

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
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CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
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EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
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GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
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MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
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SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
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WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 22, 2014

The House met at 10 a.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 morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker. First, on the matter of House business, in accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Community Based Home Support for Seniors, brought forward by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that, in accordance with rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Community Based Home Support for Seniors, sponsored by the honourable member for Emerson.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Official Opposition House Leader, on House business?

Mr. Goertzen: And now, Mr. Speaker, could you canvass the House to see if there's will to move directly to Bill 200, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Democracy for Voters), brought forward by the distinguished member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen)?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to proceed directly to Bill 200? *[Agreed]*

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 200—The Legislative Assembly
Amendment Act (Democracy for Voters)**

Mr. Speaker: Then we'll call Bill 200, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Democracy for Voters), standing in the name of the honourable member for Selkirk, who has nine minutes remaining.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): I just want to wish all my colleagues a happy Thursday morning, Mr. Speaker, a beautiful Manitoba morning. And I want to recognize the visit of Prince Charles and Camilla to Manitoba. I thought that the event was very well received by our fellow Manitobans, and I especially enjoyed the investiture yesterday here and the Order of Manitoba ceremony what happened here in the Chamber.

And I wanted to just—I know all of us here would commend—or would extend our thank you to the Legislative staff in preparing the Chamber, preparing the building for this event, and if you could pass on our best—our thank you to them for the hard work.

Mr. Speaker, this—I want to speak today about the bill brought in by the member for Steinbach and, of course, talking about the need to hold by-elections, and I want to pay tribute to my colleague who recently resigned, the member for The Pas, Frank Whitehead, and I want to thank him for his years of service here to the Legislature. I found him to be a very humble man but a very hard-working MLA with a wonderful sense of humour, and a person who cared very deeply about his community, cared very deeply about the challenges that a northern constituency faces.

And, you know, if it can be said if somebody cares too much, I think it would be said about Frank in that he—you know, as members know, he would often drive those six or seven hours home, a challenge that not many of us face. Some do, of course; some of the rural members and northern members, the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn) and others—Flin Flon and Thompson and many, many of my colleagues have to make a long drive home, and Frank would often drive. He chose to drive rather than to fly, and we

know that he had some health issues, obviously, and we know that he needs to take some time to recover from some of his issues, but I know all of us want to wish him well in the years ahead.

This is a chance for us to speak about democracy, Mr. Speaker, and I'm reminded by someone the other day about the Leader of the Opposition—reminded that the Leader of the Opposition, in 1997—I was a member—I think he sat in this very chair I am now or where the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) sits, and we were across the other way, and he was the minister responsible for emergency measures at the time and this was during the flood of the century, 1997. I remember it well—I remember it well. All the members in this House were preparing for this and we knew it was coming. It wasn't like a flash flood, you knew it was coming up, it was moving up the river.

And what did the member for—the Leader of the Opposition do? Well, he quit. He quit. The water was lapping at those expensive shoes—the water was lapping at his expensive shoes. And what did he do? He quit and he went to—he left Manitoba, forced a by-election. He left the province to go to Ottawa rather than stay here and fight for—in this position, it wasn't that he was like any other minister of the Crown; he was a minister responsible for emergency measures—emergency measures—and this is a person who left Manitoba to pursue other options, and this happens to other members—it happens to other members, I understand that. It happens to members in this Chamber from time to time when they do leave this, but you would think a minister responsible for emergency measures would stick around in the province while we're dealing with a disaster like the 1997 flood, Mr. Speaker. But, no, he decided to leave.

Another thing, Mr. Speaker, talking about democracy is, of course, what's happening in Ottawa with the Senate. I don't think we need to—we've had a very substantive debate in here about the Senate and—but it's—we had a good debate here when we brought forward a government motion about abolishing the Senate.

The members of the opposition, regrettably, voted in favour of maintaining the Senate—a shocking result—absolutely shocking. But, you know, he—there's no greater subsidy—there's no greater subsidy in Canada now than the subsidy for the Senate—\$92 million of taxpayers' money go to pay for the upkeep of the Senate.

Now we have the Liberal leader, I listen to—federal Liberal leader. I hear him running ads that he's going to clean up the Senate. Well, after the Liberals have appointed thousands of their bagmen, hundreds of their bagmen to the Senate over the years, Mr. Speaker, now he's going to clean it up. Finally he saw the light after all these years.

But, you know, the—again, it's—we know, Mr. Speaker, about the Tories have a terrible track record when it comes to fairness, when it comes elections. We have the Monnin inquiry. We know that the member for the Interlake has spoken about the Monnin inquiry several times in this Chamber. We know that the—Judge Monnin said, in all my years on the bench, I've never encountered as many liars in one proceeding as I did during this inquiry. And he was talking about the members of the Conservative Party as they fixed—tried to fix an election in the Interlake.

And it wasn't only in the Interlake. I believe they ran candidates in Swan River; I believe they ran—tried to run candidates in Dauphin, but especially in the Interlake. It took vulnerable individuals of the society, the Aboriginal people—they tried to fix that election. I remember it well—I remember it well.

* (10:10)

They ran a candidate, it was orchestrated right out of the premier's office, Mr. Speaker, right out—his chief of staff was one of the ones who was the—who was behind it. And it was, as well, not only was it the chief of staff, Taras Sokolyk, was involved with it, Cubby Barrett—the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), his uncle, he's talked about him many times—Gordon MacFarlane, who was the—Gordon MacFarlane, he was the party's accountant during the '95–19—excuse me—1995 election, he broke the law when he filed a false election return; Treasury Board secretary, Julian Benson, I think the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) calls him Big Julie. So he actually helped cover up the scheme and lost his position. We have Arni Thorsteinson, who's a fundraiser and he was a member of the Hydro board, and he was removed because of his involvement in the 1995 election scheme. So many liars.

I want to talk a little bit about the fact that our government recently—or excuse me—one of the proudest moments, I think, of our government, was when we came to office and we banned the union and corporate donations, Mr. Speaker. I felt that was one of the best things that we did. I know as a member representing the community of Selkirk, I

used to receive some union donations. And, you know, but I was very proud of the fact that we banned them, both the corporate and the union donations. I believe the member for—one of my colleagues said that when the Conservatives used to do fundraising, they'd go to the sup of the—top of the Richardson Building and they walk their—they walk down, hit every office on the way. By the time they hit the main floor, they had enough money for the election. And that's the way they would do it.

And now, Mr. Speaker, you know, they're—it was my understanding they opposed it. They opposed the banning of union and corporate donations. So we don't know where they stand. We have a feeling that that's what they're going to do if—if—they ever win the next election. I know some of them over there are already measuring the drapes in the Cabinet ministers' office. Well, I tell you, the rumours of our demise, rumours of our demise are greatly exaggerated. I'll let the members opposite know, because there's absolutely no doubt that Manitobans will re-elect us in the next election campaign, and I'm comfortable with that—with stating that.

The other thing, of course, is that we've introduced an independent commissioner. We've made—we've taken away the political partisanship when it comes to appointing returning officers. At one time, the returning officers were picked right out of the Cabinet room. And we came into office, we made it an independent process. And I think it's worked out very well under the new—we've expanded those who make—who sit on the constituency—the boundaries commission. And now we have a truly independent. We made it an independent process. We have a set election dates in this country. We have—*[interjection]* Mr. Speaker, we have—the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) is trying to distract me from my comments.

But, anyways, I'm getting back to what we're saying. We've made elections clearer. We made elections fairer here in Manitoba. We need no lessons, Mr. Speaker, from members opposite when it comes to—

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

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise. I've just listened to eight minutes of the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) whistling past the graveyard, and it was educational, to say the least. I'm pleased to rise and speak to my colleague, the member for Steinbach's Bill 200, the democracy

of voters, which will require a by-election to be called within 180 days after a seat became vacant.

Mr. Speaker, I'm almost interested to know and follow with interest and, unfortunately I didn't get to engage in any manner of the former member for The Pas and, again, that's just one of the unfortunate circumstances during—due to my late arrival and his early departure, and I regret I never had the opportunity to form any kind of relationship. But I have a lot of respect for any individual that puts their name forward on a ballot or seeks nomination because it's individuals like that that truly make our democracy the beacon that it is throughout the world.

But I'd be almost interested to know if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the government will keep The Pas by-election vacant for as long as they did Morris, a record 360 days from the moment the vacancy occurred until Elections Manitoba signified or validated the results. I know we'll have another—I understand we'll have another couple of by-elections. The member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), I understand, will be leaving us soon. So we'll have another by-election for the Premier, again, to engage those long, long delays.

But, Mr. Speaker, it was quite an interesting process, obviously, for myself, getting—putting my name forward and getting involved in politics. And I remember, as I was—I happened to run into the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), and I met her at The Forks, at a common event we were at, as the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, and not surprisingly, the minister and I had been together to—as students together through Brandon University, so we obviously got talking, and we got talking about the Morris by-election.

And I had asked the minister when she anticipated the Morris by-election being called, and at this time, this was June, so, you know, three, four months had passed since that vacancy had occurred. And it really struck me, the minister's response at that time. And the minister said to me—she said the by-election in Morris isn't a priority. And I thought, wow, that's quite a statement to make that democracy—democracy and political representation for the residents of a constituency isn't a priority for her government.

And so that was quite a striking comment that democracy, political representation simply isn't a priority for that government. And the minister made that comment after, like I said, in June, and the vacancy had occurred in February.

No one would have ever imagined that the vacancy would go on as it had. The Winnipeg Free Press actually made an interesting comment, and again, I mean, this was in an article they had written in June, saying that the—if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) waits until September, Morris will be vacant for about seven months. Then—not a record, but close—any further push into the fall would most definitely be setting a new standard for political passive aggressiveness.

The most frustrating part of this story is the NDP government's failure to enunciate a reason for delaying the vote. If a reason was given, we could all pass judgment on this as a political strategy. So, Mr. Speaker, I mean, the political strategy is—was pretty simple. Members opposite, like children, were a little bit peeved that we took their summer away when they illegally hiked the PST so unfortunately that they acted in such a petulant manner that we decided, as an opposition, to do what opposition is supposed to do, and that's hold the government to account. In this case, the government ran on a commitment, a—not to raise the PST—a commitment that the First Minister referred to any suggestion that they would raise the PST as ridiculous and total nonsense. I mean, this was a pretty black and white commitment.

And, of course, we all know what happened subsequent to that commitment, Mr. Speaker. The government was re-elected and then promptly took a look and saw that there was an opportunity to raise the PST, and so they raised the PST. And again, according to Department of Finance documents, they even actually looked at raising the PST to 9 per cent, but at the time, or for now, anyway, they seem to have settled at 8 per cent.

But there was a, you know, a small roadblock in their way, Mr. Speaker, a small roadblock in their way and that was called the balanced budget law. And so, it's always interesting that, you know, this is a government that ran on a commitment, and it was one of their, you know, their, quote unquote, core commitments to Manitobans and their families that they would respect balanced budget legislation. But I guess they only were willing to respect that legislation insofar as it was valid in their eyes, and as soon as that legislation became impediment to their insatiable desire for revenues, then they just simply got rid of that legislation.

Now, members opposite would—will, of course, argue that, you know, well, the legislation still exists. You still need to have a referendum. Well, I mean,

it's very convenient that in the one instance that the legislation was actually tested, Mr. Speaker, the government simply just did an end run on that legislation.

You know what? And, you know, I listened to the member of Selkirk, and he made comments about 1995, Mr. Speaker, and they love to go back to '95, and, I mean, I'm not going to get into all the details. I wasn't around then, but I am aware the government of the day actually did call a provincial inquiry and to—obviously, to investigate that situation.

I noticed the member opposite—and I suspect no member opposite will actually talk about what their government did in—what their party did in 1999 with their in-and-out scheme with their union brothers and sisters—a scheme that apparently was so fraudulent that the Premier himself demanded, Mr. Speaker, actually demanded a letter to exonerate himself to say, whoa, whoa, whoa, I had no part in this fraudulent scheme or whatever. But in the process, of course, the future Premier and the member of St. Boniface was more than willing to send the dozen or so of his colleagues under the bus.

* (10:20)

What's also quite interesting, Mr. Speaker, and I can hear members opposite, you know, feigning indignation over this issue, but they actually pled guilty to Elections Manitoba, they admitted fault to Elections Manitoba and they were forced to pay restitution to Manitoba for the illegally acquired funding that they received. And in fact, the former premier went on to state on the public record that they'd been doing this illegal, in-and-out scheme with the unions for years and it just happened that they finally got caught.

So it's truly unfortunate that, you know, they wouldn't stand up and support a piece of legislation that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has brought forward, a piece of legislation that will actually bring Manitoba into the norm, into where we're really the middle of the pack. And so the government often talks about, you know, the middle of the pack for a whole lot of its other policies, but when it comes to the time frame for the calling of by-elections when a vacancy occurs, we are not in the middle of the pack, we're in the outside of that norm; most other jurisdictions are in the three-to-six month range which is more than an adequate range.

You know, what's also interesting about the situation, Mr. Speaker, is really until recently this

legislation simply wasn't needed. I mean, you take a look back at the entire history of the NDP in office and out of all the by-elections that they called, the average wait between vacancy and election was 110 days, so well within what the—what Bill 200 suggests should be put into law. But, again, as the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) took the reins and as, you know, Ms. Mihychuk had noted publicly that the party has begun this hard shift to the left, these delays seem to get longer and longer as the government got more—or less actually, interested in issues that actually impact Manitobans on a regular basis.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that members opposite will get up and stand up with Manitobans and speak the truth and talk about again about how the member for St. Boniface said I need a letter exonerating myself, I can't be part of this fraudulent scheme that went on with union brothers and sisters, I need something to, you know, wave in front of the cameras, but you other, you know, 12 or so MLAs and candidates that took part in this fraudulent scheme, you guys can deal with your—you guys can set your own ways or whatever, but of course all, you know, we'll plead guilty to Election Manitoba, we'll pay the restitution then, we'll try to, you know, sweep this under the rug as they often will.

So, you know, with those words, Mr. Speaker, I hope and I—

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

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Housing and Community Development): It's a pleasure to rise in the Chamber to talk about this proposed legislation that's brought forward by the member from Steinbach, and certainly it's not the first time the member from Steinbach has introduced private members' bills for debate around electoral and democratic reform.

Mr. Speaker, I do recall not that long ago in this Chamber we had a debate on a piece of legislation that the member brought forward that on the surface suggested it was designed to improve the democratic process, but we know that the underlying thrust of that particular piece of legislation was to marginalize people and prevent them from actually voting and participating in the democratic process because we've seen that happen time and time and time again with right-wing governments, right-wing people who adhere to right-wing philosophy.

We've seen that just south of the border, and actually we're seeing it in Ottawa regrettably with the Fair Elections Act which is supposed to improve the access to the democratic process but we all know that is designed to take people who are on the margins and not engage them in the political process, in fact disenfranchise them. And that's really disconcerting that these types of ideas still persist in a democratic society that not everyone should have the right to vote and it's really quite disconcerting that we see that happening in Ottawa.

And we've seen the response by the public; the public won't be fooled that you call it the Fair Elections Act, people assume that it means that it's going to be fair. And the public has spoken and I do know that there have been some changes made to that legislation but I'm not as well versed in the legislation as I had hoped to be. I know that there is still some fundamental flaws with that legislation, Mr. Speaker, and it's really disappointing to see that that fight is happening in Ottawa, in Canada, in 2014.

But we shouldn't be surprised; as I said, we see it happening in the United States. We know that 60,000 voters are not allowed to vote in Florida. They were essentially locked out from voting, and we know what happened with that election and you just have to watch all the HBO movies that dissect that history of the United States that put George Bush in the president's chair for a second term and how the election was essentially stolen. That's not democracy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, of course, we're talking about an amendment that the member is proposing today that talks about by-elections, and it's like putting the wolf in charge of the henhouse or the fox in charge of the henhouse by suggesting that the Tories should be responsible for electoral reform. And if you look at what we've done since we've come into office, first and foremost, of course, banning corporate and union donations. And the opposition has never supported that, but we feel that we should not have big money influencing the democratic process here in Canada.

And look at the super PACs in the United States, where billionaires can essentially buy candidates, they can essentially buy senators and congressmen. We see that these super PACs have incredible influence over the democratic process in the United States, and if they're going to spend tens of millions, hundreds of millions of dollars influencing the political outcomes, then you can be assured that they

are going to be hoping to influence legislative reform as it relates to their particular industry or their particular tax needs within the United States, Mr. Speaker. That's unfortunate that that is happening in what the Americans still say is the best democratic society in the world. But we learn from other people's mistakes. We've seen the things that can go wrong in a democratic society when those in power do more to shift that power.

Now, with respect to our own experience here in Manitoba, of course, we know that in 1995 the worst fraud in electoral history in this country was brought to the people of Manitoba through the vote-rigging scandal perpetrated by the members opposite when their leader—their current leader was sitting on the Cabinet table. He was very much aware, I am sure, that this fraud was going on with the electoral scandal in 1995. And, of course, my colleague from the Interlake knows all too well the outcomes of that on him personally and, of course, the impact that that has on an individual when you're going through that process and, of course, the family connections, too, and what that meant to him. But, of course, he is sitting on this side of the House and that is because Manitobans rejected that in 1995 when the Monnin inquiry said, we've never seen as many liars.

And there's a lot of great quotes from the Monnin inquiry that talked about the opposition's—or, pardon me, the current opposition—but when they were in government the Monnin inquiry talked about, and I quote: It is disheartening indeed to realize that an oath to tell the truth means so little to some people. And another quote: A vote-rigging plot constitutes an unconscionable debasement of the citizen's right to vote, to reduce the voting rights of individuals is a violation of our democratic system. And there are several quotes from the Monnin inquiry that really speak volumes to what they represented in 1995, win-at-all-costs, power-at-all-costs approach to politics. Mr. Speaker, the electorate did not fall for that in 1999 and the electorate held them accountable for what they did in 19—in that 1995 election.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've seen a lot of things happen in the political world. We've seen senators running campaigns, the \$92-million taxpayer-funded Senate, and we have senators running campaigns for the political parties such as the members opposite, fundraising for them—we've seen that. And it's rather interesting because I know that Stephen Harper said he wasn't going to appoint anymore senators, so he broke that promise 57 times by appointing more

senators, including, of course, Mr. Duffy–Duffy, who we all know has been the poster child for what is so wrong with the Senate in Canada.

* (10:30)

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting how the opposition is looking at by-elections because I recall that when the by-election was called in Fort Whyte, the candidate for the opposition, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, actually complained that we called it too soon. He said, why are you calling this election now? It's summer. Doesn't everyone know that's family time? I think that was his line, something along those lines. It wasn't that important to him that the by-election be called right now, because he wanted family time. That's rather interesting, you know, Mr. Speaker.

And, of course, Mr. Speaker, he would know about by-elections because he was elected on a by-election, but he also triggered a by-election in 1997 when he walked away from his responsibilities as an MLA. And he walked away in April, the day before—I think it was April 28th when he resigned his seat as MLA, and April 29th the soldiers from Petawawa were coming to Manitoba. He was packing his bags. We were filling sandbags. He walked away from his responsibilities in 1997 for his other ambitions.

And when he went through that exercise, it was rather interesting—he went through that exercise, and when he did not win as leader, I think his line was something like, they voted for the past. When he didn't win as leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, he said they voted for the past.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are not going to vote for the past in the next election. They're not going to vote for a Leader of the Opposition who says, we're going to cut half a billion dollars from our budget. That means we're going to cut health care, we're going to cut education, we're going to cut social services, we're going to cut Justice Department, we're going to cut family services. You know, that's what he's saying. He's going to cut half a billion dollars. Manitobans aren't going to vote for that past.

But, Mr. Speaker, back to the issue at hand. With respect to this particular piece of legislation, I think, as was said earlier, it's really disconcerting the things that we've seen right-winged governments introduce in North America with respect to voter suppression techniques, with respect to elections acts that will exclude people from the voting process.

And I think to my own history in Manitoba where we recently talked about celebrating the anniversary of the vote for women and the suffrage movement. And I know that there are a lot of Icelandic women in my community who were tremendous advocates and tremendous—did tremendous work on the ground as suffragists to help win the vote for women in the early—in 1916. We know that. And I would have to wonder what they would think today when they see some of the legislation like the Fair Elections Act. When they see things like this being introduced 100 years—almost 100 years later after winning the vote for women, seeing these things introduced, they have to be wonder—they would be wondering, what is wrong with our democratic system? Everything that they fought for is slowly being eroded by some of the measures that these governments have—right-wing governments have been taking in so-called Fair Elections Act and the principles of Fair Elections Act that we're seeing in Ottawa, which is so fundamentally flawed.

Voting is for everybody, should be for everybody, and that's what democracy is all about, including everyone having a voice to elect those who are privileged to serve in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I just want to relay on what the member of Gimli has said about suppressing the vote. I know with my by-election, when it was called on December 27th, talk about suppressing the vote. I know a lot of my constituents were down—snowbirds were down in the south and they were unable to vote for such a—the time period that was called before new year's—*[interjection]* Well, it was too—it was not very much time.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation introduction by my colleague, member of Steinbach, amends The Legislative Assembly Act to require the by-election to be called within 180 days after the seat had become vacant unless a fixed-date election is held within a year or a state of emergency exists in the affected electoral division.

Mr. Speaker, this—doesn't this sound like a novel idea, giving the citizens and—representation they deserve in this Chamber within a reasonable amount of time? The reasonable idea, though, don't seem to 'permenate' with this government at—very often. Rather than respecting voters at the—and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the members opposite of choosing

to 'polititize' an issue of 'dematic' representation, that is the shame, for the people of the Manitoba deserves better.

The government attitude towards the people of Manitoba is becoming characterized by the considered disrespect and even contempt. I know that these are strong words, Mr. Speaker, but this is very much the reality.

The PST hike was very much the tipping point for the government that no longer considered the best for the Manitobans. The only consideration of the members opposite is the best for the members of the NDP Cabinet.

The approach—Mr. Speaker, this government knows the best and it's not the approach that we want to support. The government can and should act as facilitators and provide support where required, always to view the respecting and representing electors.

When the government raised the PST without holding a referendum that was—a sacred trust was broken. Members opposite does not represent Manitobas and this fact is blatantly obvious.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of the divine, the right king—rights of kings, or the idea that derives from the power of—over the others are the sum defined being long gone by the wayside. Yet this NDP government feels that is not required to respect the law and consults with the very Manitobans purports for the represents.

Mr. Speaker, when Charles I, the King of England, tried to impose a tax on his subjects without the Parliamentary consent, what was the result? Why, the English Civil War. We know that Manitobans are inherently non-violent people and proponents of peace and I'm not suggesting that Manitobans will soon be marching on the Chamber, but I would remind the member opposite that they are not above the law and should perhaps heed the words of the former English politician John Hampden: What an English king has not right to demand, an English subject has the right to refuse.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the PST hike was illegal and it was hit to the pocketbooks of Manitobans and we know that the government believes money is better spent at the Cabinet table rather than the kitchen table. But perhaps the height of this government disrespect to Manitobas is leaving the Morris riding vacant without representation for almost nearly a year.

And then this situation the legislation seeks address, the Premier came up with the very—every excuse in the book to delay the Morris by-election. He dragged his feet. When the second seat became vacant, the constituency of Arthur-Virden, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said he was calling two by-elections simultaneously that would save the taxpayers money. The myth of electoral Manitoba has rebuked.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier continues to say that the election would come in due time. As we approached the legal maxim period of time that the Morris seat should remain vacant, I think the real reason that this spend NDP refused to call a by-election in Morris, and later in Arthur-Virden, it's because of a moratorium on ribbon-cutting announcements. The Premier and his chief ribbon cutter, Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Ms. Oswald), wouldn't be able to carry out their most important function as ribbon-cutting cutters during the writ period—and this is a serious concern to the Premier and his band of ribbon-cutting ministers. The sadly reality of the people have suffered that Manitobans of Morris and Arthur-Virden, indeed across Manitoba.

My concern, when I was running for my seat and I became the—a candidate for the Arthur-Virden riding—my biggest concern was that again it was going to delay the election until October of 2014. And my biggest concern would be, was that right now, as a new MLA, there are so many different issues in our riding right now. We're contending with the ER closures, with doctor shortages and then also at the same time we're experiencing floods that we haven't seen since 2011. The Assiniboine valley flooding when the—this government said that there wasn't going to be no flooding. They missed the forecast altogether and now these farmers in our riding are actually now having to deal with the flooding conditions of the Assiniboine valley. Shame on this government.

And at the same time, our infrastructure is crumbling in our riding. Our—in oil industry is growing, our agriculture industry is growing but yet our infrastructure is crumbling more and more and more. And we don't—this government does not realize how much of per capita that we provide for this province in our constituency of Arthur-Virden.

And it's disgrace that the people from Morris didn't—weren't able to be represented for over a year and I really—should be disgrace to this government.

And the big thing is—but Mr. Speaker, I remain optimistic and remain hopeful and remain jubilant that the idea perhaps the government will come to its senses and adopt this reasonable legislation and put forward and the member of Steinbach who proposed the reasonable time frame for this line of the other—in line with other provinces filling vacant seats in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I reference to the English Civil War, the spoke that taxation without representation isn't the theme that I want to become back to, wrapping up my comments, the topic because of this really is the heart of the debate of.

The 'lectoral' of Arthur-Morris and Arthur-Virden waited nearly a year, in one case without representation, this House will remain—remaining that the political tax role. Perhaps soon the members of the Assiniboia is soon to be resigning and I wonder how long the electors are going to remain without representation, Mr. Speaker.

* (10:40)

Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded—the definition of why it's—tyranny is a definition of taxation without representation, the very circumstances the fine people of Morris and Arthur-Virden found themselves in, in this last year. I urge the members of this House to put an end to the tyranny imposed by this Premier and to support this legislation. Thank you.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to engage in the process within the House. And sometimes the debates that occur in this Chamber is more of a duel, a duel between those who have the sharpest tongue or the glibbest, or who's got the ugliest arguments that they could muster against the other and who's got the most heckling that they could do. And I find that it's also important for me to listen to the heckling.

And the bill that amends The Legislative Assembly Act is a very profoundly considered bill by the member opposite. And I think if it were up to me, I'll even consider it, except that in the scheme of things, when society was first formed—now I'll go back to the millions of years before we even got around to the idea of a Legislative Assembly, when society, when people were still not as numerous as today—there was a theory that people got together and they had a social contract. They got together and said that maybe there should be somebody among themselves who should lay down the law, enforce it,

and, of course, change it from time to time. And it has evolved, that social contract theory, and we now have, in this modern times, a society where the law adapts to the circumstances. But then, we always have something in mind when the law is applied, that there ought to be that intervention of the human mind and the human heart. They call it discretion.

So what this bill purports to do is set six months, 180 days, and sometimes, putting a deadline helps, but then, not always. So I'm almost inclined to put in an amendment to this amendment, and which is to allow the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province to call the by-election at his discretion when the need is there. And it's the exercise of sound judgment that he will be judged on. And deadlines or no deadlines, I see this bill as being, well, redundant.

The points that have been raised, including those about the PST or the referendum or the failure to call it, is something that needs to be looked at maybe at a future time. We have, at this point in time, a call to do urgent things today, not tomorrow. When the flood of 2011 came and when the threat of the 2011 flooding was avoided by the city of Winnipeg, when we had to, well, divert the water away from the city and when we had to save Headingley, St. François and Charleswood and Tuxedo, what we did as a government was to act on the basis of a necessity. So the way that I see this personally is that the law can always be changed by the legislator, because not to do so, as in not to impose that 1 cent on the dollar, would be negligent as a government. It was a choice that was made by a government that was facing a \$1.2-billion bill, as recommended by a commissioner, to protect its people. And when that was done, it was more of a—in the nature of an exigency that supersedes, trumps, goes beyond any and all regulation, rule or law.

Common sense has dictated that governments must act. If it's an emergency, you act in an emergent manner—not just urgent, but emergent. So from my point of view, the way that we are dealing with things in this province is that we get so 'humstrung' with so many—if this happens, then what are you supposed to do, and we have to put that into law. Sometimes we have to rely on common sense, and common sense is something that I cannot claim exclusive ownership. Everybody's got it, except that the point of view that's used or from where some would opine or say their piece about are quite different from the other, and that's the beauty of democracy. The majority which has formed government, which is the New Democratic Party, is

allowed by our system itself to govern, and to govern with the best of intentions and in the best way that it sees fit.

So it is with great pleasure and an honour—it's actually a privilege—to be speaking about things that matter to all of us and to at least express my mind and my views about these things that are going through our Chamber, from the regulations to protect consumers to changing our basic processes. And I'm happy that nobody's taking any shots at me. I'm happy that nobody's heckling me. I'm happy that at least I'm able to say the things that I want to say and people are listening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (10:50)

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise to speak to Bill 200, Democracy for Voters, that was presented by my colleague, the member from Steinbach. I'm very disappointed to hear the previous speaker slam the bill as being redundant, and such a derogatory statement about a very serious piece of legislation that speaks to the democracy that was denied in Manitoba by the NDP government. It's quite sad to watch the efforts they went to to deny the voters of Morris and Arthur-Virden the right to representation.

And now that we have two fine representatives from those constituencies, who wouldn't want to have them in the House? Well, perhaps the NDP, because there were a few people that voted for the NDP in those constituencies, just a few, and a few voted for the Liberals. But, of course, in this regard the Progressive Conservative candidates were successful, and I welcome them to the House. They've been a great addition to our team and a great addition to the dialogue in this House. It's interesting to listen to them. They contribute to the discussion and bring new outlook and they represent their constituents very well.

And this was one of the difficulties we had here, was that the constituents of Morris had no representative. They were denied a representative by this government who delayed the election—the by-election for a year, and delayed the election in Arthur-Virden. And then they proposed that they were holding them at the same time so that they could save money, but, again, we heard from Elections Manitoba that that was, indeed, not the case. There was no saving of money by holding them concurrently or trying to delay one for the other.

So disappointing, Mr. Speaker, to see the government is not interested in this legislation, because we want to see representation and when you deny representation to Manitobans then you drag us all down because all of your constituents want representation. You do a fine job, I'm sure. Everyone in this House does a fine job for their constituents and they mean to do so, but when we don't have that representation for other Manitobans it's denying them that democracy. It's denying them access to this House. It's denying them access to solutions that they can ask the government to engage. They can ask questions of the government. They can represent their constituents to the ministers and solve problems, because that is what we do for our constituents. A majority of the time you get a phone call, an email of a constituent that is having a difficulty navigating the bureaucracy that's been set up by this government, and often we can help them find their way through that bureaucracy and find the answers that they're looking for, finding reasons that they can or cannot do something. So it's very important that we have that representation.

And when that representation was not available, I know I was receiving calls from Arthur-Virden and I was pleased to try to help the people there. And I did not, perhaps, know as much about their circumstances as the member from Arthur-Virden does now, or the previous member, but we learned about it and we tried to help them out, and that added to other MLAs' workloads.

So what we're trying to do here is make sure that those constituents have adequate representation in a timely fashion, and I think it's a simple request that those people require representation and they deserve it. That is the way that this has been set up in Manitoba and we want to have this representative democracy. But when we don't have those individuals out there, the MLAs that are elected, that they're denied by this government, then that democracy has been denied. And very disappointing to watch that that went on for so long, but, apparently, the government required time to make announcements, promises and, again, we know that NDP promises just highlight their failures.

I was interested to hear the previous speaker say that the PST increase, the 14.3 per cent PST increase was necessary to pay for the flood. Okay, I've heard that one before, but, of course, it didn't go to pay for the flood; we know that. There's promises that it'll go to pay for infrastructure, and we know that's not likely going to happen because they've underspent on

infrastructure by \$1.9 billion over the last four years. They promised—what did they promise? Let me see in here now. First of all, they promised not to raise taxes and they broke that promise in the election, each and every one of them. And there was something about the fuel tax going to infrastructure and not one dime went to infrastructure. There was a promise of, let me see now, they broadened the PST, and that was all going to go to infrastructure. And, again, not one dime went to infrastructure; \$1.9 billion underspent in infrastructure.

And then there was another promise. Let me think now. There was a vehicle registration fee, the largest increase in Manitoba history; that was going to go to pay for infrastructure. No, no, no money there went to infrastructure. Now there's a promise of this PST increase that Manitobans were promised that they would have the right to vote on that increase, on tax increases. And this government snatched that right away, just like they want to snatch the right away for representation, Mr. Speaker. So disappointing to watch all these promises unfold, and I can understand why they don't want representation from the Conservatives in this House. I can understand. I watch them across the floor every day. And it's disappointing to watch how they may represent Manitobans in this House.

But, you know, I encourage the government to look at this legislation. I know it's important legislation for Manitobans, for their representation. Is it asking for a huge change? No, Mr. Speaker, small change to make sure that Manitobans are adequately represented in a timely fashion. And I encourage the government to enact this legislation and make sure that Manitobans are adequately represented, that they are represented in a timely fashion. And I'm sure there are others—I hear them, you know, battling away in the background there—that want to speak to this. And I'll be interested to hear what some of the government representatives have to say about this. Why don't you want democracy in Manitoba, is the big question. So let's see what they have to say.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour, as always, to get up and speak, particularly about this topic of democracy, which so strangely is being suggested by the opposition, who, in so many areas, is not representing their people. I've been saddened over and over in the House to see that when issues that matter to Manitobans come up

that are, you know, federal issues that are harmful to Manitobans, not one time have you ever stood up and actually stood up for the Manitoba people. So, I mean, I think that when you're a representative of the people of Manitoba, your goal is to actually represent your constituents, not your federal party. So as I—so as we see the MPs come in and sit in the loge and point at you to ensure you did not, I don't think they had any worry because I don't think there was any intention ever on your part to stand up for the Manitoba people. And quite honestly, I think it's shameful.

One of your members mentioned—what did he call it, I don't know—a sacred trust, a sacred trust when he was speaking of a Gary Filmon bill that was absolutely meant to harm the next government and was a piece of legislation that, as Len Evans noted, was certainly not a good piece of legislation because legislation is something that you actually need to have. If you don't need to have it to complete a goal, then you shouldn't have that piece of legislation, right? So that's when legislation needs to come in. But we should have seen you standing up over and over again for the Manitoba people, and you didn't.

In 1995—and I mention this because it ties into something that your federal cousins are busy doing—in the inquiry of 1995, where the quote said: In all my years on the bench, I never encountered as many liars in one proceeding as I did during that inquiry. It is disheartening indeed to realize that an oath to tell the truth means so little to the people. But here's—*[interjection]* No, no, this matches. This is current to now. And you know why it's current to now? Because a vote-rigging plot—*[interjection]* No, no—a vote-rigging plot constitutes an unconscionable debasement of the citizens' right to vote.

To reduce the voting rights of individuals is a violation of our democratic system. And the goal of what they were doing during that time, the basic premise on the vote-rigging plot was so Aboriginals in those ridings that historically voted for the NDP would be split if there was an Aboriginal candidate running. So the attempt at vote splitting was, in my opinion, unethical and morally reprehensible, was the quote. And why does it tie into right now? Because—

* (11:00)

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

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 19—Balanced Budget Promise Broken

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private members' resolutions, and the resolution under consideration this morning is entitled Balanced Budget Promise Broken, sponsored by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer),

WHEREAS the provincial government has overspent its core budget by a cumulative \$3.4 billion since 2000; and

WHEREAS the provincial government's actual core expenditures exceeded budgeted core expenditures in 13 out of 14 budgets since 2000; and

WHEREAS in the last provincial general election, the Premier promised to balance the budget of the province by 2014; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Finance reiterated the promise that the budget of the Province would be balanced in 2014 when he announced his annual budget just two years ago saying, we are on track to return to balance in 2014; and

WHEREAS the 2014 budget shows that the provincial government has failed to balance the budget this year, as promised; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has failed to balance its budget, even while revenues have skyrocketed through the tax and fee hikes of 2012 and the illegal 8 per cent PST hike of 2013, which together now generate more than \$500 million per year for the provincial government.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to acknowledge that it broke its promise to Manitobans by failing to balance the budget by this year; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately enforce the sections of The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act, which require that the salaries of all ministers be reduced by 40 per cent when the provincial government fails to balance the budget.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), seconded by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer),

WHEREAS the provincial government has overspent its core budget by a cumulative 3.4–dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House to consider the resolution as printed in today's Order Paper? *[Agreed]*

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has overspent its core budget by a cumulative \$3.4 billion since 2000; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government's actual core expenditures exceeded budgeted core expenditures in 13 out of 14 budgets since 2000; and

WHEREAS in the last provincial general election, the Premier promised to balance the budget of the province by 2014; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Finance reiterated the promise that the budget of the province would be balanced by 2014 when he announced his annual budget just two years ago saying "We are on track to return to balance by 2014"; and

WHEREAS the 2014 budget shows that the Provincial Government has failed to balance the budget this year as promised; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has failed to balance its budget even while revenues have skyrocketed through the tax and fee hikes of 2012 and the illegal 8% PST hike of 2013, which together now generate more than \$500 million per year for the Provincial Government.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to acknowledge that it broke its promise to Manitobans by failing to balance the budget by this year; and

BE IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to immediately enforce the sections of the Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act which require that the salaries of all Ministers be reduced by

40 per cent when the Provincial Government fails to balance the budget.

Mr. Speaker: And just in case I neglected to mention earlier, before we moved to private members' resolutions, I should have put on the record that the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) has, I believe, seven minutes remaining when the resolution's again before the House.

So, now, the honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

Mr. Friesen: This morning, Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to be able to introduce this private member's resolution. I welcome the debate that will follow in this hour on this important topic, a topic of interest and importance to all Manitobans.

And, indeed, Mr. Speaker, over the last number of weeks, we've had a number of resolutions here in the House that have obtained agreement from both sides in this Chamber. And it is my hope that today, as well, there will be a broad-based agreement and a feeling that is shared on all sides of this House that this promise about a balanced budget in Manitoba has been broken, and what is owing on the part of this government is both an apology and a remedy. Somehow, though, I do remain somewhat skeptical that we will have that same degree of unanimity after this hour concludes. In any case, I will venture down this path to try to seek that kind of result.

Mr. Speaker, it is an important thing to keep one's word. It is no less important for a government to keep its word than for individuals to keep their word. And there is the beginning of this problem that we believe on this side of the House that when this NDP government, before the last election, made that pledge that they would be in balance by the year 2014, we believe as an opposition party that the government should be held to account for the promise they made.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is not just the opposition party in this Legislature who feels that way. In fact, it is Manitobans who feel that way.

This issue we are debating this morning is, on one level, an issue about financial accountability. Is it about—it is about financial management. It is about this—a reflection of this government's record on their financial adjudication of this Province's revenues and expenditures. But, on another level, this is a resolution that talks about ethics and integrity. And, Mr. Speaker, that is why we feel it is so important now—in the same year when the NDP was supposed

to get this budget into balance, why it is important now for us to once again raise this issue and talk about the fact that the NDP government did not keep that promise to get this—the Province's finances into budget in this year. They did not even come close and they have, in the wake of this broken promise, offered no explanation. They have offered nothing in the way of an apology to Manitobans for leading them along. They have offered to do nothing in terms of a measure against the ministers of this Crown to draw attention to the matter, nothing in the way of any kind of penalty, nothing to reprove these ministers.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we would say at the outset it is a far better situation if people are intrinsically motivated. We all understand the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. We should know and we should expect that the ministers of the Crown would not break their promise in the first place when it came to something so fundamental to Manitobans. It's not just a number on the page, it is about far more than that. Every dollar that this government runs as a deficit is a dollar that cannot be spent towards the programs, towards the services, towards the infrastructure, all that Manitobans depend on.

But, Mr. Speaker, even if these ministers have not been—and they have not been intrinsically motivated to seek to maintain their word to get to that promise to implement what they said they would do and then stand by their word—there should be an extrinsic mechanism by which they should move in that direction. And we have that in the province of Manitoba, or rather I should say we had it in the province of Manitoba in The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act.

This act, Mr. Speaker—and I know you are well aware of it; I know that the members of this House are well aware of it, but it was designed to provide that exact kind of framework to hold a government accountable for those actions, to say it is not enough to simply announce what you want to do, there should be a penalty imposed if you do not say—do not do what you said you were going to do. There's a famous expression in education I know that was made popular by an education psychologist by the name of Barbara Coloroso, and she used to say, you know, do what you say and say what you mean and do what you say you are going to do. That is no less an expression of merit here in the House than it is in the education field.

Mr. Speaker, the taxpayer—The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act provides a provision whereby all salaries of all ministers are docked, they are reduced by a significant amount when a provincial government fails to balance the budget. What the NDP government has done, of course, is to gut that provision so that they don't have to pay that fine.

I know that in the minutes that follow, the government's members are going to stand up and they're going to put false information on the record. And as a new member of this House, I'm still unaccustomed to this idea of having statements attributed to me that I simply didn't make. I know that the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) is going to stand up and go off on a tangent about things like the economic downturn. Sure, it was there—widely acknowledged. What we have continued to hold this government to account for is their decision just recently to artificially extend the period of what they call the period of economic recovery. Why would they do it, Mr. Speaker? Because if they do it they are not forced to make mandatory payments towards the debt. They can withhold those payments and use them for other things.

*(11:10)

So, let's be clear, before the Finance Minister even stands up, that this government has chosen to artificially extend a period of economic recovery, something that other jurisdictions are not doing. Why do they do it? To make even more compelling revenue come into their coffers that they are not then in turn required to put towards deficit. That is why the Fiscal Stabilization Account has been raided.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is a context here. This is not just a situation where the government made a target and, oh, well, they couldn't meet it. The context is this—and I know this Minister of Finance will stand up and talk about extenuating circumstances, so let's talk about extenuating circumstances: the lowest interest rates perpetually in modern times; the highest transfer levels by the federal government in modern times—in history; record revenues accruing to government through corporate income taxes and personal income taxes; an 8 per cent PST. In alone that adds another \$288 million to government revenue per year, and that does not even account for the widening of the PST the previous year which puts another \$186 billion in the coffers of government. This is not even to speak about the increase to fees and services

and fuel tax and all the other measures. When we talk about extenuating circumstances, these are those circumstances. This government enjoys revenues never seen before by any previous provincial government, and yet they miss even the most fundamental election promises to get into balance.

As a matter of fact, it was only 24 months ago that that former Finance minister stood in his place and said, we reaffirm our government's promise to get into deficit—into balance in 2014. Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are, 2014, and how are they doing? Well, it's not just a miss. It is a spectacular miss. It is an epic miss. It is a miss of incredible proportions. It is a miss by \$357 million, and that is just in the budget document.

We all know from past experience, if past performance is any indicator of future behaviours, we know they will again spectacularly miss this projection. They are nowhere close. The money is going somewhere; it is not going to reduce the deficit.

In the meantime, Manitobans pay more. The services we need to have in this province cannot be there. The government pays more to service the debt. The debt is up \$10 billion in five years.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the debate on this subject this morning. I welcome the chance to set the record straight before this Minister of Finance can come up and bend the facts and I welcome the statements from my members that will ensue that will once again reinforce that this government must do—do so much more, enact penalties and be true to its word and not break its promises.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I, too, welcome this debate because I do think it is an important debate to have, and it—fundamentally, it's a debate about what governments do when they are faced with difficult economic times.

When they're faced with challenges, how do they handle that and how do they move forward? And how do they ensure that the solutions to those problems don't just create more problems down the line? And so that's what I'm going to use my time to talk about.

I want to talk about, certainly, the financial crisis of 2008-2009 that led into what irrefutably many economists call the greatest financial crisis around the world since the Great Depression. That's what everybody agrees on.

The other thing, I think, that people agreed on at the time was that the plan to deal with that crisis—and the Canadian government made this plan and we made this plan and other provinces and other countries around the world who have come through the recovery, who continue in the recovery—the plan was not to go down a path of deep cuts and austerity. The plan was to go into deficit, very clearly, to achieve stimulus funding to protect jobs. That is the plan that we followed, that's the plan that many other governments followed, and the recovery is ongoing.

I know the members opposite seek to live in another world, but in the real world the recovery is ongoing in all economies. Things are getting better, absolutely. But growth around the world, and growth in this country, continues to be at or around the 2 per cent level, and Manitoba has done well through the recovery, one of the best performing economies. But there is no doubt that that recovery is ongoing and it is fragile, and it could easily be undone by the kind of harsh and austerity measures that the members opposite favour.

So, there was this that happened in the world, and then, also in 2011, this province was faced with record flooding. And we didn't say, no, I'm sorry, we aren't going to do anything about that because it might increase the deficit. We went in and we did the best that we could, working with communities, working with experts to fight that flood, and that led to a billion-dollar deficit.

Then, after that flood, we asked the question, as has been asked in this province after every major flood: What can we do to prevent future risk to property and lives through future flooding? And the response that came back had a price tag of a billion dollars.

And, so then, absolutely, there was a choice to be faced. Do you forgo that flood protection? Do you cut deeply into the services that matter to Manitobans? Do you lay off thousands of civil servants? Or do you find a more balanced way? And part of that more balanced way was taking a little bit more time to balance the budget, was ensuring that you're spending money wisely, but also was investing in an economy that continued to grow.

We are not going to go back to the way things were before the crisis. We have to do better than that. And, doing better than that means that we invest in tomorrow's economy. And that means investments in infrastructure, which we are making, which we continue to make. That means investment in training

and education and skills, so that our children, our young people, can grow up, can have a good job and good life here in Manitoba. But, it also means not doing those things at the expense of the services that families count on, things like health care, things like education. Because we know what making harsh cuts to those services can lead to.

So, our reaction to those challenges were to keep the economy growing, invest in infrastructure, invest in stimulus, yes, incur a deficit to do that and have a responsible plan to come back into balance. It was to protect front-line services for families, it was to make sure that we weren't seeing the most vulnerable among us suffer more in a time of economic uncertainty, and it was to protect jobs, and look to the future and build an economy that could create those good jobs for tomorrow.

That's been our approach. It continues to be our approach. It's a balanced approach. And when you look at the evidence, you will see that through the economic crisis and through the ongoing recovery, the Manitoba economy has been one of the top three performers in the country, and that is because of the labour productivity that business and workers have shown, the innovation that they've shown, but it's also because we have taken a balanced approach. We haven't brought in the harsh kind of cuts that have been called on since day one of the financial crisis by the members opposite.

Now, when you talk about how governments handle difficult times, I think it is also instructive to look at another time when the province was facing challenges, another time when the province was facing difficulties, and that would be in the mid-'90s, when there was no doubt there was a recession in the country.

In those days, we heard very clearly, from the government of the day, their concern about reduced transfer payments. And let me say for a moment, when I look back in press releases of the day, they make mention of losing \$139 million because of the census undercount of the population. In 1993, they were concerned about that.

But they also—when we talk about transfer payments today, we need to put the facts on the record. And the facts on the record are that transfer payments to Manitoba did not grow during the economic recovery; they are at the same level, they are flat as they were in '08 and '09, at the same time that they increased by \$12 billion to other provinces

in the country, including provinces like Alberta. That is the truth. That has put pressure on our budget.

But, I looked back to see how the government of the day handled the difficult times that they were facing. And there was one day in March of 1993, they put out two news releases on one day. One of their releases cut \$3 million from 56 organizations—in one day, organizations like friendship centres, associations for child care, the committee on unplanned pregnancy, learning disability support groups for parents, cut in one day. On that same day, they put out a press release that froze all child-care spaces, increased the rates that the lowest-income families have to pay, cut funding—operating funding for nursery schools by half—50 per cent in one day.

* (11:20)

Then we flash forward—maybe that was just a moment in time, it was a bad day that day in March of '93, so we look at what else they did. In the space of one week in January of 1996, we have one news release that comes out to trumpet their public school funding announcement which they called a high priority. Do you know what they did to public schools? Cut them by 2 per cent, and that was a high-priority department for them. And this is at a time that they were still collecting the ESL. They were still collecting the second education property tax, which we have done away with in our time in government.

That same week, they put out a press release that said they were suspending all health capital. Imagine that for a moment. Any project that was on the books, any renovation to a personal-care home, any expansion to a hospital, any new clinic, cancelled in one day. And when they had to provide—this is their press release, this is—they're putting their best foot forward when they had to provide their explanation for why they did that. They said, we have no choice. We have no choice because of federal transfers. We have to cancel all the building in health care.

And I know one might say, well, that was then, things have changed. But you know what? On the first day that they had an opportunity after the financial crisis to say what they would do, they brought forward a motion in this House to cut half a billion dollars from the budget. That was their plan. And last year when they had an opportunity to put forward their plan to say what they would do, the plan looked very similar. It was déjà vu all over again, Mr. Speaker. Their plan when they brought forward was to double down on those kinds of cuts.

They talked about a tough love approach that they were going to take, across-the-board cuts to services, the firing of people who work in our civil service, who work on the front lines. That is their position. It was their position on day one. It was their position when there were faced with difficult times and it would be their position if they had the opportunity to govern today. And that has been proven time and time again to be the wrong path for Manitoba.

We only need to look at what they did to health care in this province through this path. They cut the number of nurses and doctors that were living and practising in Manitoba. They reduced the opportunities for them to be trained. They drove them out of the province. And so today and future days and past days when they stand up and ask about where is this nurse or where is that nurse, they need to look in the mirror because maybe that nurse left in the '90s. Maybe that is someone who didn't go into nursing in the 1990s because of the low morale and the lack of a future for them.

So we will continue on a path that is committed to a future economic growth that will help us to balance the budget responsibly without damaging the core services that families count on, that will keep people employed and working and will promise the good life—deliver on the promise of the good life to their children. That's the path we're on.

The path that the opposition would have us on, the path that they've committed to over and over again, has been demonstrated to be a path of destruction in this province and we won't go back there. I believe that the road that we are on, listening to Manitobans, working with Manitobans has the best chance for future success, in fact, success that we've already seen demonstrated through one of the worst economic crises since the Great Depression.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I am very pleased to rise in this House and speak to the resolution, the balanced budget and promise—Balanced Budget Promise Broken, brought by my colleague from Morden-Winkler.

And I listened intently to the minister, and what I heard her say is what was important to her was protecting her salary and her colleagues' salaries in Cabinet. That seemed to be the most important critical thing, and that's what they're protecting by not agreeing to this resolution. They make sure that

the minister will not take a cut in pay for her failures or her Cabinet colleagues' failures as this resolution discusses. So disappointing to—that what's most important to the minister is not what matters to Manitobans what—but what matters to the minister, her salary.

Because apparently now we hear this morning from the Conservation Minister announcing what matters most to Manitoba families is that we're now having an official fish, official now, but why are we taking the official fish from Saskatchewan, the walleye, as Manitoba's official fish, but we're not taking their tax policy? Perhaps we could follow their tax policy as well and be as successful, you know, in how we're going to deal with our debt and deficit because we see these promises made by this government and, again, NDP promises only serve to highlight their future failures because they know we know they will be failures.

They just change the dates time and time again when they're going to balance the budget, and they try to blame it on somebody else. It's never their fault. That's why this minister won't take responsibility for her own actions and actually take a pay cut that this resolution talks about, that if you can't do what you said you were going to do, then you shouldn't get paid for it is what the resolution says. But of course the minister is protecting her salary and the salaries of her Cabinet colleagues, and Manitobans understand that. It's all about themselves. It's all about the NDP. That's what we see here, what's most important to them not what's most important to Manitoba families.

Because when we see things happen like this government has done, you know, the type of debt that is out there now from the Manitoba government, the type of deficit they're running, what happens in this environment is you crowd out private investment because the government is borrowing all that money. That money is not available to the private sector. You crowd out the ability of the private sector to grow because of the government intervening in areas that they should not be in.

And we see other things happening. Let me see now. They seem to be confused on current assets and long-term assets and long-term liabilities. They sold a long-term asset, the property registry, untendered, no tendering, and the Auditor General is taking them to task for their untendered contracts. Here we have another example of something that untendered, sold to their labour friends in Ontario untendered. So you

took a long-term asset, and when you sell a long-term asset, you should apply the revenues from that long-term asset, the sale, the property—the sale of that to long-term liabilities, but that was not done in this case. The sale of the long-term asset was applied to current liabilities because we have a deficit.

So, again we're going against conventional accounting practice here with this government and just something that they really don't seem to understand. Every time that I hear this minister speak, she talks about Manitoba's growth but then she talks about the recession. We seem to have been in a recession for five years now at least, Mr. Speaker, when I listen—[interjection] Oh, and I hear the member from Burrows saying, they're right. You're right. Well, economic theory doesn't quite flow that way. If you're in a recession for five years, that's not a recession. It's a depression, and there's considerable difference in how you deal with those things and what that means to the economy, but I don't mean to educate the member. I'll let her do that herself.

So it's sad to watch this minister protect her salary and that of her Cabinet colleagues. You know, I do recall during a Public Accounts meeting we had with the previous Finance minister and his deputy minister. She talks about falling transfer payments. Well, that deputy minister told us that, no, we see stable and consistent funding from transfer payments from the federal government into a pretty long-term future. He added the dates there that were necessary. We can go back into Hansard if it's necessary for the members to see that and was surprised to hear people say that there were cuts because indeed, they're not.

But again, it's just misinformation put on the record by the members opposite and then, you know, they talk about flooding and trying to protect Manitobans from flooding and that they were going to make all these investments and protect them again. Well, I just met with people downstream from Asessippi, the Assiniboine River Valley area. Four out of five years, four out of the last five years they have been flooded out, either unable to harvest their crop or unable to plant, and the government won't say if it's artificial flooding because that would put them on the hook for compensation.

And when we look at their management of that aquifer, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious to the people in that valley that there is mismanagement and they have been flooded by this government. So again we see that their promises don't necessarily fall in their

favour and indeed just highlight failures of this government.

* (11:30)

Mr. Speaker, they promised—for Brandon, what did they promise? Let's see now, at one time it was one-in-100-year protection and then there was a one-in-300-year protection, then there was a one-in-700-year protection and then they said, you know, we really don't know how to do it, so, perhaps, City of Brandon, you can deal with this, but here's the lump sum that you have to spend, no more. And, boy, it's surprising, you know, as I drive by the parks and the soccer pitches that are flooded yet again in Brandon. Yet again, the flooding is—taken away that opportunity for the soccer teams in Brandon to play on their soccer pitches that were restored from the last flood so that they could perhaps play on them this year for one of the first times.

And, again, they're flooded because of broken promises by this current government, broken promises from the 'premier' premier. He did promise that Brandon would have flood protection. They were going to build up 18th Street so that it would not flood that area. That was not done. When they built the two bridges there that were over budget and late, they did not provide the adequate levels of flood protection that were promised; so, again, another broken promise that contributed to the floods we had in 2011. Had they fulfilled their promise, then there would have been not the need of what was done during the 2011 flood. Most of that would have been taken care of.

So, again, we see promises that are broken, and it's disappointing that the minister seeks to disregard this resolution and protect her salary and the salaries of her Cabinet colleagues when they don't fulfill the requirements that they've set out to promise Manitobans. They certainly have been not able to balance their budget. They promised several times. They keep moving the goalposts and we anticipate perhaps they'll move it again. There's been no firm commitment on their current goalpost. So we'll just have to wait and see what happens, and, again, it's always a moving target with this government.

So I'm interested to see other reactions from the government to this very critical resolution that I think Manitobans would support, because, yes, if you're not fulfilling what you promised to do, you should take a pay cut, and that's what this asks this government to do.

So sad to watch the minister defend her salary and that of her Cabinet colleagues, so I'll be interested to see how they protect that further.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Municipal Government): Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the opportunity that members across the way have afforded us to talk about debt and deficits and building an economy. I just wish that we could take 1.2 million Manitobans and put them in the gallery to witness the kind of hypocrisy that we see coming from members opposite—boldfaced, two-faced hypocrisy from members opposite. You know, they parade around here in this debate as if they were the big experts, the big experts in terms of the economy, every single one of them across the way who pretend like they know what they're talking about when it comes to building an economy. When it comes to integrity, members opposite are the last people we should listen to when it comes to those kinds of things.

These are the same economic geniuses, Mr. Speaker, who in the 1990s ran a debt-to-GDP ratio of 33 per cent—33 per cent. Today, 27 per cent, six points better.

An Honourable Member: Who said that?

Mr. Struthers: Who said that? Everybody said that. Economic forecasters said that. The banks said that. The bond rating agencies said that. I'll believe them over the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) any day of the week.

Mr. Speaker, the economic geniuses across the way had a worse debt-to-GDP ratio than what exists today. This government will fix up the mistakes that those folks across the way made back in the '90s. We'll continue to do that. The economic geniuses across the way also financed their debt—their debt—at over 13 cents on the dollar, more than 13 cents on the dollar. That's after they sold—*[interjection]* Yes, I know they don't like to hear the truth. But that's after they sold the telephone system to avoid having to reduce their salaries as Cabinet ministers. They sold the people's telephone system so that they could not run a deficit in the '90s, a one-time, cheap decision that they made to sell that telephone system so that they wouldn't have their own shame of carrying a debt.

Even after that, 13 cents on the dollar is what they spent to finance their debt that they put in place in Manitoba. What's that compared to today? The

economic geniuses across the way, 13 cents; this side of the House, 5.8 cents, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, they can make up all kinds of ideologically driven, cute little sayings all they like. They can twist the truth. As the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) earlier made very clear, he wasn't even going to listen to what our Finance Minister had to say. He got up and he actually said in this House that our Finance Minister would be twisting the truth. I'm not sure we're allowed to say those kinds of things in this House, but that's his approach. Instead of being open-minded enough to consider the facts of the matter, his guilty conscience made it so that he would get up and say—and try to write off our Finance Minister before she even spoke.

And I want to say, when she spoke, she put it out pretty clear in terms of the Tory ideology and what motivates decision makers on—in the Conservative Party when they ever have the—their hands on the wheel in government. People should be very concerned—very concerned—about what we see happening across the way.

Mr. Speaker, we are very clear that we're coming back into balance in '16-17. The other side of the House has been all over the map on that very question. I'm not exactly sure what their position is today, and maybe they will be courageous enough to tell us later in this debate what their position is, but I doubt it. First and foremost, when we entered into an economic downturn, which members opposite, their Finance critic in particular, even denies exists—he denies that there was an economic downturn, and now, you know, he doesn't like to hear that. I understand that, but that's what he said; that's what I've heard him say.

And he's not the only one on that side of the House. The whole world understands that in '08-09, for a very—a number of various reasons, our economy turned downwards. Members opposite want to ignore that. They want to twist that. They want to spin it their own way. Fine, go ahead. We can't stop you from doing that. But what we can do, Mr. Speaker, is we can respond to that economic downturn in a positive way. We could understand what it means to the people that—Manitoba families living in our province. We can do that, and we can—we do have choices that we could make. We do have choices in terms of where we can invest our money, both public and private sector. The private sector has choices

too. The private sector has choices as well, and the private sector has been working with this government to build our economy and make our economy grow.

Mr. Speaker, their very first impulse, a natural impulse for a Conservative, a natural ideological impulse, was to hunker down and take it out on the people who live in this province. The Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) went through a whole number of cuts that this government made, you know. And it wasn't just cuts that that previous government—they raised the gas tax. You know what else they did at the same time they raised the gas tax? They cut where the gas tax was going. They cut money that was going into infrastructure. So you raised taxes and you cut at the same time. That's the economic geniuses across the way who think that they know better than Manitobans on how to run an economy.

Mr. Speaker, that was their original position. But, you know, they talk about integrity. What did they do on the eve of the 2011 election? On the very eve, at the 11th hour, just before the people of Manitoba were looking to cast their votes, just before the 2011 election, they changed their position. All of a sudden they came out to the people of Manitoba and they said, we're not going to come back into balance until 2018. Well, what is it? Are you going to do \$550 million of cuts immediately—immediately—to come back into balance, or are you going to push it back to 2018? I might suggest that the oh, so credible and oh, so dignified members opposite, the ones who always talk about integrity, those integrity-filled members across the way may have been pandering for the odd vote when they said they were going to go to 2018. I'm going to speculate on that. I think I'm probably right.

*(11:40)

Mr. Speaker, they go from kicking the daylights out of the economy by cutting \$550 million out of our economy in one fell swoop just like they did in the 1990s, to all of a sudden, overnight, oh, we're the kinder, gentler Conservatives. We're not going to do that. We're going to come back into balance steadily until 2018.

Mr. Speaker, that's arrogance and hypocrisy. I will take our approach to building an economy any day of the week. We have been looking at ways to bring our expenses down. We have taken the 13 regional health authorities that existed at the time of the Conservatives and we reduced that to five, and we've redirected those savings back into the front

lines to protect nurses and to protect doctors and to protect the health-care system that members opposite tried their darndest to get rid of when they had their hands on the wheel of government.

And that doesn't stop, because they have said very clearly that they will privatize health in Manitoba. They will privatize health care; their leader has said that. Is that how you're going to come back into balance? Is that your 2014 version of you selling the Manitoba Telephone System?

Mr. Speaker, we've made some decisions on this side of the House that were not easy decisions. We have said to the people of Manitoba that we will raise that revenue and we will dedicate that revenue to infrastructure, some of which comes right back into your constituencies that I don't hear you complaining too much about—and not supporting, voting against it in a budget.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to make sure that we work with the private sector, that we work with Manitobans in order to invest money into infrastructure, 5 and a half billion dollars over the next five years. For every dollar that we put into that plan, it realizes \$1.16 worth of economic benefits. It helps each one of our constituencies. It helps our overall provincial Manitoba economy.

And I know members opposite, they quibble about the numbers and they'd say that, well, that's, oh, not true. You go talk to the Conference Board of Canada about that—you talk to the Conference Board of Canada, you talk to the validators that have stepped up and have said this is the right approach. I'll take our approach to build an economy over yours any day.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the next speaker on this matter, I'd like to draw the attention of the honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Garden Valley Collegiate Technical Vocational Program 33 grade 9 to 12 students under the direction of Johann Friesen. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen).

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

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I'm pleased to rise this morning to put a few comments on the record on the motion brought forward by the honourable member from Morden-Winkler, believe it or not, on balanced budget promises broken. I think this is an extremely good resolution and it's timely in this House.

You know, back in 1999, one of the main promises that the NDP government made at election time that year was to continue the balanced budget legislation. That was an election promise, and I just heard the minister talking about integrity. There was some integrity to that promise. There was no integrity to the way it was kept. The balanced budget legislation, of course, didn't appeal to them, but they felt that was a promise they had to make in order to win the '99 election.

Since that time they've changed the act probably six or seven times, taking pieces out of it each time that didn't suit them very well. So, they've finally taken it to the point where it's completely useless. It's an act that's gone out the window. They've taken all the teeth out of it.

They—that act had several things in it. One was—I believe it was \$120 million paid down on debt each year. We're some 15 years—well, 20 years since that act was put in place, at \$120 million a year paid down on debt, we'd be somewhere between two and two and a half billion dollars less that now, instead of over double the debt that we had at that time.

And you take the interest, even at low interest rates, on that two to two and a half billion dollars. That's money that could be used to provide services to the people of this province, to Manitobans. Instead we're paying it in interest.

I always get quite a chuckle out of the pounding away about some election promise we made about 2018 on an unbalanced budget. We would've kept that promise. Their promise was 2014, and obviously they broke it, and they broke it two years in a row. So they couldn't even keep their promise. They—we can keep our promises. They certainly can't keep theirs.

You know, in 2014 budget debate, the minister—the member from Thompson, the minister for Infrastructure and Transportation, stated that, really, there was no recession. But, if there was no recession, how come our debt continues to grow? How come our deficits continue to be there, year after year? You know, they can't have it both ways.

They—we're in a period of, and it was mentioned earlier, of record low interest rates, record federal transfers and, actually, record taxation on our province by this government. And, still, they can't budget—they can't balance the books, a \$350-million summary deficit this year, and it goes on. After several years of summary deficits, we have another one.

They crow about the things that they're doing, but the one thing they seem to forget is back in the '90s, there was a billion-dollar cut in the transfer payments from the federal government. They've never faced the cut and transfer payments, never, ever.

You know, so, over the last two years, probably three years, over probably the last two to three years, they've taken \$1,600 per family of four off the kitchen table. And they always argue that, but it's very simple math. They raised the taxes over two budgets; the 2013 and the 2012 budgets. They raised taxes and service fees and licensing incomes by half a billion dollars. It's pretty simple to take the 1.25 million people in the province of Manitoba, divide it into that half a million dollars per year increase in taxes that was foisted on Manitobans and do the division. It comes to \$400 a people, \$1,600 per family of four.

And, you know, that's so misleading in the way they present things. They talk—they love to blow now about the infrastructure spending they're going to do. It's interesting that they can't seem to blow about how much they underspent in infrastructure over the last four budgets. The last four budgets, \$1.9 billion budgeted that was never spent on infrastructure. They—if they had of spent that much on infrastructure, we'd be seeing some improvements.

But they go out now and say they're going to spend X number of dollars, and that's what they say. Obviously, the track record from the last four years has proven they're not going to necessarily keep their word of what they say. They went out before the last election and they said we will not raise taxes and then raised them two budgets in a row.

* (11:50)

You know, they promised this budget would be balanced by now. When I talk about some of the things that were in that balanced budget legislation, one was a penalty on a government that doesn't balance the budget in any given year and it—for one year it was 20 per cent, for the second year it went to

40 per cent. So they changed—what'd they do? Well, we won't try and balance the budget. All we'll do is change the legislation so we make sure we get paid. That was very important as having themselves paid.

You know, there's so many ways that they could've—the NDP could've saved some money, and one would be the vote tax, people of Manitoba having to pay for the operations of a political party; Bipole III, at least a billion dollars with the routing of Bipole III; sole-source contracting of the STARS ambulance—\$100 million wasted on sole-source no tendering. And the auditor went to great lengths to talk about the tendering policies of this province. We know of a campground expansion in the province that, I believe, is either in the minister from Dauphin or the member from Swan River's constituency, that was expanded, non-tendered and certainly done in a very partisan way.

You know, they've added ministers. There's a cost to every minister and it's quite a high cost. They've added ministers since they formed government. They probably didn't need extra ministers, 192 communicators at \$12 million a year just in salaries. Add in the extra costs, cut that in half—cut that in half—you save half of 5, 6 million dollars. Contract to Marilyn McLaren, extra \$50,000 that we find out that there was—four staff received \$16,000 of training—worth of training to do that work, and yet they've got to pay her another \$50,000 to come in and make presentations to the Public Utilities Board.

I know many of them—I can tell by the crowing—want to make some comments to this legislation, so I thank you very much.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It's a pleasure to put a few words on the record.

I listened to the member opposite and I—you know, they're grasping for straws to try to find ways that they're going to plan on balancing this budget. You know, they—we know that they made a promise to balance it, I believe, in 2018, which is beyond what we're going to do—[interjection]—apparently they reaffirmed it.

But what is interesting about the members opposite is they are recession deniers. You know, the—as the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) has stated, the recession is still continuing. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office of United States projected that the United States, the US economy, would grow at 4 per cent this year, which is

1 per cent per quarter. But, in fact, it grew at 0.1 per cent, which is a tenth, only a tenth of what was projected by the CBO, which is regrettable. I'm not saying it's a good thing, because our economy is deeply tied to the US economy. But that is a simple reality. There's still struggles in Europe, even China, India, their projections of the growth of their economies are down. So there's still a lot of uncertainty out there in the world.

I want to just make a reference to the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) who brought this forward. Just last week he brought fine people from his constituency to this Chamber asking the government to fast track a personal-care home in his constituency over any other in his constituency, over any other in anyone else's ridings, and what did he do? He misled those fine people from Morden-Winkler. He misled them because he voted against money for that home every single year. He misled those fine people from Morden-Winkler because—how does government build nursing homes in Manitoba? Well, we borrow the money. We borrow the money, we amortize it over 40 years at low interest rates. We add—well, that's added to the debt, capital asset of the Department of Health. He voted against that and he misled. Now he's making it a resolution condemning debt, the same debt that's going to be required to build his Tabor nursing home. He's absolutely hypocritical on this. Members know that the—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Selkirk knows the rules of this House. The word hypocritical used in reference to a specific member of this House is clearly unparliamentary.

I want to ask the honourable member to withdraw that word, please.

Mr. Dewar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do withdraw that.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member for Selkirk.

Mr. Dewar: Do you know that the leading driver, the leading cost drivers on our Treasury are the members opposite? Every single member opposite comes to this Chamber and demands more—the members, every single one, and so for him to say now that all of a sudden they're condemning, you know, the government when they use deficit financing is, again, a ridiculous comment, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to talk a little bit about the opposition when they were in government. I think it's instructive if we go back and look at some of their budgets. I did. I went to the Legislative Library, and I looked at their budgets from '92 to '96 when the Leader of the Opposition was in government, and they talk as if they are the great defenders of the tax cutters but they're not. There's not a tax cutter over there. The member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) who just spoke was a municipal leader. How many taxes did he cut when he was a municipal leader? Absolutely none, absolutely none. The member for Springfield was on the school division in Springfield. How many taxes did he cut? Absolutely none. There's no tax cutters on that side. The tax cutters are on this side.

The 1992 Budget, no tax cuts. The 1993 Budget—oh, let's see, they increased taxes by \$108 million. They expanded the PST to newspapers, snack foods, meals, personal hygiene supplies, schools—excuse me, school supplies, baby supplies, sewing patterns. They increased taxes by \$108 million in one year which is equal, I might add, to a 1 per cent increase in the PST. The same kind of—same level of increase that we raised, that they condemned, Mr. Speaker. I could go on and on and on, but I know my other colleagues here want to contribute to this debate, so I end my comments there.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I appreciate the opportunity and—to speak and appreciate that the member has yielded some time that I do have an opportunity to speak. Of course, I don't have too many more minutes to speak, but I do want to put some words on the record and, of course, give an opportunity for others if they would wish as well.

You know, this is one of those issues that it becomes so very clear for those of us in the House where we stand and exactly what the plan is. And, you know, I hear the members of the opposition applauding and I do, as well, because I think this is

where we can actually come to this Chamber, we can have this debate, and folks can see exactly where we stand and we—they can see our balanced approach. They can see a plan, and they can see a province that's growing and moving forward. And they can see a plan that is reckless, and I think that Manitobans understand this fundamental difference between our parties.

They understand that the way that we have managed the economy over the past number of years through a difficult economic time, which the members opposite don't want to acknowledge. Maybe some days they do, some days they don't; depends if it fits with their ideological narrative. But, Mr. Speaker, they don't necessarily appreciate, you know, what the global economic situation was, whereas on our side of the House, we understand that, through these times, that being reckless, being impulsive or being ideological is not the right path. And, in fact, what we've done is we've really sought to have that balanced approach, and, you know, I'm somebody who has an economics background. My degree is in economics. I'm certainly no expert. I'm just a member of this Legislative Assembly, you know, who tries to represent my constituents well. There are a number of experts that we do listen to. We do listen to economists throughout the world, and we do listen to those who look at the Manitoba model and say that this is the right model. This is the right model. But when I talk to my constituents, they don't care. They don't care that our—we're balancing a year or two or three years later or earlier. What they care about—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Concordia will have seven minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 22, 2014

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