to do some of the things that we used to do. Some kids' programs may have to be cut because of that, and it's very unfortunate because that's what will happen with this PST. The increase of some \$1,200, Mr. Speaker, per family of four over the year—that's a lot of money. That's a lot of money that could go towards a kid being able to be on a hockey team or be on a soccer team, or be on a basketball or volleyball team or a baseball team. And that's how it will have a negative impact on families, when they sit down to look at their own budgets.

When they look at their budgets and they're having to make the tough decisions, then—you know, that they're no longer going to be able to afford to spend, you know, this kind of money for their kids in their programs, Mr. Speaker. And I—and, you know, it's really all because this NDP government has taken that money from them and they've decided, you know what? We don't want you to be able to spend the money on your child going to soccer. We don't want you to be able to spend your own money deciding what to do with your own money. We're

going to take that money because we know better how to spend it than you do.

And I think Manitoba families will reflect on this, and they will say, how dare that arrogant NDP government. How dare they say—they take away my democratic right to have a vote on this, to make a decision for my family. They took that away, they took my money away, and they've now prevented my kids from being able to play on a sports team in the province of Manitoba.

At a time, Mr. Speaker, when childhood obesity is out of control, we need to be looking and encouraging all Manitoba families to make that decision to put their children into programs in the community centres in our province. But instead, the NDP will be stripping that decision right out of the hands of hard-working Manitobans and they will be taking their money and spending it on their own pet projects.

* (16:30)

So over the course of the next little while, Mr. Speaker, we will see—we will see—Manitobans will speak loud. They will come out and they will show this government how unhappy they are with this decision because it will start to affect them and have an impact on them as they sit down and write their own budgets over the next year and over the next few years. And when it starts to have a serious impact on those kids being able to play in those programs within their communities, Manitobans will remember it was the NDP government who took the money away from their kids.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for letting me rise in the House today and speak to this budget. I just wanted to put a couple words on the record to correct the member for Tuxedo.

She was saying in her speech how, you know, people are going to turn out the lights in this province. I know that Conservatives don't really like researching data, but, you know, in this province we've actually seen a really big gain of people in the province. And maybe if the members—maybe the Leader of the Opposition actually lived in his riding he would know that there's about a thousand houses being built right now in his riding and there's another thousand right next door in my riding. So to say that people aren't coming here, that Manitoba isn't vibrant and happening is completely a false statement.

I just wanted to make sure I pointed that out, and then the other thing I wanted to point out, Mr. Speaker, is I really love the fact that she said that we're going to work on our pet projects. She's right. Pet projects like hospitals, pet projects like bridges and roads, pet projects like the community clubs she was speaking of that these children are going to play soccer at. You're right. We are bad people. We are going to work on pet projects. Oh, look out, here comes another school. Maybe we'll have a daycare in the area. I don't know, those pet projects are pretty scary. We might want to review some of them.

I look forward to working this session, Mr. Speaker, with everyone on our side of the House to building a better Manitoba. I know that on—people on our side of the House have worked very hard to find creative solutions in these challenging times and we're working all of us together to make Manitoba even a better place to live and raise a family.

Manitoba has changed a lot in the last 10 years if you look at all the things that are going on. I'll just say a few: the new hospital; new ERs; new access centres; new QuickCare clinics; new arena; new and more daycares; new schools. Oh, and let's not forget the wonderful thing that happening tomorrow night; the Jets are back in town. How about that one, Mr. Speaker?

An Honourable Member: You did that?

Mr. Gaudreau: Yes, actually the members of the opposition are asking about what we did. We actually supported building the MTS Centre which was what contributed to bringing the Jets back. So, yes, we do take some credit in that fantastic and very economic spinoff of the—having the Jets back in our society.

When I rise to speak in this House, Mr. Speaker, I always find that I—pride, and I find that it's—I'm very proud to say that my community has put the trust in me to raise concerns for them here and to be their voice. I thank my constituents in St. Norbert for giving me the honour and the privilege for getting this work done for them.

Mr. Speaker, I've met thousands of people in the last year and a half on the doorstep, community events, and I've listened to them and their concerns. And I'm taking them forward in this Budget 2013 and protecting what I've been told by them that matters the most: health care; education; jobs; and infrastructure. That is why our budget is a growth budget. We will grow jobs when we build more

critical infrastructure. We will grow the population because Manitoba is vibrant and people want to call it home. We will grow the economy with businesses and families that come here because there's even more flood protection and they're not worried about being flooded out every year.

I have lived in the constituency for most of my adult life, Mr. Speaker, and I currently live just less than a kilometre from my office in the heart of St. Norbert, and I do have a very big passion for improving my area. These improvements have come in many forms, from the bigger projects that I have seen to that—a new school, a couple of new daycares being built, and the simple grassroots things that I really love and enjoy doing like serving pizza to the kids at lunchtime at their schools or cleaning up along Pembina Highway or the community cleanups that I organize every spring. Some of the St. Norbert residents have seen that it—that—have said to me that it's very important to them in their lives their jobs, and that's why we will see to it that the jobs, that the lives of all Manitobans will improve over the next few years and this will happen because of the programs in our budget. This will happen because of more training. Last month we saw the job Skills Summit and a plan to see more Manitobans trained for highly skilled jobs and the demand that Manitoba employers are facing right now.

I know first-hand the many challenges trying to find opportunities. Back when the opposition was in power—and the Leader of the Opposition was actually in government at that time, I found myself an unemployed father trying to find work. I couldn't find it, Mr. Speaker.

So, you know what? I looked at training programs and I had to really dig hard and I did find one. But you know what? It was from the federal government. There was no supports from the provincial government for the program I took. I took a federal program and I was getting \$600—actually, I remember the number exactly—\$636 biweekly supporting a family of three, and that was the federal unemployment system that paid for it. I paid for my own books. I paid for my tuition, and that was what was the supports were back then.

I'm proud to say that through our programs we are going to be doing a lot more training and a lot more apprenticeship than was ever seen before, and we also have a lot more supports in program. Now the provincial government is involved and they help people get to these programs.

So I look back at those tough times when the Leader of the Opposition sat around cutting things for folks like me and making his millions, and he's so proud to be part of a government that is helping—that didn't help people get their skills. He says he's very proud of that government. Well, he didn't help people get skills. He didn't help the economy grow. He didn't help the stable workforce. No thanks to the provincial Conservative government back then.

Those years of apprenticeship and training happened—were the biggest opportunity that I had in my life. I ended up getting a great job, which led to a rewarding career and a great life. And now we will see Manitobans being able to experience that exact same thing with the help of our provincial government.

We should be very proud of what we have to offer here, Mr. Speaker. We have home-care and health-care systems that are the envy of other provinces, low unemployment rates, in fact, 2 per cent—over 2 per cent lower than the national average. We have good jobs and affordable housing, and we have clean, affordable hydro, something that I'm sure, if the members opposite were in power, would see to it that that didn't exist either.

These are all things that we all often take for granted, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud that our approach does not slash jobs like we saw in—when the Leader of the Opposition was around the table. When he and his team were in power, they laid off thousands of people, not just nurses and teachers, but other support workers. Our approach is to keep Manitobans working.

I will never forget the strikes and the labour disputes when the Leader of the Opposition was around the table: the nurses being laid off, hospital wings being mothballed, and fruit flies in the ER. The creation of hallway medicine happened around when the Leader of the Opposition was at the table.

I believe that we should give credit where credit's due, Mr. Speaker, so I will point out that the Leader of the Opposition should get credit for his role in creating hallway medicine. I think that's a great thing. We'll give him the total credit for what he did.

What makes me so proud to be part of this government is that we have never cut doctors or nurses. This government understands that health care is one of the top priorities for Manitobans, and I certainly know it is for my family. We all deserve a

high level of care, not just the rich that live in million-dollar mansions.

Mr. Speaker, in these uncertain global and economic challenging times, people can rest assure that our government's priorities are on front-line services that everyone depends on. Just look at a small snapshot of some of the great things we are doing in health care: Over 500 more cancer treatments per year and faster cancer care by having treatments available on stat holidays, \$1.2 million announced for the community health-care clinic, partnering with other Provinces to lower drug care costs, cutting the waiting lists for hip and knee replacements by 40 per cent, a state-of-the-art new diagnostic machine that will shrink wait times for diagnostic for breast cancer, and I could go on and on.

They say actions speak louder than words. What was their side of the House's actions during uncertain times? They cut teachers; they cut nurses; they closed hospital wings, created hallway medicine, and stalled the economy. They're all about the books, Mr. Speaker. They're not about families like we are on this side of the House. We keep moving forward, and we keep investing in the future, the future of people in Manitoba and the health care and—of people in Manitoba. People can trust us.

Something else that people can count on is the floodway that protects Winnipeg from the Red River when it floods. These gates are housed in St. Norbert and they saw a complete rehabilitation over the last few years by our government because we know the value of infrastructure that protects families.

Look at the 1997 flood when the Conservative government was in power. The flood hit Winnipeg and St. Norbert. South of the Perimeter was evacuated, Mr. Speaker. Furnaces, hot-water tanks were cut out of basements and raised up onto the second level. Everyone was told to move their belongings out because they thought St. Norbert was going to be lost. Thousands of people, hundreds of homes.

* (16:40)

Well, what action was taken by the other side of the House, our opposition, after the flood, to correct this? Nothing, not a thing. There was no extra flood mitigation done to St. Norbert after that flood. But you know what happened? The only action happened after our government came in and we doubled the size of the floodway. So, right now, my furnace and

my hot water tank are exactly where they should be: in the basement of my house, heating my home that I get to go home to every night. There are thousands of other St. Norbert residents that benefit from that floodway being doubled in size underneath our government.

See, Mr. Speaker, we build. And we protect. We build for families and businesses, and we protect families and businesses. Who knows what that side of the House would have done if they would have stayed in power? Mothballed the project? Seems to be a theme over there.

St. Norbert is a diverse riding with rich history all the way back to 1815 in the original Forks. St. Norbert is home to wonderful people and a lot of economic activity and ethnic background, and it is a fantastic place to raise a family, work and play.

St. Norbert has so much to offer, and I enjoy walking to Saint-Norbert Farmers' Market every week during the summer for some fresh produce and check out the unique, 100 per cent Manitoban grown goods that are available in that farmers' market. And our budget speaks to growing things in Manitoba and providing things for Manitobans.

I highly recommend that everyone join me and the Premier this year at the season opening of the 25th annual farmers' market on June 1st. There are many more projects that I'll be working for in my area alongside the member for Fort Richmond (Ms. Irvin-Ross), projects that will improve the lives of people in our area. Things like the health-care access centre, more child-care spaces, much like the one that I'm proud to say that is being added to the Bonnycastle expansion of the school. Another example of our side's vision for the future, and how we build towards the future, not mothball it—what did they do when they faced tough times? They cut education funding, closed schools.

St. Norbert is growing, and I'm committed to working with them, with my constituents, on projects that matter to them. Working together, I believe that we can help St. Norbert continue to be the best area in Manitoba to work, play and raise a family. And I'm proud to represent such a wonderful area.

I work for all people of all political stripes to improve the quality of life for everyone. I'm not afraid to get involved and roll up my sleeves, work alongside community members to improve families' lives. I truly feel that we have put forward a budget that protects what matters most to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, there's an interesting article in the Free Press on Saturday, April 13th, about governments needing compassion, and how cuts that the federal government have made are downloading all those costs to the Province. Well, I know on this side of the House, that we look at every issue through that lens of compassion. We have proven ourselves over and over by not recklessly slashing programs like the opposition has suggested. We continue to invest in all areas of the province, including members of the opposite ridings.

We are also investing in things like—in Manitoba, in Brandon West, \$10 million for a street that was announced in the budget. Fixing flood damage for the St. Ambroise park that they're asking for. Nursing homes, in some other areas.

We, unlike the opposition, know our role is to look after every single Manitoban, and have continued to do so by investing in all areas of the province. We have not laid off thousands of people like the opposition did, endangering public safety, disrupting lives and destroying the economy. We will not take their advice and do that; that is not how our government operates.

We know that austerity doesn't work. Just look at the federal model right now. We saw a stock market crash; we are on the verge of another recession because of austerity. We have chose to keep people working and proven it that our method works better because we have a 2 per cent lower-than-average unemployment rate. That proves that our way of doing things is better than the way of austerity. It keeps Manitobans working, and it keeps building for the future.

I'm positive this year we'll hear the same rhetoric. Actually, I have to confess, I must be clairvoyant because I wrote that part before the session started, and I'm—what I'm about to say is what they've been saying, is that I'm sure that we're going to hear that—how their area needed more stuff. I must be clairvoyant like the Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation.

It sure didn't take long for them to suggest \$112 million. In less than one day, they wanted another \$112 million, which is—what?—about a half a per cent on the PST, right? But it didn't take long. We heard Tuesday that they had petitions requesting more money—spend in four of their areas \$112 million. They cry that they're for spending cuts, but spend in their area.

I'm looking forward to the members opposite who asked for all that money to stand up and vote for the budget that we delivered. You asked for it; we delivered it. So have the guts to stand up and vote for it.

And I hope that all the construction companies in all of your areas take notice of the vote, because if you vote against this infrastructure, you on the other side of the House will have to answer to all those construction companies that won't be employing people and won't have any jobs. We are going to be continuing to employ people by providing this kind of infrastructure.

Our budget protects our children's future, Mr. Speaker. We're not laying off thousands of teachers like the Conservative government in Alberta is doing and, surely, like the opposition would do if they were in power. They talk a big game about being the party for everyone, but their actions when they're in power spoke differently. Only the rich made out like bandits. The Leader of the Opposition is trying so hard to make people think he has changed, his come on, please believe me, I'm different now, please, are commonplace. A real working class fellow with a nine-car heated garage. I, for one, am not buying it.

They say actions speak louder than words. He asked Manitobans to trust him. Why? Why trust a man who says that he's proud of his time as a senior member of the last PC government, saying it was one of the finest governments in the history that Manitoba's been blessed with. This means the Leader of the Opposition was proud that he made cuts to nurses. The Leader of the Opposition was proud that he made cut to teachers and school funding. The Leader of the Opposition was proud that he made cuts that forced people to take Fridays off, without pay. And services to Manitobans declined. The Leader of the Opposition was proud when the government took in more gas tax than they spent on crumbling infrastructure around the province.

Why, on earth, would he trust—why, on earth, would we trust him that he is a lighter, fluffier version of himself, Mr. Speaker? Well, to be honest, I do trust him. I trust his past, his record, when he was in government: cuts, cuts, and more cuts. I can trust that.

It's our record that shows we have been protecting front-line services and that we keep the province strong and growing. It's our record that our government is improving home care and Pharmacare. Our government has made sure Manitobans suffering

from cancer will now have access to all the prescription drugs they need. Our government will continue to train health-care front-line staff. Our government will ensure that health care can provide a level of care that Manitobans want and expect, not cut away recklessly like the opposition would do.

Our government doubled the size of the floodway and will continue to invest in critical infrastructure around Manitoba, protecting every Manitoban from these flooding events.

Our government continues to build Manitoba, and we will be committed to ensuring that our families continue to pay the lowest electricity, home heating, and auto insurance bills in the country. Our government is seeing lower than average unemployment. Our government has trained thousands of more nurses, doctors, and apprentices. We can build the economy with hydro and do all of this—the good things that we can continue doing, keeping our publicly—public utility owned publicly, something the Leader of the Opposition asked them to trust them with again. Trust them? Trust them like when he was in government and said he wouldn't sell MTS? Yeah, right, Mr. Speaker. I don't trust that at all.

The past few years have been a hard battle for Manitobans. The world is waging a war on climate change. It has been said that the members of the opposition don't like science. They dismissed it like pixie dust. They mothball projects and muzzle scientists. But that won't change the fact that climate change is real. Maybe they need a blogger to tell them that climate change is actually real.

You cannot deny that the world is seeing increasingly crazy weather events, Mr. Speaker. All you have to do is look at close to home. Manitoba has seen droughts and floods at record levels in the same year. Last winter was mostly snow free and completely melted by mid-March. This year we have three feet of ice on the Red River and it's not even—and it's mid-April. We are facing another flood. The third in five years.

Manitobans can trust that we will remain committed to building and restoring these affected areas and protecting Manitobans. Manitobans can trust that we will always be there for them. We have flowed the funding from the 2011 flood, and now we're waiting for the federal counterparts of the opposition to pay its fair share over two years later. This should show Manitobans how the Leader of the Opposition would handle a flood. Delay payments

and make people wait. Not us, Mr. Speaker. We are there for Manitobans.

The recent flood reports that over a billion dollars is needed to upgrade the flood protection in the province. Manitoba can trust that we will act on these reports, and we will build, not delay and mothball projects, like the opposition does. That is what every dollar of this plan is going to be spent on, critical Manitoba infrastructure. Manitoba can trust that we will continue our efforts to rebuild infrastructure and build for flood mitigation along the Assiniboine. Manitobans can trust that we are moving forward and building a clean green hydro that will help battle against climate change, selling power to the US, and lessening the use of dirty coal-fired power, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:50)

We are building for the future. It takes 10 years to get a dam online; we cannot wait for the demand to be here, as the Leader of the Opposition expects. If we wait, we fall behind by 10 years. It's just like in the past when our side of the House built hydro. The demand will come. We are on our side of the House know it's coming by using science, history and facts—not Conservative pixie dust or a blogger.

We have a vision, we build. We are not mothballing projects that put thousands of people at risk, and not to mention the clean environment aspect of it. Mr. Speaker, it seems like the Leader of the Opposition must have stock in mothballs; he's always wanting to mothball things. I guess he has to pay for his mansion somehow. Maybe that's how he got his millions. I should talk to him about that. That might be an investment I want to do if they ever get into power: buy into mothballs.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans can trust us on the economy, too. We have been called Manitoba's miracle. Our Premier has been called Canada's most financial-impressive financial leader. Manitoba consistently has among the lowest unemployment rates in the country.

Compared to 1999, we have saved Manitoba families more than \$850 million in property tax and income tax savings in Manitoba. The Education Property Tax Credit is more than double, \$700. The seniors maximum act-education property tax and credit will increase to \$1,100.

And, in 2015, Mr. Speaker, seniors will no longer have to pay school taxes. Yes, you heard me right: no longer have to pay school taxes. Letting

them stay in their homes longer, allowing them to age in place.

Mr. Speaker, all jurisdictions and all political stripes are facing the same revenue problems across the country. The great news is that the Manitoba NDP government is performing better than other promises—other provinces with Conservative governments. Did you know that in Manitoba our education and property taxes only rose 9.2 per cent over the last two-12 years? A far cry from the Canadian average of 41.1 per cent. *[interjection]* Whoa, it's a good statistic, Mr. Speaker. Maybe they should learn statistics and facts, not just rely on bloggers.

Mr. Speaker, some more fantastic news, on the education front, is that the elimination of the seniors tax credit will help the seniors live in place and also, in this budget, we protect things that families care about most. It protects front-line services and we set out of responsible plan for the future of Manitoba.

We have promised to deliver more child-care spaces, and we will deliver. We have promised more affordable social housing, and we will deliver. This government has taken the appropriate measures to provide pensions to attract high-quality workers to our child care, providing a stepping stone for our future of our children in this province.

Our government is looking to the future generations with stable education funding. Fourteen years in a row we have increased education funding, Mr. Speaker, 57 per cent more than when the Leader of the Opposition was last in power.

Our government capped tuition rates to the rate of inflation and is providing post-secondary institutions with stable funding. We know that the youth cannot afford the reckless cuts and the tuition-rate hikes of over 140 per cent like when the opposition was in power.

Our commitment to children and families go even further. We are also the first province to mandate that new schools will all have early childhood learning education centres in them. We will continue to work and make sure that families have access to quality child care.

Mr. Speaker, even in these uncertain financial times, we have not lost the vision that people and families come first. We will work side by side with those people to find solutions and keep the province growing and keep Manitobans well cared for, now and into the future.

I support this budget and will continue working with my colleagues and every Manitoban to build Manitoba into an even better place than—to live, work and play.

In closing, I would once again like to thank the people of St. Norbert for giving me the honour of representing them here today and the next three years. I will continue to work as long as, as hard as I can for St. Norbert and make sure that their voices are heard.

I will work with our government to continue finding solutions to problems in uncertain times, always keeping in mind that people and families come first, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): It's a pleasure to rise in the House and stand before the members here to put a few words on the record with regard to the 2013 Budget and speak on issues that are important to Manitobans, but specifically to the constituents of Riding Mountain.

Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a disconnect, I believe, with this government and with Manitobans as a whole. The previous speaker, the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), forgot to mention or failed to mention the 1 per cent PST increase or the retail tax increase that actually wasn't part of their election platform. Their election platform actually indicated we will not raise taxes. So, when they're talking about credibility and hidden agendas, I think that that probably is the worst election betrayal that Manitobans have seen.

Mr. Speaker, this budget, they say, is about families, and we've heard from many Manitobans who've said that it's ironic that they talk about the importance of families, and then they go and tax them in two consecutive budgets, the highest tax increases that this province has ever seen. It's unfortunate that this government has put politics over best-governance policies because I think that, by the government, you know, dismantling the balanced budget legislation or law, it has taken away Manitobans' belief that there'll be careful fiscal management done by this government.

We—we're seeing a government that really doesn't seem to care about democracy. They're not allowing Manitobans to have a say with regard to the increase in PST. Not only did they lie about it or were dishonest with Manitobans with regard to raising taxes, they're not even allowing Manitobans

the opportunity to have a say with regard to the PST hike. And this is in the legislation as we speak. So in a sense they bring in a budget, and then within three weeks of that budget they're going to bring in legislation that is actually going to take away Manitobans' opportunity to have a say of whether they want to see a significant increase in PST.

Mr. Speaker, over the last two budgets, the government has done several things to reduce their credibility with regard to balanced budget legislation. They talk about meeting the needs of Manitobans. I live in an area that has seen significant challenges over the last 10 years. We have seen, in communities like Minnedosa, lose Crown-land jobs. The Minister for Agriculture at that time, the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn), said that, oh, but we're going to give you engineering positions, and those are, you know, professional positions. Well, they're taking those this year. You know, it doesn't make any sense.

The people in the community called this government's members back-door members, back-door ministers, Mr. Speaker, because they never came through the front door to speak to the people that they were going to be taking the jobs from.

And I remember quite clearly one of the people that were in one of the positions that were being eliminated had written to the Premier (Mr. Selinger) specifically and begged him to look at what they were doing with regard to losing those jobs. And, you know what? The Premier actually deleted that email without even looking at it.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a government that cares about people. This is a government that cares about themselves. This is a government that actually is going to give themselves a significant amount of money to their party so that they don't have to go to the Manitobans to ask them to support them in the next election. This is a government that's taking care of their own, and I'm so disappointed in the behaviour of this government and how they are treating Manitobans.

And, if they think that, you know, their rhetoric and their 198 spinners are going to actually help them change the views of Manitobans—and I believe the views of Manitobans are something that the government is going to have to listen to because I believe that they are not doing what is in the best interests of Manitobans—they are being very self-centred.

And, when you look at the amount of taxes that they're actually accumulating and putting on the backs of Manitobans, it's no wonder that you hear of young Manitobans who are saying that, you know, what's the point?

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) will have 24 minutes remaining.

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

CORRIGENDUM

On April 16, 2013, page 523, first column, sixth paragraph, should have read:

I want to indicate that we've successively increased the capital budget year after year. They voted against it every time.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 17, 2013

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