

**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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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

Thursday, April 25, 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, 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

**Mr. Speaker:** Introduction of bills. No bills? We'll move on with—

### PETITIONS

#### Highway 217 Bridge Repair

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The bridge over the Red River on Highway 217 outside of St. Jean was built in 1947 and provides a vital link for economic opportunities and community development on both sides of the river.

The Department of Infrastructure and Transportation closed the bridge after spending significant sums of money and time on rehabilitation efforts in the summer of 2012.

Individuals require numerous trips across the river each day to access schools, businesses and health-care facilities. The bridge closure causes daily undue hardship and inconvenience for residents due to time requirements and higher transportation costs.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to repair or replace the existing bridge as soon as possible to allow communities on both sides of the river to return to normal activities.

And this petition is signed by M. Sabourin, M. Marion and S. Sabourin and thousands of other 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.

Further 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 this are the reasons for the petition:

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 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 conditions so the park can be reopened for the 2013 season or earlier if possible.

This signed by J. Dumont, A. LaDuvett and S. Ducharme and many, 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 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 E. Ritlbauer, P. Gray and K. Halychuk and hundreds of other fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal**

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

And this is the background for 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 the 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 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.

Mr. Speaker, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by B. Burla, C. Mayoff, D.F. Perrin and so many other Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including the 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 governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force the municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

This petition is signed by A. Flintoft, D. Naylor, D. Boss and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Yes, I was wondering if there might be leave to revert to introduction of bills?

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave to revert back to the tabling—or introduction of bills?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

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

\* (13:40)

We'll now proceed with—

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** I am pleased to table the Manitoba Finance Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2013-2014 Departmental Expenditure Estimates report.

**Mr. Speaker:** And I am pleased to table the report of the Allowance Commissioner on annual allowances for Manitoba's registered political parties.

### 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 two former pages in our gallery today. We have Angela Roesler and Daniel Darcel, who are the guests of the Sergeant-at-Arms. On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you back to your Assembly.

And also seated in the public gallery, we have with us today members from the Buy-a-Net Malaria Prevention Group Margot Christie and Gail Fones, who are the guests of the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino).

And also seated in the public gallery, we have today from the Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary School-Agassiz 17 grade 4 students under the direction of Mr. Wes Krahn. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross).

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Taxpayer Protection Act Democratic Rights

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, we love Manitoba over here, and we believe we have tremendous assets in this province, tremendous people too. But we're being held back. We're a have province, but we're handicapped by a have-not government.

And there is no doubt that this government is lowest ranked in Canada, bottom of the barrel, none.

Statistical analysis and various rating agencies have said that on fiscal management, we're last; on ending poverty, we're last; on cutting red tape, under the NDP, of course, we're last; and on fighting violent crime, we're last.

So other provinces seem to be able to make progress happen, but the spendP is focused on increasing taxes and making life harder for working Manitobans and seniors and disrespecting their judgment at the same time.

Now, the taxpayer protection act, Mr. Speaker, was brought in by the previous government to empower Manitobans, so I have to ask the Premier: What right does he have to take that power away?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker.

We listened to Manitobans. They told us that we needed to build schools. We announced Sage Creek school yesterday.

They told us that we needed to build health-care facilities. We announced the opening of the NorWest Access Centre today in north Winnipeg, one of 22 clinics or access centres we plan to build in order to ensure that Manitobans have access to a family physician, nurse practitioner and other health-care professionals by 2015.

We're moving down the path towards prosperity and looking after Manitobans by ensuring that we're building a better future in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have our Building and Renewal Plan is a \$10-billion plan over 10 years, over 100,000 jobs, to ensure that Manitoba moves forward and they have the roads, schools, hospitals and personal care homes that they need.

### Province of Saskatchewan Competition

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, higher taxes and non-sustainable debt and deficit practices aren't going to give this government anything but more ability to cut ribbons while everybody else is in debt in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And it can't help Manitobans by—build a better future if they keep looking to the past. There was a very interesting story today about that. You know, Jonathan Toews doesn't compete against Stan Mikita, Mr. Speaker. And Sid Crosby—Crosby doesn't compete against Mario Lemieux either. Winners

don't compete against yesterday's rivals. They compete against today's competition.

And we're in competition, and the NDP government has the wrong attitude. They have a losing attitude. They are last for a reason. They are cellar dwellers for a reason. They spend so much time looking to the past and trying to get credit for spending money from the future that they forget about today, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday—just yesterday—the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce announced it has ambitious plans to take advantage of NDP mismanagement. Is the Premier still fighting Gary Filmon, or is he prepared to compete with Brad Wall?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Our competition is the statements the Leader of the Opposition made last week where he would cut everything in Manitoba by 1 per cent.

He would cut municipalities by 1 per cent, when we increased their funding by 8 and a half per cent. He would cut public schools funding, when we increased it by 2.3 per cent. He would cut health-care funding; he made that commitment to all Manitobans last week. He would cut everything that Manitobans have said they value.

There would be less nurses in Manitoba under the Leader of the Opposition. There would be less police officers. There would be less teachers. There would be less daycare workers. There would be less people working and building a future for their families in Manitoba under the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

#### **PST Increase Community Response**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Manitobans would like to cut too. They'd like to cut the leash on that dog.

Saskatchewan has a forward-looking Premier named Wall. We have a backward-looking Premier who likes to build walls, Mr. Speaker, walls against trade, walls against prosperity, walls against sustainability, walls against profit, walls against security.

And certainly he's erected a wall against a brighter future for Manitobans and their children. Behind the wall the Premier's built, he's stopped listening—he has stopped listening. He has a siege

mentality. He isolates himself so he can pretend that he's right because he is alone behind that wall.

Now, the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Winnipeg Harvest, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, social activists, taxpayers associations, municipal leaders across the length and breadth of this province are all of the same mind. They say don't raise the PST, and they are unanimous.

When will this Premier realize that he is a majority of one?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the parents and families in south Winnipeg yesterday very much appreciated the Sage Creek school that we announced.

The people of Brandon very much appreciated the fact that, due to the leadership of the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell), we're paving Victoria Avenue in 2013. The people of Brandon know very much because of the leadership of the member for Brandon East that the roof on the Keystone Centre will be repaired this year. And the people of Brandon know very much that the flood works that are being developed there to prevent flooding to a one-in-300-year level was funded made by a commitment by this government.

Under the slash-and-burn policies of the Leader of the Opposition, none of those things would've been done this year, Mr. Speaker. He's still trying to stop those things. No roads would be built. No schools—

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

#### **Health-Care Services Maternal Care**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, this past December, Rachel and Eric Driedger of Russell arrived at Russell hospital at 3 in the morning because Rachel was going into labour. Her contractions were four minutes apart. It was an emergent situation, and because of this the couple figured they would either deliver in Russell or be transported by ambulance to a facility equipped to deliver babies.

Well, after being assessed by the doctor, Rachel was wheeled to the hospital entrance and was told to drive to Yorkton, Saskatchewan. That's one and a

half hours away in the middle of the night in -25 degree weather. No ambulance was offered.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Health: Is this the NDP's policy on improved maternal care in Manitoba, go to Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** And I can say to the member opposite and to every member in this House, if the case is indeed as presented it's wholly unacceptable. When parents arrive at any health-care facility when they're in need of services, in particular child-birthing services, we need to ensure that we have as many services available as possible.

I would say to the member I would be very interested in speaking with her, learning more about this case so we can investigate. But I can assure—ensure for her that I do not view that to be acceptable.

\* (13:50)

**Mrs. Rowat:** Mr. Speaker, nobody from the regional health authority or this government department contacted them after the situation.

Mr. Speaker, Eric desperately tried to reach the Yorkton regional hospital, often driving at 150 kilometres an hour. He did it because he knew they were running out of time. But they ran out of time, and at 4 o'clock in the morning the Driedgers' baby girl was born on the side of a highway, on a cold and dark Saskatchewan highway with nothing but blowing snow for miles.

It is no wonder we are so alarmed, 'expecially' after this Minister of Health has said, and I quote: Our government's record on providing services and supports for expectant moms, for young families, is significant.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Is her policy to send maternal care from Manitoba to Saskatchewan? Is that her policy?

**Ms. Oswald:** I thank the member for the question and I reiterate to her, if there has been no communication with the regional hospital—regional health authority or the hospital, she has my commitment that I will follow through on that. It's not acceptable.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's why we are building our entire EMS fleet for the decade ahead as a result of our EMS review. It's why we've introduced the

STARS helicopter ambulance for situations of emergencies just as this.

There are a number of protocols in place, Mr. Speaker, that, if the case is as presented by the member today, were not triggered. I want to know why that happened. I thank the member for raising it and she has my commitment that I'll investigate without delay.

**Mrs. Rowat:** But you know what? She has no credibility. This continues to happen in rural Manitoba, and she's looking at reducing ambulance care.

Mr. Speaker, the nightmare still wasn't over for this couple. At 4 in the morning when their new baby girl was born, Eric assisted his daughter with her first breath. He then wrapped her in his coat and tied the umbilical cord with his own bootlace. Rachel called 911 and let the Yorkton hospital know that they'd be arriving shortly with a baby. Rachel needed immediate medical care; she had yet to deliver her placenta.

I ask the Minister of Health: What does this NDP minister have to say for herself? And skip the rhetoric. She has no credibility. She continues to share shallow words of commitment, yet families like the Driedgers are forced to go to Saskatchewan to have children.

**Ms. Oswald:** I thank the member for providing more details, and I would seek from her after question period today further details so that we can investigate this.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please. The matters that we deal with in question period are often very, very important. I'd like to have the opportunity to be able to not only hear the question but also the answer that—to be provided to the House, and I ask for the co-operation of all honourable members to keep the level down a little bit so I might be able to hear those questions and answers.

**Ms. Oswald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You have my assurance that—and so does the member opposite—that I take this issue very seriously. Certainly, as I've said earlier, I will follow up with her after question period if I haven't already received materials from her. This is a serious case. I'm sure that there is a letter in my office right now from her concerning this, but she has my commitment that I'll follow through.

It's why we're going to invest in more health-care professionals, not less. It's why we'll maintain our commitment to health care, because if this case is as she's presented, that's not acceptable and we will do better than that.

#### **PST Increase Impact on Out Migration**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** The nightmare continues, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans are being driven to Saskatchewan by this NDP Premier's (Mr. Selinger) dictatorial PST increase to 8 per cent. He's making Manitobans pay 60 per cent more for PST than in neighbouring Saskatchewan where it's 5.

It drives people like Mike Melham, who moved to Manitoba last fall, to say, and I quote: This change is—to 8 per cent makes me wonder why I chose to settle here. He adds: Saskatchewan and Alberta will be my major purchase—will be where my major purchases are made. I'm appalled at the lack of thought put into this by the provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, why is this NDP Premier continuing to drive Manitobans to Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that Manitoba is one of the most affordable places in this country to live, and members opposite don't have to believe me when it comes to that. They can consult such things as the Saskatchewan budget this year, who labelled us as in the top three in terms of affordability.

Mr. Speaker, this Province of Manitoba, our government, guarantees Manitobans that they will have the lowest bundle of home electricity rates, home heating rates and Autopac rates. We guarantee that by law, and I think that's a very reasonable way to approach the affordability of Manitobans and good encouragement for Manitoba families to locate here and to remain in Manitoba.

#### **Personal Tax Exemptions Impact on Out Migration**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Well, Mr. Speaker, the PST is one nightmare, but the hole the Premier's digging gets even deeper.

Basic personal exemptions is quite another. Premier Wall's vision provides \$15,241 as a tax-free exemption for each Saskatchewan resident, while Manitobans receive only \$8,884 under this NDP Premier: 171 per cent more for our western neighbours.

When will this Premier get his head out of the sand and realize his taxing decisions are driving people to Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, again, when Manitoba's—when Manitobans and Manitoba families look at the big picture of the savings they get in Manitoba, I'm sure they can compare favourably with other provinces, including Saskatchewan.

That's why this side of the government put forward \$1.4 billion in tax relief over the last 13 years. That's why we put forward that kind of support, so that when people look at the—at their property taxes, when they look at their income taxes, when they look across the board, taxes and expenses such as hydro and Autopac and home heating, they'll see that Manitoba is still one of the most affordable provinces in this country in which to live and raise and grow their businesses.

So, Mr. Speaker, we don't have to take lessons from anybody else, especially—

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

#### **PST Increase Impact on Out Migration**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** So, obviously, they haven't learned anything, Mr. Speaker. They calling Mr. Melham a liar. They don't believe that the Chamber of Commerce in Saskatchewan is credible either.

You know, even the Chamber of Commerce CEO, Steve McLellan, said in Regina yesterday that raising Manitoba's PST to 8 per cent will, quote: send people our way who just say, forget it, we've had enough—we're moving our business.

Is Manitoba's Premier so bankrupt of ideas that he's unaware that his dictatorial powers are forcing more Manitobans to consider pulling up stakes and leaving our province?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** Well, Mr. Speaker, the facts don't bear out what the member opposite is saying. He should take a look at what's happened to our population growth in this country, in this province. Our population is strong; it remains strong; it remains in a growing condition. We're gaining Manitobans through our—through very strong immigration policies. But when we continue to invest the PST into such things as roads and infrastructure and hospitals and schools, that's

another reason why Manitobans will be and continue to be moving back into our province to raise their families, to start up businesses and contribute to the Manitoba society.

### **Personal Tax Exemptions Provincial Comparisons**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** I'm not quite sure if either—if there's a window in that ivory tower, Mr. Speaker.

On the 19th of April, on CBC, a one-time Manitoban now living in Saskatchewan was on CBC comparing Manitoba tax returns to Saskatchewan tax returns. Charlene Wicks, who's in the financial field, is filling out two tax returns, one in Manitoba and one in Saskatchewan, just to compare returns. She is finding out that she is saving \$5,000 by living in Saskatchewan.

Why is this NDP government holding the emergency doors open for these people going to Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** Well, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I think I've made it pretty clear, and the Province of Saskatchewan in their budget has made it very clear, that Manitoba is in the top three in terms of affordability.

\* (14:00)

I don't think that Manitobans have the same narrow, short-sighted view as members opposite. I think, Mr. Speaker, that Manitobans look at the big picture. They consider what their taxes are and they know that we have provided tax relief to the point of \$1.4 billion over the last decade or so. Manitobans know, and Manitobans who are returning to Manitoba know, that they have the lowest home heating, they have the lowest hydro rates, they have the lowest Autopac rates, and we guarantee in law that they will have that. That is a real—

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

### **Post-Secondary Education Impact on Out Migration**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** In my previous career, I spent time working with youth on post-secondary choices right here in Manitoba. Over the weekend, I met with a group of youth. Two thirds of them said after graduation they are leaving the province for post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, what does the minister of child and youth opportunities have to say about how this spenDP government is failing the youth and sending them out the exit door?

**Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities):** I appreciate the question. I got a bit of a round of applause when I stood yesterday to talk about all of the wonderful programs that we're providing to young people.

We continue to have the most popular, effective programs in the country for young people, not only in the classroom but outside of the classroom, Mr. Speaker. We provide thousands of jobs every summer for work experience and career exploration, and we continue to improve on these programs every single year. One program alone that I talked about yesterday has 500 applications with over 1,000 young people working.

I'm glad I got the question today, Mr. Speaker. I was glad that—yesterday when I talked about it, when I talked about the budget and the investments we're making, I got a round of applause from members opposite. So thank you again for the question.

### **Tax Increase Impact on Out Migration**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** It's nice to see that the seatbelts in the government chairs aren't quite working today.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are concerned. Our caucus is concerned, and I'm sure the government's caucus is concerned as well—well, the silent ones anyway. Saskatchewan is doing press releases that they are ecstatic with the spenDP's budget and the recent PST hike.

What does the spenDP's Finance Minister have to say to those youth and other Manitobans running out the emergency exits?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** So he says—so he talks about emergencies. Mr. Speaker, he talks about emergencies. His own leader would turn to health care and cut, cut, cut. He would cut—or fire nurses as they've done in the past, as they said last Thursday they would do.

And in an emergency situation in Manitoba, Manitobans can turn to the STARS helicopter. And, Mr. Speaker, do you know what that costs each Manitoban? Zero. Do you know what it costs Saskatchewan when—clients, Saskatchewan residents, when they turn to use the same kind of a service?

Three hundred and fifty bucks. I'll put our affordability up against Saskatchewan anytime.

### PST Increase Public Consultations

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** We continue to hear from many Manitobans who are very, very angry about this PST hike. The only people that seem to like it are the people in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, maybe that's where the NDP held their budget consultations, in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance: How many Manitobans who he consulted with asked him to raise the PST?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** I can't believe, Mr. Speaker, that this member, whose hometown is in the Swan River Valley where we did have a prebudget consultation, where the people of the Swan River Valley came out in good numbers to talk to me and the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn), to talk to us about infrastructure, to talk to us about hospitals, to talk to us about schools, to talk to us about how affordable a province we live in. And I got to say, they had some good ideas that we incorporated into this budget.

We listen to the people of Manitoba because they give us good advice. Members opposite, on the other hand, their advice is pretty narrow and pretty short—

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

The honourable member for Charleswood has the floor.

### Community Response

**Mrs. Driedger:** He forgot to mention about the 50 women from Swan River that are forced to go to Saskatchewan to have their babies.

Mr. Speaker, not only is this NDP government hiking the PST after promising not to raise taxes, they are offending people by doing it without a referendum as the law requires. Speaking out against this is the Manitoba heavy construction industry, chambers of commerce, retailers, the Manitoba Business Council, Manitoba municipalities and thousands of Manitoba taxpayers.

So I would like to ask this Minister of Finance: Who told him to raise the PST on Manitoba taxpayers?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Certainly, I noted in the member's remarks questions about providing additional services for moms, for babies, for women across Manitoba.

And I would hasten to add to the member's remarks that it was the Filmon government that decided to completely disband the child health direct—*[interjection]* I seem to have hit a nerve, Mr. Speaker. It was that member and her leader now that decided to completely disband the child health directorate, and in the very report coming out of the new maternal directorate said that it was a direct result of the loss—the net loss of 1,573 nurses from the Manitoba health-care system that moms and babies dis—received worse care than ever.

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

### Public Consultations

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, it's becoming more and more clear that NDP promises are worthless. We see that over and over again, and we wonder if these budget consultations that they were having are nothing but a charade.

It's a simple question for this Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker: During the budget consultations, how many Manitobans asked for a PST hike? Was it 10, was it five, was it none? How many Manitobans, how many taxpayers asked him to raise the PST there?

**Mr. Struthers:** Mr. Speaker, they told us clearly that they wanted us to build Manitoba. They wanted us to build hospitals and schools. They wanted us to build infrastructure. They understood that Manitoba is impacted by floods—three threats in five years; we're responding to that.

I'll tell you what they didn't tell me, Mr. Speaker. They didn't tell me to do what their Leader of the Opposition said, and *[inaudible]* cut health care, fire nurses, cut schools and lay off teachers. That's not what they told us to do.

We have a plan that we put together to make sure we build Manitoba and move forward, and that's exactly what they told us to do in all seven of those prebudget consultations.

### PST Increase Call for Referendum

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Well, it's clear, Mr. Speaker, there was only one Manitoban who was

asking for a PST increase, and that was at the prebudget consultation meeting that was held in the Premier's office with the Premier and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers).

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this is a Premier who doesn't respect democracy. He told Manitobans before the election he wouldn't increase taxes. He then tore up the balanced budget legislation that required a referendum to increase the pre-ST. And then he wasn't listening to the other Manitobans, other than the Premier, who didn't want a PST tax increase.

I want to ask this Premier: Why does he care so little about democracy that he won't listen to Manitobans, that he won't call for a referendum and that he lied to them in the last election, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Speaker:** I'm pretty sure all members are aware of the—with respect to parliamentary and unparliamentary language. The words that were just used by the member for Steinbach are clearly unparliamentary in that they refer specifically to a member of this Chamber with the use of an unparliamentary word. I'm asking that the honourable member for Steinbach withdraw that word, please.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the comment that the Premier lied to Manitobans in the last election.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I understand that certain situations could be highly charged during the course of the proceedings of this Chamber, and I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members. Let's ensure, please, that we follow the rules that are in place for us with respect to the parliamentary practices and procedures that have been long established.

\* (14:10)

And I know that the member for Steinbach did withdraw the statement but again referenced the word that I asked—not specifically to be withdrawn, but the unparliamentary language itself. And by referring back to it again, that can, in turn, reinforce the original message.

So I'm asking for the honourable—co-operation of the honourable member for Steinbach, please do not reinforce the word that I've asked be withdrawn

that was unparliamentary in the first place. That's a caution for the future.

So, the honourable First Minister, to respond to the question.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you for that clarification.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans told us that we needed some new schools because we have growing communities with young families. Manitobans told us that they needed better access to health care, which is why we opened up the NorWest health-care clinic this morning, a \$4.7-million investment that will serve another 2,500 residents in the northwest quadrant of Winnipeg, the people of Tyndall Park, the people of Burrows-Keewatin, the Shaughnessy Park neighbourhood, the Burrows neighbourhood. All of those people will now have access to doctors. They will have access to nurse practitioners. They will have access to dietitians, and they will have it in a facility that they can be proud of. That's what Manitobans asked us for.

The members opposite want to spend millions of dollars. They want to spend millions of dollars on other things. We want to spend the resources that are earned by hard work of Manitobans to—

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

### Committee Presentations Government Attendance

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, it was the Premier who, just a couple of years ago, said that referendums were great because it allowed you to hear directly from the people.

But he doesn't believe that anymore, Mr. Speaker, and now he believes that Manitobans should travel to the Legislature—planes, trains and automobiles—and come here and make presentations at committee. Now, the Finance Minister said yesterday that he intends to be at every committee hearing and listen to every Manitoban, but it was the Premier who extended the invitation.

So I'll ask the Premier: Is he going to be at every presentation at the committee, and he—will he go there with an open mind, listening to Manitobans and be open to changing this decision, Mr. Speaker?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Where I'm going to be is I'm going to be out talking to Manitobans all

around the province. That's where I'm going to be. And you know what, Mr. Speaker?

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

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

I'm pretty sure all honourable members understand that time in question period is very precious. I'm sure you'd want me to respond to any point of order or other matter that would be raised in the Assembly if there was a breach of the rules. I'm having difficulty hearing the answer from the First Minister. I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members, please. Give me the opportunity to hear the response.

**Mr. Selinger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And as we're out talking and listening to Manitobans, we will listen to what their priorities are. And, again, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have told us very clearly they would like to see investments in flood protection. They would like to see investments in roads. They would like to see investments in schools. They would like to see investments in hospitals and personal care homes, the very same requests and demands that the members had less than eight days ago. The very same requests we've heard from Manitobans are reflected in this budget, and that's why we will move forward, to provide those essential needs for Manitobans so they can have a better quality of life.

**Mr. Goertzen:** You know, Mr. Speaker, it was the Premier who invited Manitobans to come to the Legislature and present before a committee, and now he says he's not going to be here. He's going to leave the Legislature. Just another broken promise by this Premier.

And, you know, I guess we've seen how these committees have worked in the past. The government will invite them to come and then they'll try to jam the committee through the night and ask Manitobans to come and travel here, hundreds of kilometres, and then present to a committee at 3 in the morning.

I wonder if the Premier, since he's broken his promise to come and listen to these Manitobans, whether he'll instruct his House leader to ensure that there's a schedule for a-times when members can come at a reasonable time so that they are not jammed through the night by giving presentations at 3 in the morning, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House do respect the democratic process, which is why we have always preserved, in second reading of bills, the right for Manitobans to come out and speak to the second reading of any bill, which is why, on this side of the House, when we do a budget consultation they are open to Manitobans to attend. When the members opposite did budget consultations, it was by invitation only. Invitation only was the way they approached democracy.

We're out listening to Manitobans. We're out talking with Manitobans, and this budget responds to the priorities of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

### **PST Increase Impact on Municipalities**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, because the NDP are so desperate for revenue, they've disregarded the public's democratic right to have the referendum needed to raise the PST and they're going, in fact, to raise the PST by 1 per cent July the 1st.

I've asked the Premier repeatedly to provide a list of the urgent infrastructure projects that he's allocated money for in the budget this year, but he's refused.

Today, Manitoba's mayors and reeves are uniting to protest the paltry amounts that they're getting from this government. Mr. Speaker, our municipal leaders are virtually in a state of revolt.

I ask the Premier: When will he provide the detailed list of the infrastructure projects that the \$200 million from the PST hike will be spent on this year?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** I thank the member for River Heights for the question, Mr. Speaker, because in this budget municipalities are seeing, on average, an 8 and a half per cent increase in their resources this year. That's an additional \$30 million. That's over \$280 million, 1 per cent—the 1—a 1 per cent equivalent in the PST.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member from River Heights knows if the members opposite, the official opposition, were in office, every municipality would see a cut in funding. Every municipality would see less money for roads. Every municipality would see less money for water and sewer. Every municipality

would see less money for recreation. Every municipality would see less money for operating—

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

### Infrastructure Projects

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, the budget book, the government's own budget book, Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue, lists on one side the new revenue from the PST and lists on the other side of the Legislature the real planned government infrastructure expenses.

The ledger shows that the budget allocated for the Community Places Program, which the Premier so promoted earlier this week, is actually down by 12 per cent, and the allocation for the capital grants program through agriculture and food initiatives, the capital grants is down by \$5 million or 30 per cent.

I ask the Premier: Come clean and provide the list of the infrastructure projects and explain why he's shortchanging Manitobans—

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

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the member opposite is looking at the budget, because if he does, he will see in the budget that capital spending this year for infrastructure—schools, hospitals, roads, Community Places programs, recreation centres, daycare centres—has been increased to \$1.8 billion—\$1.8 billion. That's \$400 million more than last year, a \$400-million increase in one year for vital infrastructure in Manitoba.

Everybody will benefit by that, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Again, Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue, we see that the money allocated to infrastructure by Conservation and Water Stewardship is down by almost \$10 million or 38 per cent. We see that that allocated by the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation is down by almost \$14 million. Actually, if you look at the expenditures, they're not quite matching those \$1.8 million number.

So I ask the Premier: Why is the NDP increasing the PST to raise \$200 million for mysterious infrastructure projects that he won't name, and yet many budgets actually allocate less for infrastructure than last year?

\* (14:20)

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, surely the member from River Heights understands that when a project is completed, the resources for that can be reduced so they can be put on other priorities, like roads, like schools, like hospitals, like infrastructure of water and sewer, like daycare centres, like new community clubs and recreation facilities all around Manitoba.

There's a \$400-million increase in this budget for capital spending on infrastructure which will benefit all Manitobans, which will generate jobs, Mr. Speaker, for Manitobans, generate apprenticeship opportunities for Manitobans, which will grow the economy here in Manitoba.

And I haven't even got to the place yet where we're increasing the support for hydro growth in Manitoba.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for Tyndall Park has the floor.

### Early Childhood Educators Update

**Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park):** This week has been proclaimed as the 22nd annual Week of the Early Childhood Educator.

Can the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities please give the House an update to what the government is doing to support early childhood educators?

**Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities):** It is a pleasure to affirm our government's support for early learning and child care.

Earlier this week, I had the honour of participating in a celebration at my son Hayden's daycare to thank early childhood educators and their efforts. We applaud the work of the Manitoba Child Care Association who actively promote early learning and child care as a profession and service.

Mr. Speaker, since 1999 we have invested over \$100 million in new funding into early childhood development. In Children and Youth Opportunities alone, we have made strategic investments in programs such as prenatal benefits, Families First home visiting, parent-child coalitions and the Abecedarian Approach in Lord Selkirk Park.

Our government appreciates the contribution that early childhood educators, child-care assistants and family child-care providers make every day

supporting families and children and communities in Manitoba and we thank them.

**Mr. Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

#### House Business

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** On House business, Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on provincial taxation and broken promises, brought forward by the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that, in accordance with rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is a resolution on provincial taxation, broken promises, brought forward by the honourable member for Charleswood.

Now, members' statements.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### PST Increase

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, Budget 2013 and the tax hike to 8 per cent PST is the largest tax increase in 26 years in Manitoba. Add last year's tax hikes and a Manitoba family of four will now pay \$1,200 more per year to the NDP government.

My constituents are standing up and speaking out about it. Nick Clayson, from Morden, is one of those constituents who wanted to send a message to this NDP government.

He says:

This brief letter is a response to the proposed 1 per cent increase to our PST. I'm—I've been a member of a municipal council and I fully understand how difficult it can be to balance a budget for a community. Not knowing where the money will come from, one must either cut back on something or increase taxes to make it work.

But to simply raise a provincial sales tax requires serious consideration. I understand that services are becoming more costly, but at what expense, and where will it end? There are families living in Manitoba who simply cannot afford all of

these increases. It's sad but true, and adding the extra tax burden will result in reduced spending in the private sector.

There are many highly skilled and nonskilled people heading to Saskatchewan for various reasons. My wife and I are also giving serious consideration to make the same move, simply because the taxes are lower and the pay is higher. We've done the math, and the figures are not lying. All three of our children have had the privilege of a post-secondary education and have moved west and are reaping great benefits. My wife and I are giving serious consideration of doing the same.

Sincerely, Nick Clayson.

#### 4-H—100th Anniversary

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** Mr. Speaker, this week we had some very special visitors at the Legislative Building. Volunteers leaders, members and organizers of 4-H Manitoba are here to celebrate the 100th birthday of a vital organization in our province.

4-H helps young people learn to be innovative community leaders. Members get involved in hands-on projects, develop valuable skills and have fun as they learn to use their four h's: their heads, hearts, hands and health to contribute to their communities.

I had the pleasure of attending the 4-H celebration at the Legislature hosted by the minister and the Premier (Mr. Selinger). Past and current members spoke out—spoke about how participating in 4-H gave them opportunities to travel, meet new people, take on responsibilities and gain confidence. Mr. Speaker, 4-H also inspires a lifelong enthusiasm to volunteer—4-H leaders recognize that the event have been involved for 20, 30, even 40 years.

Many others are also getting involved in celebrating this milestone anniversary. It has been recognized at both Ag Days and the Royal Winter Fair in Brandon. MacDon has made a special edition self-propelled windrower that has travelled to events across the country. A highlight for Manitoba will be hosting the annual meeting of the Canadian 4-H Council later in May where a gala event will bring together the many government, corporate and organizational supporters of 4-H. Local 4-H clubs have been getting involved by displaying signs in their communities, partnering with their community food banks to collect donations, participating in a national public speaking contest and much more.

It is essential that young people have positive outlets for their energy and enthusiasm as well as an opportunity to develop skills and learn new things. I invite all honourable members to join me in recognizing 4-H for helping to guide a century of Manitoba's future leaders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Frank Gelbraith Sissons**

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** On December 2nd, 2012, the constituency of Portage la Prairie and the province of Manitoba lost an outstanding citizen with the death of Frank Gelbraith Sissons.

Frank is remembered for his huge contribution to the field of agriculture in Manitoba. Frank began his farming career working with his father and later with his sons Don and Grant. Frank took great pride in the farming history of his farm and the farm's designation as a century farm in 1971.

Frank also contributed beyond the farm gate, serving for 15 years as director of Manitoba Pool Elevators and representing them on many trade missions abroad and also hosting many trade missions on his farm. He was also a founding member of the Manitoba Pulse Growers and served as director for 15 years, and was active in the introduction of new pulse crops such as black bean production here in Manitoba. Frank was also recognized by the Canadian Seed Growers Association for 50 years of service in 2003 and given both the Outstanding Service Award as well as the Robertson Associate Award.

Frank enjoyed the company of his entire extended family who were very important to him. I know he would be very happy that another generation has now begun to farm in the long family tradition. Portage la Prairie and Manitoba have lost a valued member of our community and he will be sorely missed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **World Malaria Day**

**Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark World Malaria Day. Established in May 2007 by the World Health Organization, this internationally recognized day aims to spread awareness of this disease. This devastating illness is a mosquito-borne infectious disease that affects humans as well as other animals. Its symptoms typically include headache and fever. In severe cases,

however, an infection can be fatal. Around the world, 3.3 billion people in more than 100 countries are at risk of this disease. It is prevalent in tropical and subtropical regions around the world, including much of the Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas and Asia.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, millions of people are still unable to access preventative therapies, diagnostic testing and appropriate treatment. In 2010 alone, there were an estimated 219 million malaria cases worldwide. In Africa, where malaria's impact is greatest, a child dies every minute from the disease. For children who survive, it can devastate their education, keeping them out of school and sometimes causing lasting learning disabilities. Malaria also keeps adults out of work and robs families of necessary income, costing African countries alone an estimated \$12 billion annually in lost productivity.

\* (14:30)

On this day, I am pleased to be a part of the fight against malaria. I encourage every Manitoban to learn more about this preventable and curable disease and to support the fight against it.

Thank you to the many individuals and organizations who are dedicated to that fight, including Spread the Net, Malaria No More—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please. We're long past the member's allotted time.

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**Mr. Speaker:** Has leave been granted to allow the member to complete his statement very quickly?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

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

**Mr. Marcelino:** Malaria No More and the Buy-a-Net Malaria Prevention Group. I thank them for bringing this issue to my attention and for asking me to speak about this serious disease. Your efforts are commendable; you are working toward a better, healthier world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Team Canada Dragon Boat Championships**

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize members of the Team Canada dragon boat who did us proud at the 2012 International Canoe Federation Dragon Boat World Championships this past September.

Representatives from the team are in the gallery today.

Dragon boats are long, open canoes paddled by 10 or 20 paddlers to the rhythm of a drum. Many think of drag—of a dragon boat as something done for ceremonial or recreational purposes, but it is also a competitive sport that requires strength, endurance and skill, as well as co-operation and team spirit.

Team Canada is made up of 60 athletes who come from across the country. I'm proud to say that Manitoba is strongly represented on the team with over three quarters of the athletes coming from our province. They train out of the Manitoba Canoe and Kayak Centre on Churchill Drive in my constituency of Fort Garry-Riverview, and all team members from across Canada work relentlessly and their dedication pulled off—paid off.

The team did spectacularly in the championships. Despite having a relatively small number of athletes, they were extremely competitive in their races against much larger teams. Their determination and fortitude led them to win a total of 14 medals, Mr. Speaker: nine gold, three silver and two bronze. This included incredible performances against the Russian team made up mostly of ex-Olympians. Team Canada also captured the Federation Cup for the most points in the mixed competition—an immense honour.

Mr. Speaker, this is a team that truly exemplifies how everyone can come together through sport. This is a team made up of men, women, seniors and teenagers from different backgrounds who have trained hard, given it their all and shown the world what Manitoba can do.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to join me in recognizing these world champions who are superb athletes, excellent role models and wonderful ambassadors for Manitoba and for Canada.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### BUDGET DEBATE

##### (Seventh Day of Debate)

**Mr. Speaker:** To resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and

Tourism (Ms. Marcelino), who has 10 minutes remaining.

**Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism):** As excited as we are about hosting the Juno Awards next year, we cannot forget how lucky Manitoba is to host the Manito Ahbee Festival every year. The Manito Ahbee is a five-day festival that celebrates Aboriginal culture and promotes cross-cultural exchange and education. Highlights of the festival are the Aboriginal People's Choice Music Awards which are broadcast live, the RBC Ohshkii Awards gala evening and the International Competition Pow Wow and trade show.

Mr. Speaker, another chance to celebrate arts and culture is during Culture Days Manitoba. Culture Days is a pan-Canadian movement, an annual event that aims to raise awareness among citizens from each province and territory about the importance of arts and culture in their communities' social and economic development.

Two Manitoba cities distinguished themselves among the Canadian cities. Winnipeg ranked first in number of activities while Flin Flon ranked seven. A full 36 per cent of the 280 Culture Days Manitoba activities took place outside of Winnipeg with notable growth in both Brandon and Flin Flon. From the seniors helping—having taken part in the Flin Flon Culture Days, along with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the member from Flin Flon, I can share that the whole community comes together to celebrate. From the seniors helping preschool children with various craft projects to the whole town performing a dance for dancing down Main Street, Culture Days Manitoba allows our province to show our creative spirit.

Mr. Speaker, while in Flin Flon, I also got to tour their Urban Art Centre. Urban Art Centre programs provide support to centres that are community-based arts development organizations that have a mandate to develop skills in audiences for the arts in an urban community setting. The current total program budget is \$404,400, the maximum award per program being \$40,600. Urban Art Centres across province include the Graffiti Art Programming, Art City, Winnipeg International Children's Festival Circus and Magic Partnership, West End Cultural Centre, Ndinawe, Red Road Lodge, Gas Station Theatre, association of Manitoba printmakers, Flin Flon Arts Council, Artbeat Studio central.

Mr. Speaker, I want you to be aware after mentioning all the great things happening on the culture side of my department, that Manitoba makes a great place to live. I want to mention that the other part of my department, Tourism, has been just as busy, making Manitoba a great place to visit.

Mr. Speaker, let me now take a moment to tell you about one of this new tourism product investments, the Journey to Churchill at the Assiniboine Park Zoo. The Journey to Churchill is part of a \$31-million commitment made by our province last year to the Assiniboine Park Zoo. Once completed in 2013, Journey to Churchill will feature the International Polar Bear Conservation Centre, the Aurora Borealis 360-degree theatre, motorized polar bear tundra tours, the rooftop tundra garden and underwater viewing area and the new restaurant, gift shop and children's play area.

Mr. Speaker, government is also improving our provincial parks, since Manitobans understand the great tourism destination their provincial parks are, whether its visitors are coming from outside our borders or people choosing to vacation at home.

There are many more projects for the benefit of Manitoba as a result of Budget 2013. My other colleagues were—will eloquently and enthusiastically share this shortly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House and speak in favour of the amendments put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister), the member for Fort Whyte. It gives me great pride to stand here on behalf of the constituents of Emerson. This job is truly an honour and a privilege, and I look forward to it every day. I'm proud to stand up for their interests, for their beliefs and for their democratic rights.

These are among the reasons why I will be voting against this spend budget. There's a lot to say about the NDP and not much of it's good—a lot to say about their mismanagement of the Manitoba economy. In 2012, this government raised taxes and fees to the highest levels that we've seen in Manitoba's history. We thought that maybe after those hikes, they would start to make decisions to bring this budget back into reality. The NDP is living in a dream world, where getting out of a deficit actually means spending more money.

In 2013, they decided to raise the PST to 8 per cent, even after the Premier (Mr. Selinger) called that notion nonsense. They've decided to institute a vote tax, collecting money from hard-working Manitobans to fund their political activities so they never have to ask Manitobans for their support again.

The NDP has proven time and time again that they're not worried about Manitobans that they were elected to serve. The whole operation on the other side of this House is a nightmare, and the people in Manitoba are suffering. The NDP refuses to listen to Manitobans. The NDP would rather raise more taxes and spend more money and never have to listen to a constituent ever again.

\*(14:40)

We have constituents of our own and constituents from NDP ridings coming to our office every day complaining about the Cabinet ministers and the NDP backbenchers avoiding them, giving them the run around and never returning their calls about their concerns. We do the best we can do. We help everyone that asks us for it and the NDP remain silent. We have people that have to go to Saskatchewan to have babies, as we've heard today thanks to certain people across the way.

Mr. Speaker, Merriam-Webster defines arrogance as an attitude of superiority manifested in an overbearing manner in a presumptuous claims or assumptions. I don't think you could describe the NDP any better if you tried.

They believe they are superior to Manitobans. They believe they're superior to the people of St. Jean who need a bridge so that their children can go to school, so that their grain can get to the elevators. They believe they're superior to the people of Altona, who after consultation and fundraising are building their own housing complexes for seniors. They believe that they're superior to the small business owners of this province, people like Chris Driedger, like Kirke Calderwood, like Carl Bueckert who operate their businesses without changing rules on their customers, who always keep their promises to serve their communities they've built their businesses in.

This government just doesn't understand how to respect Manitobans. They decided not to call a referendum. A party that is all about referendums when they have no control over them, when suddenly faced with legal requirement to have one all of a

sudden doesn't like them as much anymore. Another example of the NDP not listening to Manitobans, maybe it's that they are afraid to talk to them. They were certainly afraid to have a prebudget consultation meeting in Altona.

I wrote a letter to the Finance Minister. I booked a hall. I told constituents. And what did he do? He wrote me a letter saying that the fastest growing area in Manitoba, the Pembina Valley, didn't need a meeting because they could drive to another one and express their concerns there, many, many hundred kilometres away.

He was afraid, Mr. Speaker. That's what it was. He was afraid to meet the people that are paying the highest amount of taxes in Manitoba. He was afraid to come out and ask them their opinion, ask them if they wanted to pay 1 per cent more PST. He was afraid of hearing their opinions on raising taxes or raising fees. He avoids criticism from average Manitobans whenever he can. He's there for the photo ops. They're all there for the photo ops, but they avoid real Manitobans whenever the hard questions come.

Another word out of the dictionary: consultation. Merriam-Webster defines consultation as to have regard to, or to ask advice, or opinion of. Well, I think the NDP dictionary avoids this word—these words too.

And when he was questioned in the House, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) refused to answer a question on how many people thought raising the PST was a good idea. And I'm quite certain that he knows how many people thought it was a good idea. He was afraid to say, none. Maybe that's because it's just him and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) over there.

I'm not sure when consultation became a dirty word for this government; maybe it was around the time of Bipole III. Rather than having people disagree with them and rather than having to put up with it, they decided to avoid the whole process all together.

You know, I find a great deal of—a great deal of laughable moments in this Chamber. You see the ministers afraid of being asked questions that directly impact their departments. They sit back and say: I hope it's not me; I hope it's not me; I hope it's not me. Even the member from Swan River does the same thing now, and he's the one that should be standing up for agriculture.

Other departments, like the department—or the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino), the Minister for Advanced Education, the Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism (Ms. Melnick), they all sit in their chairs, cashing their pay cheques, and never having to answer a single question from constituents.

The NDP backbenchers get up and hype their Premier, their Minister of Finance for the hope that one day they might get to sit in Cabinet and never be heard from again. Being promoted to Cabinet minister gets you the office, the title, and you don't have to say anything to anyone for the rest of your time in office. Isn't that fascinating, Mr. Speaker? The only time you see the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) answer a question is often—backbenchers, a carefully crafted question, and then the minister has 24 hours' training from the spin doctors before he can answer.

This job is about helping people. It's about helping your constituents. It's about listening to everyone, whether or not they share your political beliefs. It's about things for people, doing things for people. The NDP is doing things to people, not 'necessaslarly' for people. They've decided to raise tax after tax, fee after fee so that people pack up their vehicles and move to Saskatchewan or shop in North Dakota. The NDP doesn't care about keeping people in this province, Mr. Speaker. They don't care about keeping business in this province. They just care about padding their own back pockets and never having to say anything to a constituent ever again.

Under the balanced budget debt repayment and taxpayer protection act, Manitobans have the democratic right to a referendum whenever a government wants to raise a major tax. The PST falls into that category. The NDP want to take away that right and impose the PST increase, yet they received no mandate to do this. They actually ran the last election opposed to tax increases. They made the promises, Mr. Speaker, and they broke those promises, and I'm going to ask my colleagues: Is a broken promise a lie?

In fact, Manitobans are paying \$500-million price this year for the NDP's deficit even with the tax increases. The deficit is going up 12 per cent this year despite another quarter billion dollar tax increases and another \$2.5 billion in new debt. And even with the member from Swan River cutting the agricultural budget, that still hasn't helped this huge, huge deficit that they're running and raising the debt.

This is a government that has no idea how to control its spending. The spendDP has increased spending every year by an average of 4.8 per cent, and that's excluding the 2011 flood costs. The spendDP only create the facade of balanced books by increasing taxes, breaking into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, raiding Manitoba Hydro, piling more debt onto the province. The debt is expected to increase by almost \$2.5 billion in 2013, another increase of over 9 per cent since last year. This is now over a 30-billion tax dollars owed to a future Manitobans, owed by future Manitobans. That's a shame, Mr. Speaker.

Manitobans shouldn't be surprised that the NDP has revoked its commitment to provide a stable 5 per cent funding increase to universities this year. This has been—this is but one of several broken promises we've seen from our government this year. At the same time the NDP has slashed its committed funding increases to university. It will cap tuition fees at the rate of inflation. That's called hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. That is hypocrisy at its greatest height.

We also have seen the NDP promise midwifery education in northern Manitoba only to have the program completely fall apart, but not before they expanded that same program to southern Manitoba. Since they started the midwifery training program in 2006, how many people have graduated? Not a single midwife has graduated, not one.

The government oversight has been severely lacking. Those midwives could work up in Swan River. They could work in that riding, Mr. Speaker. People wouldn't have to go to Saskatchewan to have their babies, would they?

**An Honourable Member:** They could use the roadside to have babies.

**Mr. Graydon:** Actually, highway, highway side.

**An Honourable Member:** Highway, highway.

**Mr. Graydon:** Yes, yes. Not just any gravel road, you've got to be -25; that's what you have to have to satisfy this government.

The NDP's less than proactive approach to attracting students to Manitoba and keeping them here shows. Manitoba has the second lowest participation rate in post-secondary education in Canada. We also have the lowest post-secondary graduation rate in Canada, and these stats are from Stats Canada published in 2010 for 2007.

Budget 2013 contains no commitment to a multi-year flood compensation program for producers. In 2011 the minister—the then-minister of Agriculture made a commitment to producers around Lake Manitoba for multi-year compensation for flooding. The NDP has backtracked on this commitment, and producers are suffering as a result.

\* (14:50)

And, unless the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn) would like to stand up and backtrack on the Finance Minister now, then he could make them set the record straight. He could represent the agricultural community that he is supposed to be representing.

During the 2011 election, the NDP made promises to eliminate the school tax on farmland and—in an effort to save farmers \$14 million per year. This is yet another broken promise by this NDP government, what they—as eliminating the school tax on farmland was, again, not included in the 2013 Budget.

So why did they not just put a cap? Instead of a cap of \$5,000 on Farmland School Tax Rebate, why didn't then put it on a thousand? Make it a thousand, and then you wouldn't have to worry about talking about it again—anybody could have it. Because it's—it really makes no sense at \$5,000 either when we look at the average school tax that farmers pay today is over \$10,000 on an average, small farm.

Where is the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) standing up for his portfolio? No, he doesn't do that.

The NDP budget is also increasing various veterinarian diagnostic fees with a goal of recovering 25 per cent of cost of food animal testing. You're taking the food out of people's mouths; that's what you're doing.

The NDP touts the importance of manure management programs that producers and farmers—mired in regulations. Regulations are deeper than any of the manure pits in this province, Mr. Speaker. Yet the 2013 Budget saw manure management financial assistant program's funding reduced by \$8.5 million to \$3.6 million.

And again, the Minister of Agriculture, the member for Swan River, has left Manitoba agriculture empty-handed—thanks very much,

Mr. Minister—again, leaving producers with the burden of this NDP's regulations.

The NDP is pushing through Bipole III, which cuts through hundreds of kilometres of boreal forest and aspen parkland with little consideration for farmers' land, despite the cheaper, shorter, east-side route.

Manitoba needs a strong agricultural industry and this cannot happen when producers are exiting the industry. The government has done nothing to boost the livestock industry and has virtually limited its growth.

The NDP has broken its promise to reduce greenhouse gas emission to an amount that is at least 6 per cent less than Manitoba's total 1990 emissions.

Mr. Speaker, time and time and time again, promises have been broken by this NDP government. The government has raised cottage service fees for cottage owners \$4.5 million per year. In the NDP's eight-year plan—and they have so many plans: they've got a five-year plan, they've got a three-year plan, they got an eight-year plan. And they all end up being worthless. They're just empty words. They're just words that they try to get people to believe, and they're not believable any more.

Budget 23rd—2013 hiked camping fees, now ranging from \$33.60 to a whopping \$186.90 depending on the campsite and the park. How much of that money is going back into the park system? None.

In the K-to-12 education, we continue to see the NDP failing Manitoba youth—the outcomes tell the story. Since 2001, Manitoba has led the nation with the highest or second-highest high school dropout rates. In 2010, Manitoba's high school dropout rate was 11.4 per cent, only behind Québec which is 11.7 per cent. This certainly is not progress, Mr. Speaker.

According to Statistics Canada, since 2001, Manitoba has had amongst the lowest high school graduation rates in Canada. Manitoba graduation rates is—in 2009 and 2010 was a mere 66.4 per cent. It was the lowest graduate—graduation grade among all provinces and, as well, below the Canadian average of 78.3. Only the Territories experience lower graduation rates.

Our students are not measuring up to, and need more help, with the basics. We can look at the

2010 Pan-Canadian Assessment Program, which measures the performance of grade 8 students in math, science and reading. Manitoba ranked last among all Canadian provinces in science and in reading, and second-last in math.

Those are terribly, terribly important when you move from this to post-secondary education, or even if you're going into trades and training. You need to have the basics, and the basics are not there.

Another measure is the 2009 OECD Program for International Student Assessment report which tests 15-year-old students. It also found that our students needed help with the basics. Manitoba rated second last among the Canadian provinces in reading, science and math, and was well below the Canadian average in all tested areas.

The NDP have ignored flood victims by failing to compensate 100 per cent, as promised. Many flood victims have only received a partial payment after almost two years since the flood. The NDP promised to flow dollars to producers within weeks of the program announcement. Why are there still so many producers who have not been fully compensated?

*Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

With a \$48-million investment for flood projects promised in the 2013 budget are sorely needed, one has to ask why this NDP government didn't make those critical upgrades years ago.

Just to give you an example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2001, the member for Gimli—or for Thompson—excuse me, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) flew over the Shoal lakes, and he reported back to the House on Hansard that that was a disaster waiting to happen, that he would address that in that summer. He would take care of that, that the lakes would not get joined together and become a disaster. And I'm sure that you can concur with what I'm going to say, that it is a disaster. The lakes joined together; the lakes flooded many, many ranchers, put them out of business, 100-year-old ranches, 75-year-old ranches, and they have nothing, and then not compensated by this NDP government.

And in 2001, the member for Thompson, the Minister responsible for Emergency Measures, said there was a potential disaster and he was going to take care of it in 2001. That's how the NDP do things. That's how some members, and one of the members from Interlake, had said it could be worse. It could be worse. Had they had the foresight to do

this work, tens of millions of dollars in flood damage could have been prevented and the human impact of flooding would have been substantially reduced.

This budget continues the NDP tradition of creating 'discentives' for businesses to grow and prosper, and Mr. Speaker—or Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on for another hour and a half, but I do have some of my colleagues that want to get up and speak, and so with those few words, thank you for the opportunity.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a great honour to do a support speech on behalf of our budget as the members opposite seem to have some true lack of understanding of what the situation is. And obviously—you know, when we talk about three events that happened, three floods in five years, where do we find the dollars? I think some of them maybe lack some experience of being in government, municipal government, and let me share some of my past experiences.

I've been in municipal politics for 20 some-odd years, and I want to assure you that, being in municipal politics, I personally experienced flood conditions that we had to deal with. And you know what? At the end of the day there has been some tough decisions we had to make. But I want to assure you, when we talk about improving in the municipal government's investments, there came times when we had to raise the mill rate to generate additional dollars for the betterment of the situation of the municipal government.

And yet today—yet today the opposition members are somewhat being very self-centered, other than play politics with the people that are being flooded, and then the situation we have, and we want to stipulate, we want to generate additional dollars so we can prevent the floods—reoccur—has the—been—in the number of years. And I'm wondering why they are being so negative to our proactive development and economic spin-off for the province of Manitoba, but also to protect the farmers and the ranchers that they're supposedly—supposedly representing the agriculture, the rural perspective. That is a lack of playing politics for the people out there in the rural landscape. *[interjection]*

Well, you know what? The sad situation is when we have this partnership when we have to deal with floods, and I want to assure you we've spent \$435 million out of our own personal pockets of the government's pockets, and yet we have not—we have

not, to this day—we have to this not day received any funding whatsoever from the federal government, and it's coming. We're hoping it's coming. We're not sure.

\* (15:00)

But I want to assure you that the other thing that we talk about Saskatchewan, and, you know what, the other day I was—I had some relatives from Canora, Saskatchewan visit me and we had a situation that was brought up by the member opposite about the birth. Well, you know what, it just so happens, I read an article in the Yorkton banner paper, the Yorkton hospital has been rated as a D. You know what, if the lights are so bright in Saskatchewan so be it—so be it—maybe that's where we have to go, but I want to assure you, life isn't all that sweet. *[interjection]* Yes. Yes. But I want to tell you, that's if you want to continue discussing and comparing provinces, maybe we should have that discussion.

To the members opposite, you know, when we talk about watershed management we would talk about situations that we're forced with. And I think one of the members opposite is quite familiar with surface water management and felt very strongly about what should be done in surface water management. And we've got three floods that happened in five years. We're trying to develop additional dollars so we can protect the people that been flooded such as the area Lake Manitoba. We got producers. We got livestock producers are suffering today. We've been asking for financial support and partnership with the federal government. We have not had any support whatsoever from the federal government, and I understand the MPs tend to want to make up stories, whether it's Mr. Sopuck or Mr. Bezan, so be it. And they're always making up all kinds of stories, but, so, you know what, at the end of the day, when we talk about the 1 per cent—what it is is being very proactive as we move forward for the benefit of the economy of the province of Manitoba.

But let me share some information, as the previous speaker spoke about Swan River, and, you know, he spoke so highly of it I kind of sense that he's somewhat jealous. Maybe he would like to live up in Swan River area because he idolizes a number of great things that occur in Swan River. And, you know what, when we talk about the Building Canada Fund, and we're talking about an investment using federal dollars and we have to generate the dollars,

that's what we continue to want to do. When we talk about successful partnerships, we talk about working with the federal government. I've met with Minister Ritz on numerous occasions, and I want to assure you that our conversations obviously have been more positive than I'm somewhat—reception I'm having today, but I guess that's part of their duty to be somewhat vocal in the opposition.

But I want to assure you in my community we've had many great things. When we talk about health care and we talk about education, we talk about the great things that the people in the province of Manitoba are asking for. In my comments, health care, education services are still No. 1, without a doubt, and I'm hoping the members opposite would somewhat agree with that priority. November the 2nd, I had the privilege of accompanying the regional health authority, the Swan Valley Lions Club and the Swan Valley foundation on the official opening of the cataract surgery program in Swan River. What we've done is we've eliminated people travelling great distances—298 individuals travelling great distances—to have the surgery done in other locations.

I also want to emphasize the investment our government have made in the south air ambulance program, which offers patients needed special care and transportation by plane instead of ground for, but I also want to also expand on the fact that STARS emergency helicopter services are a 24-hour program, and we want to continue providing health-care transportation cost savings for the individuals.

But I also want to stress the fact that we've had Red River College paramedic training, a pilot project that happening right now in Swan River, and the Prairie Mountain health authority will train eight new paramedics right now in the Swan River constituency. So we are definitely dealing with the benefit of health care in the province of Manitoba.

I want to also emphasize the exciting news at University College of the North campus in Swan River. Located near the Swan Valley Regional Secondary School, this centre will provide post-education and training opportunities right in Swan River. It will have the capability to offer a—multiple programs in-house and from a distance. I also want to recognize a new UCN regional centre activities to the UCN facility of health care and family campuses that currently train 24 licensed practical nurses over the next two years. The LPN program is being provided a high-quality education to local students

who want careers in health care and want to live in the Swan River area and the rural area as well.

I also like to acknowledge Nancy Allan who attended the sod-turning—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Sorry.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Just like to remind the honourable minister that he should refer to other members of the Legislature by their constituencies or their ministerial portfolios.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** My apologies, Deputy Speaker.

I'd like to acknowledge the Education Minister who attended the sod-turning ceremony in Swan Valley School Division when we announced the new heavy duty mechanics shop. This is an opportunity for the local area students to improve in the apprenticeship programs regardless whether they go into diesel, carpentry, 'electree'. So in that perspective we are very focused on the benefits of education and health in the province of Manitoba.

But I want to share some statistical information with the members opposite when we talk about the Manitoba GDP. It's the second best of all provinces because it continues to grow in the last five years; an example being, in 2013 it is estimated to be at 1.9 per cent and in 2014 we're anticipating 2.3 per cent. And that is, let's say, that is—in 2012 that is Canada's—at the growth of 1.1.

What we tend to see is that the rural population is growing and, yet, regardless of what the members are saying, the Manitoba government has conducted a successful immigration and settlement program such as the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program which saw 16,000 new immigrants in 2011. Many of these new Manitobans have found homes and jobs in the communities outside of Winnipeg and now are contributing to the rural economy. Since 2006 these rural communities have become the home of more than 25,000 new Manitobans in the province of Manitoba. At the end of 2011 there was 386,000 Manitobans living in the rural Manitoba numbers. I've never seen that since 1981, thanks to the time the opposition members were in power that drove people away from the province of Manitoba.

I also want to stress the fact, as we've—moved—talking about the budget of 2013, maybe you've heard about the program called Growing Forward 2. And yet I see there's a lack of vision of the members opposite when we talk about the Growing Forward.

Minister Ritz and I have talked numerous times about the benefit, and the fact is that we need to have innovation and research. I know that members opposite somewhat believe in a certain livestock breed and so do all of us, but the Growing Forward will bring in additional revenue to the province of Manitoba.—[interjection] Deputy minister, I'm—or Deputy Speaker, I'm also being challenged here somewhat and it's really distracting me. Is there some way we can address the issue?

Well, you know, when we talk about the Growing Forward 2, we talk about commodity groups. We talk about the positivity. As the Agriculture Minister, I truly believe in 'transparency' in talking with the producers that are affected, whether they're in the livestock industry, whether they're in the hog industry, whether they're in the grain industry. We've committed to have constant communication with the organizations.

And I want to also add to the fact that when we talk about the benefit of agriculture in the province of Manitoba, we talk about the value-added processing in the province of Manitoba. When we talk about products that we grow here, and we can talk about the added value of increasing economics to the province of Manitoba. Those are the challenges we having today is that members opposite are choosing not to allow this budget to go through and simplify having some real effect in province of Manitoba.

We talk about the benefits of CentrePort. We talk about the benefits of Churchill. These are all things that we are focused on for the betterment of agriculture in the province of Manitoba.

\* (15:10)

The agriculture industry contributes 62,000 jobs in Manitoba's economy and directly employs about 30,000 workers with over 255 companies that add value-added for the province of Manitoba. It is estimated that 1 in 10 jobs depends on direct and 'interdirect' spinoffs from agriculture. Agriculture supports growth and employment in the rural economy by providing market for services needed by the industry. The 2011 census counted 15,877 'cens' farms in Manitoba. This includes 2,490 farms with a gross revenue of \$500,000 and 22,315 farm operators.

As we see it, and—young farmers are the next drive of the economy. And I want to continue my dialogue with Keystone agripro—agricultural

producers, as young farmers. We've had numerous conversations with the young farmers and we continue to work with the young farmers, as I'm sure that the members opposite are quite familiar with the benefits. I want to also indicate that the last little while we've taken an increase of about 110 per cent of young producers providing—asking for loans through our financial institute, and we continue to provide that service to the province—to the young producers of today.

As we talk about certain things that—when we talk about the rural economy and we talk about the MTS of the world and—was it the 1990's less—when the members opposite chose to privatize MTS. And now we talk about the benefits—we talk about the 'benefits' of cellphone service and yet the members opposite seem to want to cuddle up and hide when we bring that subject up on a regular basis. We talk about the safety; we talk about the economy spinoff. No, they would sooner have the money go to private enterprise and let them take the profit rather than on the benefits of the people that live in the RM of Lawrence, the people that live in the Ethelbert area, the people that live in Bowsman. No, they choose not to even want to talk about it.

What we have happening today, is MTS going around to these municipal governments and saying, come up with \$900,000 and we'll pay you back as we get fees. Is that what—is that the vision of—the party opposite chose to do years and years ago? To have a multi-million dollar company go to municipal governments and say, come up with \$900,000, and you know what? We'll pay you back over the next 20 years. Is that—was—that was their visionary?

I'm telling you as Agriculture Minister, my vision is not that at all. I'm talking about working with the producers, being transparent with the producers regardless of what we talk about. Today's 'transparency' of social network is using telephone communication, using the BlackBerrys, using—I—that is the problem we're having with the government [inaudible]. They tend to want to criticize, they want to play political games, but not stick up for rural agriculture as I am going to do today.

What we've seen in a number of years—the farmers are coming back. Without a doubt, they are coming back. In 2011, the Manitoba, cash receipts increased by \$4.9 billion. Manitoba is two points—has increased among the lowest of the province of Manitoba. We've seen agriculture grow in dramatic fashion.

In 2011, immigration, like I said earlier—and it's worth repeating, Deputy Speaker—15,962 in Manitoba. Since 1999, 25,000 immigrants have moved here from the—and moved into the rural areas, supporting the Provincial Nominee Program and immigrant settlement humps in Brandon, and new offices in Cartwright and Grandview are now in establishment, so.

So targeting \$1.8 billion in investments through a building and renewable plan in 2013 and 2014, and that is to protect the people in Lake Manitoba. We are focused on developing a system that will help the re—not the reoccurrence of the Lake Manitoba flood—that's our visionary.

We want to have a reoccurrence, because if somehow we tend to have no co-operation from the member opposite to move forward to lobby the federal government towards a positive infrastructure development so we don't have reoccurrence of the floods of 2011 and '12.

We tend to forget, \$25 million this year will be used in the Urban Highway Fund which will enable municipality to 'prioritize' investments in provincial highways and that affects the municipalities as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm—like to sum up my presentation today by saying—is that the Bipole III is an investment in the future and I hope—I hope the member opposite will support the budget that we presented today, because Bipole III is going to be the best revenue that we're going to have in the province of Manitoba in the future years, and a partnership that we can develop additional revenue dollars for the betterment of the— Manitoba's economy. And I hope that we get full support when we talk about this as far as additional revenue.

And, in the end, I want to ensure statistically to the loan program that we have through MASC, five hundred and—we've had an increase—from 2008 to 2009, we've had a total 235 loans in 2008-2009—2012-2013, total loans are 555, at an estimated value of \$84.7 million have been lent out to the young farmers. And that is a benefit to the young farmer agriculture society in province of Manitoba.

So, in closing, I would like to refurbish the fact that the province of Manitoba cannot sustain to see the '90s as the previous government had. When we talked about laying off—firing of a thousand nurses, 700 school teachers—is that what we want to see—the province of Manitoba? Do we want to see that? We have.

We have the fact that we've got a new doctor that just come into Winnipegosis. I want to tell you the benefit that we've had in the Winnipegosis area, but yet the members opposite in the '90s chose—let's get rid of the doctors because we don't need them, because, you know what? We'd sooner balance the books for the benefit of their own characteristics.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it's been privilege to present my support in today's budget. Thank you so much.

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** Today I have an opportunity and privilege to rise in this House and put my thoughts on the record 'regrading' the annual document of lies and broken promises and misdirection commonly referred to as a provincial budget. Most Manitobans do not have that honour and I'm truly humbled by the privilege I have today. I take the responsibility seriously and I try to bring forward the issues and the concerns that I hear in consultation with my constituents.

We see an NDP government that has a massive appetite, a compulsion to take as much revenue as they can out of the pockets of Manitobans in all walks of life, and use it for their misguided uses.

The budget tax people in Manitoba, no matter whether they're rich or poor, high income, low income, employed or unemployed, and it does it by raising the provincial sales tax. Everyone who purchases goods or services in Manitoba must now pay more into the provincial coffers.

What are the reasons given for this massive tax grab? Well, the NDP say they're protecting the front-line services, that they have a potential flood coming, that infrastructure needs are growing. The truth about the NDP spending addiction is that the growth of front-line services is not the reason for needing new funding. Front-line services have not dramatically increased. In fact, in many cases, they have decreased. There are 18 closed ERs in Manitoba that use to have front-line staff. Conservation offices, agricultural offices, planning services are all operating with skeleton staff.

What has increased is the upper bureaucratic jobs. Since 2006, the civil service was grown by some 2,000 positions. Last year in the budget, the NDP said that they would reduce the civil service by 600 positions. Even if they accomplish that, and that's not very likely, they still have a net gain of about 1,400 jobs in the civil service in the last six years. The NDP mindset is that job creation in

Manitoba means more people working for government and that is unsustainable. It is a false economy.

\* (15:20)

In order to improve the economy, governments must create a climate that attracts private business, one that says Manitoba's open for business, one that attracts businesses—large and small—to set up shop here, not a climate of overtaxed overregulation, that sends a message that says there are better locations for businesses. Not only are we discouraging new business, we go far beyond that and discourage existing business. And I know my colleagues have referred to several that have been discouraged or are at the present time being discouraged. There is two new crushing canola plants in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, one of which should have been in Manitoba. But they said, there's a better business climate here; we're going to be set up in Yorkton. So two large, world-size canola crushing plants—we should have had one of them. Where'd you go off the rails?

The 'prieries' of this government seem to revolve around adding to bureaucracy, not in providing front-line services. Why do the NDP need 102–192 communicators and spin doctors at a cost of \$12.5 million just in salaries, probably another \$10 million in support and housing for that staff? Why does the WRHA need 15 communications positions? After all, they are the only game in town. They have no competition.

If the NDP were doing their jobs and telling the truth, these positions would be obsolete. The NDP have designed and built a top-heavy structure that is dragging down the economy of the province with maintenance costs and they fail to understand that top-heavy structure is completely unsustainable. Until they have an epiphany, they will continue down the same road to destruction and they will continue to blame everyone else for their failures.

Second excuse they use as a problem is the past flood and a potential flood. I remind them that there were four floods in the province in the 1990s, two of which were very significant, namely, the '95 Assiniboine flood, in '97 the Red River flood. We didn't see the government of the day running out and demanding more money from taxpayers to cover the flood costs. They worked with what they had and did what they had to do to pay the costs within the revenues they had.

The NDP government went through 10 years: strong economic times, rapidly rising revenue, unprecedented prosperity. And what did they do? They blew it. At a time when they could have paid down debt, built a rainy day fund to offset economic downturns and disasters, they blew it.

They gutted balanced budget legislation, emptied out the rainy day fund to feed their spending addiction, and even after all that was gone they refused to take responsibility for their actions. Instead of cleaning their own house the NDP went out and instituted the largest tack–tax increase in 25 years in 2012, and then went one better in 2013 and did the largest tax grab in 26 years.

They should be ashamed of themselves, but they're not. Instead, we have a Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) who rises every day in question period and starts his answers with empty words. He says, I want to be very clear. My late father, who was a long-time reeve in an RM, once told me when a politician says, I want to be very clear, don't believe a single word he says after that. That's a good lesson my father gave me. I've remembered all these years and it's never let me down.

You know, the NDP blame the 2011 flood on their financial woes. They say it was a \$1.2-billion flood. They make it sound like the cost was all theirs, once again, spin doctoring mixed with a large dose of misrepresentation. I would like to use other words, but I'm fairly sure they're unparliamentary.

First of all, the federal government will be in the picture through DFA, disaster financial 'siftance,' and will be offsetting probably 40 to 50 per cent of those costs. Sectionally, the NDP include a–crop insurance of claims—and AgriStability claims on the total expenses. Most programs are insurance programs. Farmers pay premiums for coverage under those programs. But the NDP are doing is—with their false numbers—is no different from them saying every Autopac claim in a flood year is a flood claim, or every house fire insurance claim in a flood year is a flood expense. That, Mr. Speaker, is pure false and the NDP government knows it.

So, if you take the insurance claims which are close to one third of the so-called flood costs and you take out the federal disaster assistance funding, you end up with provincial government costs about one third of the \$1.2 billion. That's affordable, manageable, under existing budget parameters.

Maybe the \$20-million spin doctors are doing their job, but I don't think so. The only ones who believe them are NDP backbenchers, and I think there are even one or two of them that have enough original thought to see through these untruths. What a waste of time and resources when something positive could be accomplished.

Thirdly, the NDP government say they have to raise taxes to match the funding the federal government is providing in their infrastructure programs. Federal, provincial, municipal infrastructure have been ongoing for 15 years and the provincial government has always been able to raise their share without raising taxes. After all, these infrastructure programs are a good deal for the Province: They only have to put up one third of the costs on new infrastructure. Now they tell us they're spending addiction is so out of whack they can't pay their one third. Instead they have to go back and pull it out of the pockets of hard-working Manitobans. This is an 'eathy' pass for them, but it certainly lacks credibility and defies logic. Once again, it appears that the NDP are simply too lazy to put their own in house in order.

I spent six years in the Canada-Manitoba infrastructure selection committee and I can tell you it would work very well, although there were always more applications than there was financial support. We had a different premier and different Finance minister at the time and, unlike the current duo, they saw the value of letting the program work without political interference and it worked very well.

The NDP are trying another spin of the budget with the claim \$650 million in the infrastructure funding when, in fact, there's been little or no actual increase in infrastructure funding. What the spin doctors have done is roll capital budgets with health and education into the same pot as roads, water, sewer and other hard infrastructure. And then they tried to convince the public that they need another \$250 million to \$300 million to cover the costs. They promised, and we've heard their promises before, that they will be accountable for the new money they raise.

What they have done is commit new taxes to infrastructure via freeing up all the money they would have previously spent on hospitals, schools, personal care homes, and they haven't said one word about accountability for the money saved by transferring health and education capital budgets into infrastructure's funding. It's underhanded, it's unfair

and if it was happening in the private sector it would be criminal.

You know, with an NDP government doing their spin, so many lies are told that we lose a reference point to the truth and that shows a total lack of respect to the people of Manitoba. The NDP say they don't have time for a referendum. They say new construction season is beginning and we need the money quickly. What a crock. Every infrastructure project planned for this year was already on the books and approved. Whether extra tax money is on the table or not the programs were planned and ready to proceed.

The real reason they want to take a requirement of referendum out of the legislation is that they know the referendum would be defeated. We have a law in this province, and the NDP think they are above the law. Government wants to be a true government of the people, a government that is based on democracy and individual freedom should include referendums; that is what Manitobans thought their government was based on. How fortunate it is we have an NDP government that doesn't believe in the law, thumbs their noses at the law, will break the law to achieve their own selfish gains and take away the lawful democratic right of their people to vote on a referendum. The may-NDP may have taken the word socialism out of their constitution, but they certainly haven't taken it out of their minds.

The NDP like to think they are the government for the most vulnerable. That's another myth, another lie. After 13 years of government we see the largest food bank usage in Canada. We lead the nation in child poverty rates. We have the most families living in poverty of any jurisdiction in Canada.

In addition, we have an ever-increasing number of children in CFS care. The numbers are now near 10,000, a number this—that is almost double since NDP took power.

I have a news flash for the members opposite, you're failing. You're failing in every significant area of keeping families together and living above the poverty levels. You've been in power for over a decade and the statistics continue to get worse. Now you turn around and raise the provincial sales tax, a tax that affects every Manitoban, no matter what their current situation is. You raise the tax to feed your insatiable addiction to spend more money foolishly and you do it standing on the backs of Manitobans.

Since I've been a member of this Legislature I've seen first-hand the way the NDP spend money. We constantly get the answer to question in question period—in Estimates—that the government spent this many millions here and that many millions there. I've never questioned the fact that the NDP are very good at spending money. What I do question, however, is the results they get out of their expenditures. Those results are very seldom monitored, and they are abysmal, but then again, socialists are never very strong at getting results from money spent. It's just not in their makeup.

\* (15:30)

A quote I came across recently said, and I quote: You measure results by measuring results, not by weighing best efforts, not by counting good intentions and not by calculating inputs. End quote. Now, I know some of the members on that side of the House would probably like to write that down, so I'll repeat it: You measure results by measuring results, not by weighing best efforts, not by counting good intentions and not by calculating inputs. End quote. I believe the NDP has very often—very often have good intentions, and occasionally they put forward best efforts in their limited way, and I also know that they calculate inputs, although they usually exceed those calculations, but what they never do is measure results, unless, of course, they're forced by some third party or a public inquiry. Once someone else has looked at whatever segment of NDP affairs has been terribly mismanaged and made recommendations, then the NDP consistently say, we accept the report, and we will implement all the recommendations. That response, of course, takes the heat off and they can merrily go on their way to producing more fiascos.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a career farmer in Manitoba, I'm shocked at what havoc this NDP government has inflicted on the ag industry. I am appalled that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Initiatives has allowed the attacks on agriculture for simple political gain. The NDP have devastated the hog industry in this province, first with legislation and second with regulation. I raised hogs for 25 years, and they paid the bills on my farm. At that time there were 20 to 25 hog producers in my municipality. Today, there's not a single one. Regulations have been put in place that require hog operations to install expensive anaerobic digesters, which are simply beyond the financial means of small to mid-size operations and which experts from the University of Manitoba say there's no data, no

scientific evidence to support the contention that they will reduce greenhouse gases. The once-proud hog industry in Manitoba, an industry that employed at least 15,000 people and added at least \$2 billion to our economy, is now a wreck thanks to this NDP government and their policies. The industry has been so devastated by government interference that our major processors are now having trouble sourcing hogs for their plants. Those processors have other options; there are other jurisdictions that will welcome them with open arms. They will go if the climate for doing business here doesn't improve.

The cattle business in Manitoba has also fallen on hard times under this government. MCEC is a joke. It's just another tax on cattle producers when they have all the costs they can handle. More slaughter capacity in Manitoba is a must. BSE taught us that. We are now 10 years past BSE, and this government has totally failed to provide any more slaughter capacity in Manitoba. Add that to the fact that the NDP have put aggressive programs in place to take large chunks of Crown land out of cattle production, and you have a recipe for failure.

The cow herd in Manitoba has been reduced by roughly one third in the last five years, and that is largely due to a provincial government that doesn't understand the industry, doesn't want to understand the industry. I had hoped that the member from Swan River would bring some sanity to the Cabinet table in regard to both hogs and cattle. Sadly, I've been disappointed. We are still experiencing constant attacks by the NDP government on those two industries.

This NDP government's house of cards is starting to fall down. We have a Premier (Mr. Selinger) who said in 2011: That is—quote—a ridiculous idea that we're going to raise the sales tax. That's total nonsense, and everybody knows it. Second statement from that Premier in 2011 was, quote: Our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have future prosperity without any tax increases, and we'll deliver on that. We're ahead of schedule right now. End quote. I think that was the Premier. Yes. We'll do it without any tax increases. Very proudly, he said that. Where's the integrity? Where's the foresight? This Premier, with intent knowingly tried to mislead the citizens of Manitoba. Why would anyone believe anything he says from this day forward? We talk about voter apathy; this Premier's actions are a large part of the cause. His lack of honesty and integrity are what gives politicians a bad name. He should be ashamed of himself, and he

should at very least apologize to the people of Manitoba.

You know, I listen to what members opposite are saying. I hear the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby) talk about science-based decisions, and I watch a government thumb their nose at science. I hear the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) reference the flood mitigation, say he had seen pictures from Minot and Grand Forks of flood devastation. I wonder why he didn't simply take a look at Twin Beaches, Big Point or almost any other area around Lake Manitoba. For him to insinuate that the flooding was worse in North Dakota than what we experienced here is simply disgusting. Tell it to the victims around Lake Manitoba and see what their response is.

Voting in favour of this budget is a vote to allow our NDP government to willfully break the laws of this province and I can't condone that. Where's the integrity? Do the NDP care what the people of Manitoba are saying? If they do, then follow the law and call a referendum. Forget the phony excuses. My parents raised me to believe that keeping my word, telling the truth, was important. A handshake and a promise was all that was needed to seal a deal, and now I'm asking—I'm asked to support a budget that breaks the law, and I refuse.

The NDP will chirp and crow every time I rise on an issue in this House. They'll use their tired line, you voted against it. What am I—what I am voting for is honesty and integrity in governance of this province. I make no excuses for that. What I am voting against is a budget put forward by this arrogant, lazy NDP government, a budget that hurts every—Manitoba's, that puts us in the backseat to every other provincial government in Canada. I challenge the members opposite to church—search their conscience. Surely, at least some of you can see how wrong this is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, listening to the members opposite discuss the budget and our vision for Manitoba over the past week has reminded me of a family story. It's a true story about having a vision, making difficult choices, yet holding firm despite withstanding intense criticism. I'm aware this may be a little unconventional, but I'm going to tell that story. I promise I will bring it back to the budget.

A long, long time ago, two brothers arrived in Canada by boat from England to work as surveyors. One of these brothers was my

great-great-great-grandfather, David, and after working for some time, he decided to settle down in a small village called Oxenden. Oxenden is a beautiful hillside, waterfront village that has been called home by seven generations of my family. In fact, my brother and his family currently live in the original house that David built.

Beside the property that David purchased for this home, he also bought a piece of land along the shoreline and built a sawmill. He powered the mill by harnessing the current of the nearby river. The sawmill provided wood to the village and surrounding communities for homes, barns, businesses and public buildings that were being built as these communities began to grow.

Oxenden wasn't a large community, but there was a general store and a post office, a school and a blacksmith shop along with David's sawmill. It was a moderately successful business and he felt invested in the community. He met and married an Irish immigrant named Jane and soon they had a young family.

Around this time, the village was about to embark on the building of their church. There wasn't much money to put into it, and to make the money that had been raised go farther, David donated the lumber for the church structure and the pews. The building was constructed, the pews installed and the community, including my ancestors, began to attend regular church services in their brand new building.

Now, David was ambitious. Like many immigrants, he came with a desire to not just exist but to create a life in this country, and he wanted to thrive and excel, just as immigrants who come to Manitoba do now. He noticed that frequently there were travellers who passed through the village, as it was a midway point between several other communities and a small city nearby, but they had nowhere to stay. And remember, in those days, you either walked to your destination or were transported by horse and buggy as there wasn't even rail at this point in the area, and almost all goods travelled by steamship from small port to port.

He recognized that there was an opportunity to create something in the community that would draw more people, more interest and possibly more industry to it. He decided to build a hotel and he was going to equip that hotel with a room designated to imbibing alcohol—in short, a bar. Well, David got to work hiring carpenters and other skilled tradespeople to build the hotel, there was growing concern by

some in the community about the fact that the hotel was going to serve alcohol. There were those who understood his concept and there were others who were completely against his vision despite knowing that there would be many other benefits to having this hotel in the community, much like members opposite are losing sight of the many benefits within this budget.

\* (15:40)

But David was not discouraged and the hotel was—when completed, was opened and drew customers right away. Those in the community who took umbrage with the selling of liquor made their feelings known, and on the Sunday after the hotel opened, David, Jane and their children 'achended' church as they always did. They walked through its doors and across the floor boards that were milled at their sawmill and sat in the pews that were built from the wood donated by David and Jane, and took their place. Immediately, one or two families sitting nearby stood up and moved away, refusing to sit near them. David, Jane and their children sat alone as the church service began, but it actually got worse because shortly after the minister of the church began his sermon, he singled David out from the pulpit, spoke to him directly in front of the entire congregation and condemned him for selling liquor.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

And in my mind I have a vision of what I often see in this Chamber, which is a lot of this going on. This is one of the few instances where the stubborn streak that runs in my family could be viewed as a positive attribute because even this public shunning didn't deter him.

Time passed, traffic did increase through the village and soon Oxenden had other businesses that opened to supply greater services to the community and to take advantage of the increased traffic that the hotel bought—brought: a tailor shop, a shoe store, a telegraph office and a flour and feed mill, to name a few. As well, during the winter months when the bay froze over, the communities on the other side of the bay and further up the peninsula would use the hotel as a delivery point for necessary goods that would be transported back and forth on Mother Nature's icy winter route.

The community did come to accept the hotel and that it served liquor. And, ultimately, his vision was a benefit to the community and enhanced the hard work that others were also doing in the village, and

many eventually recognized it. However, it didn't come quickly and it certainly didn't come easily. But his determination to proceed in the face of opposition was the right thing to do for the community even though it carried with it a kind of stigma for some time to come for both David and his family, and that was a burden he was willing to bear for the sake of doing something he knew would bring greater prosperity to the village.

This bit of family history reminds me of the present. Just as David believed in his vision enough to take a bold step forward, our Premier (Mr. Selinger) and our government are also taking a bold step. And often when we make choices based on a vision that not everyone can yet see, boldness is demanded. We must be prepared to withstand the criticism that comes our way until the proof that our vision is sound is apparent to those who are stuck looking at only one piece of the picture. So it is with our government and this budget.

The specific challenges that we are facing are unique to Manitoba. Anyone who denies the impact that two, possibly now three, floods in five years has had on the financial challenges that our province faces, is being disingenuous. With the recent release of the Flood Review Task Force report which recommended we make 126 changes to be better prepared for future floods, we are faced with either making those changes now, before more flood damage affects Manitobans in future flood seasons or we tell all of the people who are regularly affected by these floods that they will have to wait. There is urgency to implementing these recommendations as homes, farms and business are better protected by the necessary changes that we can make now, there will be fewer people in need of compensation in the future. Investing in these preventative measures now will reduce in future the kinds of debilitating expenses associated with flooding that are currently affecting us. We may be facing these kind of flood scenarios more regularly as time passes, so the longer we wait to implement the changes, the more people will be affected and most certainly the more expensive it becomes for all Manitobans as we continue to make payouts for flood-affected citizens of this province.

In order to be able to implement these changes, we all, as Manitobans, will need to pitch in, but it will ultimately benefit all of us. If we move quickly we can begin to make those changes in the coming construction season so that next spring we are less likely to be threatened by flood waters and the

expenses that always come with them. This is work that will be undertaken by Manitobans, thus creating more employment opportunities for those in the trades or those entering the trades. And as we improve infrastructure against flooding we also must look to other infrastructure issues that Manitobans have told us they wish to see addressed.

When canvassing in my constituency, there is one complaint that I hear no matter which end of St. James I'm in, and it is in the conditions of the roads. We are doubling our funding for residential road renewal in Winnipeg as part of our historical increases in funding to the city. As infrastructure demands mount, how can we not find a way to further increase our investments when people regularly voice their frustration over the lack of upgrades? This is something that affects all of us regardless of what part of Manitoba you may live in and it is why we are investing province-wide in improving our infrastructure.

By investing in our Manitoba Building and Renewal Plan through a time-limited PST increase that will expire in 10 years, we are working together to make sure Manitobans have better flood protection and ensuring the improvement necessary for provincial roadways and infrastructure as they are going to be renewed. This increase would not affect items such as essential baby supplies on which we are eliminating the PST. And for those who say our taxes are too high under this government, I remind them of this: our balanced approach has reduced the taxes that Manitobans pay by nearly \$1.4 billion since 1999.

We also are improving the basic personal income tax exemption by \$250 this year and another \$250 next year which is higher than inflation and will benefit all taxpayers. There will be an increase in the spousal and dependent exemptions by \$250 and we are ensuring that seniors will no longer be paying the education tax by 2015.

While there are some who are upset about increasing revenues to pay for infrastructure, this will be a benefit to all Manitobans in the face of adversity by allowing us to combat future flood impacts and renew infrastructure in the province. Part of our vision for Manitoba is making sure that we work to maintain to the many good services available to its citizens and find ways to move forward and to continue to grow by investing, not cutting, to make Manitoba stronger and more

independent. This is something that we must all do together, even more so when times are tough.

Sadly, buried under the lightning rod of this aspect of the budget lay some really wonderful opportunities for Manitobans in the coming year's provincial plan. I'm especially proud of the work that this government is doing for those on assistance. While we increased the RentAid package by \$240, what many have not yet recognized is that there are other key pieces to the housing package. We are not just increasing RentAid, but are building more affordable housing for those on assistance. We are also focused on helping people on assistance transition to independence. We have introduced a RentAid transition bonus which provides \$110 per month for up to two years for EIA recipients, transitioning into training or employment, who would otherwise be ineligible for RentAid.

We have also introduced the Portable Housing Benefit, a monthly rent supplement of up to \$200 to EIA participants with mental health issues. This government believes in encouraging people to make their way to independence and self-sufficiency and finding them practical ways to support them as they do this.

Some have suggested that we must cut. I am sure that if we were to do that, the moment those critics experienced first-hand the inconvenience of not having that service when they need it, they would be the first people to criticize us for cancelling that program or cutting that job. We are raising the PST to be able to invest in critical infrastructure, but still maintain the most important elements of daily life to Manitoba citizens: their health care, education, and ensuring young people have job opportunities right here in this province by stimulating growth.

Like David, we are making a decision that not everyone will like. In an effort to see beyond the current challenges we must accept that some will focus only on the immediate and reject our approach. And, like David, some will ridicule us and we will take some flak; however, we choose to move ahead understanding this. Our vision includes investing in Manitoba's future as we work with the present challenges.

I strongly encourage Manitobans to please read this budget thoroughly. It would be a much better conversation if people's perceptions were based on all of the pieces of this budget as opposed to two or three in isolation from the whole.

As elected officials we are responsible to the people who elect us and to listen to the needs of the people of this province, but it is also our responsibility to have a vision that will keep us all moving forward together. In the case of our budget this means making very difficult choices and taking bold steps in order to make sure we create that vision. Good decisions are not always popular decisions but easy options are rarely the best ones.

Mr. Speaker—Mr. Deputy—oh, Mr. Speaker, just as in my great-great-great-grandfather's time, there are folks today like members opposite who can't appreciate the vision required to move our province ahead.

Thank you very much.

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** It is my privilege and my honour to stand up and deliver remarks on Budget 2013 and represent the Morden-Winkler constituency in this Chamber, and it is always my honour to do so. It's a great constituency—wonderful people living in Morden and Winkler and the RM of Stanley.

I wish it was it was under better circumstances that I could rise today, but I have to say I will not be supporting the government's budget, and there are many reasons for that. And I can guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, that I continue to hear from my constituents for sending a strong message and trying to make their voices heard with this government, speaking out against the increases. And I'm glad for this opportunity to be able to stand up today and to bring some of those concerns forward and put those thoughts on the record.

I also want to welcome back the Clerk and the table officers and the pages that we have in the Legislature, and thank them for the good work that they perform here for all of us.

As I said, Manitobans are standing up and they are speaking out at this time against the NDP increase of the PST to 8 per cent. Last year, of course, Mr. Speaker, as you know, Manitobans realized they were going to have \$184 million of broad-based increases to the tax regime. Those increases included things like the expansion of the RST, MPI increases, the gas tax, application of tax to home insurance policies and new fees and permits alone that amounted up to a hundred million dollars. This year, it's something different. They've outdone themselves. This year, we have another \$277 million

in additional taxes, accomplished through a 14.2 per cent increase to the provincial sales tax. And there's a strategic difference, as well, between last year's budget increases and this year's. Last year, at least those increases, from a strategic point of view, were broad and they were incremental and to a degree at least they were under the radar. So it took some time for Manitobans to fully appreciate how difficult those increases would make life for them. It meant the MPI increase of \$35 per vehicle registration, but maybe you didn't realize that until you went to reregister your vehicle. It meant a 3.5 per cent immediate increase in Manitoba Hydro rates in addition to other emergency rate increases, but maybe you didn't take notice of that until the next time you went to pay your utility bill. It meant a fuel tax increase of 3.5 cents per litre, but even that is more easy to hide or mask because the price at the pumps does fluctuate to a degree.

And it meant as well an expansion of the retail sales tax to include hair tax and other services and things across the spectrum where people would feel the increase. And, like I said, it took time for Manitobans to become fully aware of the extent to which these increases were going to have an impact on their wallets and on their available money that they can use. And it left average Manitobans with the unmistakable realization that they were going to pay hundreds of dollars more for this government's spending habits.

But this year's budget is different, Mr. Speaker. This year, the increases are up-close-and-personal. They are in-your-face. And there is no way to disguise an 8 per cent tax increase. There's no way to disguise an 8 per cent PST. There's no way to put lipstick on this pig; it is what it is. And every time Manitobans go to pay a bill, they are going to know—they're going to see in their face that 8 per cent bill coming at them. And they will understand in a short time that it's going to cost them \$1,200 more per year for a family of four. It is calculated. It is not sincere. It is cynical, and it demonstrates the degree to which this government has ran out of ideas. They've ran out of steam.

It is a disingenuous approach, and they are seemingly untroubled by the reversal, by the about-face, by the 180-degree course correction, because this was the government who said they were not going to raise taxes. This was the Premier (Mr. Selinger) who said that the utter idea that he would raise taxes was nonsense. This was the Premier who made the 2011 election a test of who Manitoba

voters could believe would not raise taxes. And I remember, because I was there. I was a candidate, I was running in my constituency, and some of the members across the way were new candidates as well. Like myself, they were new to this enterprise, they were unjaded by elections past, and they knew the promises that they made when they went door to door, they knew the commitments they made to potential voters when they went to candidate forums and when they went into public places and when they visited the malls and when they went into businesses. They made those commitments because they had assurances from their leader and from the incumbents that taxes would not go up. And so they repeated those same claims in their constituencies, in the backyards and at the doorsteps of Manitobans.

And, Mr. Speaker, despite those assurances and despite those things, we come into the Chamber last week and the government changes directions, shocks Manitobans and introduces an 8 per cent tax hike. I have to say, it could not have been a pleasant weekend for members opposite to go into the coffee shops. As a matter of fact, I'm quite sure they didn't go into the coffee shops. I'm sure they found any excuse to—I don't know—update the antivirus software on their computers in the basement, because the last place they would've wanted to be was in a coffee shop, was in a public place having to defend that kind of reversal in the—with the same constituents that they sold a bill of goods to when they said, don't worry, we're not going to raise taxes. We are not the government who will raise taxes.

And, Mr. Speaker, I must say that it is—it comes with dismay and some degree of disillusionment as a new MLA that the actions of this government to do this thing helps—it contributes to the low estimation that so many citizens hold about those who serve in this place. And I find it disappointing as a new MLA in this Chamber that there is not more of a connection between what they say and what they do.

And, Mr. Speaker, as you have heard so many of my colleagues say, we have balanced budget legislation in this province. We have protections in law against just this kind of action. The taxpayer protection act was brought in in 1999 and this government promised to uphold it. They promised in 2000—in 1999 that they would uphold it; they promised in 2003 that they would uphold it; they promised in 2007 that they would uphold it and now they gut it.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to make that indication that you're raising taxes on Manitobans and it is another thing altogether that you say you're going to do it, but you're not actually looking at your own expenditures. And there is this central disconnect with what this government is saying and what this Finance Minister is saying and what he's doing it—when, in fact, we know that core government spending is going up again this year. And I went back and I looked at the speech that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) made. I kept that copy of his speech in my office, and as a good, keen, new MLA I had highlighted key pledges. And I said, Minister of—Finance Minister—I will help to hold you accountable to what you said. And to my shock, I went back into that document and the Minister of Finance actually indicated he would reduce core government spending last year. He said that he would reduce it. So imagine—imagine—my shock as a new MLA to discover in fact that core government spending had not gone down. It had gone up. And I thought, what could this possibly be that there's such a disconnect between what he said and what he did.

And, Mr. Speaker, I remember this Finance Minister saying, we will reduce spending by 1 per cent. They promised it and, instead, here we are a short 12 months later back in the Chamber and we discover that, instead, \$502 billion of core government spending is virtually unchanged—as a matter of fact, has gone up from last year. And that is why that the budget amendment introduced by our leader just a few days ago cites this NDP's failure to tame a \$500-million structural deficit created through 13 years of overspending.

Mr. Speaker, in short, it should be about results, and this government has not in 13 years and 14 budgets been able to demonstrate to Manitobans in tangible ways that they are producing results for Manitoba. That is the message that I am receiving from constituents through the phone and through email and through faxes. They are complaining about a lack of integrity, a lack of leadership, a lack of leading by example, because, as I said, it would be one thing to say that a tax hike is inevitable, that it will be painful but that we're going to have to take our medicine and reduce the structural deficit. But we're going to lead by example, and we will do things to send the message that we're serious this time; this time you can believe us.

\* (16:00)

But, instead, there is no cut in pay to ministers' salaries. There's no reversal to say, actually, I think, in these conditions, we could not, in good conscience, accept money as a vote tax scheme to fund our NDP coffers. There is no principle that is in place that we are finding that says, yes, we're increasing the tax, but look at all we're doing to demonstrate the integrity of our plan. That has been totally missing from this discussion, totally absent from their rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP could have told Manitobans that this tax hike was necessary, that they were tightening their belt, that they were cutting back spending, that they were getting back on track. But government spending is, indeed, unchanged, and the new taxes that Manitobans are now paying, we understand, will not go to infrastructure to help municipalities; it will go to general revenues. It will be entrenched, it will be enshrined, it—we will not be going away under this government's leadership.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is coming to be understood by Manitoban ratepayers, by economists, by journalists, by the business community, by the academic community, by families, seniors and working people, as hypocritical, as a betrayal, as a breach of trust. As a matter of fact, today the Canadian federation for independent business released its latest monthly Business Barometer and they revealed that small business optimism in Manitoba decreased almost 3 points in April and it is once again below the national index. Keep in mind, this is even before the release of the government's budget. I cannot imagine what those new numbers will be when they're updated in a few short weeks. That's just one indicator of the kind of response that's happening to this budget.

And there are other early indicators of the effect of this NDP tax hike. We know that for two straight months, Manitobans have seen inflation rates increase higher than the national average. In February, that inflation rate in Manitoba was 2.2 per cent; in March it was 2.3 per cent. And a large portion of that increase relates to the government-controlled revenue sources, such as vehicle registration rates and extending the PST to previously exempt items.

Mr. Speaker, in a briefing, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) stated on Tuesday, that his government would be instructing retailers to collect the additional 1 per cent on the PST beginning on Canada Day, regardless of whether Bill 20 was

passed or not. This Premier (Mr. Selinger) has encouraged people to come to committee and I believe that, even at this time, there's more than 100 names on the list of presenters—Manitobans who want to come to committee.

We learned today—we learned today—when the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) asked questions, that the Premier has said he's not even coming to committee. He's inviting Manitobans to show up. He's saying, I will be listening, but he's not coming to committee. He says he's going to be out there somewhere. I think he's going to be with those other members who are hiding in their basements and updating the anti-virus software on their computers, because the last place they want to be is talking to Manitobans. The last place they'll want to be is in that committee room, listening to those hundred-and-some—and I can't imagine how big that list will yet grow to be by the time this Bill 20 hits committee.

But what a failure, to put your message right, and to send a message to Manitobans that it matters what they say, when, in fact, Mr. Speaker, it matters more than ever. I think if there's one encouragement here, if there's one silver lining, it is that more and more, as people contact our offices, they are coming to understand that, perhaps, in this situation and others, their voices may matter. And I guarantee you, that list of presenters on Bill 20 will continue to increase. And I would still challenge this Premier to reverse his ill-advised decision to be absent from those committees and agree to come, and agree to be present, and go through the night, if necessary, and send a strong message that we are listening. But, of course, that's an issue of respect, it's an issue of credibility, it's an issue of responsibility and democracy.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, speaking of credibility, I had to have mentioned it, the fact that I had to draw some attention in my remarks to the fact that the Minister of Finance released a news release, it was back when he was releasing his second quarter financial report, and there was such a lack of honesty in the way they're putting forward the information to try to disguise how bad the situation has become, and his media release had actually said that we are—we can't effect everything, and we can't effect every change we'd like to, but we are working with the things that are in our control, to narrow the gap between our expenses and revenue. This Minister of Finance doesn't even talk anymore in terms of reducing the deficit or eliminating the deficit or

paying down debt. He talks about closing the gap, and I would ask the Minister of Finance, you know, how does that same kind of idea translate into other areas?

There were some municipalities who had accidental waste water discharges in the last number of years, and there were fines that were swift and severe that were assessed against those municipalities. And I wonder if the Minister of Finance would have accepted an explanation from them that said, well, listen, Mr. Minister, we are trying to close the gap between accidental discharges and we are getting closer all the time. I wonder if the minister would talk about the small businesses who now have to produce a report, monthly, on the additional taxes they are collecting for the Minister of Finance because of extending those taxes to haircuts and other services. And I wonder if they didn't submit them, if the minister would be willing to say, well, you know, we tried to submit those reports on time, but the fact of the matter is that we're closing the gap between the months that we submit the reports and the months we are—no. Now, the minister's response would be severe; it would be immediate; there would be penalties. And yet that's the kind of rhetoric we receive from this government.

And, you know, I do want to take a minute just to recognize that in the gallery today we have representatives from Saputo Cheese that have just joined us, representatives from Manitoba and Saskatchewan and Alberta, and we welcome them here today in the gallery. It's our pleasure to welcome them, and we know that there are groups standing up all over Manitoba who are coming to visit us here because they care about this debate. They care about the future of Manitoba and they're being counted and they're saying we—it matters what is going on in this place.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the PC Party leader started to inform Manitoba that this is about choices, this is about results. And I have to say, it's about trying to reconcile what can realistically be done, what needs to be done, what has remained undone. And we sent that powerful message this week, that it's about making choices and where this government has been called upon to make choices, they have been satisfied instead to make excuses. And how contrite and how meek those members opposite looked this week when they realized that many of the same choices that we were articulating were the choices that they had made in the last budget, the choices that they had left undone one

year ago, things that they were now walking away from. Things like reducing expenses in core government, looking for savings. Oh, how soon they forget and go on in a different direction.

Mr. Speaker, just in my last few minutes here to put comments on the record—I think the failure of this government with this process has got to come back to their failure to consult Manitobans. I saw the media release that came from this province that said we are consulting with Manitobans. Except that if you plot it on a map, where the consultations took place, it ended up that there was not a consultation south of the Perimeter Highway and No. 1 Highway. And so, as a result, the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) and myself, we hosted with our own critic for Finance, the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), a prebudget consultation to gauge submission and gauge the opinion of 20 municipal leaders in our area. And we were happy to hear them and happy to come back and talk about their views. And that cons—the breakdown in that consultation, nowhere is it more evident is this government's decision to go around to circumvent that protection in place, which is the referendum, which would give a chance for Manitobans to put on the record how they feel about the proposed one—one—well, I should say, the 8 per cent increase, which would be like a 14.2 per cent increase to the PST. And where is the argument they've put forward that they have to invest in infrastructure?

\* (16:10)

And yet today we have mayors of Winnipeg and communities all across Manitoba standing up with one voice just hours ago and sending a strong message that this government has dropped the ball, that this government has not respected their wishes, that they are denouncing the PST hike. They are standing in lockstep and saying this government got it wrong. They did not consult. It was a missed opportunity and that this approach as articulated by the NDP is phony, it allocates money to provincial projects, but not to municipal aims.

As a matter of fact, Doug Dobrowolski of the AMM said earlier today: this Premier (Mr. Selinger) repeatedly told us that there was no new money and that they were not elected to raise taxes and, as a matter of fact, they weren't. But it turned out last week when the Premier came back into the House and the Finance Minister came back into the House they delivered a new message: there was new money,

just not for municipalities and not for where Manitobans want it to matter.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot that I could say. There's a lot I could say about the lack of consultation and the breakdown in consultation. But I need to wrap up so I would like to end my remarks by simply saying that—I mentioned earlier—this budget presents us with a stark contrast. It's a contrast where we are talking about ideas and they are talking about excuses. It's about results. It's about choices, and in Manitoba this government makes excuses not choices, and where are the results? Oh, they're there. The results are there: last in reducing poverty, last in cutting red tape, last in fiscal management, last in leadership from the Premier's office—I almost forgot—and last in fighting violent crime. Oh, and almost dead last in education when it comes to literacy and science and math results, lest I forget.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's why I cannot support this budget and that is why I will support the amendment introduced by our leader.

Thank you.

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs):** I am very pleased to speak after the member opposite because I do agree with one small part of his speech, and that is there are contrasts and choices and I believe there's contrasts and choices.

And so I'll start off my speech, Mr. Speaker, with why I actually ran. And it was way back in 1998 and I was working for Frontier School Division and I had a chance to go and travel to Dauphin. And I actually stayed at the member of—Minister of Finance's (Mr. Struthers) house and we started talking about what choices happened in the 1998, '97, '96, in fact, when the Conservatives were in power. And we talked about some of the cuts to education and I was an administrator in the school division and I had set up a program which was providing education and literacy to about 1,200 adult students across the north.

And I can remember the cuts to that program. I can remember that program had won awards, national awards for the literacy and education and for creativity and for getting people to school and transitioning into the workforce and other post-secondary. And I can remember the Conservatives cut it, and why did they cut it? They cut it because they had to put money in front of people.

And I think money is important. I do know a little bit about money. I know a little bit about finances. It seems probably more than the—a lot of the members across, because I believe when you put money into education and you keep teachers in front of people, you invest in universities and schools, I believe you're investing in the future. When you look at Sage Creek, when you're building a new school and you're investing in child care and you're investing in training at universities. I believe that's not a cost; it's an investment. And when I've set up my businesses I know that they cost at first. I know you spend some money. When you buy a business you invest money and then, you know what? You reap the benefits over time with good work, and I think that's what we need to do.

I look at the members opposite, and the final straw that broke the camel's back that got me involved in politics and wanting to run in Assiniboia was the cuts to health care. And I think it is true that we need to compare and contrast our government versus the Conservative government. And here's an example. The Grace Hospital emergency was built too small. If you look at demographics, if you look at what the future was going to be, it was too small for the demographics. And not only that, I find it passing strange the members across are talking about being the champions of health care. What got me to run, the final straw, was when I took a family member to Grace Hospital emergency who was suffering a heart attack, and it was closed. It was actually closed on evenings and weekends because what happened was they made the decision that they weren't going to train enough doctors and they dropped the medical school for the amount of spaces in 'medischool'—school. They cut the training for nurses, and they couldn't staff Grace Hospital. They said it was necessary.

Well, to me, I have a choice, and if it's going to cost me \$20 more a year to keep Grace Hospital open so that if another loved one has a heart attack, I believe it's an investment in services. It's an investment in humanity, and we believe, as a society, that's something that we need to do.

So I believe the member was right; there is comparison and contrast. We want to invest in health care and here's an example. We want to have a new MRI in Grace Hospital. Yes, we will spend approximately a million dollars to have a MRI. We will train the technicians. Now, during the 1990s, there were no technicians. Why? Because they closed the technician training program at Red River.

They closed it. And then they were wondering why they had problems filling the technician training programs for the lab techs and the radiologists, et cetera. Well, if you close the program, you have no staff. So we opened the program. We're training staff, and when we open that MRI, when we invest that money for the MRI, we'll have staff there so that people can get good quality health care.

It's also wonderful to note that I was at the palliative care opening. Why? Because it's a good health service. I was there when we announced the new access centre. Why? Because we're opening up services and supports to people who need it, especially the seniors in St. James-Assiniboia and Kirkfield Park. These are services that people need to depend on. And I am proud to be part of a government that is investing money. And I don't look at it as an expense; I look at it as an investment because if I need that service, I want to pay it.

And I find it interesting the Leader of the Opposition's comparing and contrasting. He's talking about Botswana. He's talking about Somalia. He's talking about places that don't have a high tax, and they have no police, no medical system, no social service system, no protection, no quality of life. And so there is a choice. There's a race to the bottom that the Conservatives wish to do, where there is no services, nothing.

And, you know, I guess it comes with perspective. I believe that we want something where all people have opportunity, all people have health care and all people have a good quality of life, not just the few who have millions of dollars to invest in housing, who have an ability to buy gated communities and have their own police department. I think it is where all people need to feel safe and secure, everywhere.

And so I'm pleased to invest in police. I'm pleased to invest in health care. I'm pleased to invest in education, and I'm pleased to finally invest more in roads because I think it's important. And I always find it's interesting comparing contrast. In the Conservative time, they upped the gas tax and decreased the amount of money spent on roads. So they were making a profit on the gas tax. I think that it was passing strange that they keep on asking time and time again for more roads. And I believe they're honest there, where they say, I want to have more roads. I would like better roads.

The difference between us and them, the contrasts, is that we believe you should pay for them,

and they believe that you should build them without any financial constraints. And it's interesting because when they were government, they didn't actually pay down debt. They had debt that extended forever. When you talk about the lotteries corporation, they had built buildings without ever paying them off. They had amortized dams in the hydro things for hundreds of years, where we have a amortization schedule. They had done some financial things where people—investments or expenditures were not on the books, and I'm pleased that we have one set of books that's public. And I think that's very, very important.

\* (16:20)

So I think that when you look at the comparison and contrast, I think it's important because here's the other one that's really funny. When they talk about planning for the future, let's talk about their planning for your future. You cut the medical school from 90 to 80 to 70, and then you wonder why you have a doctor shortage. I think I can figure out basic math. If you cut the training you have less people. If you cut the nurses' training spots and you fire people and they go elsewhere, and you wonder why you have vacancies—I'd—I'm not surprised.

I am proud to be a government that's training a record number of doctor—of doctors. And when I had the opportunity to join the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) at the white coat ceremony where all these young people are putting on their white coats for their first time, it's a very emotional time because the family and friends are there cheering. And there—it's feel—filled, and there's people who are from the north and rural communities and city. We are training all sorts of people, and they want to practice here in Manitoba and they're excited. And we have incentives so that if they get their training here they have incentives to work here in Manitoba.

We have a tax program that gives 60 per cent of people's tuition if they stay in Manitoba. And again, one of the comparison and contrasts that I am proud of is when I started in this job I looked at the stats, and the population was declining. There was decreased economic activity. People were fleeing the province. There was a brain drain, and I am proud to be part of a government that invests in people and has an increased population.

Now, I know that it's gone from about a million people to over 1.2 million in 10 years. That's—I think that's good. And I think what's happened is that we've had increased expansions. And just this week

we've learned about expansions at North West Company, Boeing of Canada, what Gerry Price is doing at E.H. Price. We're learning what Winpak's doing. We have a new aerospace engineering thing that's testing engines from around the world. We have new Composites Innovation Centre. We've got the Magellan project and lots of work on aerospace. We're composite leaders and, Mr. Speaker, that wasn't there in 1999. I'd like to say it was, but I want to be accurate here to say that we have increased employment and opportunity. So Boeing, when I got elected, was around—just around 500 people. Now, they were celebrating that it was 1,600 and growing, and I think that's a good news story. Winpak is, again, that. E.H. Price—I have to give credit to Gerry Price; he's done a good job. And we want to continue that.

But I also want to look at what we're doing in my ministry. And I look at my ministry, we are investing in seniors. Here's an example: the tax credit for seniors was \$250, now we're pushing it to \$1,100. That allows seniors to stay in their homes. Simple things—the primary tax credit. My friends, was there a primary tax credit in 1999? No. Is there one now? Yes. It allows loved ones to financially get compensated for the support of their loved ones, which is only appropriate.

When you look at community mental health organizations, the funding has increased from \$900,000 to \$2.4 million this year. When you're looking at the seniors' abuse line, I'm pleased to—been there when we announced the programs to support seniors, to talk about seniors, to create the safe suite, to create the phone line, to create a person who will go out and work with seniors and identify the problems. And you know what? That's where you say we have issues that some of our seniors are facing. We want to help them; we want to provide the support and, Mr. Speaker, I believe that's not an expense. That is an investment in quality of life.

I look at simple things like the pension liability. The Conservatives never paid down the pension liability. And, no, I have to say that other governments hadn't paid the pension liability and I think that was wrong. I think it was a good fiscal step to actually pay the pension liability to TRAF, teachers' retirement plan, and the superannuation. Why? Because it's good fiscal management to pay your bills and I'm pleased that we put money into both those pensions to have real money there. And that's very, very important because a lot of the jurisdictions in the States and across the world are

actually technically broke because they haven't put in money into their pension liability. So I'm pleased on that.

I look at our economy. We have one of the best economies in Canada and have had for the last 10 years. I look at our employment levels; the highest participation rate in history. We look at the oil and gas industry where we're now producing 18 million barrels. By the way, the population is now 1,267,000 people—that's a real great thing.

And so, when you're looking at the comparison and contrasts, I actually agree with the members opposite, there is a choice. I believe we need to invest in hospitals, roads, education, the—industry. I believe that we need to make sure that we have real money that's being invested. And the members opposite think that you can decrease education and race to the bottom. They believe that they can cut services and grow to the bottom. Well, it's interesting to note that—I believe that some things like education are an investment, and I think that we need to continue to make that investment.

And when you compare 1999, when we took office, to now—I'll just do a few comparisons. The small business tax—9 per cent in 1998; zero per cent now. Nine to zero, it is less. When you look at the—1999 to 2013, a single person of \$20,000 has had a tax decrease of 23.8 per cent. A single person with \$70,000 has a decrease of 21.9 per cent. A family of four, one earner, \$40,000—decrease, 43.1 per cent; \$60,000—tax decrease of 34.5 per cent; \$75,000—decrease by 28.2 per cent. And, Mr. Speaker, those are all decreases.

And is it just the young? No, it's—older people, too, have had good tax decreases. The one that I thought was quite interesting is the senior couple of \$30,000—a vulnerable couple—has had a tax decrease of 910 per cent, and I think that's a positive statement. We've had a senior couple of \$60,000 has had a 41.2 per cent decrease; \$80,000 senior couple—28.5 per cent decrease.

Now, it's not just spending more money, and I do agree that way. I look at efficiency—you've cut the bureaucracy of the regional health authorities from 11 to five—that's a decrease—cut the bureaucracy. We have merged liquor and lotteries corporations, saving millions of dollars. We cut \$128 million in spending, including areas in my own department. We are cutting 600 civil service jobs over time and with thoughtful changes. We're going to extend the 20 per cent cut in ministerial salaries and we're going

to use greater online services to make sure that we are providing services to all Manitobans in an efficient manner.

And I go back to one or two things that I've done in my career as minister of Industry; one of them was BizPaL. I finding it passing strange when the members opposite keep on saying, be more efficient, be more efficient. When the Conservatives were in government, everything had to be done by paper and pen and mail it in and print it out and all the rest. I am pleased that we were the—I believe, the second jurisdiction in Canada to partner with the federal government, and I'll give them credit for working with us and developing BizPaL where things can be done online. It's easy to navigate and it's simple to use and you can use it at any time. And I think that's really positive for business and individuals. And I have to admit that the first time that I owned a business—it was up in Norway House—and it was very, very frustrating, because I often got some issues because I had to get the mail from the Province. By the time I got the mail and mailed mine in, I had the issue about getting things in on time, and I have to admit that. The good part now is that now I can look for business names or I can do certain things online, and I think that's a very, very positive thing.

\* (16:30)

Now in my—the last part of my speech I want to talk a little bit about my own department and I want to talk about some of the things that are very important. I believe in prevention. I look at the in motion and the healthy businesses and healthy school campaigns and all the things we've done. We were one of the least active provinces in Canada. I'm pleased to say that we are now one of the more active provinces. We moved from 41 per cent of the people meeting basic standards to 51 per cent and I'm pleased about that because people did not think it was possible. I'm pleased that we actually took the stand—and I'd like to say thank you to Denis Rocan because way back then we were the first jurisdiction in Canada that did the smoking ban and it was passed unanimously in this House. And it was a proud moment because we said we needed to work together and I believe that we do need to do that. And I am pleased that we went from 29 per cent smoking to 14 per cent smoking, and I think that's a very good positive progressive step.

I look at this whole idea about healthy food, and I had the opportunity to travel in northern Manitoba

and I am pleased to say that in Garden Hill there's gardens once again. We have almost a thousand gardens in northern Manitoba and there's great programs that are raising chickens and raising pigs and freezer programs and healthy food programs and gardens. And why? It's because if you want to deal with diabetes and heart and stroke and lots of chronic disease, I think prevention makes sense. And so I'm pleased to be Minister of Healthy Living and moving forward on some of those things.

I'm also pleased to sit there and support programs like SafetyAid where we have a team going into seniors' houses and making sure they're safe and secure, and you make sure that there's handholds where people might need them so they don't fall and break a hip or get hurt. They have appropriate locks on their doors and all those things become important. And why are they important, Mr. Speaker? Because it's prevention.

And let's not forget that there is a comparing contrast. The comparison is we created the position of Healthy Living Minister. It was the first in the country and it was really exciting, and it was fun because we picked all those investments that would save long-term money and it wasn't spending it was investing in good health. And I am pleased today we have lots of results that have shown the positive outcomes of investing like that. And so I believe that not everything has to be in partisan. I believe there is a comparison contrast. I believe that we need to invest in the future.

I believe in—hydro is our oil and can be our future in Manitoba. I disagree with the Leader of the Opposition because I think it's fabulous economics when somebody else pays for an asset that we're going to own. So, if we can ship someone 20 years or 30 years of power, they pay us money. Billions of dollars are paid to us and then they hand us the key where we then make profits forever. I think that's a good model and, you know, Mr. Speaker? the one very, very scary thing I see is the Leader of the Opposition saying we don't need exports. We don't need to build hydro. We don't need a future of green energy. We believe in the mothball party over there.

And in my case I believe hydro is our future. I think that the economics of exporting energy to the south, it's going to be good and has been good. And I look back to the debateable Limestone when the Conservatives called it lemonstone and said it was a stupid idea that you could invest a billion dollars or a billion and a half dollars and make \$6 billion. To me

that's good investment. And now I look to the future and I think that we could build a couple dams or three dams, invest \$20 billion, get our American friends to pay for those dams and then have good, solid income and a positive future for our country and our province. I like that, and so there is comparison in contrast and I think the deal is we want to make sure that we plan for the future.

Now, as far as the balanced budgets, I think that what we want to do is true—have true transparency. Part of the bill that we will be debating and discussing is about spending that extra penny, investing that extra penny. I think it's very important that we do have open and transparent disclosure. I want to see where the money goes. I think Manitobans want to see where the money goes. I think Manitobans want to see where the money goes. I think that's an important part of the bill. I think it's really important because I think that we believe in having that provided.

Now, unlike when the Conservatives had two sets of books, one that was for the public and one that really wasn't, I think that unlike when the auditor actually did not sign off on the provincial books for two years, 1997-98, I believe, we believe in having disclosure and public disclosure.

So part of the new legislation on the Manitoba building and renewable plan says that that commits every dollar raised to be spent on critical infrastructure and flood protection. It will have an annual report. It'll talk about where those are investments are made, and you know what? I agree with the members that people want to know where their money goes. I want to know where money goes, and we will show it to the people.

And you know what? I'm not opposed to saying the Grace Hospital is a good investment; I believe in that. I believe when we build assisted housing units, which are needed in west Winnipeg, and the ones we've got in Kiwanis Courts are fabulous, and I think that there's other investments that we would love to be made. So those investments, whether they're in the new Grace Hospital emergency, the MRI, the access centre, the new schools in Sage Creek, are all positive. So, Mr. Speaker, I think those are good.

The other thing that's different than us is that I believe that we need to invest in flood infrastructure. Flood infrastructure is essential. We need to make sure that we have people protected. Now I can remember debates in this House when we were doing the new floodway, and we invested, I think, 6 or

7 hundred million dollars, and we went and did that. And I'd like to say thank you to the federal participation because the Liberals were there and they worked hard on us, and I don't know if it was the Tories also were on, but I'd like to say whoever our federal partners were, I think it was a good investment because you know what? In hindsight, we needed the floodway. We needed it and I think that was an important step.

And I also think that we needed the protection of Morris and those outlying communities, and so when we spent that billion dollars—no, it wasn't just spending; it was an investment. So, when we invested that billion dollars around Morris, and we made the floodway bigger, I believe that the—*[interjection]* Wider. Yes, wider. We made a good investment, and we made that good investment because it was the right thing to do.

And, you know, it was funny because I didn't think it was going to be used for years because I thought there was no chance that we could use it. And, you know, just a couple of years later we needed it, and I'm glad that we built it the way it is. So that's important.

And, finally, Mr. Speaker, I look at the affordability of the province. I think it's really important to make sure that we have a good, affordable province. I believe it's essential to have competitive taxes, and you know, every jurisdiction can pull out one thing.

And I encourage you to look at one page in the budget which shows where BC has a health-care premium. BC has higher gas taxes, but they might have a lower tax rate in certain areas. Alberta has different things that are competitive in some ways and non-competitive in others.

I think what you have to do is look at the overall picture. The overall picture is the quality of life, and when you look at our quality of life, Mr. Speaker, I think it's second to none. I had a lot of chance to move to other jurisdictions or locate my businesses in other jurisdictions. I'm pleased that my businesses are located here. I'm pleased that my investments are located here, and I'm very pleased to be representing an area here.

And so I don't want to go back to freezing health capital. I don't want to go back to laying off 700 teachers. I don't want to go back to Filmon Fridays. I do not want to go back to firing a thousand nurses or reducing the spending on highways, and I

don't want to get to a government that believes you can cut your way to prosperity. I think you need to invest your way to prosperity.

\* (16:40)

And in business, we heard today on how some businesses, when it's tough times, they choose to invest because they know good times are coming, and some people don't. In corporations, the companies that have invested in bad times survive and prosper in good times. The companies that lay off and cut and slash, when good times come, they have lost their human capital.

So, therefore, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support this budget. I'm proud to be a minister in this province and of this government. And I'm also proud to be a member of the—first, Minister of Healthy Living and, again, in the portfolio to invest in prevention and make a difference for the lives in Manitoba.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise and put a few words on record in support of my leader's amendments on the budget speech.

This budget has very clearly shown the NDP plan for our future: tax Manitobans more heavily, spend their money as fast as you can, and leave the problem for the next generation to clean up.

In fact, I can give you quite a nice example of that. My oldest daughter, who is in high school, their class ventured down the road of having a discussion about the impact of the budget. And there was lots of pros and cons about whether or not it's good to invest money at this time, in this particular aspect, or whether the tax was regressive. But the minute they got to the summary at the bottom, and it said, deficit was still over \$500 million, and the ongoing debt—deficit continues to run into the billions, the question came up: Well, who's expected to pay for this? And these are teenagers just learning the basics of fiscal development. And the teacher was very honest with them at the point, and said, well, you are. It changed the whole nature of that discussion. They did not feel—well, the first comment was, well, that's not fair. Now, we all know that politics is not necessarily fair. But what we—what they didn't realize was that they would end up with that burden well into the future, and it certainly changed their summary conclusion about whether or not they liked this budget, and you

got an all-around thumbs down from that particular class.

This from a government that likes to style itself as being a sustainable government. Those type of fundings is hardly a model it can be considered sustainable in any way. In fact, it's a really great departure from anything that resembles sustainability.

Money well spent on infrastructure can be money well invested, but close examination of the budget shows the truth. There is little real increase in dollars for infrastructure, and despite back-to-back record tax increases, no real improvement in the deficit. In fact, had we not had the 1 per cent or the 1 point—*[interjection]*—yes, 1 point or 14 per cent increase, I suspect that this year's annual deficit would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$800 million-or-plus—*[interjection]*—yes—which is a ridiculous amount in a single year.

In fact, my suggestion for the Finance Minister is he actually should probably rename this budget and open the front lines with once upon a time, like most good fairy tales. However, this is not one that is going to live happily ever after. It's more like the Grimm Brothers' fairies. We'll have a very disturbing ending.

We're really looking at a classic case of spending addiction. This government has a decade of increasing revenues, increasing transfer payments, and during that time they spent those dollars very—in very many ways—not all of them created, and they have not yet come to grips with realities of where we are. This budget brings in \$227 million in new taxes in this year alone, on top of the \$184 million from last year, combined with huge increases in fees for many essential services. We are no doubt asking Manitobans to shell out over \$500 million more.

This from a government that clearly promised in the last election that there would be no new taxes. In fact, I remember going door to door, and, of course, the comments come up, well, the NDP promised no new taxes as well. And many people were incredulous that they could actually do that; how can they possibly do that? And, of course, in retrospect, those people were actually better informed than many of the other—that voted for NDP, at that particular time. How many of you actually went door to door telling people you were going to increase taxes? Would you even be here if you had carried that message? I suspect that many of you would not.

Also, you promised to balance the books by 2014. And our previous leader did get quite a lot of criticism for saying, well, probably that couldn't be done, that, realistically, it would take longer than that. And, given the fact, though there's no discussion in this budget at all about when the books will be balanced, it is absolutely impossible to believe that without a huge, even more major than we've seen up to this point, a huge increase in taxes, there is no chance whatsoever we will balance the books by 2014, unless you want to start the next budget with once upon a time.

We see no progress towards that goal and another year with accumulated debt. Now, we thought Manitobans had at least some level of protection with the taxpayer protection act. It required a referendum, and of course, now we've seen the truth of it, that they really had no respect for that. A 14 per cent increase in PST is certainly one that anyone that was thinking would say, well, this is a major tax increase.

If we have a mandate for a referendum, we certainly need to take it to the people. And there were many ways to do that, including bringing the House back a little earlier so you could actually introduce, in all honesty, that bill. But it would appear that they just don't want to discuss this particular law. They want to try and change it retroactively and make the changes—sorry—make the changes come out the way they want to without actually dealing with the realities of law.

Now, really, this is, it touches on one of the areas that I've frankly been disappointed, as a new MLA, in this House. I have quite a bit of respect from the law and I heard my previous—or my colleague from Agassiz talk about this too, that we were raised to respect the law and to make our word worth what we say and follow what we believe. And so I have great respect for law, and I try and follow it carefully, even sometimes when it's not all that convenient. You simply have to make the—take the extra step. In the two years I've served, I've seen election laws broken, and them just apologized away with no consequence. I have seen inadvertent mistruths spoken about Jets tickets. And, now a law broken just for convenience. Is it really any wonder that the public holds us in anything less than full respect?

The impact of this 14 per cent increase in PST is not minor on each family, as our 192 spin doctors would have us believe. For a family of four it's at

least \$1,200 per year. And for those on fixed income, or income assistance, or the disabled that can be one or two months' rent. Try living without one or two months' rent and see where you end up.

Now, I have the pleasure of representing the fine constituency of Portage la Prairie, and in our constituency we have more than a passing interest in dealing with floods. We certainly suffered as much as anyone did in 2011, and we fought through a number of aspects of the flood. We fought through the flood on the lower Assiniboine dikes. We fought through the flood on the Hoop and Holler cut, and we remember very well the frantic overnight rebuilds on the Portage Diversion and the evacuations that were associated with that and then the ongoing flight—flood, sorry, on Lake Manitoba.

Now, we're very pleased to see that the work has been done in the two studies, one on Lake Manitoba/Lake St. Martin regulation and on the task force on flood review. And I was very pleased when the Premier said, oh, well, we accept them, but he really obviously has not looked at them.

There is a lot more in here than just a few recommendations, and, frankly, absolutely none of the recommendations are shovel ready. Every one of them needs further work because if you don't handle this right someone downstream will pay the consequences. Just to give you a couple of examples, in the case of the lower Assiniboine dikes, not yet being elected, we were all very concerned in the fall when we could tell from the soil moisture maps that are available through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada out of western Manitoba and into Saskatchewan that we had a problem on our hands. We were already at surplus levels in most of the watershed areas that flood into Assiniboine, and those of us who were local knew that those dikes along the lower Assiniboine were in extremely poor condition, had had really no work done on them in the 20 years that the Province had been responsible for them. Before that, they were actually part of PFRA, of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and they actually did a reasonable job of maintaining some aspects of it. But in the lower end nothing was done when it was turned over, so they were at great risk. In fact, there were points in there where people who had moved into the community and built houses along the river and had never seen a major flood had actually taken the dikes down. They were gone. They had a nice view of the river, but we had no flood protection anymore.

\* (16:50)

So, working with the local RMs, we managed to get at least some level of interest from Water Stewardship at the time, and say, well, you should come out and at least have a look at these things. And, after some urging, they did, about three months later. And, after that, we had frantic activity. Then they discovered we got a problem. We don't really know what's going to happen here and we have to continue, or we have to have an emergency. They had the municipalities declare an emergency, which takes away rights from individuals. But, you know, the local people there along the river, they bent over backwards to help them and to do whatever, because they would be, of course, front and centre if anything went wrong. So they cooperated to a great degree, many of them actually moving out of their houses that were close to the river, but also providing material, clearing roads, so that things—people could get in there and actually get the work done.

And you know what happened to those people that bent over backwards and got—and helped? They got no compensation. They didn't even get damages paid. There was no program for them. MIT was supposed to, quote, compensate them for any damages taken. Two years later, they haven't even seen adjusters. So they came back in a few months ago, I—MIT did, and they wanted to strip the snow off the dikes so they could examine them and maybe repair a few places. And to a man, they were told: You're not getting on this property until you settle for the last one. Now, we did manage to get some accommodation so they could at least go in and inspect the dikes, and one or two spots were fixed. But I can tell you I have been successful in getting more activity for these people in terms of compensation in the last two months than in the previous two years.

And it's a sad reflection on the state of this government, is that we only deal with things when they're in crisis. So we have to have 'crises', flood 'crises' fairly often, it would appear, before we can actually accomplish anything.

Now these people certainly have not been properly compensated, and we owe them a debt of gratitude. And there are plans in these recommendations to rebuild those dikes, and every one of them will have to be involved in that because this is an area of settlement in Manitoba that actually goes back into river lots. So, in those cases, if you have a river lot, you actually own right down to the

water's edge, including the dike, so any settlement there in the future.

So we worked with those people and dealt with that. Then we had the scare on the Hoop and Holler. Now the Hoop and Holler cut really didn't turn out to be a very big thing. Very little water was actually let out there, but we didn't know that. So here we are diking houses 20 miles from the cut, spending a lot of time and effort, and many, 'veny'—many, many volunteers spent a lot of time and effort, and I was one of them, doing this. And you know what the problem was in that? Not that we—you know, we're all very glad that we didn't have to use it; it was bad information, Mr. Speaker, and the reports actually point out the poor quality of the information, and they do make some comments, too, on the experience of the forecasters, and I'll leave that unsaid because it is a shame that we had to pay a price for the lack of experience.

But the information those forecasters had to work with was extremely poor. In fact, you could go online to look at SaskWater's information and you could get far better information out of Saskatchewan than we had here in Manitoba.

So was—that left us with a lot of work to do, but it turned out, really, to amount to very little damages. We could have probably only done 20 places and we would have covered everyone that was impacted had we known. But, really, I don't think that the cut was actually that necessary. And, when you look at the numbers, in retrospect, it was more about feeling good than actually doing anything of significance.

But we weren't done yet. Because with the Hoop and Holler cut already on the books, we still had to rebuild the Portage Diversion. Literally overnight, trackhoes appeared out of nowhere Saturday and Sunday. By Wednesday, we had added, 28—sorry, 8,000 cubic feet per second to the capacity of the Portage Diversion. And that only worked in a few places. It managed to hold—keep it in the channel for about the first 12 kilometres. Once you got past a point which used to be PR 249, which is the second set of drop shot structures, then they didn't worry so much about the dike and let things kind of find its own way. And it took the bridge out down below that so it left many people stranded. And then it went out the fail safe on the diversion because the outlet, frankly, never was built for more than 22,000, so it can't handle over 30. So the water had to find another place to go. And it flooded many thousands of acres of farmland and also caused an immense amount of

environmental damage in the renowned Delta marshes.

So we learned that lesson the hard way as well. And, in that process, by the way, we had to evacuate everyone in a four-kilometre stretch on both sides of the Portage Diversion because there was literally a risk that, if the diversion broke, that water was going to go somewhere and we didn't know where it would go. And I can tell you from personal experience, not living very far from there, that there was more than one day you could go over there and find them—frantically sticking their fingers in the dike would be the best way to describe it—throwing sandbags along the top of the dikes because water was actually running over. And that depended on the controls and the—down at the Assiniboine River and which way the wind blew that day. So it was a very frantic effort.

On top of this, of course, then we had the flood at Lake Manitoba. Now, we all knew that the lake would rise, certainly not to the level it did. It actually rode to a level never historically recorded, even beyond the 1955 flood levels. And then, when it was nearly at its peak, not even quite all the way there, we had a wind event, which drove it even further. We saw seven-foot waves 10 miles from the lakefront. And the amount of damage that was done, not only physically to people's structures but to farmland, but to the environment around there, it'll never be the same piece of ground, Mr. Speaker. We have done permanent environmental damage, and one of the major recommendations in the report, by the way, is that this Province come up with a plan to deal with this environmental damage.

Now, I see really no discussion around that and no—and even though questions were asked last year about what is the plan to deal with this, no action was taken. It would've been far easier, not this winter but the previous winter when it was wide open, to actually get in there and deal with some of the environmental damage, but nothing was done.

The two studies that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) refers to, and I have already referred to, the task force report and the Lake Manitoba/Lake St. Martin report, do deal with some proposals, but they are not ready to be started. And so we're—what is the rush? Where do we get this mandate that we actually have to have the one point on PST immediately so we can actually start construction tomorrow to make sure that we have something in place to deal with these floods?

Well, we really don't get any feeling of urgency from reading the reports. Certainly, they have projects that need doing in there. In fact, a good example would be the expansion of the extra gates on the Shellmouth Dam, which was originally planned for 2004, and the federal government put their money up and did what they said they were going to do, but the Province never actually got around to doing their side of the project. So it never got done. So we—the Province—or the federal government actually at some point withdrew any further funding because the Province didn't actually move on this.

But there is land purchased to expand Lake of the Prairies, which would certainly help to deal with the upper Assiniboine and part of the floods there. However, the latest thing we hear on that from the engineers involved in maintaining those structures and designing new ones is that, because the Province didn't move on it, those dams—that earthen dam at Lake of the Prairies is probably now not safe to do additional work on. It took so much damage in 2011, which has yet to be repaired, that it's probably not a good idea to move ahead with that. So one of this options recommended in here and solutions has probably passed us by because we did not move on it in a timely manner.

Now, the Province has had, for many years, a process of developing water management plans. And we have certainly encouraged them to get to some point of conclusion somewhere in a reasonable timeline. We have some actual good working examples, programs, environmental goods and services program like the ALUS program that we have seen in western Manitoba. That was a pilot run under this government, actually had an excellent evaluation, was concluded in 2006, I believe, was last year of the project, and the recommendations was that we would move forward with a larger scale project for the future. We're still talking about that. We're still studying that. We actually haven't moved ahead in any way.

Now, that probably would not have completely dealt with the issues in 2011 because they were certainly well beyond the normal scale, but one of the biggest benefits of an environmental goods and services program is you actually start to deal with water quality, and the progress we have made on Lake Winnipeg is marginal in terms of improvements in water quality. In fact, I would suggest to the government across the way that, following 2011, we now have not one lake in

Manitoba with a nutrient loading problem, we have two. So we will start to see those kind of problems in Lake Manitoba as well because we have used that—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Order, please. When this matter's again before the House, the honourable

member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) will have 11 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 25, 2013

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