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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
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BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 12, 2014

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no bills, we'll move on to petitions.

Beausejour District Hospital— Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The Beausejour District Hospital is a 30-bed, acute-care facility that serves the communities of Beausejour and Brokenhead.

(2) The hospital and the primary-care centre have had no doctor available on weekends and holidays for many months, jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of those in the North Eastman region of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

(3) During the 2011 election, the provincial government promised to provide every Manitoban with access to a family doctor by 2015.

(4) This promise is far from being realized, and Manitobans are witnessing many emergency rooms limiting services or closing temporarily, with the majority of these reductions taking place in rural Manitoba.

(5) According to the Health Council of Canada, only 25 per cent of doctors in Manitoba reported that

their patients had access to care on evenings and weekends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to ensure that the Beausejour District Hospital and primary-care centre have a primary-care physician available on weekends and holidays to better provide area residents with this essential service.

This petition is signed by S. Paizen, J. Fandych, M. Thomas and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further petitions? Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Office of the Commissioner Law Enforcement Review Agency, or LERA, annual report for 2012. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to ministerial statements.

Canada's Military Mission in Afghanistan

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Yes, I have a statement for the House.

Today marks the formal end of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan with the withdrawal of the last 100 soldiers from Kabul and the ceremonial lowering of the Canadian flag.

Through their perseverance in combat and efforts in diplomacy, education, construction and women's rights, Canadian soldiers have shown an incredible commitment to the NATO mission in Afghanistan. More than 40,000 Canadians took part in the 12-year mission, many from CFB Shilo. Today we recognize each one for their service. Your

strength has inspired the support of your country and has brought hope to many living in Afghanistan. Canada's legacy in this mission will last for years. For many individuals, it has meant an access to education, clean drinking water and hope for the future of their country.

Behind each Canadian soldier stands family and friends who mirror the courage of their loved ones overseas; these are the silent heroes. We do not always hear their stories or read about them in the news, but it takes incredible strength to say goodbye to the one you love and to continue living at home.

Tragically, the mission in Afghanistan cost the lives of 162 Canadians. Our province has lowered its flag seven times to commemorate the memory of each Manitoban soldier who lost their life in service. Today we reflect and honour those lives lost. To their families, we extend our deepest condolences. There is no remedy for the pain you feel, and all of us can only hope that you have the support you need through this incredibly difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans remember those who have served our country. Their valour and sacrifice is a debt we can never repay. I ask us to cherish the commitment of ordinary men and women in upholding our institutions, values and identity. We must work to ensure their sacrifice and legacy is not forgotten.

Thank you.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Thank you, Mr. Premier, for your kind words.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the conclusion of Canada's mission in Afghanistan. Since 2002, Canada has been a participant in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and, later, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF, mission.

Canada has served in a variety of senior leadership roles in the Afghan mission, including commanding the ISAF force in 2004 under the leadership of former chief of defence staff General Rick Hillier. If you do not—have not heard Mr.—General Hillier speak, I highly recommend it.

Canada's involvement in Afghanistan represents the largest deployment of Canadian Armed Forces personnel since the Second World War. At its peak, approximately 2,950 soldiers and over 120 civilian personnel were deployed to Afghanistan, and one Tim Hortons.

The work of Canadian Forces personnel has been focused on the provision of security, diplomacy, human rights and development opportunities. Manitobans and all Canadians are rightly proud of the vital contributions made each and every day by our men and women in uniform, and the conclusion of Canada's mission in Afghanistan should give us pause to recognize these vital contributions.

Mr. Speaker, I know I speak for all members of this House when I say that we are forever grateful for the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, some of whom have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, that of their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I have been present several times when the troops have returned to Shilo after their tour and have witnessed the emotional greetings from spouses, children, parents and friends.

* (13:40)

I was very fortunate to attend a dinner celebrating the tour of Mr. Dave Sopha's mural Portraits of Honour. The mural portrays the faces of the Canadian soldiers who died in Afghanistan. It was an honour to meet Mr. Sopha but an even greater honour to meet some of the veterans of Afghanistan.

We sat with a Silver Cross Mother who lost her son in Afghanistan. She's younger than I am, and her words and strength were very moving.

Mr. Speaker, this is not something to be taken lightly, and I want to put the names of all the soldiers based out of Manitoba who made this sacrifice forever into the permanent record of the proceedings of this Chamber: Master Corporal Tim Wilson; Corporal Paul Davis; Captain Nicola Goddard; Master Corporal Jeff Walsch; Corporal David Braun; Corporal Shane Keating; Private David Byers; Corporal Keith Morley; Captain Jeff Francis; Bombardier Jeremy Ouellette; Sergeant Jason Boyes; Private Terry Street; Captain Richard Leery; Corporal James Arnall; Master Corporal Josh Roberts; Corporal Mike Seggie; Private Chad Horn; Corporal Andrew Grennin; Sergeant Scott Shipway; Private Garret Chidley.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and may we remain forever mindful of the sacrifices made by all members of the Canadian Forces, and most

especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our province and country.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the Premier's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join other MLAs in thanking the Canadian soldiers and, indeed, Canadian civilians who were in Afghanistan and Canadians who have supported the mission.

We had, tragically, 162 Canadians who died, who sacrificed their lives. We honour them. We remember them, and we want to make sure that their efforts are remembered and remembered and remembered.

I think it's as important that we recognize not only those who lost their lives but those who were injured, hurt either physically or mentally and who have come back to Canada, and ensure that we do what we can to help and support those who have found it difficult in one way or another coming back to Canada. We think of things like post-traumatic stress disorder, which we don't understand nearly as well as we should, and we need to make sure that we are considerate and understanding of those soldiers who are struggling.

I want to make sure that not only are we unanimous here, we are thankful, we are grateful, but we recognize all who have contributed to this mission. And we hope that the long-run future of Afghanistan will, as a result of this mission and the mission from other countries, be turned around and improved in the future and that there will not have to be other wars in Afghanistan, which the people have suffered a great deal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any further ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon Mr. Gerard Jennissen, the former member for Flin Flon.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Speaker: Now it's time for oral questions.

Immigration Program Event Civil Service Involvement

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, the Premier hasn't been forthcoming on repeated questions about the exact date that he became aware of the fact that he and a colleague had misled this House and committee of the House in respect of the involvement of their government in trying to organize a partisan political rally and recruit civil servants to be involved in it. So we'll assign a date. We'll say July 12th, for example.

That would mean 17 months between the release of the Ombudsman's report and that date, 17 months in which a civil servant stood falsely accused of wrongdoing while a Premier sat silent on the information, hid in the background, looked the other way and let that innocent civil servant take the blame unjustifiably and wrongly.

Why?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the decision by the federal government in the spring of 2012 to change the way immigrant settlement services were offered resulted in us bringing a resolution to this House in order to have an important meeting about a program that we thought would engender widespread support in this Legislature. After all, this is a program members opposite took credit for for many years as one that they thought was the right direction for the future of Manitoba.

We know it was the best future for Manitoba as well, but when that resolution was debated, only one side of this House stood up for the program, Mr. Speaker, and that was us. The leader of the opposition at the time, the members of his caucus at the time did not stand and support the need to have a strong immigration program and settlement services in the province of Manitoba.

And we saw the same thing from the Leader of the Opposition when it came to protecting essential services in Manitoba. He said he wanted to make across-the-board cuts. He said he wanted to see jobs reduced in Manitoba, and in April 18th, 2013, he said his plan was based on layoffs and leaves the possibility of further job cuts to meet their target.

Why won't he stand up for services—

Mr. Speaker: The First Minister's time has expired.

Mr. Pallister: Well, the Premier's idea of protecting civil servants is to hide behind them and protect himself.

The reality is civil servants can take certain comfort in the knowledge that this Premier will remain silent that they stand falsely accused of engaging in partisan activity. That must give them a lot of comfort.

Mr. Speaker, 17 months of knowing that a civil servant was wrongly accused, 17 months of sitting back doing nothing, saying nothing and letting that civil servant remain falsely accused of something the Premier knew full well was unjustifiably wrong and that was perpetrated on that civil servant by himself and his colleagues.

Now, I want to give every member of this Cabinet and former member the benefit of the doubt on this, and I'll ask them all if they did not know that this civil servant was completely innocent of these charges until the Ombudsman's report came out. I'd invite them now to stand in their place and demonstrate that they did not know.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there actually wasn't a question there. It was just a declarative statement by the Leader of the Opposition.

But it allows us to once again say this immigration settlement program, this immigration program has been one of the key economic drivers of prosperity in Manitoba, and when it came to a time to stand up for the program, the members opposite did not do that. They did not stand up for the program in Manitoba. They did not stand up for the future prosperity of Manitoba. They did not stand up for growing the population of Manitoba and making Manitoba a welcoming place for people from all around the world. People from over 132 countries have chosen to make Manitoba their home and people around the world still want to make Manitoba their home.

It's unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition wouldn't stand up for that program then, won't stand up for that program today and continues to want to cut jobs and services for the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: Well, it's faintly humorous that the Premier would expect me to ask a question after 20-plus questions, simple questions asking him for a date. He hasn't answered a single one of them. So I don't see why it would matter to him if I was to ask a question, but I'll try it again.

The principle of non-politically partisan civil service must, of course, be upheld both by politicians and civil servants: The Right Honourable John Smith, leader—former leader of the Labour Party in Britain. This is a principle we stand by here in this party. This is a principle we believe in. We believe that civil servants should not be used as body armour by a government.

* (13:50)

This Premier, on the other hand, believes that they are for his purposes, to be used by him. *[interjection]* And the Finance Minister chirping from her seat believes the same thing. And the reality is that both of them and others of their colleagues have engaged in a direct cover-up of the information which would have cleared an innocent civil servant of an unjustifiably—of an unjust charge, Mr. Speaker.

Now, this is a government which chooses to frighten and intimidate. Why does this government use civil servants selfishly for their own protection rather than protecting the integrity—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition's time has expired.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was a member of the government that perpetrated the largest voter fraud in the history of Manitoba. And some of his senior officials were involved in that.

Now today he says he respects the principle of partisan public service. He didn't respect it then; why should we believe him when he says he respects it now?

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

Conference Board of Canada Report NDP Job Creation Numbers

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, speaking of fraud, Mr. Speaker, this budget document is—ranks very highly.

What it says, what the government claims in it, is that they will create 60,000 jobs. But the fact is the Conference Board of Canada says they won't. In fact, this false document actually inflates the number of jobs that the government's going to create so much that the Conference Board of Canada actually says it's a tiny fraction as many. They say eight to 14 thousand approximately.

So the credibility of this government's already an issue; they've made it an issue. But then when they actually cite as their foremost source the Conference Board, which actually totally contradicts the information they put in this document, it kind of means that this document is misleading Manitobans, doesn't it? This document misleads Manitobans. This government tries to take credit for creating jobs it will not create.

Does the—who's right, the Conference Board of Canada or the Premier?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): The Conference Board of Canada, on page 5 of their document, indicates eight and a half thousand jobs in 2014; 11-thousand-point-one jobs in 2015; 12-thousand-and-a-half jobs in 2016; 13,400 jobs in 2017; 13,400 jobs in 2018, for a total of 58,900 jobs, Mr. Speaker. That's what we've said.

Mr. Pallister: That's hilarious, Mr. Speaker. The document says the government—the government, mind you now—will create 60,000 jobs. The government will create those jobs. The Conference Board of Canada is reporting on the number of people who might be working.

Now, the government's trying to take credit for jobs that already exist. The government is trying to take credit for Manitobans that are already working. They're already working in their jobs, but the government wants to take credit not only for jobs it'll never create in the future but for jobs that Manitobans have created for themselves in the past.

Will the Premier just come clean and admit that he's totally misrepresented the facts of the Conference Board report today in this House and repeatedly before that in various media interviews and in this largely worthless document?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board explains the number. They say that the number of unemployed persons will drop by 23,750 and the labour force will increase by 35,100. If the member will do the math after he reads the report, which obviously he hasn't, that generates 58,900 jobs.

That's good opportunities for young Manitobans. That's good opportunities for young Manitobans to live and work in Manitoba. That gives us steady employment growth, steady economic growth in Manitoba.

This \$5.5-billion program for infrastructure, something the members will vote against. They will

ask for all of these roads to be done, but they will never vote for the resources to do it, and they will deny young Manitobans the opportunity for these jobs.

I invite the member to actually read the report rather than the question that has been prepared for him.

Mr. Pallister: Such a credit-grabbing Premier, such a credit-grabbing government.

I invite the Premier to have the Conference Board of Canada do the calculations on how many jobs Manitobans could create with the money that he's illegally taking from them in his PST hike. I invite him to do that research.

I invite him to consider the fact that his government has hiked taxes more than every other Canadian province and that his government, in fact, is the only one to invoke an illegal and unnecessary PST hike on its people. I invite him to do that research.

And while he's at it, consider this: another promise on the backs of breaking the promises to seniors, breaking the promises to Manitobans about not hiking the taxes of this province and breaking the promises to this province and its people about balancing the books.

Does he really think Manitobans have any reason to believe his promises at all?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the report that was brought out by the Laurentian Bank on the 5-and-a-half-billion-dollar infrastructure program actually gives us quite a bit of credit as well for job creation. It says: Lastly, a significant 5-and-a-half-billion, five-year infrastructure program is announced. It should create almost 12,000 jobs per year during that period.

Mr. Speaker, these are independent reports put forward by those people that take a look at how we do budgets every year.

The member opposite runs away from his commitment to cut jobs, to cut civil servants, runs away with scissors in his hands. He reversed himself when he said he wouldn't privatize the telephone system. He says that he respects the partisan political—non-partisan civil service at the same time as he perpetrated one of the largest voter frauds in the history of Manitoba, aided and abetted by his own senior civil servants. Why should we believe him on anything he says?

**Conference Board of Canada Report
NDP Job Creation Numbers**

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, today we have learned that the government has been misleading this House when it comes to the numbers of jobs to be created in their five-year infrastructure plan.

On March 10th the Minister for Jobs and the Economy stated, and I quote, according to the Conference Board of Canada, it will create north of 58,000 jobs. Yet the Conference Board of Canada, the architect of the report, stated through the media that only 11,800 jobs would be created.

Can the minister please explain the discrepancy between this—the 47,100-job discrepancy in those job numbers?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): I really do appreciate the question. Any day we get to stand up in this Chamber and talk about the \$5.5-billion infrastructure plan that's going to boost our economy by \$6 billion over five years, it's a great day in the House.

I can assist the member by letting her know that the Conference Board of Canada report, which I'll table now for her, clearly says that our infrastructure plan will create 58,900 jobs over five years. She can take a good look at it.

You may notice that 58,900 is exactly five times 11,780, the average number of jobs created per year. The actual number of jobs, Mr. Speaker, is shown on table 2: 8,500 in the first year; 11,100 in year two; twelve, five in year three; thirteen, four in year four; thirteen, four in year five. Over the five years of the plan—

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

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) last Thursday tabled a budget document in the House that stated, and I quote, the Conference Board of Canada expects that our plan will create almost 60,000 jobs. Yet the Conference Board of Canada, I remind them, the architect of this document that they commissioned, the Conference Board of Canada stated through the media that this would create an increase of only 11,800 jobs, a discrepancy of 47,100 jobs.

Are they misleading the House, or are they calling the Conference Board of Canada a bunch of liars?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, only a Tory that is absolutely, single-mindedly bent on cutting jobs would quibble with over 11,000 jobs per year. Curious strange.

Okay, so clearly she doesn't believe the Conference Board of Canada. How about the Laurentian Bank, where it clearly says in their analysis of the provincial budget—listen for it: Lastly, a significant \$5.5-billion infrastructure plan is announced. It should create almost 12,000 jobs per year during that period.

Let me do the math. That would be 60,000 jobs over five years. Now, I'll dial that back to fifty-eight, nine as stated by the Conference Board of Canada.

I'll table that report for the member. Maybe she'll have a little look—

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

* (14:00)

Mrs. Stefanson: I bet the minister is quoting from page 5 of the Conference Board of Canada report where it states that anywhere between 8,500 to 13,400 people will be working at any time, Mr. Speaker. What that means—and let me explain this very carefully for members opposite who don't seem to understand how jobs are created—this means that only 11,780 jobs will be created.

There is a discrepancy here between what the minister has said, what many ministers and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of this province have said. There's a discrepancy of 47,100 jobs.

Are they misleading Manitobans, or are they calling the Conference Board of Canada a bunch of liars?

Ms. Oswald: Once again, I encourage the member to read the two reports that I've provided for her.

I would signal, Mr. Speaker, that you didn't refer to me just now as the minister of person-years of employment and the economy; it's jobs. It's about good jobs for hard-working Manitobans.

And I would also add, and I'll quote, person-years of employment and jobs are interchangeable terms. Who said that, Mr. Speaker? The government of Canada.

Fiscal Stabilization Fund Provincial Deficit

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget is full of misleading claims, including when they say that Manitoba is on the right track.

But, according to the NDP's own budget, it must be a rainy day right now in Manitoba, because this year alone his Finance Minister is projecting to withdraw another 20 per cent of what remains of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to service debt caused by an NDP spending addiction. They have raided this fiscal reserve every year.

Why is the NDP government treating Manitoba's rainy day fund like an everyday fund?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): Since the great recession, which has been the deepest and most prolonged economic downturn in history since the '30s, which I think qualifies as a rainy day in my estimation, since that time we have paid down half a billion dollars of debt because we set aside that money when times were better in the rainy day fund, and we've taken, I think, a responsible course of action to continue to pay down debt, even during a recession, by taking that money out of the rainy day fund and applying it against the debt.

That is part of what we had said we would do all along. We've done that every year, and that's resulted in half a billion dollars going towards the debt from money that was saved in good times for more difficult times. We are in more difficult times.

Mr. Friesen: That response is truly laughable. This budget is very misleading. When the minister says she's paying down debt, she neglected to say they've added \$10 billion of debt in just the last five years to the Province.

Mr. Speaker, the fiscal stabilization was there to—for emergency situations. Where's the emergency, record low interest rates, rising record transfers from the federal government, rising government revenues?

The fact is that since 2011 they raided almost half of the fund in reserve, and here they go again with another \$55 million of withdrawal in good times.

Why should Manitobans believe anything she has to say when it's so clear they can't manage?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the debt today is more manageable than it was when

the man sitting next to the critic was in government. The debt-to-GDP ratio today is lower than it was when the man sitting next to my critic was last in the government. The debt-to-GDP ratio today is less in Manitoba than it is in the federal government.

And, yes, we made a decision when times were tough not to fire people, to continue offering services to families. We made a decision when times were tough to build, to invest in infrastructure, to create jobs. I don't apologize for those decisions, Mr. Speaker. Those were the right decisions. They've helped to set Manitoba on a path towards economic growth.

And those decisions are reflected in this budget, which continues us on that path by investing in skills training, by investing in creating good jobs today and tomorrow so our kids can have the great life here in Manitoba that we all enjoy.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, this Finance Minister's statements in the budget are misleading Manitobans. What she's doing is she's making a \$50 minimum payment on her credit card and she's maxing out the credit card at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has added \$10 billion in debt to our government in the last just five years. There was a time when there were also payments made into the fiscal stabilization account. Those payments don't even appear as a line item in this budget this year; they've been removed. They're emptying the account. They've created an everyday account for what should have been a rainy day account.

Why should Manitobans believe anything this government has to say about controlling spending when their record shows they cannot manage their spending?

Ms. Howard: So let me understand today's fiscal policy from the member of the opposite, because it changes daily. But today the idea is that instead of investing in skills training, instead of investing in job creation, instead of protecting services for families, instead of keeping nurses and teachers employed, what we should do instead is put money aside in this budget, add to the deficit, to put in a rainy day fund when it is raining.

And we are paying down the debt with that money, and I do not apologize for making payments on the debt, even in difficult times. I think that is a fiscally responsible thing to do.

And I don't apologize for investing and building our province, creating good jobs, investing in schools and personal-care homes and highways and roads, which comprise part of that debt, and ensuring that during difficult times we didn't make the decisions that were made opposite, to stop training nurses and doctors. We didn't make the decision to freeze all building in health care, to not build a hospital, to not build a personal-care home. We have taken—

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

Highway and Road Maintenance Infrastructure Spending Record

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, we're starting to move into spring, and with spring comes pothole season. Manitobans get to see first-hand how poorly this NDP government has been at maintaining Manitoba's roads.

Mr. Speaker, the minister recently announced the NDP's now annual five-year plan with yet more promises. Every time the NDP makes a promise, it highlights their failures. All these promises highlight their underspending on infrastructure of \$1.9 billion, plus the \$71 million that just seems to have vanished into their spending.

Where is that \$71-million pothole?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, if you want the definition of failure, it's what the members opposite did in the 1990s when the Leader of the Opposition—you know, Mr. Speaker, when he wasn't busy laying off teachers and nurses, they reduced the highway capital budget down to \$85 million. This year it is going to be \$548 million; that's success.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, we'll believe that when we see it next year.

You know, in 2007 the former premier announced a 10-year, \$4-billion plan. It included the same roads, the same bridges announced in the 2009 plan, 2011 and the 2014 plan. Mr. Speaker, Manitobans can't trust the NDP's annual five-year plan. Potholes we're trying to dodge show first-hand this government's failure.

Where is that \$71-million pothole, or is it just in the government's books? Another NDP promise, another NDP failure.

Mr. Ashton: Well, indeed, seeing is believing, and I wonder if the member opposite has seen the work

we've done on Victoria Avenue. He actually stood up in the House and called for it and then, Mr. Speaker, it appeared in the budget, then eight days later he voted against it.

And, Mr. Speaker, in terms of seeing is believing, he might want to take a trip on Highway 1 to the Saskatchewan border. It was this government, the NDP government, that four-laned from Virden to the Saskatchewan border.

And I'd suggest he might want to take a drive north of Brandon on Highway 10 to see the work we've done over the last couple of years. And while he's at it, he might want to take a trip this summer south to Highway 10 to Boissevain to see the work we're doing on Highway 10.

Mr. Speaker, seeing is believing. You're going to see, you're going to feel and you'll be able to smell the difference from the NDP investment in infrastructure.

Mr. Helwer: Well, I'm glad he brought up Victoria Avenue, because I do indeed drive on that road quite regularly, and I noticed, Mr. Speaker, last weekend there are large cracks in the newly paved asphalt that's out there. What happens with cracks in the spring? More potholes. Congratulations, you've done a great, fine job. It won't even last 'til the election.

Where did that \$1.9 billion go? Not into infrastructure. Just where is the \$71-million pothole? Now it's maybe in Brandon.

* (14:10)

Mr. Ashton: If the member doesn't get it from what he's seen, if he doesn't get it from the announcements, I'd refer him to page 12 of our plan because it outlines the \$5.5-billion investment. I'd like to point out that this year alone we're investing more than a billion dollars in terms of core infrastructure.

But they also say that a picture is worth a thousand words. He might want to check out page 13. He will note there's a picture of a paving machine. I want to tell the member opposite he's going to see a lot of those next year, the year after, for every single one of the five-year plan. He better get used it.

And I know the next thing he's going to do, by the way, he's going to explain about construction delays. He complains. We act. We build core infrastructure. That's the difference.

Manitoba Hydro Rate Increases Preferred Development Plan

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I'd like to table for the minister page 3 of Manitoba Hydro's most recent integrated financial forecast, which provides for more than 75 per cent increase in hydro rates. Interesting, Mr. Speaker, despite these rate increases, Hydro is still projecting millions and millions of dollars in losses, prices 75 per cent higher and huge losses.

If this isn't proof that the minister needs to put the brakes on the Hydro plan that will double the debt, double the rates within 20 years, I don't know what is.

Will the minister commit to putting the brakes on Hydro's preferred development plan and let the PUB do its job?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, Mr. Speaker, the No. 1 factor that will cause rates to go through the roof is the plan of members opposite to privatize Manitoba Hydro, to privatize hydro and have rates for Manitoba families go right through the roof.

We have a growing population in Manitoba. We have an economy that is growing. We will run out of power within the decade if we do nothing. We can build dams. We can build transmission lines. We can work on demand-side management. We can do these kind of things to bring down costs for Manitoba families, to provide employment for Manitoba families.

Why on earth do members opposite stand up and defend jobs for Albertans when we could do that for Manitobans?

Mr. Eichler: I suggest the minister look at the PUB. Obviously, his information's not correct or he's not even looking at the PUB responses.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, this is a plan that Manitobans cannot afford. I encourage the minister to take the time to read the document I've just tabled. These are Hydro's own numbers. Manitobans are looking at at least 75 per cent in rate increases, a fundamental plan that government's own experts are calling a very limited economic advantage, very independent estimated benefits offering limited advantages.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, will this government respect the Hydro ratepayers and stop this 75 per cent rate increase?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, we are not going to take advice of members opposite who would leave Manitobans, who would leave Manitoba families stuck in a position where their rates go through the roof. We're not going to leave Manitoba families or our provincial economy in a position where they miss out on jobs, good paying jobs in Manitoba. We're not going to let them leave them behind.

The—yesterday I was, I think, kind enough to help members opposite out by quoting from the Conference Board of Canada. They want to talk experts, let's talk experts. The Conference Board of Canada said: Continuing down the path with hydro is the more economic choice. Provinces with thermal generation, like Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario, have higher wholesale prices for electric power and higher delivered prices to consumers.

If we do nothing, if we don't build, if we don't continue to invest—

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

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the minister to consult with his own experts in Manitoba Hydro. Those are their numbers. He should take a look at it.

Obviously, 75 per cent increase over the next 20 years is a rate that's going to be so high nobody's going to want to come to Manitoba.

I ask the minister again: Will he listen to the experts, his own department, put a hold on this release that he's going to be doing the wonderful things that he talks about? Obviously, they're not. Do the right thing.

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, there they go again. Just like always, they're telling us to mothball projects for the benefit of Manitoba families, just like always.

And, Mr. Speaker, when they ask us to delay, when they ask us to put the brakes on like they did today, what they are saying is cancel those projects, privatize Manitoba Hydro. We know that because that's what they've always said.

The member—the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) is part of a government that privatized the Manitoba Telephone System. He tried, unsuccessfully, but he tried to privatize home care. Their position was to privatize MPI in the last election. Their position today is to privatize health care. That's disaster for Manitobans, that's disaster

for Manitoba families. The rates in Manitoba Telephone System—

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

Conference Board of Canada Report NDP Job Creation Numbers

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, 13 times in the last four days since the Legislature started sitting, the NDP government has misquoted the Conference Board of Canada report as saying that 58,000, 59,000 or 60,000 jobs will be created. In fact, as the Conference Board of Canada says in its report, this is not the total number of jobs created but rather the person-years of employment.

Why are the Premier and his government exaggerating the employment impact by suggesting that their program would create 58 to 60 thousand jobs, permanent jobs?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I read into the record earlier the Conference Board indicates in year one, 8,500 jobs; in year two, 11,100 jobs; in year three, 12,500 jobs; in year four, 13,400 jobs; and in year five, 13,400 jobs. Total it up, Mr. Speaker, 58,900 jobs, jobs in Manitoba, jobs for young people, jobs to create good opportunities for the future, better infrastructure which will increase our ability to have a growing economy in the short term and in the long term, steady economic growth, good jobs, confirmed by the Conference Board of Canada.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, according to NDP math, if one person was employed in the first year and stayed employed for the next four years, that person would be counted five times.

You know, the problem is that if these were permanent jobs, the maximum number you would create is 14,000, less than 25 per cent of the 58,000 this NDP government is misrepresenting. It's not clear if any of these are actually permanent jobs or are jobs involved in the temporary repair or construction of infrastructure.

Problem is time and time again in this Legislature, the Premier has tried to spin information rather than to give accurate facts. The Premier, in fact, has spun himself into a rather sticky web.

Will the Premier stop spinning and focus on providing factual information to Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, what this budget does is provide 58,900 jobs over five years. Each job is

measured on an annual basis, and then it rolls forward. As the infrastructure program ramps up, the number of jobs ramps up.

As the amount of infrastructure projects are built and put in place, we get greater economic productivity for the trucking sector, for the manufacturing sector, for the export sector, for the farm sector, value-added foods. All of those things go to markets more rapidly when we have good roads.

Communities are safer when there's flood protection, which more—means more people are working instead of being dislocated by floods.

Good jobs are created when we have trades and skills and apprenticeship opportunities in Manitoba. Good jobs are created when we build more schools and allow more people to stay in school and get a trade and get a good job.

And the member from River Heights will vote against that vision, that plan for Manitoba. Why would he do that when the young people of Manitoba need those opportunities?

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, why would I vote for if it is not very credible and provides a lot of misleading information?

Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the NDP government's misrepresentation of information is sort of like an infectious disease. Their non-factual releases are spreading like a virus, making their way into publications like this weekly letter of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, which I table. It is the respected voice of the very industry affected by the NDP government's unqualified promises of job increases.

* (14:20)

I ask the Premier: Will he correct his government's misleading statements and the—stop the spread of these faulty, baseless and empty promises?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Heavy Construction Association made it very clear. They like early tendering. That allows them to mount the equipment and the workforce they need to do the job. It allows them to keep employed people in Manitoba.

The Conference Board of Canada has been very clear. Every year, there will be jobs created in Manitoba over the next five years: 8,500 in year 1, 11,100 in year 2, 12,500 in year 3 and 13,400 in each of years 4 and 5. Add it up, 58,900 jobs, good jobs

for Manitobans, good for—future for Manitobans. Trades opportunities come out of that. And that doesn't count what we're going to require when we do other things that build schools and hospitals and personal-care homes, because we're going to require apprenticeship opportunities there, which will create even more opportunities for young people to make a good life in Manitoba.

I do not know why the member for River Heights wants to vote against that plan, that vision, for a prosperous Manitoba.

Smaller Class Size Initiative Funding Announcement

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, our government is justly proud of our record supporting the Manitoba public school system. We've reversed the brutal cuts administered by members opposite when they were in government. We've restored collective bargaining rights for teachers, which were removed by members opposite when they were in office. Moreover, we've embarked upon the largest infrastructure renewal of the public school system in provincial history. We've tied provincial funding to the growth of our economy, which has resulted in sustained funding increases for the public school system. Our government is committed to ensuring that our kindergarten-to-grade 3 classes are small so that students have more chances to interact with teachers and learn in a one-to-one environment.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning please inform the House about what our government is doing today to ensure that our K-to-3 class 's'tizes' stay—

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

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I have to tell you, that's the best question I've heard today. I was pleased to join the—my friend from Logan today at Sacré-Coeur School to make an announcement that we were adding an additional \$12.4 million to build 21 classrooms in eight schools across Manitoba. This is in addition to the \$3 million I announced in February to add to the teaching complement for our class-size initiative, which brings us to 213 teachers added as a result of this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to creating 75,000 workers by 2020 in this province. And that begins by ensuring that every child—every

child—in Manitoba gets a quality education. If you want to support children, if you want to support good quality education in Manitoba, you should be voting for this budget.

Youth Mental Health Services Case Concern

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): In 2011, the NDP government promised to improve mental health access and support for all Manitobans through a plan called Rising to the Challenge. Fast-forward 2014, and we see the Prairie Mountain regional health authority responsible for the child and adolescent treatment facility in Brandon say no access to an eight-year-old child, no access to the seriously ill eight-year-old child who has not one, but multiple, mental health diagnosis. Mr. Speaker, enough incompetence, already.

Today I ask the Minister of Healthy Living: Will she rise to the challenge, share the action she will take today to ensure Ryleigh receives the needed treatment she was denied at the Child and Adolescent Treatment Centre?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors within the Department of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. And I'd like to say I appreciate her concern for the individual involved. And we all know that like physical illness, mental illness can take many forms and have a devastating effect on the individuals and those around them.

Mental health promotion and mental illness prevention, as well as the supports that are required by those individuals with lived experience, are a priority for the government and which is why we are making investments in key areas, including Rising to the Challenge. This past year, we hosted a mental health summit to bring forward experts to share our best ideas to improve mental health promotion and illness prevention. And at this time, again, with youth, it's a very special case. And I invite the member to contact me directly. As she knows, within this Chamber, we do not discuss the confidential details of an individual's case. So I welcome her to come meet with me—

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

The time for oral questions has expired.

Prior to us proceeding to members' statements, I want remind our guests who are in the audience in

the public gallery with us this afternoon that there is to be no participation in any way in any of the activities of the Chamber, and that includes applause. So I'm asking for the co-operation of any members of the public who may be with us here this afternoon.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: Now, members' statements.

45 years of Festival du Voyageur

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, every winter Manitobans come together on some of the coldest nights of the year to celebrate the spirit of French-Canadian culture and embody the liveliness of voyageurs at Festival du Voyageur. This year marks the 45th year of Festival.

As western Canada's largest festival, Festival brings together families, individuals young and old, and everyone in between. The Festival offers everything from beard growing, traditional Francophone-Manitoban cuisine, music, jigging and fiddle contests, to sleigh rides and snow sculptures.

This year my wife and I, along with some friends, took in a day at Festival on Louis Riel Day. We enjoyed the ice sculptures, jigging and music performances, Fort Gibraltar and its costumed interpreters, bonfires on hay bales and, of course, my favourite French dish, tourtière with gravy.

Every year the era of the voyageur is reflected back to Manitobans through events like this. People experience what life was like for the voyageurs, their family and the community. It's not—it's hard not to feel like you've gone back to another age of the Red River Valley when you stand in the small blacksmith shop and watch nail—a nail made, handmade right in front of your eyes.

Festival du Voyageur also has a huge impact on our local economy. In 2011, a study by the Economic Development Winnipeg foundation found that Festival contributes roughly \$13 million annually to the local economy and adds about \$7 million to Manitoba's GDP.

Festival is also about celebrating the rich history of the French voyageurs, Metis and First Nations in Manitoba. It links the past to present by celebrating many of our successful local artists and musicians.

Mr. Speaker, Festival du Voyageur contributes to the rich tapestry of Franco-Manitoban cultural heritage; every year it continues to make a profound

impact on the way we celebrate our French history and culture.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Hydro Workers: Toronto Ice Storm

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Manitobans are renowned for their generosity and contributions. Recently Manitobans were recognized as the most generous in the country for the 15th year in a row.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer the House a prime example of the heart and soul of Manitoba citizens, of helping others, and just what it means to help out neighbours in need. This past December, during the holiday season, 42 staff from Manitoba Hydro volunteered their time and went to Ontario to help the recovery after a ice storm that left more than 300,000 residents without electricity for up to five days. These individuals not only volunteered their time, but some of them sacrificed their first Christmas with spouses or children. This fact further highlights the generous spirit of those who went to Ontario to lend a helping hand.

The severity of the ice storm in southern Ontario left power lines encased with ice; ice-laden branches fell into power lines tearing them down, and houses and businesses and automobiles were covered in ice over an inch thick. Manitoba Hydro workers arrived in Toronto without any equipment, but were armed with a can-do attitude and immediately got to work to restore electricity along their Toronto Hydro colleagues.

The residents of Toronto were so happy to see the crews from Manitoba that some of them posed for pictures, others offering coffee and doughnuts, and others crying and dancing and otherwise celebrating the help of these fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking the Manitoba Hydro workers who volunteered their time during the past holiday season to help restore electricity to those affected by the December ice storms in Ontario.

Conclusion of Mission in Afghanistan

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): Mr. Speaker, for 12 years Canadian 'soldiers' have risked their lives in Afghanistan, proving their courage, resilience and strength. They fought for the people of Afghanistan, for greater democracy and freedom, for access to education and health care, and, of course, for a better future.

Today the sun sets on this period in Canadian history, the last 100 soldiers will return home and the Canadian flag will be lowered at NATO headquarters in Kabul. As we leave, the schools, hospitals and water treatment facilities built by our troops will remain; they will forever stand as a reminder of the commitment and sacrifice made my—excuse me—made by Canadian soldiers.

* (14:30)

Sadly, this mission did not come without cost to human life—162 Canadians were killed in Afghanistan, seven called Manitoba home. Each time, Manitoba lowered its flags to half-mast in honour of their sacrifice. The memory of these men and women will live on, and Canadians will always value their service.

I feel a personal sense of relief at the closing of this mission, as my nephew, a reservist, served in Afghanistan. Selfishly, I am not disappointed that he will not have another opportunity to return in the same capacity.

I can still see the look of apprehension in my brother's eyes—I'm so sorry—when he told the rest of my family that his son was going to be deployed. I rushed home to see my nephew the night before he left and tried not to entertain thoughts that this could be the last time I might see him. My family is supremely grateful that he returned home safely and I feel immense sympathy for those families who have loved ones who are not as fortunate.

Mr. Speaker, as a special envoy for military affairs, I had the great honour of representing Manitoba's servicemen and women. We owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude and a great deal of respect—and if I could read through my tears, I could get through the last sentence here. They will always be remembered for their commitment, they will always be valued for strength and they will always be heroes in the eyes of Canadians. Thank you.

The Shoebox Project

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I rise today to congratulate Eva Whitmore and all of the volunteers who contributed to the Shoebox Project this past Christmas. The Shoebox Project was founded in 2011 by four sisters-in-law in Toronto. The concept is simple: fill a shoebox with items valued at around \$50 that a woman would enjoy but not splurge on for herself in difficult times. In 2012, the Shoebox Project delivered gifts to 2,700 women in shelters and outreach programs across the country.

So Eva Whitmore of Winnipeg decided to bring this project here to Winnipeg. She picked three women shelters in Winnipeg and had a goal of a hundred shoeboxes to fulfill this plan and have a few left over. The idea spread like wildfire around the city, as various groups decided to get involved with this project. In Charleswood, at our community leaders' lunch, we asked people to participate if they desired. We received many wonderful items from various people in our community, community leaders and friends. What awesome results. The citizens of Charleswood in Winnipeg came through again.

Thanks to all the generous Manitobans who donated shoebox gifts to the Shoebox Project in Manitoba. They received 1,393 shoeboxes. That's what I would call exceeding your goal and many women would not otherwise have received a gift over the holiday season and enjoyed them. They were distributed to over 30 women shelters and organizations that work with women in 10 communities across the province.

I would like to recognize Eva Whitmore for her efforts in spearheading this project and wish her continued success next year. She has already indicated that she will be co-ordinating this project in Manitoba again next Christmas. Given the huge response, they will definitely need more people involved. Congratulations on a job well-done and congratulations to all of those who stepped up to contribute items for the various shoeboxes and we certainly recognize that the women who are in shelters at Christmastime would have appreciated this more than we can probably even imagine. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable member for River Heights, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members who are our guests in the public gallery here this afternoon. During the proceedings here, while we welcome you to the Legislature to observe, we ask that you do not participate in any way in the proceedings here this afternoon and that also includes applause. So, I'm asking for your co-operation in that regard, please.

Now, the honourable member for River Heights.

HPV and HIV: Funding for Treatment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I speak today about health issues, and specifically the human papillomavirus or HPV, and HIV/AIDS infections.

Human papillomavirus infection can lead to the development of cervical cancer in women. Cervical cancer can be prevented by early detection and treatment and by vaccinating against HPV. In Manitoba, we have the CervixCheck program through CancerCare Manitoba. However, only 30 per cent of women in the province are routinely tested; therefore, there is a risk of women developing cervical cancer from HPV infection. Sadly, with their most recent budget, the NDP government has eliminated funding for the HPV vaccination program, which supplied this invaluable vaccine for free to women ages 17 to 26. After March 31st of this year, all women will have to pay \$450 each for the vaccine. As Dr. Denise Black told the Free Press, few doctors and even fewer young women realized the vaccine was available for free during the last 18 months, so ending a program before it could have a broad impact is doubly frustrating.

Additionally, Manitoba's population continues to develop HIV/AIDS infections, and 30 per cent of those infected are women. Prevention and treatment is critical. Jim Kane of the Canadian AIDS Society, who's in the gallery today, has confirmed that the cost averages between 25 and 30 thousand dollars per person each year for HIV drugs. Manitoba Pharmacare subsidizes the cost only after the deductible has been reached, resulting in a two-tiered health-care system. Almost 10 per cent of HIV-infected individuals stop taking their medication because of cost.

I urge the government to move to fully fund HIV/AIDS medications as part of the effort to decrease the spread of HIV/AIDS in Manitoba and to compassionately support those infected in our province and to rethink its communication strategy and commitment to funding the HPV vaccine for women in Manitoba.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Now we'll proceed with orders of the day, government business.

House Business

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): On House business, before we commence budget debate, I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on March 19, 2014, at 7 p.m., to consider the following reports: Auditor General's Report—Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013; and

Public Accounts for the fiscal years ending March 31, 2011, March 31, 2012, and March 31, 2013, volumes 1, 2, 3 and 4. Witnesses to be called: the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) and the Deputy Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on March 19, 2014, at 7 p.m., to consider the following reports: Auditor General's Report—Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013; Public Accounts for the fiscal years ending March 31st, 2011, March 31st, 2012, and March 31st, 2013, volumes 1, 2, 3 and 4. And the witnesses that are to be called will include the Minister of Finance and the Deputy Minister of Finance.

BUDGET DEBATE (Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Now we'll proceed to resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed motion in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) who has four minutes remaining.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I started off talking about a difference in philosophy that in my younger days I didn't know existed. And recently I watched a Bill Maher piece on billionaires who feel victimized by the 99 per cent. I kid you not. These guys actually believe that they are so rich because they work harder. The quote from billionaire Sam Zell was, actually, the rest of America should stop bitching about the 1 per cent and realize they have more because they work harder. That's entitlement, Mr. Speaker. Maher, tongue in cheek, spoke of how no doubt it was true. Sitting in your 70th-floor office talking on the phone was no doubt harder than working all day in a slaughterhouse.

Well, that is the kind of philosophy that the Conservative Party was built on. The policies are made to benefit the rich, and the hope is that there will be some kind of little trickle-down effect that will come down to the rest of us as their friends get bigger and richer. It's the very philosophy that resulted in the current situation in our world where 85 individuals own more wealth than the bottom three and a half billion people in the world. This huge gap is not in the best interests of anyone, and it grows in spite of the fact that over the years worker

productivity has increased over 90 per cent while wages have increased only 8 per cent. In spite of knowing that it would be better for everyone to make a decent wage, ideology always trumps pragmatism in the conservative world.

But our government, Mr. Speaker, has a different philosophy. We want to see everyone given the opportunity to reach their full potential. We believe government has a very important role in assisting folks to do that. We are on the side of all Manitobans from prenatal to the golden years.

* (14:40)

Our Finance Minister said it was a budget with few surprises, a meat and potatoes, albeit my favourite, budget. But I respectfully disagree with her. I think it's a bold budget with record investments into Manitoba that will be good for our youth, our families and our businesses. I think it will change the face of Manitoba forever. Suggesting that this level of infrastructure isn't a good thing on so many levels for all Manitobans just is not credible, and, most importantly for me, we are doing this, major investments, while making record improvements to reduce poverty in our province, and while protecting health care and education and friendship centres and programs for our youth and increasing child-care units and affordable and social housing and school food programs and milk for the North. It's gold, and I'm glad to be part of it.

This budget encapsulates why I wanted to be an MLA, Mr. Speaker. I want to see Manitoba and all our residents and all our businesses have the best possible opportunities to succeed. I want to be in a government that makes it the best of times even when, during the recession and a slow world recovery, we might be going through some of the worst of times.

So I just want to say to all of those who worked on the budget, thank you, thank you so much.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise to put a few comments on the record regarding the member for Fort Whyte's (Mr. Pallister) amendments to the budget acceptance act in general, and I certainly appreciate the opportunity to go on to speak after the member from Burrows.

She certainly has her own view of what she read in the budget document. I recall actually her saying it in—I think it was a previous budget or a Throne Speech—that she had quite a vivid imagination, and

certainly following her response to the budget document, I can certainly believe that she has a very vivid imagination. But this budget is not quite as rosy, from my point of view.

Budget is a reminder actually of many of the broken promises that we see in this particular—from this particular government, things like the PST promise during the election when this government promised not to raise taxes, not—they didn't qualify it. They said not raise taxes of any type. Well, they proceeded in the next two budgets to broaden the tax, the PST, and then finally to raise the tax, at the same time increasing fees in a monumental way and, frankly, leading to the biggest tax grab in a generation.

And certainly we run into people all the time that are continuing to feel not only the size of the tax grabs but the breadth of the tax grab that has occurred in this last little while, and people are even—especially those people on limited and fixed incomes, the seniors, those that are living on EIA or other forms of very fixed pensions, whether they be disability or otherwise, are feeling this far more than the average Manitoban. They have limited money to work with, things are actually very often right down to the penny, and what we've done actually is force more and more of them to look for other resources. Things like food banks—and, of course, we've seen record numbers coming to the food banks, which, I think, is a very real indication of the pressure that is being put on this sector of the population and something this government should certainly not be proud of, and I hope they actually realize what they're doing.

They've ignored the taxpayer protection act, and certainly that has left many people wondering what's next. What's next in terms of tax grabs? We have no protection out there. We know we can't believe this government because they ran on one promise and then proceeded to do the absolute opposite, and so certainly they're feeling very vulnerable and wondering whether or not there'll be further tax grabs.

And frankly for those, particularly seniors, still in their own homes who were promised a tax break that they haven't seen yet on education tax, and are also facing an indirect tax from the school divisions because the funding that the school divisions did not receive from the Province, they're going to get back from their local ratepayer, so they're seeing substantial increases and we're seeing some very

high numbers coming out on that. They're feeling that they're being hit in—from a number of different directions and, in the end, of course, we all know there is only one taxpayer.

And I find that really interesting because the member for Kirkwood Park actually made a comment a year or so ago saying she doesn't represent taxpayers; she just represents her friends and neighbours. How do other taxpayers in this province feel about a minister that doesn't represent taxpayers in this province? I would certainly suggest that they must be very uneasy about that.

They also suggested that this was important that we move ahead very quickly on the PST increase because we needed the money right away. We absolutely had to move quickly on infrastructure, we'd missed the construction season. This is the construction season, passed, of course, which did not see, in fact, even the promised amount of money that was budgeted for infrastructure being spent.

We certainly would have had all kinds of time to go to the public on a proper referendum on whether or not they wanted this money spent—whether they wanted the tax increase and the money spent on infrastructure. And frankly I would suggest to the government that they might have done okay if they'd presented an honest question, one that locked them into the situation that if they in fact raised the PST that it must be spent on infrastructure.

But now we've had so many different versions of what is infrastructure from this government that frankly I don't think anybody believes them anymore on anything, even the 5-and-a-half-billion-dollar repeat announcements that we've been getting. And, if you look back, of course, some of those were even contained 10 years ago in Gary Doer's first 10-year plan, and they're still not accomplished. Many of them have been announced so many times that I'm sure they must be—I hope they're recycling the paper, because otherwise we will be killing a great deal of trees that we shouldn't be killing here in Manitoba, simply to make further announcements.

But we shouldn't end up having to fight in court to defend Manitobans from an illegal and unfair tax increase, but the government, of course, is fighting this case in court, and we are taking it there on behalf of Manitobans because we certainly believe that Manitobans have every right to be protected against illegal tax increases.

Broken promise to the seniors in terms of eliminating the school tax from their homes. Tax increases for many of these people have been ongoing. As I mentioned earlier, they're seeing it in terms of PST increases, taking some of the money away from disposable dollars, and very often they're on fixed incomes of one type or the other, or—also the school tax is being passed on to them and also property taxes, because many cities in other jurisdictions are really feeling the impact of an ongoing period when we have not actually spent the money on infrastructure that we should have done. In fact, that—certainly haven't spent the money that has been promised.

And one of the more obvious ones is the broken promise to farmers in elimination of farmland tax. And the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), I hope, is at least aware that the clawback that he took from farmers in this province this year, which is under 20,000 people—more than half paid for the amount that they put in—an extra amount that they put into education this year. They alone, those 20,000 people, are responsible for more than half of the money that was reinvested back into education. So I hope he's going to send them all a very nice letter thanking them for digging so deep on his behalf, because certainly it's been very disproportionate in what has happened in terms of the education tax credit for farmers.

And this on top of a promise that was made in the election that they would get to a hundred per cent on property tax credit. Instead now we've moved from 80, where we were, to—down to somewhere probably south of 60 per cent of a rebate, and I hope that they realize just how disproportionate this is. These farmers compete in a world marketplace and, at the very least, in a western Canadian marketplace on things like land costs. And so we've given our farmers quite a substantial disadvantage against their neighbours in any other province in this country, simply by transferring the burden back to them.

And, if you think that's insignificant, not a big amount, right, one of my neighbours actually crunched their numbers through in their own situation. And, of course, they're a family farm, but they're a family farm corporation so they only get the one \$5,000 credit, and it's going to add \$12 per acre in additional land cost to them in a single year. Now, you think that's not very much; they farm three, four thousand acres, they can obviously afford that. That means that they actually are going to have to let somebody go, that they have employees and

somebody won't be able to go to work this year because they have to find the money somewhere else. They can't run ongoing deficits like governments can, so they certainly need to pay attention to where the money's coming from. So this actually costs, in that particular case, this little thing, like, oh, well, we'll just let—make them wait a little while longer or maybe we'll move them backwards a little bit, is going to cost a job on that farm. And there are 20,000 farms in the province that are impacted for that. So certainly it—I hope that the Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Ms. Oswald) is actually counting those lost jobs in her total, because that's going to be another one that she has to account for.

* (14:50)

There, of course, is the broken promise to balance the budget by 2014. We certainly would love to have seen that happen, but it's certainly not happening. Now they've moved the date to 2016, which—didn't we run on that same position during the election that we could balance the budget by 2016? And they scoffed at us, saying that that was inappropriate, that we were dreaming, that was way too long; they could do much better. Apparently, they can't do any better. In fact, they have yet to accomplish what they claim.

And, certainly, I hope the former member for Fort Whyte is not chortling into his soup too much regards to this, looking over his shoulder and saying, well, you know, what they said, we shouldn't take that long; here they are in exactly the same position. And I suspect that he has at least had—feeling a little better about the cruel ironies in—that we see in this situation every day.

And then, of course, we see the repeated announcements on infrastructure, and some of those projects have been announced so many times that they are actually old news to the people involved, and we've seen all kinds of them mostly in and around the city of Winnipeg.

I expected, actually, to see the age-old project of the overpass at 1 and 16 actually trotted out sometime. I think the first time it was announced was somewhere around the year 2000 or 2001, and it's been announced about every four years which is—isn't that the election cycle?—announced about every four years ever since. And, certainly, we see no sign, actually, of anything more than a couple of studies being done, and the studies, of course, do not go very far towards putting the project in place.

And if you were doing things in terms of public safety not public convenience, that would be one of the highest priority projects, because we repeatedly see some very bad accidents at that intersection because it involves trains, involves a four-way uncontrolled intersection, and certainly a situation and a long stretch on both highways where there are very little for controls and people tend to get lulled to sleep and tend to actually end up right in the intersection before they even realize they're there. So it is a very dangerous intersection and one that we would've expected, if they were looking at things like public safety, would be far higher up the list, but so far we haven't seen it. Perhaps we have yet to look forward to that over the coming months.

And then in the budget itself, something that we actually had looked for: the increase to the EI housing allowance, something that we had been calling for along with a number of other groups—End Poverty Now. And I know—I see the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) actually laughing, thinking that we're not serious about this. We are very serious about this. We are—very quickly determined that this was one of the critical areas where those that are in poverty, actually struggling to get by, that they were robbing Peter to pay Paul. They were having to put food money into housing, and it was costing many people in many ways. How can you move on in your life if you don't have stable and adequate housing? How can you pay for housing when you're well under the market, and I've talked to literally hundreds of people that have been impacted by this and I am glad to see them move on this.

However, I am very concerned that everything we see so far says, well, sometime we're going to get there. Sometime in the next four years, we're going to increase the housing allowance to 75 per cent of the market median. Sometime we'll get to that.

And we committed to move there much more quickly in a much more bold way, and, frankly, what we suspect we'll see now is sort of an inequity in the marketplace with some people getting some portion of the money and others struggling to get it. And whether or not that'll deal with the issues of things like having to go to food banks because you run out of food before the end of the month and the money's run out already because you had to use that to pay for part of your housing, I do hope the government is very committed on this. We certainly will be watching very carefully to make sure that they move on this in a fair and equitable manner, and we will be pushing very hard to make sure that this is done as—

in a timely manner, it is not forgotten as many of the promises have been. Promises made by this government are pretty much guaranteed to be promises broken in one form or the other.

And, of course, we have seen the additional tax burden on families: PST, both breadth and increase in the amount; expansion and also fee expansions, which has amounted to about \$1,600 per family per year. Now, their personal income tax deductions went up a grand total of \$250. That comes to about \$27 saving for a person on an average income, so I'm sure that's not going offset that. In fact, people that are living on EI allowance feel that they're spending far more than that in increased PST costs.

And I'm only go to touch very briefly on the Hydro gamble that we see them playing. It reminds me, frankly, of a little bit—not of chess, where they're planning for the future, but of poker, because everything is all in, all the time. And poker players like that don't usually end up walking away from the table feeling very good about the way things went that particular day. And they've certainly committed to an all-in situation where they're increasing the debt for Hydro to a point where it's well beyond sustainability.

And from my previous life, I have—still have some contacts in the sustainable energy field, actually, in the Minnesota and Wisconsin area. And I actually dug some of those out and became a voice from their past and asked them how things were going down there in terms of the energy market. And they were actually pretty critical of Manitoba because they're—here they are trying to develop sustainable energy sources, one of them is actually involved with—is a shareholder in a plant that burns turkey manure, of all things, to generate energy—a steam plant—and the by-product is fertilizer, and also they run a greenhouse in associated with the by-product energy.

Now, I don't know how you can get much more sustainable than that, but maybe there's something out there, but that's certainly a very sustainable model. But he says, we can't compete with what you're selling it for down here—we simply can't. Even though we get the product for next to nothing, we simply cannot compete with the giveaway prices that Manitoba Hydro is offering hydro—the grid, in his situation, and in his case it's Otter Tail. And so you're actually hurting the sustainability down there.

On the other side of the argument, he is pretty free to admit that they actually are doing pretty good

at attracting some light industry back into the cities down there because they're offering them hydro rates that are actually less than what we're paying up here. I wonder how that plays out in terms of our long-term plans for a stable and prosperous economy here in Manitoba.

Now, I did want to touch on a few other areas, particularly in the area of poverty, children and youth. Manitoba remains the child poverty capital of Canada despite all of the great announcements, and we've been there for six years. That is hardly anything to be proud of. Currently, we have approximately 55,000 children in this province living in poverty, a number that is an embarrassment, I think, to all Manitobans. Manitoba's child-poverty rate is six times higher than the Canadian average, and 68 of—per cent of those children are children with Aboriginal backgrounds and are under six years of age. So that's certainly the formative years when you want them to have as much support as possible, and clearly we're failing to provide them with that. We need to provide them with basics, at the very least, which is housing and food, and opportunity, and an opportunity for education, and we are clearly failing to do that in far too many cases.

Since 2005, more than 20 children have died while in the child-welfare system, and, of course, we've seen the recommendations come out on the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry. They are far reaching and many, and they have been extremely critical of government's ability to not only deal with information and deal with children once they are in the system, but also extremely critical of the actions that have been taken to give families support so that they do not end up in the system. And I think, frankly, that is one of the greatest failures of this government; that they talk the good act—and they do move very quickly to seize children. We now have more than 10,000 children in care, by far, on a per capita basis, by far the highest in Canada. Certainly, not a good indication that we're doing a good job in giving the families the supports that they need; in fact, an indication that we may well be failing miserably in that sector.

But we are certainly responsible for a lot more children. We need to do something to provide them with support, not only seize the children. But we need to provide the families that they came from with the supports that they need so that they can rebuild their lives and be back—and the children can be placed back in the homes, something that is an ultimate goal for everyone.

* (15:00)

But, when you look at the numbers of children in care, something that we've obviously not done very well at—and I would encourage anyone to read the—at least the summary of the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, because there are some recommendations in there that are far-reaching, multidepartment in nature, pointing out some of the weaknesses that we have in the system, where information is not transferred well, and that gaps are there for children to fall into. And some—many of these still remain, and we need to work at making sure that those are resolved in a timely manner because these are lives that we're playing with here. And, certainly, we need to make sure that we'd done absolutely everything within our power to try and make sure that these children are protected.

I also would encourage people to pay attention to the numbers at food banks. Our numbers continue to go up here in Manitoba. We had a little reprieve last year; demand seems to be up again this year. Perhaps it's something like increased cost for PST and taking more money out of the household, because seems as though more people are turning up at the food banks again. We are No. 1 in Canada; isn't that something to be proud of? We have the greatest use of food banks of any province in this country. And it's a sad reflection on how we treat these, the most vulnerable portion of our society. And of those that go to food banks, virtually 50 per cent are children. And so that is certainly a very sad reflection on where we are and where we are moving in the future here.

Now, I did want to talk a little bit about some environmental issues, because the other day, the minister—or the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) made some comments about what poor record the provincial Conservatives had in regard to environmental issues. And I would dearly like to remind him, or I would like to remind him, of his record when he first came on as minister of Water Stewardship. And he had a half-concocted plan that was going to lead to improved water quality, preferably in Lake Winnipeg because that was their target audience, but hopefully for all of Manitoba. And he ran that out to the farm groups and the farmers in the province. And it was a wonderful new plan, based on data developed from aerial photos that were 70 years old. They were so historical that most people had quit using them, and we actually had a great deal of difficulty finding an active copy of it

because nobody'd used them in so long that they actually were covered in dust.

And once we pointed out to the minister and his staff that this was very out of date with what modern agriculture was doing, he was, first, very defensive. And, frankly, I think he struggled to understand the connection between landscape efficiency, landscape quality and nutrient management, and what types of nutrients we actually had to learn to manage, and which ones were having an impact on Lake Winnipeg. He didn't seem very interested in actually doing what was right for the environment at that point in time. What he seemed more interested than anything else was to finding someone to blame. And he was certainly looking for a scapegoat, not a whole lot more.

Now, we worked very hard with the department and eventually managed to hammer out something that allowed farmers to continue farming in this province because, had we gone with their original proposal, there would be big chunks of this province that were nothing more than hinterland now. Because they'd have to be abandoned under their rules because simply didn't have the land quality, shouldn't be any agriculture in this area because these 70-year-old maps suggested that perhaps they weren't the most productive areas in the province.

The fact that we've learned how to manage these landscapes and improve the productivity, that was irrelevant to the whole discussion. And, certainly, I was very disappointed at the time with the understanding that that government of the day seemed to express in terms of its ability to manage landscapes and how to manage the environment, and I have seen, actually, little evidence to convince me otherwise. In fact, they—though they made brave and bold commitments on where they were going with greenhouse gases, we would find that the highest year—they missed their targets by a country mile, and the highest year would be 2012, where they were 5 per cent over any previous high. So we're certainly headed in the wrong direction.

The flood projects that we have heard so much about are in the process of being run through consultants and run through some public consultation, though not a great deal has happened yet. But already, it's a year behind—already, a year behind. So we're certainly looking at projects that the government suggested would be five to seven years, probably more likely going to be seven to nine.

I certainly hope we don't have another major flood in the interim, because they're going to look very poor in terms of how much the work they've been able to accomplish.

We also see, in areas, things like cottage services fees, and, of course, we all have cottagers in every one of our constituencies; and I have yet to find one, frankly, that is happy about the fee. Many of them will admit that they're prepared to pay more, but they do want some accountability on the money that's being paid. And they have received nothing for many years, have seen no improvement in services, seen no improvement to the facilities that they're working with, and now they're being called on to pay a whole lot more for what, Mr. Speaker, for really no improvements. And so many of them are very unhappy with what is being proposed and certainly are going to be very vocal about demanding some level of accountability, and this government's record on being transparent on accountability is probably the worst in the country.

So, certainly, I've warned many of them. I said it'll be a chore for you to get that level of accountability. We certainly are prepared to help push for it, but don't be disappointed if they can't come up with anything more than generic figures, because that seems to be what they work with.

This time around, of course, we're also looking at things like a pesticide ban being proposed and, certainly, that won't be based on good science. We've seen other jurisdictions where they have been put in place in some, and in some that had backed away from them after they've been put in place because the science simply does not back up what they're doing. So we'll certainly be looking at that one and making—have a—look forward, actually, to having a lot of comments on how good this government can—will be—will look against the questionable science that they use on that.

And one other point that I really wanted to get to. We've been three years since the flood of 2011. We still have over 2,000 people that are not in their homes, and though there was \$100-million allocation in the budget, a special appropriation to help to deal with this, there's simply no details on what's going on. Are these people going to be provided with the opportunity to rebuild their homes and—with some protection in the area where they came from? Are they going to be moved to new locations? Many—and many have actually prepared to—seem to be prepared to agree to that. Are they just going to be paid off?

Is that \$100 million really just money for the lawsuit to go away, or is that \$100-million silence money? Really, what is the purpose of that? And certainly we—we'll—pushing very hard to make sure that these people are not forgotten, because I think, frankly, government has forgotten, and I feel for them. And I talk occasionally to some of these, because many of them are not in the hotels anymore. They found something a little more permanent than that, and after three years I'd hardly blame them for looking something more permanent. And they've moved on to some degree with their lives in a new location with new realities, get their kids back in school, look after their elders, try in the many cases—try to find something, a way to get some income, try and find a job, and many of them are not prepared to go back to where they were.

They—it's been such a long period of time that they have moved on to another new reality. Where are we going to be helping them? What are we going to be helping them with? It's certainly not clear at all that we are doing a good job on this. And I hope that we're really committed as a Province to deal with these people and make sure that—they took the brunt of the impact so that many other communities would not be flooded out, and, frankly, that includes a big part of this city and part of the area that I represent as well. They took the brunt of that impact and we have not treated them fairly at all.

Now, I must return, I guess, towards the last here and make a few comments about the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry and, as I indicated earlier, I would encourage every member to at least take the time to have a quick look at that. It is a sad reflection on how poorly and how many gaps we have in the system. We have a complex system that we have structured in response to the demands of society, many different agencies in many different locations under several different authorities. We also have linkages with other government departments that, frankly, just don't work very well—including Justice and Health—and information that should be passed along regarding family situations that's not passed along, and that leaves many people vulnerable and many children in particular very vulnerable in the system. And that is something that should bother us all, because these children are responsibilities of the Province when they're in Child and Family Services. And we have a serious responsibility to try and do the best for these children, and we are not doing that.

* (15:10)

So I'm very concerned about that in the future, and I do hope that we don't—do not see any more situations like the one that led to the death of Phoenix Sinclair.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've had my opportunity to speak. In fact, I think I had a little more time than I was probably supposed to have because the clock didn't start out—start up when it should have. But I certainly enjoyed the opportunity and I will give someone else the opportunity to speak to the amendments that our leader has put forward and indirectly through the budget. Thank you.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): I'd like to start off by thanking my constituents again for once again giving me the honour and the privilege of speaking here today on their behalf. I'm really proud to be standing here today to be talking about a budget that isn't about cuts and that's about building and jobs.

In other jurisdictions across the country we don't see that. We see cuts, deep cuts. We see teachers being laid off. We see schools being closed. We see health care being ignored, and infrastructure as well. Happily, experts have actually mentioned that Manitoba is the one bucking the trend. The experts from all over the world have been saying that austerity is not the way to go, but I know that the opposition doesn't like experts. They don't like to have anybody with facts and figures. It just confuses everything.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? We're fighting for the people and we're fighting against the natural disasters that come our way and we're continuing to build and protect for the future of Manitoba. Now, I know the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson)—I heard her speak during question period, and she said that we are only, and I want to emphasize only, creating 11,500 jobs. Do you know what only 11,500 jobs means? Only 11,500 people will actually be able to afford food, you know, little things in life, shelter, all those things. So we're only creating enough room for people to actually have a life and to be able to survive.

But that's only what our government would do. What would they do? They've made it very clear. They would cut. They would cut, cut, cut, and they would just let the jobs sort itself out. We've seen how that works. You know, less nurses, less teachers, less doctors, less people: 30,000 people left the province when they had their chance at it. You know, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) attacked the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) in his speech a

little bit, saying that her—on her beliefs, right? Well, not only do I stand with the member for Burrows on her beliefs, you know who else stands with her? And I know he's just a little figure in the world, but the Pope stands with the member for Burrows.

The Pope's view on poverty and the über-rich is that the—when the über-rich said that their cup would flow over and it would—eventually it would flow to the poor, but then you know what the Pope said? You know what? That's not the case. What's happened is the rich have actually went out and got bigger cups and they're not sharing the wealth. You know, the member for Portage la Prairie asked for improvements in his speech. Well, luckily, our budget calls for enough money and enough funding and not the cuts that maybe his improvements will be looked after. I mean, look what member for Brandon—last year, he spoke about how he wanted things, and we delivered right away on it.

He spoke about EIA, and how we were robbing Peter to pay Paul. You know what robbing Peter to pay Paul is? It's when you say we're going raise the rental rate or we're going to give them a little bit more but then you cut their Child Tax Benefit from them to the tune of over \$50 million out of the pockets of families. So you might want to talk to the Leader of Opposition who was in power, around the Cabinet table, who made that decision to take money directly out of the family's mouths—talk about robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Our system that we're going to do is going to help people because it's going to follow them when they decide to, you know, get a job and work. That benefit is going to follow them. And that benefit is going to prevent the welfare wall which we know the Leader of the Opposition would gladly just put up and push people behind. But you know what we're doing? We're offering them a hand up, not a hand out. And it's going to help families. We're not cutting the Child Tax Benefit like they did. We're taking a very different approach. So you want to talk about robbing Peter to pay Paul, that's exactly what the Leader of the Opposition did when he had his hands on the wheel the last time.

You know, they want to talk—he also talked about transparency. Transparency, Mr. Speaker. This is coming from the leader—or their leader who created one of the biggest election frauds in the history of Manitoba. Oh, transparency, let's talk about that. How about having two sets of books like they found that they had when they were in power?

Is that transparent? Well, I guess it might be because, you know, they found the other set of books after a lot of digging so that might be the transparency.

You know, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) talked about the people who are not in their homes, which we take very seriously, and it's a really serious issues. And I feel for those people. But do you think that with their plan, their Leader of the Opposition's plan—well, I mean, we don't know which one it is because, you know, not even a year ago he was saying 2 per cent, across-the-board cuts, jobs would be lost, layoffs are a possibility; that's how we're going to balance. Now he's changed his approach, and now it's 1 per cent cuts and we're going to find all these magical efficiencies through agreements that they, you know, just throw numbers at. There's no facts or figures behind them because, once again, they don't like them.

But how would those people, those very people that he's claiming to stand up for, how would they end up back in any situation where they have decent housing and flood protection without money? It's interesting, because all of their cuts would not take into that hundred million dollars that we're going to be doing to help those people get back in.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to quote *The Globe and Mail* because, you know, the member opposite was attacking the member for Burrows' (Ms. Wight) integrity on her views, and I'm going to quote an economist. I know they don't know anything about the economy. I know that the members opposite think that they don't know anything about the economy, but I'm going to quote the economist who says that growing surpluses of capital also explain why housing prices keep rising—and when so many economists think that they're overvalued. If the Canadian government—oh, who happens to be a cousin of the government—the opposition across the way—if the Canadian government eliminated preferential taxes on capital income it could generate well over \$15 billion in additional revenue annually, another half of that for the provinces, more than enough to eliminate the deficit and provide better funding for public services. But what are the chances of that happening? Zero to negative with the current government in office. Well, this is what they would bring in. There's no doubt, they follow their federal cousins all the way.

It also goes on to say the Conservative Party policy instead calls for the elimination of tax on capital gains. Their proposal is to expand tax-free

accounts—savings accounts that could create a gaping hole in the government's revenue-raising ability. Together with income splitting it would exacerbate inequality and do more harm than good to the economy.

Well, I have to say, once again, I stand with the member for Burrows because the policy of the Conservatives is obviously on the wrong side according to everybody except for them—except for them. They're the ones who think that they're on the right track to things, you know.

I'm going to also—I also want to talk a little bit about storytelling. Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Leader of the Opposition, that actually seems to be his forte. He might want to go into writing children's books. He's just, you know, maybe learned how to draw and he could write a children's book because he's certainly not in it for the people or the facts, because, like I said, in April of 2013 he was on record as saying 2 per cent across the board and that job losses and layoffs are a possibility to balance the budget.

Not even a year ago and he's already running from that record, already running in full stride. I mean, he's a tall man and he can run fast and he can run far, but we're going to catch him because we have the facts on our side. And now he's saying it's 1 per cent inefficiencies. What's next? I mean, what's the next thing from him? What's he going to come up with? He's going to come up with that we're going to, you know, harvest moon rocks in order to pay for all of the roads that need to be fixed and the—all of the demands that the members opposite put on us all the time. He's really good at telling stories.

But you know what story he doesn't tell, Mr. Speaker—and this is a great one, I'm hoping everybody's listening to this—that in April 28th of 1997, 10 days after Grand Forks goes under water and the greatest flood besides the one of 2011 is going to hit the province, massive flood, he's in charge of EMO, the minister responsible, and do you know what he does on April 28th, 10 days as this massive wall of water is coming towards us? He quits. How about that story? He quits, He quits as the EMO minister and runs yet again. He runs with scissors to cut things, but he also runs away from problems. This is the guy who wants to run our Province? He has run—he ran away as the minister responsible for the flood 10 days after Grand Forks went under. I guess he was just like, oh, my goodness, this is just too much for me to handle. I'm

going to get while the getting's good and I'm going to head to Ottawa. He looks after his own self-interests long before he looked after Manitobans.

It's a good story, Mr. Speaker. I'm surprised he doesn't tell that one. Maybe it'll fit into his children's book that he's going to write after his foray into politics. It's sure a good story, but he doesn't like to tell it. So I'm glad that we are here to tell it. I'm glad that I'm here to tell it.

There's also some nice things in this budget, though, that will help normal families like mine, like MPI offering low financing for winter tires. Now, let's be honest. You know, this has been the worst winter in—since 19—I think 1976 was the last time we had this many frozen pipes, and in over a hundred years it's the worst winter. But I listen to the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) complain about the MPI program that helps families afford winter tires. Well, whose side are they on? But for some families like mine, I will benefit from this program and my constituents will benefit from this program. But I guess the über-rich party over there doesn't think that, you know, normal people should have any safety or winter tires.

*(15:20)

You know, maybe it's because if the Leader of the Opposition took advantage of this program, we could pay down the deficit. With 28 tires in that seven-car garage, that's a lot of financing you would have to do. We could help pay off the deficit in the economy.

In other provinces we see teachers being fired and laid off, just like the Leader of the Opposition has put on record he would do if he had his wheels—hands on the wheel. Now—and he's backpedalling from that story and trying to run as far as he can, but this is something else we've seen in other provinces that are run by the Conservatives. They've just decided that they would cut, but not here. We actually fund inflation—fund teachers to the rate of inflation, and we value our teachers. In fact, over 200 teachers—I believe, in fact, there's 213 teachers today that we've hired more in the last year for our commitment to lower K-to-3 class sizes, something the Leader of the Opposition has put on record that he would cut.

Oh, but maybe not, because he's changed his mind again. Maybe it's a different record. I don't know which one he wants to stick with and which one he wants to run away from. My constituents,

who I'm very in contact with because I canvass, I'm at every event in my area and I know the people because I live in my area, not unlike the Leader of the Opposition who happens to live in a different area, but that's okay—my constituents have told me that they want new schools. You know what they've told me? They want expansions on existing schools. The opposition would not do this because you can't fund it with the cuts, Mr. Speaker. You would see higher class sizes just like the last time they had their hands on the wheel—higher class sizes and schools being closed.

Something else I heard at the over 200 events I was at last year was the concern about jobs. Now, I know the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) says it's only 11,500 new jobs being created, but you know what? That's a lot more than their plan would create, because their plan would actually lay people off. We would have less jobs. We would create a stalled economy just like all the experts are saying that happens with austerity.

Now, the report from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce found that Canada—and this is—they might want to listen, because this is their federal party who's done this—added 0.6 per cent new jobs in 2013, not enough to cover the population growth. What's more than that, the net jobs created were almost all part-time, 95,000 of the 99,000 jobs, raising concerns about the quality of jobs created. This is what the report said. And of the—most of the jobs, most of them were created in Alberta.

Now, I know it's only 11,500 jobs that we're creating here—only—but, Mr. Speaker, that is huge in a province with a population of only a million and a half people. So it's a really good percentage, and if their government only created 0.6 per cent in new growth, and only—let me see, I'll do the quick math here—4,000 of those jobs were full-time, how does our 11,500 jobs stack up? Pretty good, considering that their federal cousins are looking after the whole country and we are looking after a province.

And we're going to create almost three times as many jobs, and good jobs: carpenters, cement layers, planners, engineers—all of those things are—have to happen for all of our jobs that we're going to be creating in the construction industry. Electricians, plumbers, all of this stuff that we do when we build. We're not talking about one labour market—this is what they say—we're talking about multiple, diverse labour markets across Canada.

Well, if we're creating four times as many jobs as the whole country, I mean, I know that, you know, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) said that's only. Well, I guess that's only 4,000 really good jobs in all of Canada. So, you know, let's talk about that. How many provinces? Divided it out, you know, not very many jobs for those people in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

We look at—we took all this to heart. We listened to the experts. We listened to the economists saying austerity, and we made this our focus. We decided in this budget that we're going to make creating jobs and building things our focus. We sure didn't want to do what the opposition's federal cousin did and create unemployment with mass layoffs.

The Globe and Mail goes on to say that government austerity measures hit the job market hard. Jobs in education across the country, not in Manitoba, decreased by nearly 40,000 positions. The Chamber also said that public administration jobs declined by nearly 30,000 positions. Well, in Manitoba, you know what's happening? We're going to be hiring more people because we're going to be building roads, building schools and building hospitals, Mr. Speaker. More jobs, more real activity, more purchases, higher incomes, more tax revenue, and that helps defray some of the burden of the—and the increased spending.

Now, I know that the reports are stats and science, and it's like pixie dust and fairy tales to the members opposite, but we do like the facts, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we took action on them. The facts are that my constituents are going to better-benefit from the better roads when they do not have to replace their strucks—struts and shocks and their front ends because of the damage that would occur underneath the opposition when they would cut from roads, raising the gas tax and cutting the spending to the roads, just like they did the last time the Leader of the Opposition had his hands on the helm. They dropped the spending on the roads, but yet they raised the tax.

The fact is that the flood protections like we did, where we doubled the floodway to protect—and protected every community south of Winnipeg to one-in-700-year floods, save the economy money. And it saves families from having to be displaced from all of that flooding, and the damage that ensues in it and making flood claims. Now, underneath them, when they were in—and they were in in '97 when the flood happened—and they didn't do a thing

after that flood to mitigate any more damages, Mr. Speaker. It was only when we took office in 1999 that those investments were made and communities were ring diked and the expansion of the floodway started taking place. It'd not happened under the Conservatives, so their claims to fame here is really nothing. It's a great story as their—our Leader of the Opposition likes to tell.

Now, I know it's not important to the opposition. You know, they're worried about cutting corporate taxes and allowing financial industries to take more money offshore. But, for the rest of us normal folks, we need these protections. We need the help of the government to make sure that communities are protected.

The spin-off argument for increasing infrastructure is sound. I mean, it's very sound. Regardless of this type of projects, it's simply the best way for governments to spur economic activity. You know, for the leader—for the opposition to say otherwise is ridiculous, because their federal masters are doing the same thing. They're trying to stimulate the economy with growing the economy by spending money on infrastructure projects.

You know—*[interjection]* And I hear the member opposite chirping about how long it took us to do it. You're right. It took us a while to expand the floodway because it was the largest earth-moving initiative in the history of Canada, Mr. Speaker. Are you kidding me? Yes, you know what? That does take some time.

Unlike the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition, where they think you can just—click—turn on a light for a hydro dam and there it is, we've got power, we know that we need to start building now because it takes 10 years. They don't seem to understand construction, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that our side has people that really understand construction.

You know, you look at all the disasters around the world this past year and the record winters right here at home, and I know that we need to be protecting Manitoba, but it seems like they're not intent on protecting anyone except for their own bottom line, Mr. Speaker. Cutting front-line services would only hurt the people who are in need the most.

We've chosen another route; we've chosen a route of steady growth, jobs, building and investing. Despite what the Leader of the Opposition says, we can do both. As you've heard in our budget, we're

going to move forward, and we're going to make better jobs for people, better lives for people. In the last few months, I've spent a lot of time on my—on the doorsteps and, you know, nobody is talking about the cuts that the gloom-and-doom party over there wants to have.

You know, we talk about—they want to talk about good things happening in Manitoba: our unemployment rate is around 5 per cent. Nationally, it's 7 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, that's better than the national average, but you won't—they won't give us credit for that and that's fine. You know, we can handle that. We'll just manage the economy and keep bringing that unemployment rate down.

The Leader of the Opposition—I'm going to reference this a lot in my speech—has said that past performance is the best indicator of future performance. I don't often agree with him, but in this speech I'm going to reference it often, because when he was last in power, I faced many challenges trying to find work during the Filmon era and the Leader of the Opposition when he was at the Cabinet table.

This 'lera' is the—is leader—is very familiar with. He calls it one of the best governments in the history of Manitoba. Past performance shows his policy would be that unemployment rates would spike to up to 10 per cent, people would be leaving the province to the tune of 30,000. Past performance meant, underneath him, gas taxes were raised and spending on roads were cut, Mr. Speaker. Gas—the—past performance under him would be people would be spending more on car repairs, because the roads wouldn't be invested on. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about past performance, let's talk about he was part of the health-care cuts, the thousand—over a thousand nurses that were gone. How about the sale of MTS? Past performance indicates future performance. Well, let's—why is he running so far from that record, that he sold off MTS and now our rates are among the highest in Canada? Unemployment was higher back then. Nurses were being laid off. Hospitals had fruit flies in the operating room. And things did not have such a positive outlook as they do right now.

So, if we want to talk about past performance, let's go there. Past performance under the Leader of the Opposition saw tuitions skyrocket to over 130 per cent. Schools were closed and teachers were laid off. Guess what happened then? Class sizes ballooned. We might not want to talk about his past

performance much. It seems like he really wants to run from that record. The problem is he's running with scissors, and people are going to get hurt.

* (15:30)

The Leader of the Opposition also said something interesting: We all know we need to invest in core infrastructure. Interesting, since, when he was in power, he spent less on infrastructure than they took in in gas tax. So he says one thing and does another—past performance. He's saying it, his words. This is what he's saying dictates future performance, so we can see that's where we would be at, Mr. Speaker. In his own words again, he would take in a gas tax and spend less on the roads.

Well, which is it, Mr. Speaker? Does he really know that we want to spend more on core infrastructure or does he really want to spend less on infrastructure? Because his past actions that he's trying to walk away from sure didn't dictate that. I'm very happy that he pointed all this out because he admits in his own words that we will see the same reckless cuts and failed policies if he is allowed to take the helm of this province.

I'm personally glad that we are moving forward. I want a better life for my son and for all the families in Manitoba, not just one that the rich can afford to buy health care and pay for higher tuitions. That's why I work so hard and am so proud to be part of a government that puts people first.

There are so many wonderful things happening in this province that have been driven by stable growth, jobs and responsible caring government. I was at the grand opening of the new rapid transit corridor. This corridor is made possible with a commitment from our government. We also heard about further development. Better commutes mean less emissions and more time with our family. We all win, Mr. Speaker. Underneath them, that would all be cut.

You know why we're having to invest in rapid transit, Mr. Speaker? Because we're growing. The province is growing. We're projected to be at over a million people in the next 20 years. Unlike when the Leader of the Opposition was in power, 33,000 people left the province and things were pretty bleak here. The doom-and-gloom party don't like to count immigrants, but we sure do.

You know, the floodway that protects hundreds of thousands of Manitobans underwent a massive rehabilitation underneath our government, not their

government. They didn't do anything to it. Once again, the Leader of the Opposition—I'm going to use his words, past performance indicates future performance—so would he let the floodway crumble like when he was in Cabinet and when, as he was an MP, he said stop all work on the floodway expansion. So, in his own words, why don't we just flood Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker? Through cuts and lack of investment, that's exactly what would happen.

We are moving forward and we are building a future and creating jobs while doing so. The Leader of the Opposition claims about being—jobs being created by the private sector and not government. Well, the titans of industry obviously don't understand that every dollar we spend on infrastructure creates jobs in the private industry that are actually bidding for the work. The provincial workers don't actually build the roads, Mr. Speaker. We have contracts for people to do that.

The Conference Board of Canada disagrees with the opposition, saying that jobs will be created under our five-year plan, and it's actually going to boast the GDP of the province by 2 per cent. The Leader of the Opposition slammed the idea of building—that building creates jobs. Well, once again, his federal cousins are the ones who tried to do that with their—with the economy. Now, they've given up on it and they went to ads. Ads are the way they're going to, you know, grow the economy, by having people give really good, you know, action plan ads. That's their economic growth. But it's funny because when a different party says it, it's a bad idea, but when his own party said it, it was a fantastic idea, Mr. Speaker. It's sad times in Manitoba when you have to go that route.

Now, you know, I heard from the Leader of the Opposition last year on CJOB saying that we should have a two-tier health-care system. He said that it's something that Manitoba needs. He would like people to use their credit cards to jump the line instead of their health card, Mr. Speaker. Is this a past idea? Well, yes, but it's also an idea that he brought forward a few months ago. So past performance shows future indication—well, there you go, he would do it just like the last time he was in power when he privatized health—tried to privatize home care and he privatized MTS. And our home care, by the way, is one of the best in the country.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to invest in Manitobans. We hear from them over and over that they just want to cut and destroy Manitoba.

We want to build Manitoba. We are not going to listen to them. We are not going to allow them to run away and run away from their record, and run with scissors and cut things. We are going to keep building Manitoba for a better future for myself, for my son and for everybody's family in here who'll benefit from all the investments that we are making.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the amendment to the budget put forward by our leader.

I'd first like to welcome the new members we have in the House. It's always nice to see some new faces in here and the new members from Arthur-Virden and from Morris. After that long session last year, it's kind of nice to have a couple more faces here to kind of pick up part of the load for us. Everyone knows I'm not that wordy, and this will cut down on the number of words I have to say.

Beyond that, I'd like to welcome everybody back. And I really would like to congratulate Larry Maguire. He's living his dream. He really wanted to go to Ottawa. Almost got there back in the '90s sometime, and then it went sideways on him. And so he's finally got where he wants to be, and he's happy. And he'll be covering ground like you wouldn't believe. He'll be a very good representative for that area of the province in Ottawa.

And Mavis is getting to spend some of the well-deserved time in Arizona with her family in the winter, which I think she was much looking forward to. [*interjection*] What about you? You don't look like you're in Arizona. Mavis will be very much missed in our caucus because she was such a hard worker and such a tough—on the rest of us on making sure we had the things done we had to have done.

You know, there's some things to this job that are—I can see a little bit of humour in some of the things that happen. Of course, I was well away from what happened, so last week, I think it was Wednesday, I received a email from my partner, Barb, back at home—and this has been a harsh winter; we've got snow piled up everywhere. The email said the car is stuck sideways in the lane, we're out of cat food, we're out of dog food and as soon as I can sell my house in town, I'm buying one in Puerto Rico. So I don't know what I was supposed to do about that. I'm 120 miles from home and it's storming. But, anyhow, that's the kind of email I got, and I thought

that was quite—some of the things that we deal with when we're away from home as much as we are.

I look around the House and I see a few new ministers on the government side and a number of others in new portfolios, and I do wish them well in those positions. For the first time since I've been here, we have an independent member of the House, the member from Riel. Now, I don't know if that is the same as having another party in the House, but I note that the independents hold as many seats in this House now as the Liberals, and as the Green Party does in Ottawa. So who knows what the future holds?

On the issue of the politicization of the civil service, there is a line that should not be crossed in any democracy. It has happened before, and it will probably happen again. But it is a line that we all have a responsibility to protect. It shouldn't happen, and when it does, it should trigger a full investigation to identify the mistakes made and the perpetrators of those mistakes. It is fundamental to democratic governance that the civil service be allowed to do their jobs without fear of penalty or reprisals for political reasons. They should not be bullied or coerced into taking political positions. I read somewhere that having a conscience means to act in ways that oppose immediate self-interest. And, by politicizing the civil service, government is acting without conscience and only indulging in immediate self-interest.

The issues surrounding the debate on the immigration resolution are an example of the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his Cabinet's disdain for the federal government, federal government that the NDP constantly find fault with and blame for their own shortcomings, and then go hat in hand and say: Could we have some more funding please? There's an old adage that says don't bite the hand that feeds you. And when 40 per cent of your funding comes from another level of government, that is probably a good rule to follow. Manitoba receives more funding from Ottawa per capita than any other province west of Quebec and, in the case of immigration services, it was close to 90 per cent. The Filmon government had the foresight to put the Provincial Nominee Program in place, and it remains one of the most well-thought-out and successful immigration programs in Canada.

*(15:40)

We, on this side of the House, know that the directive to the civil service had to have originated in

the Premier's office. Decisions of that magnitude are not made by individual ministers acting in isolation. I suspect members on that side of the House know where the directive originated as well, and the feedback I hear from the public is they understand where the directive came from also. The member from Riel was ordered to throw herself under the bus to protect her leader, but she did a strange thing. She told the truth, and in the Premier's eyes that was unacceptable.

You know, the difference between party politics and partisan politics is that in partisan politics they stab you in the front. The Premier's lust for power was so great he had to cover up. There must be consternation among caucus. The question has to be asked, who's next? The Premier could have quite easily said, I apologize, we made a mistake, and the debate that is still ongoing two years after the fact would not now be happening. Leadership includes taking responsibility. It includes integrity. Sadly, both are lacking in this situation. The issue of politicization of the public service was brought up in the debate on the resolution. The Premier claims he had no knowledge of what happened. The Premier has the resources to check the facts and get to the bottom of the issue immediately, not claim ignorance for over 15 months after the fact.

Mr. Speaker, in the first budget from the new Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) the theme has changed a little bit from the last two budgets. There are very few tax increases in this one. The province had—that had the most massive tax increases in 25 years, taking \$1,600 per year out of the pockets of every family of four in the province. There were, however, some common themes from the two previous budgets, one being that we are still borrowing massive amounts of capital, the second being that we are still running huge deficits in spite of the amounts being borrowed.

Another common theme is the list of broken promises that gets longer and longer every year. The Premier promised pre-election of 2011 to eliminate the school tax from seniors' property tax bills. In this budget he has promised to make an election promise in the next election, broken promises. The Premier promised in 2011 pre-election to balance the budget by this year. The promise not—now appears to be two hundred and sixteen pre-election. How will he do that? He certainly won't do it by exercising any fiscal responsibility. What he is most likely to do is simply borrow more money to create the illusion that the budget is balanced.

We had a very good piece of legislation in this province. It was called the balanced budget, fiscal management and taxpayer protection act. It was put in place by the Filmon government in very difficult financial times. The legislation not only called for a balanced budget, it also specified debt pay down. The legislation also allowed for extra spending in the case of disasters such as the 2011 flood with no penalty to the government of the day.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

What have we seen from this NDP government? Well, we saw Gary Doer commit to balanced budgets in 1999 pre-election and actually try to carry out that promise. Well, once Mr. Doer was gone, it didn't take long for the current Premier (Mr. Selinger) to dismantle balanced budget legislation in spite of new taxes, rising revenue, higher funding from Ottawa and low interest rates.

Along with destroying that legislation the Premier got rid of the responsibility to call a referendum giving Manitobans the right to vote on major tax increases. The NDP showed their contempt of the laws of our province when they raised the PST without going to referendum. I would think, if, in their highly vaunted rationale, that the PST increase was necessary for infrastructure and that Manitobans were telling them that, then they shouldn't have had any fear of selling the tax increase to the people prior to holding a referendum.

The fact is they were not raising PST for infrastructure, they were raising it to cover their poor fiscal management, and they know that. They know that wouldn't stand the sniff test of the public, so they first broke the law and then they got rid of the law. The fact is the NDP have underspent the infrastructure budget by \$1.9 billion over the last four years, which is far more than the PST will raise in— increase will raise in four years. The question has to be asked, where did that money go?

The other trick that is being pulled here is the definition of infrastructure. The NDP have now rolled health and education capital funding into infrastructure. That move inflates the so-called infrastructure file, but doesn't deflate the health or education budgets by an equal amount. That move alone leaves a huge slush fund in both health and education. But don't worry, the NDP, true to form, will blow their way through it too. Isn't it ironic that the NDP raised taxes when they said they wouldn't, and didn't spend on infrastructure when they said they would? Broken promises—broken promises.

The people of Manitoba have caught on. They now realize that the NDP simply do not keep their commitments. Even the highly touted infrastructure announcements they are making every day now are mostly reannouncements, mostly promised sometime after the next election and mostly clouded with false information.

The claim they're going to upgrade No. 75 and No. 1 highways to interstate standards. Have any of them driven on interstates? There are no grade-level crossings on interstates, or they may not have noticed that. Are they now going to build cloverleaves and overpasses every five to 10 miles? Highly unlikely.

I recently had a long-time, long-haul trucker contact me and say, I drive 250,000 km per year, the Manitoba highways are the worst in North America. That certainly gives me a sense of pride in the infrastructure that has being neglected by this NDP government for almost 15 years.

We are seeing more and more fatalities on our highways at a time when our vehicles are being built safer and safer. Is that not cause for concern?

Not only are the highways in deplorable shape, the cutbacks in maintenance such as mowing, plowing, salting, weed and brush control and shoulder repair, are all aspects of making our highways less safe.

An editorial last fall in the Dauphin Herald said, and I quote: It's also a good thing the NDP is planning money—to spend money on our roads, because unfortunately young Manitobans are going to pound them to dust as they stampede to leave this province once and for all. That's the end of the quote, and that is from the Dauphin Herald; that's in the member from Dauphin's hometown.

The NDP have a basic philosophy that they know better how to spend Manitobans' money than Manitobans do. They believe that Manitobans should be glad to send all their money to the government and then beg for a little back to feed their families and maintain their homes.

They continuously talk about cuts. We hear the angry Minister of Ed yelling, cut, cut, cut. I presume he was talking about the indiscriminate cuts his NDP government has been making to the budgets of Manitoba families. Not only have they taken \$1,600 from a family of four with tax increases in the last two years, they have also taken huge gobs of money out of family budgets in other ways, with fees, licence and access to service fees. Hydro rates

jumped 8 per cent in the last year, and now we are seeing another 4 per cent increase being proposed. Household incomes in Manitoba are flat, but household costs are increasing at exorbitant rate, and all because this NDP government's mismanagement. Their insatiable need to spend—send—feed their spending addiction.

You know, last summer we watched Bill 33, which deals with municipalities, wind its way through this building. And I remember a quote that Doug Dobrowolski made pertaining to that municipal amalgamation bill. He said Bill 33 threatens not only the damage to the relationship between our two orders of government, but to tear apart communities that have built their partnerships over decades. Not because of what is in the bill, but because of the undemocratic way it is being forced on our members.

* (15:50)

And, you know, there's so many words that come to mind when I think about that municipal amalgamation bill and the way the municipalities were treated. The government was controlling. They were manipulative. They were autocratic. They were viscous. They were unprincipled and they were untrustworthy.

An Honourable Member: With no integrity.

Mr. Briese: No integrity was shown either, as the member from Emerson reminds me.

I talk to those same municipalities now. This was supposed to create big cost-savings. It was supposed to do all these good things. These municipalities are struggling with time constraints. They haven't got time to do all the things they need to do, and it's costing them. They're having to hire consultants. They're having to hire all sorts of help, and it's costing them and it's costing them big time.

You know, the federal gas tax in 2013 to the municipalities in this province was \$66 million. The total to date has been \$432 million. That's the specific tax that the federal government collects and then hands out to municipalities. A number of years ago the federal government took the GST off municipal purchases, very good move. It was millions of dollars retained by municipalities that they didn't have to pay on the GST. That's dramatically different from what happened in this province. Not only do they pay PST on everything, three times in the last decade the Province has expanded what they're paying PST on, and then last

year they came with a full whammy. They increased it by 14 per cent, resulted in the municipalities paying somewhere—outside of the city of Winnipeg—paying somewhere in excess of \$800,000 extra on their insurance just on sales tax. They've got the fuel tax that—which probably it's one level of government taxing another level of government. It's one level of taxation going against another level of taxation. Municipalities make their money through taxation, then the province comes along and taxes the tax.

We just read the other day in the Winnipeg paper an article about the increased cost to the new water treatment plants in the city of Winnipeg from the impact of the PST, the increased PST on those facilities. The figure they used in the paper was \$2.2 million.

Like, so, why not let the municipalities use that PST money for infrastructure purposes? Makes sense to me. The municipalities will do a cheaper, better, cheaper job of infrastructure construction than the Province can any day. They're just better at it, more experienced at it and they will do it cost-effectively.

Something else we've been talking about for years and years and years and doesn't look to be getting any closer, we talk about people being entitled to clean, safe drinking water. There are some 45 municipalities in this province that need water lines put in. We haven't had any water lines put in now for a number of years and the Province refers to—refuses to do their share of funding on those, and they are expensive. But are they not entitled to having clean, safe drinking water? It appears in the city of Winnipeg here right now with the lines frozen up there's some of them not entitled either, but that's a little different story. At least they got a water line.

You know, when I talk about other entities doing the delivery of infrastructure and infrastructure services, one that really comes to mind is conservation districts. Last year, I believe, it was in the budget—there was about a \$600,000 cut in capital funding to conservation districts. And conservation districts are capable of doing infrastructure jobs out there, drainage jobs, bridges, culvert installation, water retention, cost-effectively—more cost-effectively than any government agency ever was able to. And it would make sense, when water management is a big area of concern with the province, to increase the funding a little bit to conservation districts. They can do those jobs. They know the local landscape. They know what they're doing. Instead, we're out there cutting them.

I find it highly amusing when somebody like the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of this province says, one thing we've never done in Manitoba, we've never left flood victims on their own.

Well, since 2011, in the Lake Manitoba area, they've certainly been left alone. There was promises made. The former minister of—I believe he was the minister of Agriculture at the time, made promises up in the hall at Langruth. I was there. He said, we will have multi-year programs. They will be comprehensive. And if, in two years, they haven't happened, I want to know about it.

Well, we're coming on to three years. I've let him know about it three or four times since the two years passed. I don't know why he wanted to know about it, because he obviously doesn't intend to do anything about it. So I guess he just wanted a little information. I have no idea.

An Honourable Member: Was he just buying votes?

Mr. Briese: He was buying votes.

You know, we hear some interesting things around health care in this province. We know there's a severe doctor shortage out in rural Manitoba, in spite of the fact that the former minister—I don't know the song and dance of the new minister—but the former minister would get up and say, well, we've hired five, six hundred more doctors.

Now, I understand how she does that. She hires a hundred doctors for five years and calls it 500 doctors. But, you know, using the math I heard in this House here today, since the last election, we've created 171 MLA jobs in this place. Because we've been here for three years, and 57 of us, plus two extras that left. Using that math that they were using today—we have approximately 600,000 people in the workforce in Manitoba—if you use two years of their math, even little babies are employed next year. The total population of the province would be employed using their math. It's just amazing stuff. Like, if I'm a contractor, I hire a hundred people this year. I'm a road builder; I hire a hundred people. And when the season ends, I lay them off. Next year, I hire a hundred people. That doesn't mean I've got 200 employees. That doesn't mean I've created 200 jobs. That means I create a hundred jobs every year. The math they're using—I farmed for 40 years so I created 40 jobs. That's the math they're using.

You know, in my town, we're short about a doctor and a half to two doctors. I'm 60—I don't know

what I am—67, 68 years old; 67, I think. For the first time in my life, I do not have a family doctor in my town. For the first time in my life—67 years—I've had family doctor in my town. So, and there's many others that don't—

An Honourable Member: You don't look that old.

Mr. Briese: That's because I don't have doctor.

There's many others in the community. I talked to a lady the other day who has three children, and she was registering them for something and they wanted a doctor—they wanted the family doctor's certificate on these children. Well, she doesn't have a family doctor. She can't get one.

So what were we told? I was told, well, you could go to Minnedosa, get a doctor there, it's only 20 miles away. That's maybe not a big deal.

* (16:00)

Only thing is, Minnedosa's supposed to have four doctors, and they've only got two. So they're not taking anybody. There are very, very few that have been able to find a family doctor in Brandon, which is 50 miles away. But we got a town like Neepawa, the population's gone up 1,200 people in the last three years, the number of doctors has dropped and—*[interjection]* Yes, it's amazing, and we're short of doctors. Like, there's probably a thousand people there that haven't got a family doctor now.

So—and, you know, the minister gets up—and once again I'll go back to their math—she gets up and says we've hired 3,000 nurses. Well, obviously she maybe hired a thousand nurses for three years. But Sandi Mowat was on the radio, I believe it was the other day, and she talked about a shortage in Winnipeg of 700 nurses and a shortage in rural Manitoba of another 500 nurses. That's 1,200 nurses short.

In '99, there was 200 nurse openings in the province; we were short 200 nurses. So we came through over 14 years—or about 14 years of NDP government to go from 200 nurses short to 1,200 nurses short. That doesn't even cover the closed ERs in the province.

You know, I mentioned I'm without a family doctor in my town, but you know what else I've got? In my town I've got a choice of dentists, there's more than one. I've got a choice of optometrists. I got a choice of lawyers, accountants, chiropractors, but no doctor.

An Honourable Member: As long as you've got a lawyer, you're okay.

Mr. Briese: That's just amazing to me—I think I need the lawyer, yes.

You know, I remember a high school teacher I had who used to—I remember when I first went into his class and he'd get upset with a student and he'd say, for heaven's sakes man, use your 'esnes nommoc'. And I didn't know what he was talking about. I was there for several weeks before I finally figured out when he was saying use your 'esnes nommoc', he was saying common sense backwards.

You know, I learned in grade school how to do math, I learned not to lie; obviously I went to a different school than many of the members opposite.

I also learned that resources, resource industries create the wealth of this country and this province, and the resource industries are mining, lumber, fisheries, agriculture. And, you know, under this government we've seen the beef industry literally destroyed in this province; we've seen the hog industry go way down. We're having trouble getting enough hogs to the processing plants in this province, and that's critical, that can have an impact on jobs and it probably will.

You know, mining, we've got the worst jurisdiction for creating interest in mining in the country. Lumbering, you know, the primary industries; these are the ones that actually pay the bill. Lumbering, we put so many restrictions in that they're having trouble surviving.

You know, what we see with an NDP government in their budget is a document of short-term, short-time gain for long-term pain, and really that should be the opposite; should be short-term pain for long-term gain. Under a Conservative government, that's what you would get.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Housing and Community Development): I'm honoured to stand in the Chamber today to speak on my 10th budget in my tenure as MLA for Gimli, and I want to start by thanking my constituents in Gimli for their support these past 10 years, and it is truly an honour to serve my home community and the neighbouring municipalities that I have come to know so well over my time in their service. I would especially like to acknowledge the continued and unconditional support of my family and friends, many of whom

attended my 10th anniversary last June, and many of my colleagues here on this side of the Chamber who were there to celebrate that milestone as well.

Before I begin with my formal remarks, I would also like to acknowledge my children. My daughter, Iris, is turning 14 on Friday—pardon me—11—11. I made a mistake. I can't believe that. Maybe she's, you know—anyway, she's turning 11 on Friday, and she is certainly a soccer fanatic.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I'd like to acknowledge my 14-year old son—here we go—Dane, who recently had an exceptional run as Nanki-Poo in *The Hot Mikado* at the Manitoba Theatre for Young People and, of course, my son Kieran, who's 16 this June and is getting his learner's permit—I just want to warn my colleagues about that. And, of course, my lovely wife, Joanne, who juggles life with me as we have our work commitments and very, very active, healthy children.

Now I'd like to talk about budget, and the budget is about choices. And sometimes those choices are very difficult to make, as circumstances beyond one's control can present obstacles, they can present challenges and situations can encourage, no, demand very difficult decisions be made in response.

Now, we have seen a number of obstacles presented in recent years, including the lingering effects of the flood of 2011, and this, of course, in the midst of a global economic uncertainty and a sluggish, at best, global recovery. And to the challenges of changing funding relationships—pardon me—add to that, the challenges of changing funding relationships with our senior level of government. Federal transfers to Manitoba for health and higher education have fallen, and we had hoped that, in setting its priorities, the federal government would recognize the importance Canadians attach to health, education and family services. Yet we are prepared to work with the federal government, but we'll also stand strong for Manitoba.

Now those last three lines were from the Filmon budget speech in March 9th, 1995. So I have to ask: What happened to those Progressive Conservatives who said they would stand up for Manitoba? When my colleague the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) was delivering the budget speech and referenced the fact that we face additional pressures from the unexpected loss of a hundred million dollars in federal transfers, due to the contested downward adjustments to Manitoba's population estimates, what

did the opposition do? They howled. I heard them calling names; I heard their disgust that we should even reference this matter in a budget speech.

So, I have to ask, what happened to the Progressive Conservatives who were prepared to stand strong for Manitoba? Where are they now? So, if they were to read the position as put forward by the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics and refer to the article where Stats Canada identifies itself that there is an anomaly in the methodology, but they cannot clearly identify the problem, you would think that perhaps they would be prepared to stand up for Manitoba and say that the federal cuts are not fair. If I were not in this Chamber, if I were a private citizen, I would hope, at the very least—no, I would expect, at the very least, that all members of the Assembly would be challenging the methodology and fighting to ensure that Manitoba receive the appropriate level of funding.

But, no, rather than stand up with us, they call us names, they dismiss the argument and they are not standing up for Manitoba. But we should not be surprised because we've seen this with the settlement services when the federal government came in. We saw that they were not prepared to stand up. They chose to stand down.

It shouldn't come as a surprise, because as the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) said yesterday in her budget speech, past behaviour is a good indicator of future behaviour. And we saw, as I said, that the opposition stands down when we were fighting the fight and the federal government's decision on settlement services. When it is time to stand up for Manitoba, members opposite stand down.

So the heckling was fascinating when the Finance Minister mentioned federal funding in one paragraph in the budget speech, and if you review previous Tory budget speeches, they dedicate entire subsections of their speeches talking about federal funding. For the benefit of members opposite, you can refer to page 10 in March 9th, 1995 speech; and April of 1996, you started on page 3. March of 1998, the first reference is on page 10. The point is that we found ourselves in a similar situation with a changing federal funding dynamic, but the members opposite become indignant if we dare mention the federal government as part of the challenges that we're facing here in Manitoba.

*(16:10)

So, as I mentioned in my opening comments, budgets are about choices. When the members opposite were faced with challenging economic times, they made their choices. And what were those choices? Right out of their budget speech, changes to the Pharmacare program, rate reductions to social assistance recipients, reductions in education funding and a moratorium on health capital. These four items were identified as cost-savings measures in the budget speech of 1995, but we know the impacts these measures had on families, on front-line services in education and health care, and on aging infrastructure. And I still hear former premier, and now ambassador, Gary Doer's words about fruit flies in the OR at the Health Sciences Centre and the leaking roof of the engineering building at the University of Manitoba.

But enough of the dark days of the 1990s, let's talk about our choices, our vision and our plan for Manitoba's future and growing our economy. We have been setting the table since we've been in government to grow a skilled labour force, to grow our population and to grow our economy. Budget 2014 carries on with programs to support apprenticeship and training opportunities. It commits to public infrastructure to employ those apprentices in heavy construction and heavy-equipment-operators trades. It means that we will have the carpenters, the plumbers, electricians, masons, roofers and painters to rebuild—or to build the 500 affordable housing and 500 social-housing units that we have committed to in Budget 2014. These skilled workers will work on the Health and Education capital projects. We know that we will need 75,000 skilled workers in Manitoba over the next seven years, and Budget 2014's infrastructure commitment will need each and every one of those skilled workers and more with the economic spinoffs of this ambitious plan.

So let's talk about training. We will improve the apprenticeship tax credit, create a new bonus tax credit for employers who take on apprentices for the first time, and provide bursaries to apprentices finishing their final year, more on-the-job training for northern Manitoba, streamlined programs for students to complete an entire year of apprenticeship while they are still in high school. Students will be able to earn university or college credits while in high school, we will increase the operating grants for universities by 2.5 per cent and 2 per cent for colleges, and we'll provide technology grants for young entrepreneurs. These are all very significant supports for our young people who, as they're filling

out their income taxes this year, will be claiming their tuition fee rebate when they choose to make Manitoba home.

Now, with the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) skill summit last year, it was an inclusive exercise which looked at ways to engage and support individuals that have been on the margins of full-time, meaningful employment. Budget 2014 provides rent assist to help EI recipients smooth the transition to work from welfare. Now, this approach has been validated as, quote, a reasonable approach that helps move from work to welfare, end of quote, according to Brendan Reimer, community development expert, as quoted in Winnipeg Free Press, whereas Winnipeg Harvest's David Northcott said in that same Free Press article, quote: "This is the best budget we've seen in two decades."

Now, let's contrast that approach to that of the Tories from the 1996 budget speech, and perhaps when the member from Portage la Prairie who said I was laughing at his comments about the Tory position on poverty, he'll see why I found that laughable. Quote: If someone receiving social assistance turns down a reasonable job offer, benefits will be reduced or eliminated. End of quote. Wow, the champions of the poor and the working poor, as they profess to be, took an any-job-will-do approach, and we know that that doesn't work.

We have worked with community organizations and stakeholders to provide wraparound services to provide meaningful training and employment opportunities for EI recipients to enjoy greater success and sustainable employment. We're providing more child-care spaces for those very people who need those child-care spaces while they're getting that training. We're providing more social-housing units and supporting social enterprises through Budget 2014 to create more jobs for persons facing barriers to employment.

What's really disconcerting is that the Tories claim their income-assistance costs were down substantially in 1998 budget speech. It kind of reminds me of that George Bush moment where he put up the mission-accomplished banner—you know, when he did that during the war in the Gulf—claiming victory for reduced EIA costs when they had reduced the benefits to recipients is what they saved—or how they saved money and reduced their expenditures. And they claim to be the champions of the poor.

They reduced benefits further again if you didn't receive—or accept a reasonable job offer. Now, who

determined what a reasonable job offer was? Any job will do does not work. But they claim to be champions of the working poor, yet they voted against our minimum-wage increases every year. And these wage increases have netted more than \$6,000 a year for minimum-wage workers on an annual basis. So we are going to increase the minimum wage again. And I am going to go out on a limb here, but I'm going to suggest that they'll vote against the increase yet again. Now, it's unbelievable that they stand in this Chamber and profess to be champions of the poor.

We'll be providing more supports and training for all Manitobans, introducing the first-in-Canada post-secondary program at Red River College for persons with intellectual disabilities. Now I wonder if this would be one of the programs the opposition leader would cut if he were premier. He said he would cut half-a-billion dollars. Would such a program even be considered if he were premier?

We know that our infrastructure plan will create thousands of jobs. We know, as per the Conference Board of Canada report, that every dollar in infrastructure investment results in a \$1.16 return on investment in economic growth. A \$5.5-billion plan will boost the economy by \$6.3 billion. It will create more than 58,000 jobs, jobs for Manitobans all over the province, jobs for Manitobans of every age, jobs for Manitobans of every skill set, dare I say even jobs for infidel atheists. But I digress. I digress. This will boost exports by \$5.4 billion, increase retail sales by \$1.4 billion and create 2,100 housing starts.

Now, I have heard the opposition members chirp away and they did it yet again today, that such investments don't create jobs. Well, that's odd, because again I refer to the Tories' very own budget from 1995 where I quote: the Canada-Manitoba infrastructure works program has been a major success, more than 3,320 jobs are being created by projects announced in the first year. So how can the Leader of the Opposition say the government invests in—that when government invests in infrastructure, it doesn't create jobs and—when it's \$5.5-billion program? Yet, while he was in Cabinet, the Tories took credit for 3,320 jobs created by an infrastructure program—somewhat duplicitous if you ask me.

But I, for one, am looking forward to the drive from Gimli to the Icelandic State Park in North Dakota in a few years when I go visit my family in North Dakota because I will drive down a rebuilt Highway 9, around a rebuilt south Perimeter and

down an interstate-standard Highway 75. When I go to the Labour Day Classic, I look forward to driving a safer highway with the expanded CentrePort way and Headingly bypass. And I know, too, that the Bombers will indeed win a Labour Day Classic before that project is complete. I'm going to go on a limb here. I'm truly an optimist.

But would these highway projects be cut by the members opposite? Now they would suggest that they'd be able to do the same projects, but where would they get the money? How many nurses, doctors, teachers, conservation officers, social workers or sheriff officers be cut from programs and services that are important to Manitobans in order to fund any infrastructure by the members opposite if they propose that you can do that with your—in your revenues?

But I'm looking forward to the springs in Manitoba when Manitobans can rest assured that they are protected from floods with more permanent dikes. I know the Leader of the Opposition was responsible for emergency measures. As mentioned by my colleague from St. Norbert, he resigned his post. He left to seek the federal Conservative leadership in the spring of 1997—yes, during the flood of the century. And I know Premier Filmon said that Manitobans, quote, should not have built on a flood plain, end of quote, during that flood. And I know the Leader of the Opposition supported protesters obstructing the operation of the diversion. Would he support millions of dollars being invested in flood protection? He'll have an opportunity to do that, but I think we know that he will vote against this budget.

Now, as a lifelong resident of Gimli, I look forward to the investments in waste-water treatment enhancements in the Lake Winnipeg watershed and our continuing efforts to reduce phosphorous and nitrate loading into the lake and restore the future and—pardon me, and restore the health of our lake.

Now, as the member of Tuxedo said yesterday in her budget debate speech, past behaviour is the best indicator of future behaviour. Would these waste-water treatment upgrades be scrapped by the opposition just as they said the investment that upgrades Winnipeg's North End treatment plan was a waste of money? They don't think we should be investing in requiring the City to refurbish an old treatment plant that has failed on several occasions, and I believe in one 48-hour period alone dumped over 425,000 litres of raw sewage into the Red River,

and members opposite said that it was unnecessary to invest that money. Somebody who lives by the lake, I'd beg to differ.

* (16:20)

As I said in my opening remarks, budgets are about choices. We have stood up for Manitobans in challenging times to create more opportunities, better opportunities, for all Manitobans, especially young Manitobans. We have focused—we have a focused plan to grow our economy and create jobs. We will build better roads, flood protection and invest in clean water. We're moving towards a balanced budget without cutting services to families, while working to keep Manitoba affordable to families.

Now, I've talked a lot about all the good things that we will see happen in Manitoba as we move forward with Budget 2014. It is an example of what we do best. We identify problems and we work towards resolving problems. Now, it's not to say that we have not been engaged in resolving infrastructure deficit in our tenure; quite opposite, actually. As we recall the Vision 2020 infrastructure round table, we've been engaged in infrastructure renewal for quite some time, but Budget 2014 is taking us to a new level.

We have also engaged in addressing skill shortages over the past 10 years, as well, by reinvesting in our schools, compared to the gross underfunding when the leader opposite—Leader of the Opposition was at the Cabinet table in the '90s. In fact, referring once again to their budget speech, they trumpeted a \$16.7-million increase in education funding in 1998-99 school year. That was the first increase in education funding in five years. Imagine that, an election year. What they didn't say was that increase of \$16.7 million was actually less than the cost of their ill-conceived standardized-testing regime, which when taken as an increase in funding and considering the growing testing regime was woefully short of meeting the needs of our education systems.

Now, we have doubled the number of apprentices and dramatically improved the infrastructure in universities and colleges. We have identified a problem in uncertain economic times, and this has also enabled us to do what we do best: identify problems and challenges and work to resolve those problems and challenges. That is our modus operandi. Let's contrast that to the opposition. And I will attempt specific dates for those moments in

history, as I noticed a fixation on dates lately with the Leader of the Opposition.

Problem: flooding. Manitobans were mobilized, as they have been time and time again, to help neighbours, and 1997 was no exception. What did the Leader of the Opposition do during that flood? As mentioned, he resigned. I mentioned it before; it's been mentioned by the colleague from St. Norbert, but it's worth mentioning again. He left the Assembly April 28th, 1997, 10 days after the mandatory evacuation of Grand Forks. And we all remember the horrific pictures of the downtown resembling nothing short of a war zone. Though recommendations had been made to improve flood infrastructure, they were ignored. We acted on the expansion of Duff's Ditch. We innovated with local municipal partners to start an ice-jamming mitigation program that is serving as a model for the world. We brought in stand-alone programs to support those affected by the flood of 2011 when federal partners would not support those programs despite the worst flood in 300 years. We stood up for Manitobans; the Tories chose to stand down.

And since I've had the privilege to serve in this Chamber, I've heard members opposite say some pretty amazing things. And I know I've said these before, but revolving door that is the Tory caucus gives me cause to inform the new members of some of these nuggets of wisdom that their colleagues have left in Hansard's records.

So I'll preface this first one by talking—by saying that I was a teacher advocate when MTS submitted a survey of Manitoba teachers that talked about school safety. The Conservative government response was to ignore the report on student safety, on teacher safety. Then I found out why, because the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) said during a debate, and I quote: There was no bullying in school when we were in office. End of quote.

Last time I said this, the member from Lac du Bonnet said—heckling from his seat, he said, that's outrageous. That's what he said, and I agree. And I invited him to check Hansard for himself to see that this, indeed, was said in this Chamber by his colleague.

Now, unlike the opposition, problem: violence and bullying in schools; solution: we have worked diligently to make our schools safer places for all children. It includes budget measures in the past. We have Healthy Child initiatives, more support for school counsellors, funding Safe Schools Manitoba—

are a few examples of our commitment, and there are many more that I could list. When we choose to stand up for Manitoba students, the Tories choose to stand down.

What about public safety? Another nugget that is in Hansard forever: The former member for Morris actually said, and I quote: There was no car theft when we were in office, well, at least not much. End of quote.

An Honourable Member: Oh, who said that?

Mr. Bjornson: That would be the former member for Morris who said that. You want me to repeat what she said?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Bjornson: She said, and I quote: There was no car theft when we were in office, well, at least not much. End of quote.

Now, our budget's introduced measures supporting an auto-theft-suppression strategy, put more police officers on the street, targeted initiatives for high-risk and repeat offenders, and have introduced measures to address root causes of auto theft.

We stand up to make Manitoba a safer place to live; the Tories chose to ignore the problem. The Tories stand down.

So I'm sorry. I did promise to include some dates for reference for the benefit of members opposite, so I'll do so for this example of our position on equality and inclusion compared to the Tories. A recent article in the Free Press about the blog that did not cast a very good light on the federal Conservative government's record on equality reminded me of the Leader of the Opposition, the MLA for Fort Whyte, and his position on matters of equality.

When the Leader of the Opposition was asked if he was considering to run for the leadership of the Manitoba Conservative Party in 2005, December 2005, he said, and I quote: I am copping what's known as a woman's answer, isn't it? It's a sort of fickle thing. End of quote. Now I really don't know what to say about that; I think his words speak loudly, the words speak loudly for themselves. We stand up for equality in—for women in Manitoba; I don't think I need to say what the leader's comments reflect on his party.

But let's go back to his words in Parliament, in the Parliament of Canada, March 24th, 2005, when

debating bill C-31, the same-sex marriage act, he said that same-sex marriage, and I quote: Is an experiment which has been rejected virtually everywhere else in the world. End of quote.

Now I suppose we shouldn't have been shocked, then, when on September 13th, 2013, he voted against Bill 18. He voted against the safe schools act amendment to ensure that LGBTTTQ students in our schools would have safe learning environments enshrined in law. We stand up for same-sex marriage. We stand up for all students in Manitoba to learn in a safe, inclusive environment. The Conservatives choose to stand down.

Now what about Internet safety? As we looked to address the growing concerns of students, teachers, administrators, and parents about cyber-bullying, the member from Emerson said, and I quote: If you're worried about being bullied on the Internet, it's easy. Don't go there. End of quote. Such a simple solution, just don't use the Internet, because it is only 2014 after all, what's the Internet? Again, I think the words speak for themselves here. We stand up to protect our children in the hallways of our schools, and from the nefarious use of technology; the Tories choose to stand down.

So budgets are about choices. We choose to build a better Manitoba. We choose to ignore suggestions like the former member from Russell who said in a 2007 election that we should get rid of phys. ed., the arts, and music in our schools and go back to the basics. He came shy of suggesting we go back to using slates at our tables. But we tend to agree, though, with the former, pardon me, with the member for Midlands when he said during the election that the Tories were not going to beat us on issues of health care and education. I thought I would add that to show that I do agree with the opposition sometimes.

An Honourable Member: Who was that?

Mr. Bjornson: That would be the member for Midlands who said that, I believe.

Now I would suggest to my colleagues across the floor that they have an opportunity to atone for their past mistakes, that they have an opportunity to stand up for Manitoba and vote for this budget as presented.

I do not support the opposition amendments that we are debating; I support a forward-thinking progressive budget that will build a better Manitoba.

We see a consistent theme here. We see a party—when they are confronted with a problem, they choose to ignore the problem; when we're confronted with a problem, we work with people to solve that problem.

We see a party on this side of the House that is going to build the province. We see a party on this side of the House that is going to build hydro. We see a party on this side of the House that's prepared to fight the federal government when you have situations like we were presented with with the settlement services being gutted by the federal government. What do we see on that side of the House? We see people who stand down.

I, for one, am going to stand up for Manitoba, and Budget 2014 stands up for Manitobans.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Well, thank you, and—

Some Honourable Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Graydon: Oh, come on, you guys, all of you, yes.

* (16:30)

It gives me great pleasure to have this opportunity to put a few words on the record, and the fine people of the Emerson constituency has made it clear, made it very, very clear what they expect, the message they expect me to bring to this Legislature. And that message is very, very clear. I'd just like to address the member from Gimli and his quoting from back in the '90s and, oh, the '80s, and he goes a way back in time. But he forgets—he forgets—the promises that he made going door to door in 2011. He is suffering from amnesia. He has to be. He said, we will not raise taxes. What did he say about the PST? How could he stand and try and quote people, and keep a straight face, when he went door to door betraying Manitobans. Knocking on the door, one after another, saying, I will not raise taxes. I will not raise the PST.

But this was not the first time. We can go back to 1999 when the Premier of the province and his colleagues said, we will eliminate hallway medicine in six months and \$15 million. I would ask all members of this House: Are we getting a better service in the health care today than we did in 1999? Have we eliminated hallway medicine? Have we replaced that with highway medicine? Have we closed 19 ERs in rural Manitoba? Please, you can participate on that side of the House. These are facts.

I know that you guys don't like to let facts get in the way of a great story, but these are facts—these are facts. This is what you have to run on in your next election. Don't run around with scissors; you'll hurt yourself. You're going to hurt yourself; there's no question. And if you ever trip with all that ribbon and roll down the stairs, you'll hang yourself. No, you did that in the last election. You did that going door to door making promises that you did not want to keep—you knew that you wouldn't keep. That's what you did.

So, yes, they have not fixed hallway medicine. They've created highway medicine. And then we get a new member of Health, the new Minister of Health, the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby), very well-spoken individual; a star in her own right. And she says, you taxi drivers have made a mistake. You have damaged my career as the Minister of Health. You have to be reprimanded. You must—you must—provide a better service for health care than you're doing right now. The taxi drivers are—they're waiting to be trained. They're waiting to be trained, but no, no training—no training—is available. She pulled a helicopter out of the air. She just said, bang, you're down. But she will not table—she will not table—the report. That's public information, but she won't table the report why rural Manitoba has no services, 19 ERs closed.

The member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) did a great job as the Health Minister. She closed hospitals. She cut services. We have our ladies in western Manitoba having babies in cars heading for Yorkton. We have our women from Swan River rushing to Yorkton to have babies. Do they have to have a green card to come back to Manitoba? Is that going to be what's next?—we charge to have our children come back to Manitoba? That's what's been brought on by this government. Health care today is the—worse than it ever was in 1990. But the budget has exploded. It's exploded with no results. Nothing.

So the next broken promise—what was that? Let's see. They promised to balance the budget, keep the balanced budget legislation in place, and that was under the Premier Doer. And he did an excellent job of keeping the balanced budget there. He ran, as well as he could, in the province with what he had to work with. Unfortunately, he was replaced. He was replaced—what happened? The balanced budget act—the balanced budget act was ripped apart. It was torn apart by members from—where? Swan River, Dauphin—he was one of the worst abusers; one of the

worst abusers of the balanced budget legislation. But he has abused his ministerships one after another as well. When he said to the Jockey Club, if you don't give me a horse, I'm going to pull your funding, and he had to go to court. And the judge said: You can change the law, but you can't break the law. Please write the cheque.

But broken promise after broken promise, that's what the great people of the constituency of Emerson have been faced with, time and time and time again.

The next broken promise. Let's see, they were going to make communities safer. That's a great promise at any election time. Year after year after year at election time they did a number of things, but the announcement to make our communities so much safer—how many feel so much safer today when we have, year after year after year, been the murder capital of Canada? Is that success? Is that how you measure the success of this NDP government? *[interjection]* We are No. 1; yes, as my colleague from Agassiz says, we are No. 1, the murder capital of Canada. And you should hang your heads on that side of the House because that is what you have done. Nothing. Nothing to improve the safety of Manitobans, although you promised it election after election after election.

Which other promise did they break? Let's see. Yes, the member from Brandon East said, we will not amalgamate the school districts. And he was clear, as was his boss at the time, Premier Gary Doer. He was clear; we do not agree with forced amalgamation. And what did the member from Brandon East do? He broke the promise to Manitobans. Yes, and he created such a boondoggle that he's been a backbencher ever since. With the member at—from Swan River, absolutely, at that time he was totally opposed to force amalgamations. But the member from Brandon East created such a boondoggle that he was removed. So you would have thought there was a lesson, a lesson learned, from that forced amalgamation.

What happened next? They forced an amalgamation on the municipalities in the province of Manitoba. This was a sad day for all of Manitobans, for the history of so many communities. These forced amalgamations were driven with absolutely no consultation. No consultation at all. And so the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) had learned nothing. He had learned nothing from the forced amalgamations of the school board. No,

he stood up one evening at a banquet and said this is what we're going to do. His leader, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), said, we are doing this. But, in questioning, the member from Dawson Trails said we are doing this, but we don't know how. We have no plan; we're just going to do it. We pulled a number out of the air and we're going to do it. Well, he created such a furor, and he made such a mess of this putting that bill through, that they pulled him out. They pulled him out the same as they did with the member from Brandon East on the forced amalgamations of the school districts. And they put him back in a bench in the corner with a different portfolio; they didn't totally throw him in the backbench.

*(16:40)

But the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) said, hey, I've got experience. I'm in favour—I'm in favour of forced amalgamations now. He flip-flops all over the place. He's like a fish out of water on the cold ice. One day he's opposed to forced amalgamations. The next day he's in favour of it. And then he says, you will do it my way because I have the power. You can call me all the names you want. There's no flexibility. There's no negotiations. You will do as I say because I am a politician, and you, you're just a lowly grassroots representative of the people in rural Manitoba, the history of which he is willing to throw away for no benefits—no benefits.

You see, we went through that with the forced amalgamations of the school districts, and there was supposed to be a benefit of \$10 million. How much benefit was there? None. Absolutely none. There is no benefit, and there's been no benefit shown by this minister today that is forcing these amalgamations. There's no benefit to any of the municipalities, but there will be a cost, loss of history, loss of representation. And that was a goal—that was a goal—I believe, of this NDP government who had betrayed Manitobans with their promises in 2011. The goal was to create a smokescreen, a diversion from the fact that the NDP government had lied to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

What did they lie about in 2011? What did they lie about? Did they lie about the raising the taxes? What about the PST? Did they lie about that? And they lied about a lot of things. So I would have hoped that the member from Dawson Trail would have learned a lesson. I would have hoped that his colleagues would have learned a lesson because

they're so good at history. You know, they get better when they get 20 years back. Their memory is fantastic, but in the last two years they have amnesia. They have amnesia.

But the whopper, the whopper of them all since the NDP government has come into power and the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the member for St. Boniface, said he would not raise the taxes. He called it nonsense. He called it ridiculous and the first opportunity he had—the first opportunity—he broadened the tax base. He broadened it to cover so many things that had not been covered before, a direct tax on a family's—\$1,600 came off of the kitchen table to be squandered by their Cabinet table with nothing to show for it, Mr. Speaker.

And, when they raised the PST by 14 per cent, it was for infrastructure. No, it was for hospitals. Well, it was for health care sort of. Then it was for education and for schools. Oh, no, it's back to infrastructure, core infrastructure, definition of core infrastructure. The definition of core infrastructure is still not available, but they're doing a study on it. I believe they're doing a study.

So what they did is they felt guilty. I believe they felt guilty about underspending infrastructure four years in a row to the tune of \$1.9 billion. I believe they felt guilty about doing that, and so they had to come out with a current five-year plan—current being they'd do this about every six months. So this is the last one, to help make up for that \$1.9-billion deficit that they had created in infrastructure. They have come out with a 5-point-whatever-billion-dollar program in infrastructure—for core infrastructure, with no definition.

They have made announcements all over the province, and then it became clear that the federal government wasn't involved. They hadn't been consulted. They were expecting that, oh, well, once we've made the announcement, the federal government's going to jump on board. No, you do these 'co-opertly'—co-operatively in advance. So I think there's another rude awakening, but it'll be the blame game—the blame game—which, they may not have devised it, but they have perfected it. They perfected the blame game. It's not our fault; it's someone else's fault.

The next broken promise, and it affects many in the Emerson riding as well as all over Manitoba, was the broken promise to seniors. This is a growing demographic in our province and a very vulnerable—very vulnerable—demographic. They're on a fixed

income, and so, in order to garner their support in the last election, along with the other lies that the NDP government put forward in 2011, they said we will eliminate the school tax for seniors.

What have they done? Oh, they took two years to get a plan—[interjection]—yes, thank you. My colleague just reminded me it took them two years to get a plan to cap it, to cap that school tax rebate at \$235. Well, hello; that's really helped the seniors of our province—another broken promise.

There's a common theme here. There's a common theme that these promises have been made for political gain, not for the good of the province, not at all. It's broken promise after broken promise after broken promise.

So, Mr. Speaker, what else did they do? They promised that they would be the help that low-income families needed. What have they done? What have they done to relieve the income tax burden for low families? They've ignored repeated calls from the official opposition and independent experts to review the government's \$25-billion Manitoba Hydro expansion gamble. And a wise man said to me one time: You build for demand, not on expectation, not on speculation. You build on demand. And so I give them credit. A few years ago they did a study, and Manitoba Hydro said to them: Yes, we do need another line just for safety—just for safety. But that line can come down the east side. That's the place that that should be.

Well, someone's ego—and I would suggest it was the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger)—his ego got in the way and said, no, no. You have to go down the west side. What happens when you go down the west side of the province? Let me try and understand. That line is very much longer; there's a lot of lime loss. They trash a lot of boreal forest on the west side, and then they come into this wide open land—this wide open farmland. Much easier to put the towers up and disrupt the agriculture industry in Manitoba that contributes greatly to the GDP.

But, because they have a small percentage of voting, it's easy for the Minister of Highways—or of Hydro, to say, it doesn't matter. They don't vote for us anyway. We're going to do it our way and we're going to spend. We're going to risk Manitoba Hydro and the people of Manitoba. We're going to risk the rates that they have today, the rates that they enjoy. He's putting that at risk with a \$25-billion investment with no market, with no guarantee.

Four years ago, the energy availability of alternate energies wasn't there, but it is known there now.

* (16:50)

And another wise neighbour of mine once said, only a fool never changes their mind. Now I'm not suggesting that the honourable member from Dauphin is a fool. Please, Mr. Speaker, understand, I'm not suggesting that, but it's not looking good for him. It's not looking good if there's no flexibility and no will to take a look at what the market really can bear—what the market is. Don't speculate, don't risk—don't risk Manitoba's future, don't risk Manitoba Hydro's future, with sheer folly and a big fat ego. Don't do that. I ask him—I ask him not to do that.

The member—the Leader of the Opposition has brought forward some very, very good recommendations for this government, and they have refused to listen. They sit there with their Blackberrys and they're playing Brick 'Bracker' or whatever that happens to be. It seems to be—man, oh man, what would you do if you didn't have those Blackberrys to play with? What would you play with then? My goodness. Sorry about that, Mr. Speaker, I didn't want to go down that trail, not at all, because some of the colleagues in this House have a very, very vivid imagination, and I can see even the colleagues on that side of the House, their imagination is going wild. The Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) has a big smile on her face, and I'm wondering what she's thinking.

But the Leader of the Opposition has said to this government, you have failed to encouraged businesses—you've been—failed to encourage business in this province. And, when we look at our PST at 60 per cent higher than a province to the west, that is a huge difference. When we see our businesses that border Saskatchewan, that border North Dakota, we see those businesses being used like convenience stores; the big-ticket items are bought outside the province.

The chamber of commerce—the Manitoba chamber, the Chamber of Commerce of Winnipeg, has repeatedly gave the current government plenty of good solid advice, and what have they done with it? They've turned a deaf ear. What they're doing is only for political gain, and personal political gain.

They gave themselves a vote tax, which I might add, that the members on this side of the House has refused to take. To the person on this side, they said,

we have pride. We will look the voters of this province in the eye; we will ask them for monetary support; and we will listen to them.

I don't blame some of the members on that side. I don't think they all knew when they were going door to door that they were betraying Manitobans. And so now to go back to them same doors and say, this time we're telling you the truth, this time you're going—you were telling—we're telling you the truth. We are going to do this for you. No, the voters in the fine constituency of Emerson have been clear; they don't believe you. And in many, many other ridings today you're not believable. I feel sorry for some of you that were not involved in that decision making. You didn't know that you were betraying Manitobans when you went door to door doing those types of things.

So, as a result of 14 years of NDP mismanagement, every man, woman and child, regardless of the age of the child, owes \$27,000 in provincial debt, and rising on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, that's the record. That's the record of the NDP government. That's the record of every member over there that said we will not raise taxes. They have an addiction. They have a spending addiction that they cannot break. They need counselling. We're here to help them. They'd—will not pay attention.

But I will say this: The voters of this province are paying attention. They are paying attention and they're very—they're, rightfully, skeptical of the NDP spin when they claim they will balance the budget by 2016. Why should they believe that? It was supposed to have been balanced now. Why would they believe you're going to do it by 2016? And I know you'd all like to get up and give me the answer, but you don't have it. You don't have it and you know it, we know it, and the people of Manitoba know that.

You know, broken promises—the broken promises—have hurt everybody. They've put us behind the eight ball going forward.

I would suggest the biggest betrayal was to seniors. They're the people who've built this province. They've—this province built on the backs of hard-working, honest seniors who now deserve the opportunity to enjoy the twilight years, and what you've done is you've betrayed them. Not only did you promise them something and pull it back—not only that—you raised their taxes. You raised their taxes in a way that their income, which is locked—

you're forcing them—some of them—to go back to work, because they're on a fixed income. That's a betrayal. That's a betrayal and it came from—who was the minister of Finance at that time? *[interjection]* The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), and he sits and laughs. He sits and laughs about the betrayal to the seniors of this province, the very people that built the riding that he's in, that they sacrificed for this generation to give him the opportunity to do what?—put his vacuum cleaner in their wallets and take their money. And he thinks it's funny. That is terrible. That is—it's revolting. It is revolting.

He's willing to gamble now. He's willing to gamble with Manitoba Hydro. He's willing to gamble on speculation. And it's all right if he wants—he's addicting to gambling. I have no problem if his personal pastime is gambling, but do not use Manitobans' money to do that. He doesn't have the right to gamble Manitoba's future. He does not have the right to gamble Manitoba's oil as hydro-electricity. And it's been classified that by many on that side of the House, but he's willing to gamble it on speculation. He does not have that right. He doesn't have an ounce of skin in the game. All he's doing is political—political—gain. That's why he's making these types of decisions.

He's interfering—he's interfering—with Crown corporations. They milked Hydro in the past, and I'm being generous when I say they milked it. They ravished—they ravished—Hydro in the past, and now they're embarked on a road of destruction with no market. There is no market. They've got contracts that are ifs and ands. The bottom line is it's all but; that's what it is. A \$25-billion gamble must be halted and properly reviewed.

Quebec—Hydro-Québec is in the same situation and are reviewing. They are reviewing. They are doing the right thing.

But, in business, what has the NDP done?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired. The honourable member for—is there a—the honourable Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors within the Department of Health): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the member opposite left me a few seconds on the clock.

Mr. Speaker: Sorry to interrupt the honourable member.

The hour being 5 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of

Healthy Living and Seniors will have 29 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 12, 2014

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