

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 7, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 19—The Legal Profession Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 19, The Legal Profession Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la profession d'avocat, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill better protects the public and lawyers' clients, notably by allowing publication of a lawyer's name, without bench approval, who is the subject of charges and before disciplinary proceedings are concluded, increasing the number of public representatives on the governing body and empowering the governing body to regulate law firms.

Thank you.

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

Any further introduction of bills? No?

PETITIONS

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

Beausejour District Hospital—Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

(5) According to the Health Council of Canada, only 25 per cent of doctors in Manitoba reported that their patients had access to care on evenings and weekends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by L. Cyncora, E. Cyncora, L. Jackson and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Bipole III Land Expropriation— Collective Bargaining Request

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

On November 19th, 2014, the Premier authorized an order-in-council enabling Manitoba Hydro to take valuable and productive farmland for its controversial Bipole III transmission line project without due process of law.

On November 24th, 2014, the minister responsible for the administration of the hydro act—Manitoba Hydro act confirmed a—confirming order for the province of Manitoba declaring that no notice to landowners is required for the seizure of property.

This waiver of notice represents an attack on rural families and their property rights in a modern democratic society. There was not even an opportunity provided for debate in the Manitoba Legislature. In many cases, the private property seized has been part of a family farm for generations.

Manitoba Hydro has claimed it has only ever expropriated one landowner in its entire history of operation. The provincial government has now gone ahead and instituted expropriation procedures against more than 200 landowners impacted by Bipole III.

Since November 13, the Manitoba Bipole III Landowner Committee, MBLC, in association with the Canadian Association of Energy and Pipeline Landowners' Associations, CAEPLA, have been trying to engage Manitoba Hydro to negotiate a fair business agreement.

For over 14 months, the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro have acted in bad faith in their dealings with Manitoba landowners or their duly authorized agents. Those actions have denied farmers their right to bargain collectively to protect their property and their businesses from Bipole III.

MBLC, CAEPLA was—has not formed an association to stop the Bipole III project and they are not antidevelopment. MBLC, CAEPLA has simply come together, as a group of people, as Manitobans, to stand up for property rights and the right to collectively bargain for a fair business agreement that protects the future well-being of their businesses.

MBLC, CAEPLA are duly authorized agents for Manitoba landowners who wish to exercise their freedom to associate and negotiate in good faith.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government immediately direct Manitoba Hydro to engage with MBLC, CAEPLA in order to negotiate a fair business agreement that addresses the many legitimate concerns of farm families affected by the Bipole III transmission line.

And this petition is signed by A. Dyback, J. Nikkel, B. Rempel and many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions? Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports. Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today a delegation from Ukraine, which includes judges, high court officials, a member of Ukraine's parliament, a representative of the Ukrainian president and the head of the national bar association.

Also, accompanying these folks from Canada are members of the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs and judges from the courts of the Queen's Bench in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and lawyers from Winnipeg and Regina.

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

*(13:40)

Also in the public gallery we have with us today guests of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and includes Michael Ocadchy. Pardon me for my pronunciation, if you are here with us, and they are the guests of the honourable member for Concordia.

And also in the public gallery we have with us from Louis Riel Arts and Technology Centre 15 adult education students under the direction of Ms. Lucille Miller. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Deficit Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by offering our congratulations to the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) and his beautiful wife, Dianne, on the birth of a new granddaughter, Maria Teresa.

The most emotional experience of my life was to be with my wife at the birth of our children, and I think many members here would share that—have had that experience and would share that perspective. Every decision that we make after an event like that is different, I think, because the person we brought into the world is vulnerable. They are dependent on us and they trust us to look after their best interests, as they should.

Over this government's term of office they have now doubled our provincial debt, and that has placed an unprecedented burden on those who will come after us, including those children and grandchildren I referenced earlier. They are made, by the actions and decisions of this government, more vulnerable and more dependent and perhaps, sadly, less trusting than they were before.

I'd like to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today: Could he clarify why he has chosen to place our children's future at risk and violate their trust?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Obviously, I concur with the member opposite when he talks about the—our children, Mr. Speaker, and our children's future. And that is why our budget that we brought in last week will invest in Manitoba's young people. And that is why we believe in building and growing an economy.

As I said, we have one of the fastest growing economies in Canada. We have created more jobs.

But the members opposite have a different plan. Their plan is to kill 70,000 jobs in this province. Their plan is to put a halt on our program of growing the economy. Their plan is to cut \$550 million out of the provincial budget.

And I ask the member, how is that going to help Manitoba's youth?

Mr. Pallister: Well, of course, what the new Finance Minister neglects to mention is that his government has introduced the most egregious tax increases of

any Canadian province over the last several years, and how does that help build a stronger economy? It doesn't. And that's why, of course, this government's actual ranking, according to Statistics Canada, on economic growth over this Premier's term is ninth, closer to 10th than to eighth. It's a risky plan. It's a selfish plan. It's a short-sighted plan, and it hurts our children's future.

Ed Schreyer introduced new debt in his term of office, about \$1 billion of new debt in his six years; Howard Pawley, about \$6 billion; and the member for St. Boniface and his colleagues, \$16 billion. And the hugeness, the enormity of that amount, it's almost impossible to understand.

Certainly, members opposite appear to have no understanding of the damage they are doing. But to put it in perspective, Mr. Speaker, every day since this Premier came to power, the debt on our children and grandchildren has increased by \$13 million every day. That's unprecedented. That's wasteful, and it is not gleaning positive results.

So when will this government and this Premier finally come forward with a plan to end this downward spiral, a real plan to balance the books and to protect our children's future?

Mr. Dewar: When we came to office, we were spending 13 cents on the dollar to service the debt. That's down to 5.6 cents on the dollar, Mr. Speaker. We came into power, the net debt was at a 32, 33 cent level; it's significantly less now.

We believe in investing in Manitoba's future. We believe in investing in the young people that the member opposite just talked about. That is why our plan calls for the creation of an additional 60,000 more jobs here in the province.

They have a plan to put those jobs on hold. They have a plan, Mr. Speaker, to kill those 60,000 more jobs.

We have a jobs youth fund to help young people connect with an employer. We've kept tuition fees low in the province of Manitoba. We're investing in universities. We're investing in colleges. We're investing in our children's future.

Thank you.

Balanced Budget Reduction Timeline

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The government's plan involves more

deficits, more debt, more taxes, and it doesn't involve any plan at all, now, to balance the books of our province, none whatsoever.

Now, the rainy day fund that was set aside to protect the people of our province was at \$864 million when the Premier (Mr. Selinger) came in, and it's now at \$115 million, so that's about a 90 per cent use-up of the rainy day fund by this government. That seems to be part of their plan too, and there's every possibility that if they continue with this downward spiral they will eliminate any—Fiscal Stabilization Account whatsoever.

Now, no government can restore a Fiscal Stabilization Account or a rainy day fund if they fail to balance the books, and the Finance Minister shows a deplorable lack of understanding that most Manitobans possess of how interest rates affect our ability to maintain our front-line services. If they can't balance the books, Mr. Speaker, they can't save for a rainy day.

So given the fact that this government and this Premier have never ever balanced the books, when will this Premier balance the books for the first time? Will it be in three years, in five years or never?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I know the member was an MLA here in the '90s. He left his job as a minister to sue—pursue other interests. So I know he wasn't here for the—since 1999, but this government balanced the budget 10 years in a row. This government paid down debt.

I also need to remind the member about the history of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Their government took a surplus, they turned it into a deficit. Mr. Speaker, they put that money into a Fiscal Stabilization Fund, then they used that up. Then they sold the telephone system to their friends at rock-bottom prices and they put that into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and they sold—and they used that up.

We've used the fiscalization fund, Mr. Speaker, we've paid down close to half a billion dollars in debt. We're also using a small part of the fund this year to help us pay for capital costs outside the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Fiscal Management Government Record

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. This Premier has never

balanced the books and this NDP government can't manage.

Mr. Speaker, the government fails each and every year to stay within their spending targets. For instance, in the financial year just completed the government forecast a deficit of \$357 million, but they overspent and the deficit went up to an actual of \$67 million higher than their projection, and this from the Finance Minister who said with a straight face that he was on track on March the 6th.

Will the NDP just admit that regardless who occupies the Finance minister's office, they just can't manage the finances of this province?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Our plan is to invest in the economy. Our plan is to grow the economy.

That's why the Conference Board of Canada said Manitoba will lead the nation in 2015-2016 economic growth. The Bank of Montreal came out with a similar report this past week, saying that Manitoba has had the strongest job growth in 13 years. That is a record that we're proud of.

I want to remind the member, we came into office, we were paying 13 cents on the dollar to service the debt. Now we're paying 5 cents on the dollar to service the debt. I'll also remind the member that we balanced the budget 10 years in a row. Our record on balancing the budget is far better than theirs.

Mr. Friesen: The Minister of Finance shows no understanding of basic financial concepts.

Mr. Speaker, in the past six fiscal years this government has got it wrong each and every time on projected revenues. Revenues, with the exception of one time, were higher than forecast, yet they still managed to fail to rein in spending. The NDP has overspent its planned budget every single year since 2003. In fact, a new C.D. Howe report on fiscal accountability shows that this is the only provincial government to overspend its planned budget every year since 2003.

Mr. Speaker, does the Finance Minister get it that the only time they lead in a category is when the category is overspending?

* (13:50)

Mr. Dewar: Our spending is the lowest in western Canada, Mr. Speaker.

And I think the question's been asked by my colleagues on this side of the House, what's their alternative? What is their plan? We know their plan. We know their plan, Mr. Speaker, is to kill our economy. We know their plan is to put the brakes on a program that's going to develop—that's going to provide 70,000 jobs over the next four years. That is our plan.

Their plan is to cut reckless cuts to our health care, reckless cuts to personal-care homes, reckless cuts to our education system, to our university—excuse me, Mr. Speaker—to our university system. We reject that.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, as long as they can't manage spending, they can't talk about a plan.

In the past 10 years, this government's revenue was \$2.5 billion higher than they forecast. But in the same 10 years, the government's spending was \$3.25 billion higher than their forecast. Mr. Speaker, that is an extraordinarily bad record. Imagine the issues in this province that could have been addressed with those funds: wait times driven down, new solutions to eliminate kids in hotels.

When will the Finance Minister just admit that the NDP cannot manage the finances, and as a result of their overspending, waste and mismanagement, there's less and less for front-line services?

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I will not admit that.

Bipole III Transmission Line Farmland Acquisition

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): And this—we know that this NDP government just can't manage anything.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government secretly ordered Manitoba Hydro to expropriate 3,500 acres of prime Manitoba farmland from 140 farm families throughout southern Manitoba for their west-side waste line, Bipole III.

Will the Minister of Agriculture explain how this new farming venture is working out, or is this just another example of NDP arrogance, waste and mismanagement?

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): I'm very happy to rise today, and I just want to indicate to the member that, in fact, over 400 meetings with landowners, RMs, First Nations communities and stakeholder groups were held since 2008.

So I believe that the member may be misleading people here by indicating what he's saying. In fact, Hydro took special—gave special attention in ensuring that landowners and people that have a direct interest in this are fully consulted and fully made aware of what they were planning to do.

Mr. Pedersen: This coming from the minister who signed the waiver of notice so that they could secretly expropriate landowners.

Mr. Speaker, the dictionary's description of steal is to take the property of another without permission or right, especially secretly or by force. Now, this NDP government went to Land Titles and took away ownership of 3,500 acres of prime farmland away from 140 farm families, without notice, without compensation, which to me fits a description of steal.

This is just another—an example of arrogance, waste and mismanagement of this NDP government.

What is the Minister of Agriculture going to do with this land that they've taken from farm families?

Mr. Robison: Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. In July 2013, the Clean Environment Commission recommended that Bipole III be constructed. Since then, more than \$1 billion has been expended or has been committed in fixed contracts on a project with 90 per cent of the land secured for construction. *[interjection]*

Up until—and I reject that comment made by the member for Midland—*[interjection]*—or Emerson, Lakeside, what—the whole works of it, Mr. Speaker. Hydro has been negotiating with landowners for voluntary easements and compensation agreements since 2012 in July.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Pedersen: I'm glad this minister finds this funny to take away land from landowners. Long-standing generations of farmland, he has now taken that land away from them. This is not a laughing matter.

They did it—not only did they take land, they took it secretly. They went to Land Titles—didn't even notify the landowners. Went to Land Titles, landowners checked their titles, they now don't own that land. What kind of government operates in secret like that? What kind of government would do that to landowners, private landowners? There is no shame with this government. This is stealing land from landowners that deserve to be treated fairly.

Where is this fairness from this government?

Mr. Robinson: Well, Mr. Speaker, just allow me to indicate to the member from Midland that's he's talking to the wrong guy when it comes to stealing land.

First of all, Hydro has been offering fair and generous compensation for easement amounting to 150 per cent of market value for property plus additional payments for structure impact, construction damage and other damages that may be experienced by landowners.

To tell this House that it was done improperly—it was done thoroughly and I believe responsibly by Manitoba Hydro in their dealings with landowners.

Shellmouth Dam Flood Forecasts

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, this past March 27th the NDP flood forecast indicated, I quote, upstream on the Lake of the Prairies flooding is considered minor.

For the fourth year out of five years, Mr. Speaker, farmers down the Shellmouth Dam have been unable to seed their crops. This year's flood is caused by this NDP mismanagement on our lakes and waterways, especially the Shellmouth Dam. Manitobans are tired of this NDP government and their broken promises of flood protection.

When it comes to flood forecasting on the Shellmouth Dam, why does this government get it wrong year after year after year?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to indicate that we have a very dedicated team of flood forecasters. They dealt with challenging situations in 2009, 2011, 2014, and they do the best with the information that's available. In fact, I'm more than prepared to brief the member on how we've extended our ability to forecast both in terms of our contacts in Saskatchewan, which is an important component, in the US, but also in terms of monitoring stations.

I would point out that there was a difficulty with forecasting this year that was acknowledged by staff in our department, but I'd also point out that this had no impact downstream, Mr. Speaker. Any of the release took place before crops could be planted. In fact, we're still—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Piwniuk: Where was the communication last year with the Saskatchewan government when we had all the floods in June?

Mr. Speaker, June 27th the NDP decided to reduce outflows on the Shellmouth Dam in the efforts to maintain the target summer water levels. Two weeks later the NDP drastically changed their outflow by 90 times greater since the last flood forecast two weeks earlier.

For—again, four times out of five these farmers have not been able to put a crop in, and still there are people misplaced in our area that—because of this 2011 flood.

When would this NDP government stop breaking their promise to hard-working families?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the member talked about Saskatchewan, and I point out that we brought in legislation here that strengthened licensing in terms of drainage a number of years ago. By the way, it was opposed by members opposite; they described it as being the water Gestapo at the time, but it's resulted in us having significant controls over illegal drainage in this province, and we've continued to press Saskatchewan to do the same thing because there are issues in Saskatchewan with illegal drainage.

* (14:00)

And I want to indicate that my colleague the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. NevaKshonoff) and I have already taken the initiative to contact them again because they have been looking at similar legislation. We ask them to do nothing less than what we've done in Manitoba: crack down on illegal drainage. I'm glad that members opposite, perhaps a few years later, realized the error of their ways and now want to see that.

But the bottom line is we expect Saskatchewan to do what we do: crack down on illegal drainage.

Mr. Piwniuk: What rhetoric coming from this minister.

Mr. Speaker, if it wasn't enough that NDP suddenly and drastically increased the Shellmouth flow from 50 cubic feet per second—they increased it 35 cubic feet per second in one day. And the next day, they increased it to 4,500 cubic feet per second

the following day, the prime example of their inability to manage our lakes and waterways.

This government continues to hide behind flooding as their scapegoat for poor fiscal management, for their consecutive budget deficits and the ballooning debt. Yet they are the only ones to be blamed for this mismanagement of our lakes and our waterways and resulting financial waste.

Mr. Speaker, whether it is the deficit targets for the budget or whether it's the levels of the Shellmouth Dam, would this minister admit that this government gets it wrong every time?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, if there was an award for the most preposterous rhetoric I've ever seen in this House, that question would win the award.

Mr. Speaker, I want to stress one thing, that when it comes to forecasting, we rely on the work of our professional forecasters, our hydraulic experts. When it comes to the operation of our flood control structures, we have operating rules. We rely on the advice of our engineers and our technical staff.

And I want to indicate to the member opposite, before he tries to politicize absolutely everything about flooding, I think everybody in Manitoba realizes in 2009, 2011, 2014 we faced great challenges in terms of flooding that, by the way, impacted in Saskatchewan and Alberta. And some of them across the way asked where was I, Mr. Speaker. Well, I can tell you, when it came to the 2014 flood, I was dealing with it. They might want to ask that question to the Leader of the Opposition.

Cottage Fee Increases Park Improvement Budget

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): The NDP's efforts to divide and conquer when it comes to the cottage cash grab is unfortunate but not surprising.

The Donnellys have seen their bill rise from \$1,100 to \$2,300 in one year alone, and it's estimated to go to \$3,000 next year. They advised the Premier (Mr. Selinger) that, and I quote: We are retired and considering selling the cottage that has been in the family since 1950. End quote.

Why is this NDP's broken promises and blatant tax grab forcing retirees such as the Donnellys out of our provincial parks?

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I thank the member opposite for the question.

Mr. Speaker, cottaging is very important to this government. In fact, it was under the leadership of our former premier, the Honourable Gary Doer—actually, I should say His Excellency Gary Doer—that we initiated a program to increase the number of cottages in our province. Our target was 1,000 cottages at the time, and I think we've exceeded that.

Cottaging is a very important industry to all Manitobans, and we will continue to do the best that we can to encourage this industry, to see that it contributes to our economy and that all people contribute equally to that economy, I might add. Thank you.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the NDP attempt to justify their 100-million-plus-dollar tax grab as necessary to pay for park improvements. Cottagers have always said they're willing to pay their fair share, but they've always feared that this is just another NDP tax grab. It appears those fears are justified.

How does the NDP explain that while they're hiking fees by millions of dollars, they're actually spending 35 per cent less today on parks infrastructure than they were four years ago? Where has the money gone, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Once again, I would like to thank the member across the way for the question, and I'm glad to see that he has interest in parks in our province. That's something new-found, I think, in members opposite, something that's very important to our government; I know that as the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship.

The budget speech that the honourable member for Selkirk, our Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), just delivered a few days ago made special reference to parks. Our investments in this regard are second to none. Certainly members opposite cannot compare in regard to our investment in our parks.

Thank you.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, Randall Kinley wrote the minister, and I quote: If you had sent representatives from your department to attend the Whiteshell Cottagers AGM, you would have heard the plea from an elderly single woman who retired 10 years ago and has now returned to work so she can afford to make the cottage lease payments demanded from her by this NDP government. End quote.

Instead of insulting this elderly Manitoban by describing her as a drain on the system, perhaps the NDP can explain how the parks infrastructure budget can go from \$23 million to less than four—less than \$15 million in four short years.

Where has the money gone, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Once again, I thank the member opposite for his question. Our investments in parks, as I said a little bit earlier—[*interjection*] As I said—as I was saying, Mr. Speaker, our investments in parks, second to none.

I have concerns of the opinions and interests of all of our cottagers. I'm new to this file, but my door is open to all of these people. I'm certainly willing to meet with them to listen to their concerns and look forward to that in the days to come.

Bethesda Regional Health Centre Accessibility Concerns

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, after spending more than \$22 million, people who are sick and who have mobility challenges struggle every day to get into the Bethesda regional hospital in Steinbach. That's because instead of building a hospital entrance on the ground floor, this government built a hospital that forces people to go up 13 steps or to take a narrow, steep ramp to get into the hospital.

Wilma contacted me and she said that she was told by her doctor that she needed to get an X-ray at Bethesda hospital and she asked her doctor, how am I supposed to get in, because I have limited mobility. She was told that she should stand at the bottom of the \$22-million entrance and wait for a passerby to help her in, or maybe she could wave and somebody in the hospital would see her and come out and get her.

Why did the government spend \$22 million to build a hospital entrance that sick and disabled people can't get into?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question, and I know that the member and I have discussed this. In fact, it was one of the very first issues that came upon my desk as I became the Minister of Health.

And I can tell members opposite that there has been a lot of work and there continues to be a lot of work being done by the RHA. And I am very thankful for the work that has been done in terms of the research, the addressing of the problem, and I

look forward to being with the member opposite as the work gets under way. I can assure him it is under way.

And we actually are taking into account other situations that have occurred since. As he's aware, we had an incident with someone driving up against the retaining wall. That has been factored into the design as well.

So I can assure the member that this is being worked on. It is a priority project for me. And I look forward to staying in touch with him.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, it's been a year and nothing has happened.

I received an email about a 90-year-old woman who tried to visit her sick 92-year-old sister at Bethesda. She struggled every day to try to make it into the hospital up those stairs and the ramp. Many days, she couldn't get in. Fortunately, she found the strength on the day that her sister passed away.

This morning—this very morning—my office received a call from a daughter who tried to take her parents, one who has a cane and one who's in a wheelchair, to Bethesda. She couldn't get up the stairs and she couldn't help them up the ramp. So she asked security for help to try to get her sick parents into the hospital, and fortunately security helped them to get into the hospital.

But why should a 90-year-old senior struggle to see her sister in her final days? And why should somebody struggle to get into the hospital? The person who contacted my office asked that the government hire navigators to help them get into the hospital.

Ms. Blady: I agree. I agree with him and the families who receive care at Bethesda that the current situation is unacceptable. And my department, as I said, we have taken those concerns, and the design plans are currently being finalized, and a tender for the new work is expected to be released shortly.

I can assure the member—again, this is not surprising for a group of folks that froze health-care spending. They're not familiar with the construction process.

* (14:10)

I'm proud to be part of a government that actually builds new projects. Our government is there for the residents of Steinbach. We have done the work on the ER at Bethesda. We're working with

the community to build a wellness centre. And they received the province's first QuickCare clinic.

So I can assure members opposite and the member from Steinbach that we are there for his constituents and for their health care.

Mr. Goertzen: Let me remind the minister, this project took seven years and \$22 million, and you can't get into the hospital if you're sick or if you have difficulty walking.

Last year I went to the former minister of Finance, the minister of disabilities, and she said, oh, it's a problem, we've got to get it fixed. So I went to the former minister of Health, and she said, it's a problem, we've got to get it fixed. And so I went to the new Minister of Health last year and she said, oh, it's a problem, we've got to get it fixed. So I emailed the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and he said, talk to the former ministers and the minister, they can work on the problem.

It's been more than a year. We have sick people who struggle to get at that hospital. While they were having a family feud, old people, sick people, elderly people were pulling themselves up the steps to try to get into a hospital while they were fighting. This is a boondoggle. They've had a year to fix it.

Why don't you fix it, or don't you care about the elderly, the sick and the disabled?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, I can assure the member opposite that we have been working with the regional authority and with Bethesda to ensure that access is available for patients.

If there are specific concerns and specific incidents where that has not happened, I would appreciate direct information. My office will address that, because we have.

But I can also assure the member that, again, as I've said, we've invested in a lot of projects in Steinbach. But what happened to Steinbach when their Leader of the Opposition was sitting around the Cabinet table? Well, hospitals and personal-care homes in the southern region—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing both the questions and the answers, and I would appreciate the co-operation of all members of the House. Please give me the opportunity so if there

was a breach of the rule, you would want me to rule on it, and at the way things are proceeding right now I would be unable to do so. So I'm asking for your co-operation. Keep the level down a little bit so we can proceed with question period.

Now, the Minister of Health, to quickly conclude her comments, please.

Ms. Blady: Again, we've invested in Steinbach. They cut.

2011 Flood Evacuees Return to Community Update

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, to begin, I want to pay my respects to the memory of Lorraine Sinclair Thuringer, who is the mother of Chief Adrian Sinclair of Lake St. Martin First Nation, and she passed away recently.

Tragically, she is about the 70th person from this community who has passed away since the evacuation four years ago on May the 8th, 2011. The community was evacuated because the flood was created and the Province diverted water into Lake Manitoba and then into Lake St. Martin and artificially flooded people in this community.

I would ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) if he could tell us the current status of the return of the people of Lake St. Martin, Little Saskatchewan and Dauphin River to their communities in a safe and dry way.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): I had the opportunity of speaking with Chief Adrian Sinclair last Thursday, and I extended my condolences to him as well in person on the loss of his mom.

This, indeed, is a sad situation, Mr. Speaker, where four communities have been directly impacted, where many other community members have had to reside elsewhere. I am happy to say, however, that none are staying in hotels, so that's a good thing.

If we are to take anything positive out of it, I had the opportunity of meeting with the federal minister of Indian affairs, the Honourable Bernard Valcourt. He and I had the opportunity of sharing our frustration with the lack of progress it would appear that we're making. But, in fact, there is progress being made, because what we're talking about for a couple of these communities is simply not returning them home to their original homeland but in building entire communities right from the ground up.

So that has been frustrating, and we are doing our best to ensure that that happens quickly.

Flooding—Little Saskatchewan Housing Compensation Discrepancy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, how many more people like Chief Adrian Sinclair's mother will have to die before this issue is resolved?

Mr. Speaker, the people of these communities continue to suffer the frustrations of a four-year stalemate, a four-year logjam in progress as a result of the inactions and the inability of this government to effectively get things done. The cost has been enormous, far more than \$100 million, in looking after evacuees to date and far more than we can ever really understand in terms of lives and people.

I wonder if the government is contributing to the stalemate by bargaining unfairly. For example, Bertha Travers, who is in the gallery today, asks why the government is only offering Little Saskatchewan 60 homes when there were more than 100 homes destroyed in the flood.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Without accepting any of the preamble that the member has just expressed, allow me to bring to his attention some of the progress that has been made by community, Mr. Speaker, with Lake St. Martin starting—starting with Lake St. Martin. We've developed with the community, with the federal negotiator, Mr. Sid Dutchak, and with our provincial negotiator, Harold Westdal, who has been working with the leaders of these four communities on the east side of the flood control structure. A community plan has been formulated with the Lake St. Martin people, and work on the site is currently under way. An expression of interest has been posted by the First Nations project manager for voice and data service to the community as well.

For the Little Saskatchewan First Nation, 114 homes are going to be cost-shared, along with most of the infrastructure, including roads and drainage, water treatment plants—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Lake St. Martin Water Level Management

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, Lake St. Martin's water level was last read yesterday at 801.28 feet above sea level. This is well above the level—797 to 800 feet—that the lake regulation review

committee said was the desirable goal. It is less than half a foot shy of the flood level, and much of the land previously occupied by these evacuated communities remains sodden and not inhabitable.

Can the Premier (Mr. Selinger) tell us: Is he using a co-operative approach with the people of Little Saskatchewan, Lake St. Martin and Dauphin River to manage the level of Lake St. Martin, or is the Premier still proceeding in a unilateral, heavy-handed way that sustains unacceptably high levels in water in Lake St. Martin?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the plan is this. Between the federal government, ourselves and the First Nations, the priority is to get the people to their homeland as quickly as possible.

If I may continue with the Little Saskatchewan First Nation, 114 homes are being cost-shared there, with most of the infrastructure, including roads and drainage. And it wasn't easy to get to that point, because we had a deal with the RM of that area—the water treatment plan, sewage lagoon, water tanks and septic facilities for each home and community buildings. And Canada will be covering the cost of 16 additional homes to address overcrowding and infrastructure, including repairs to teacherages, along with water trucks, heavy equipment and maintenance buildings.

With the issue of Dauphin River, the infrastructure requirements there are plentiful and piped water and sewer among them, a landfill site, a school, a band office, health—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Launch of Alert Ready New Emergency Alert System

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, when disasters of any kind occur in our province, they can often strike with very little warning. Every second can be crucial in minimizing harm, protecting communities and saving lives.

* (14:20)

Can the Minister responsible for Emergency Measures please let the House know what steps we have taken to inform Manitobans of potential life-threatening disasters across our province?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was

a very important development in Manitoba with the first test of Alert Ready.

This is a national system. It didn't just happen. It's been the work of federal, provincial, territorial ministers and first ministers, the CRTC, which regulates. In fact, I want to commend former minister Vic Toews, who was very supportive of this concept.

And it's pretty straightforward. It takes the platform of broadcasters, who've been very involved in this development, and allows us to communicate directly. Whether it's a tornado, a forest fire, whether it's a wind storm or a flood or a biohazard situation, Manitobans will have direct communication that will interrupt any and all broadcasts once this system is up and running. And our goal is to have nothing less than all platforms across the country—and that includes hand-held devices and the Internet—up and running by 2017.

Alert Ready, get used to that sound. If you hear that sound, there is an imminent disaster situation, Mr. Speaker. We are asking Manitobans to be prepared for a brand new system—

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

The time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: It's now time for members' statements.

YM-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards

Ms. Theresa Oswald (Seine River): How quickly they forget.

Last evening the RBC Convention Centre hosted the YMCA-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards to celebrate and commend many of the women who make a remarkable difference for the people of Manitoba.

These annual awards highlight the achievements of outstanding women in areas of innovation, research, community service, leadership, culture and the arts. Both the awards and their nominees deserve our attention and our gratitude. I would like to highlight two of the nominees who reside in the beautiful constituency of Seine River.

Ms. Karen Wiebe, who has bravely shared her personal story concerning the loss of her son in a drug-related homicide, has been a leader and an inspiration to us all in her quest to help youth make

positive, healthy choices. Ms. Wiebe has always been a wonderful teacher in and out of the classroom. She serves as an excellent role model for all of us, in particular, those who face adversity and may need help turning abject sadness into positive change. I know members of this House will join me in congratulating Karen Wiebe on her nomination and her indisputable achievements.

Ms. Tanjit Nagra was nominated in the Young Women of Distinction category, and rightly so. Tanjit is a strong role model and a leader who advocates on behalf of fellow students in many capacities. She is also an ardent promoter of volunteerism and social inclusion. In high school, Tanjit served as student council president and was chosen to serve as valedictorian for her class. Last year at the tender age of 18, she very capably ran for school trustee in the Louis Riel School Division. Tanjit also serves as director of external relations for the Winnipeg chapter of Results Canada, which has a strong focus on foreign and international efforts. As the Women of Distinction Awards committee could see and as anyone who has met or spoken to Tanjit surely knows, this girl is on fire.

I offer my heartfelt congratulations to all nominees and award winners, and I want to thank you for everything you do to make our province a better place each and every day.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, an astrophysicist, a singer, songwriter and a math professor were among the 12 women honoured with the YM-YWCA Women of Distinction Award on May 6th, 2015. I had the wonderful privilege of attending this annual event along with many of my colleagues from both sides of the House.

The Women of Distinction Awards were created by the Winnipeg YWCA in 1977 to honour the contributions and achievements of women and girls. The awards are selected on a nomination basis and recognize women who have made a significant difference in the lives of those around them. This special occasion is an excellent reminder of women's diversity within this province.

This year more than 60 amazing women were nominated in 12 different categories and came from backgrounds in health, science, engineering, the civil service, community groups and educational institutions. All of the nominees demonstrated leadership, inspiration and the determination to make a unique contribution to the development of others and to their community.

I would like to thank all of the committee members, staff and volunteers who each put in countless hours to ensure that this year's Women of Distinction Awards are a night to remember. Thank you also to CBC's Diana Swain who was a wonderful host.

I would also like to thank the YM-YWCA which has hosted and co-ordinated the Women of Distinction Awards annually for the past 39 years. On a daily basis, the Y continues to provide programming and support to families and children in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I hope members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba will join me today in extending our warmest congratulations to the nominees and recipients of the YM-YWCA Women of Distinction awards.

I also ask leave to table this year's recipients' names, Mr. Speaker, so that they may be preserved in the public record.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit the tabling of the list of names for the event mentioned by the honourable member for Charleswood?
[Agreed]

John Wichers

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): I'm honoured to welcome to the Legislature today an incredible athlete and volunteer from the constituency of Fort Richmond.

John Wichers arrived in Canada from Holland in 1957 and has covered many miles since then. He began running at the age of 47 and has demonstrated his abilities and his sheer determination by completing 25 marathons and 83 half-marathons during his 30-year running career.

Through the years, he has combined his love of running and biking with his desire to give back to the community. He is currently in his ninth year of coaching students in the running program at St. Emile Catholic school, helping many of them to prepare for the Super Run at the Manitoba Marathon.

In 1999, he participated in a relay run from Winnipeg to Thompson to raise funds for the society of Manitobans with disabilities. In 2002, he ran and biked from Thompson to Winnipeg, this time in support of the Rehabilitation Centre for Children.

John has been a recipient of many awards in recognition of his outstanding dedication and commitment to our community. He was the recipient of the Premier's Volunteer Service Award in 2003. In 2008, he was inducted into the Manitoba Runners' Association Hall of Fame and, in 2012, he was the first person to receive their prestigious President's Award. Also, in 2012, he received the regional volunteer of the year award for Manitoba from the Canadian Diabetes Association. This is only a sample of the well-deserved recognition that John has received over the years.

Mr. Speaker, on June 10th, John will begin his next adventure. He will be cycling almost 2,500 kilometres from Vancouver to Winnipeg as a fundraiser for the Children's Rehabilitation Foundation. John's goal is to raise money for 10 custom-built bikes to help 10 children gain independent movement.

Through the years, John has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of others within our community, with a particular focus on improving the lives of children.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask all members to join me in thanking John for his years of commitment to the community and to wish him well in his next adventure.

Beachell Family Farm

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Farming is an occupation and an activity that has woven into the history of Canada. It has shaped and developed this country and continues to be an integral part of Manitoba.

Today I would like this opportunity to recognize the Beachell family in the Rural Municipality of Rosser.

In 1989, Henry and Alan Beachell, along with their seven children, moved to Rosser from England in order to start a new life in Canada. Shortly after arriving, the family bought 240 acres of land and proceeded to build a home on it. Little did they realize that 125 years and four generations later, the family farm would still be in operation.

The farm is currently owned and operated by Jim and Arla Beachell, both of whom are active members in the Rosser community. This past July, the couple hosted a 125th anniversary event for the beloved family farm. The gathering was attended by more than 200 family members and friends who

enjoyed a filling meal and kind words about the farm's history.

The farm was also presented with a plaque from Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to commemorate the historic event. The family has maintained that with sixth generation beginning, they look forward to another 125 years in the community of Rosser.

Please join me in congratulating the Beachell family on this significant accomplishment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

Michael Ocadchy—Canada Winter Games

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Congratulations to Concordia resident Michael Ocadchy. Earlier this year, Michael joined Team Manitoba to compete in judo at the Canada Winter Games in Prince George, British Columbia.

Michael is a grade 11 student at Kildonan-East Collegiate. He began practising judo about 11 years ago, but really began to devote more time and energy to his practice over the last seven. His dedication has certainly paid off, as he has done well in many competitions across the province and the country.

For those that don't know, judo is a Japanese martial art with a history stretching back more than 13 centuries. Only recently, though, in 1971, was judo added as a sport at the Canada Games. Michael was a valuable member of Manitoba's team in the male team competition, where Manitoba placed fourth. Michael also competed in the male individual over 100 kilogram category, where he placed fifth.

The Canada Games were certainly some of the— one of the more exciting competitions Michael has been in. The Canada Games is a wonderful event that celebrates sports, culture and community. The games give young athletes like Michael both a chance to compete at a high level and enjoy a supportive environment, thanks to many passionate and caring coaches, volunteers, co-ordinators and sponsors.

Hours of training and practice with coaches and teammates goes into preparing for competitions like the Canada Winter Games. Michael's dedication to the—to go the distance and compete at such a high level demonstrates his outstanding drive and discipline.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in congratulating Michael on such a wonderful

accomplishment. We wish you the best in your bright future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I believe that concludes members' statements.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE

(Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move on to orders of the day, government business.

And to resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, who has 23 minutes remaining.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): As I left off last—yesterday, one of the things, when I went to my classroom of my daughter's teacher, she asked me—one of the classmates of my daughter asked me why I ran for—as an MLA. And the question that she gave me, I had to think about it for a while. And the answer I gave her was that, you know, I help people on the personal side for finances and I help businesses on their side for business finances. And I thought that, more importantly, I think government needs to look after their finances. And that is why I'm here today to—that I ran, because I just believe that I can give—be—have some input into, you know, when we go forward here, especially when we have a great team here on our side of the House.

And what I was really surprised, on their side of the House, how lack of inexperience they have in the business world. You know, as—I think I—as I was told that one of them maybe is a farmer, and the other one is a—was a deejay as part-time work. And I was quite surprised about that. When we're looking—working with finances in this province with billions of dollars, and we have people who have no 'exec' experience looking after this money.

And, you know, none of them opposite ever built a business, none of them ever created a 10-year plan for a business, none of them ever hired an employee, I believe, for a business. And the hardest thing is, I don't think they ever had to worry about if they had enough money in the bank account to make payroll.

And, when I look at this, they call this a budget. But, really, I look at more like a—it should be more

called, like, an increase in credit limit application. Because that's what it is. And the sad thing is the credit card belongs to my—our children and our grandchildren in this province.

And there's no consideration of the future of this province. I believe that since the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has become a Premier, the debt has gone from \$18 billion to \$36 billion. And that's—is incredible. That's unacceptable to our future children and grandchildren in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And then, also, our servicing debt is over \$782 million a year. That's as much as putting two of our departments into that. And, really, we could be spending a lot of money on building bridges that we really need, especially in the Arthur-Virden area, where we got inundated with a lot of rain, and a lot of bridges had destroyed. And even the people from MIT said, you know, these bridges really should have been replaced over—like, they had a 50-year span and they should be really replaced probably in the last 20 years. And it's funny that all of a sudden now we're replacing all these bridges and we're going to be replacing them on a higher value now because there's some—such a 'bant'—a big demand and low supply for, actually, contractors. And I don't think this government understands supply and demand. I don't know if they ever took an economic course in this—it's just incredible.

And so the thing is, you know, again, from \$19 billion to \$36 billion, the Premier has represented 87 per cent of this debt that has incurred in that period of time for the NDP government.

And, again, every man—like, every household now has increased their tax rate—taxes—extra taxes per year about \$1,600. That's a lot of money, especially when it comes to middle-class families who are struggling in this province.

I look at the other side of Saskatchewan. We have a lot of middle-class families in neighbouring towns who are thriving and growing and they see very good outlooks in their—in that side of the province [*inaudible*] at that border.

And the thing is, and I can't believe it, too, that every man, woman and child in this province also will be owing \$30,000 of their share of this debt. And the amazing part, we—the Saskatchewan government has reduced their servicing costs of their debt by \$359,000. And Manitoba has increased in the last 10 years of \$78 million in more finance. Whatever happens if interest rates rise?

And that's—in being in business all my life, I was really concerned that if I go into debt, what happens if interest rates rise? I remember growing up in the '80s when my parents borrowed money for the dairy farm and interest rates were good when they first started out. That was in about '72–1972. But, by 1980, interest rates more than quadrupled and 10 times higher than they were when they bought that—started the dairy farm. That was hard times, and what happens now if we go through those hard times again? If interest rates rise we're in really big trouble, and I don't think this—members opposite even think about those things.

And, you know, right now with the cost of—that we could be saving if we went the other way in reducing our debt, we can be eliminating payroll taxes, cutting the PST by 1 per cent, spending more—80 per cent more on infrastructure, tripling the budget for flood protection—which we really need, especially in the western side—new hospitals, improve education and health care, and we really need improved health care, especially in rural Manitoba. We're sitting with ER closures that we haven't seen before.

We also have seen, you know, flood—like, flood protection we need so badly. We need to look at a comprehensive plan when it comes to the Assiniboine drainage basin. Right now there was already a plan done for the Red River basin, but this is their opportunity to work with all these DFA claims that we had where the federal government puts a lot of those programs—the money into those programs—we've got to work with the federal government, work with each of our neighbours, North Dakota and south—and Saskatchewan, to come up with a strategy and a comprehensive plan to work so that we can eliminate all these problems.

Like, what I just spoke on in my question period about the Assiniboine valley producers, who, for the last four years—four years out of five, they haven't been able to put a crop in. And, you know what, when they sort of joke around and laugh across the aisle there, they don't realize that these people work very hard to put crops in, to pay the taxes on that land which, again, they're not getting any revenue from those taxes. And shame on them for even laughing at this situation because it's vital. It's—people put a lot of risk into this. You know, they are borrowing money for this land.

I've known many young farmers who I know personally who bought land and—at high values

because the land production in the valley is so important. But, when they're flooded every year, they have to upkeep their equipment still. They still have to pay taxes on that land and that's a big impact to this young generation. And it's also not only in the Assiniboine valley. I've talked to people in the Lyleton-Pierson area, Melita—a lot of young farmers. We're going to lose a whole generation of farmers because there was nothing in that budget to talk about young farmers and keeping those young generations.

* (14:40)

What this—I think what this government wants is to have a whole corporation coming from another country to do—to have all this farmland. We have an opportunity of young farmers who want to continue the third, fourth, fifth-generation farming, and the way that the crop insurance is for them, there's deductibles. And if they have a—every year that they don't put a crop in, their deductibles grow up higher—grow higher and their premiums go up higher. And for a young farmer, we're going to lose that generation of farmer and that's a big impact to our area.

Again we got inundated with all the rain, and all the infrastructure—again, we could've had—again this government had failed to put money—again they spent—on every single department they overspent except for infrastructure. If they were to reinvest that infrastructure by 28 per cent less they spent it on, we could've had good roads and bridges and we probably wouldn't have been in this situation.

If you go down to Highway 83—I wish somebody would be—from their opposite would have a drive down there; it's atrocious. When you have bridges that you have to go on one—like, reduce to one lane and you have to wait and there's lights to tell—indicate if you can go or not, well, there's a lot of trucks out there right now with—hauling oil, and that produces a lot of revenue for this province even if oil prices are lower. And I believe that I know how this government is also going to do it, too, when the oil prices are low because they really counted on that—all that oil, but unfortunately never reinvested back in our area who—where the oil came from. So, you know, it's just been really frustrating.

And my first year as an MLA we've had a lot of challenges, and we'll probably continue to having lot of challenges for the next year until 2016—April of 2016, I believe that we're going to have a very good opportunity to be the—forming next government.

And again we go back to the Shellmouth Dam, you know, 40,000 acres of farmland being lost every year for four years. That's a lot of money in the revenue that could be given to the general coffer of this Province; it's amazing. And also, at the same time, you know, other important thing, we have a few provincial parks in my riding: the Turtle Mountains, and, you know, I actually grew up in the—between—by the Duck mountains and the Riding mountains. And I feel that the mismanagement of this government with when it comes to wildlife, too, you know, everybody's paying more and receiving less from this government.

And I believe that the displacement of hunting of mismanaging of the wildlife like moose and elk—it's amazing, you don't see those moose and elk in those parks anymore. They've all been chased out, and there's a number of stuff that are displaced in our area of Arthur-Virden. Thank God we got rain because we're seeing more and more moose, but those moose would've probably stayed in the parks if it wasn't for the mismanagement of this government.

The other issue that we have in this area when it comes to healthy living and seniors is that our personal-care homes, there is such a demand to be—for people to be panelled in personal-care homes in our region, but the unfortunate thing is there's not enough health-care workers to actually fill all the beds up. There's many beds in the Virden personal-care home that are empty because there's not enough workers in our area, and this is poor mismanagement because we're actually having the aging population, the baby boomers, who have Alzheimer's that we—they need to be into these personal-care homes because their families cannot continue looking after them because it puts a lot of stress and they need to be supervised. And these family members also need a break from being caregivers, because sometimes it's the caregiver that's—especially with Alzheimer's patients, that are going to be the ones that are going to be stressed out and their health could be deteriorated, compromised too.

So, when it comes to ER closures in rural Manitoba, it's an epidemic. You know, we've seen so many ER closures, and what's the amazing part is when there's ER openings 24 hours in a small town called Redvers, Saskatchewan, just across the border and they're asking Manitobans to come over there because they have a 24-hour ER service. Meanwhile, Melita is closed for another month coming up here, and Virden is partial, and they say, well, we only open it for peak periods. But what are the peak

periods? When you're in an oil industry area where it's high risk and you're in an agriculture industry which is high risk, where does our peak periods? They're always; they're 24 hours, seven days a week. This government has mismanaged; people are paying more. Manitobans are paying more and getting less. And they're also—all the wastage that this government has, it's creating the drain on our front-line services. And that's why our personal-care homes are actually empty, because front-line services are not being focused on.

And also they want to raise the speed limit on the Trans-Canada Highway. I wish some of them would actually drive down the Trans-Canada Highway westward, because there is a lot of—there's going to be a lot of construction that—needed to continue the roads because there is some dangerous parts on the Trans-Canada Highway. There is—frost boils are coming up out of the ground. There is—some of the new pavement that they put on, they didn't do it the right way and we're going to have issues coming up in the next two years.

And one day I was actually driving back from Pierson on an evening coming from the state border and I couldn't—I was driving down Pierson and there wasn't a marker on all these frost boils that were coming out of the pavement and it was dangerous. And this is what these people day after day have to put up with—is wanting to make sure that their loved ones, if they drive on these highways, are going to be coming back. Because with big trucks and semi trucks, oil transporters, drilling rigs, this is really dangerous on these highways. And this government again has failed to help out with the infrastructure.

And again it's an embarrassment. I remember moving to Arthur-Virden back in 1994, and I remember going to Saskatchewan. I remember we were driving to Kenosee to the waterslides—took my nieces and nephews there—and you could almost close your eyes when you went from Manitoba into Saskatchewan because you hit potholes. The opposite's happening now. When you come in from Saskatchewan, you can close your eyes when you hit Manitoba borders and that is the reality of it. We used to make—poke fun of Saskatchewan back in the '90s, and now they're poking fun of us.

And we're also going to be poking fun of Albertans now. But I think it showed in Alberta that there was a change for the better—change was happening, but I think they wanted change. But we

believe that we can make the change here in Manitoba for the better.

So—and the other thing was the lack of respect of this government here to—was in the—many municipalities had to go through a lot of anxiety when it came to forced amalgamation. There was many municipalities that basically—were basically common law; you know, the town and the RM shared the same office, same employees. And basically that's how it should've been done, is work—trying to get them to work together—not forcing them and having this anxiety and putting a lot of stress. And the sad thing was there was many municipalities that didn't have anybody running in these municipalities or elections because people quit. It was too much stress for what it really—what they had—the amount of work that they had to be—and the time that they had to put in.

So, as I would say today, I don't support this budget. This budget is going to be a really disgrace when it comes to future Manitobans in the—when it comes to the debt that we're going to incur. You know, we saw what Greece had created—their such great debt—that they're now in trouble. I—as a Manitoban who've lived here all my life, I do not want to see us to be the next Greece in this province. I want us to be—prosper. I want us to be competing, much like our neighbours in Saskatchewan. They changed things around when they got rid of their NDP government. We can do the same when we have our—when we change to our—for our government to take over. And I believe that change is coming and I really believe with the team that we have, the leader that we have, we're going to make that change on April 19th, 2016. Thank you.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today in support of Budget 2015, because I know what this budget means for my neighbours and how much it reflects the values and what they've told me on the doorstep. I know for them that health care is a priority.

And, as many of you in this Chamber know, oftentimes when I have the opportunity to speak, whether it's for the budget or in response to the Throne Speech, the academic in me tends to go back to different either literary works or academic works.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And I begin today and I will reflect on a wonderful book that I think many folks should take a look at, if they haven't already, and it's called *Life*

Before Medicare: Canadian Experiences. It's a wonderful book that was compiled by Helen Heeney and I think in many ways has a lot to teach folks about what we've built and where it comes from, because medicare is really one of those things that is so crucial to so many people and, to quote the book, it is based on two important Canadian values. The first is that no one be denied needed health care for economic reasons. The second is that, as resources are not infinite, we should focus our health spending on actual services rather than on administration and private profits. End quote.

* (14:50)

There are examples. This spring in every province that show that there are some governments and some political parties who forget these important basic principles, and we have seen budgets and legislation this spring that will institute private payment for needed diagnostic services in other jurisdictions. We have seen things like MRIs and ultrasounds. We've also seen health-care premiums brought forward in some budgets. We've seen some governments that have chosen to pick fights with their front-line health care providers, and I can reassure my neighbours in Kirkfield Park and all Manitobans that something different is happening here in Manitoba.

In Manitoba, we invest and we build. In contrast, what we've seen here in Manitoba is that RHAs in Manitoba have made good progress on bringing down administrative costs and ploughing money back into the front-line care. We've reduced administrative costs overall by amalgamating RHAs, the 13 we were given by members opposite, now down to five, and we are well-positioned through new contracts with doctors and nurses to find better ways to deliver health care into the future in this province.

What is the opposition's response to focusing spending on the right things when they were in government? They paid \$4 million to an American consultant to tell them how to fire nurses, shame.

I think of the importance that health care has to my neighbourhood and what I hear from them, and I've heard wonderful stories the past little while of amazing experiences that people have had within our health-care system because of the doctors and nurses and other allied health professionals and capital investments that have been made.

A gentleman from Woodhaven only recently was telling me about how he ended up showing up at the Grace emerg with abdominal pains, and in a very short order, thanks to the nurse-initiated protocols and the rapid assessment zones that are in there, he was assessed quickly and had emergency gall bladder surgery. Within 24 hours all was well and he was on the mend, no long waits, nothing. He had an amazing experience. He went back to the Grace, to myself and others to share that experience.

I also spoke to someone on the doorstep recently who was thrilled about the knee and hip replacement surgeries that had happened in his family. His wife had most recently gone through having both of her knees done and, again, he complimented the health-care providers and told me about the wonderful care and follow-up that his wife was continuing to get at the Grace as part of her recovery. And so it's nice to know that these are the things that we're continuing to invest in, and I love hearing the feedback from my neighbours because it tells me that we're on their side and we're on the right track.

One thing we should also mention—think about, again, another quote here. It says: We should not forget that Medicare is also one of our most important economic policies. End quote. The economic advantage for employers in Canada to be able to rely on a strongly, publicly funded health-care system to support their workforce, is crucial.

Being a nurse or a health-care professional is really a good family-supporting job in this province, and we have record numbers of nurses and that's because thousands of men and women in this province with good jobs as a result of this government being prepared to invest in them and their communities.

And, again, before coming into this Chamber, I spent time teaching in the joint baccalaureate and diploma nursing programs, and last night—actually, at a long-service recognition dinner for the Selkirk Mental Health Centre—had the wonderful surprising opportunity to reconnect with one of my old students, Jason. It was nice to see that Jason had not only done well in the program, but he took that passion and energy and now he's out there on the front lines and doing amazing work and he has spent about the past eight to 10 years doing phenomenal things. But he's one of the nurses that we ended up training to fill the nursing positions that were left

vacant when over 1,000 nurses were let go by members opposite.

We also built, in terms of building the economy through health care, building personal-care homes, whether they're in Winnipeg, Morden-Winkler, Lac du Bonnet, for example, or hospitals like Notre Dame de Lourdes, Selkirk, and the Women's Hospital. These things, as well as the clinics like QuickCare clinics in Seven Oaks and Southdale, all of these things in addition to providing front-line health care for folks also provide construction, engineering and trade jobs. Health care is a cornerstone to a healthy economy, and investing in health care is investing not only in the health of the province in terms of physical well-being, but also in terms of economic well-being.

And, again, how do you support those investments? You do it by also investing in smaller class sizes for our young children, investing in programs like seeds and roots of empathy, in the PAX program. Those are things that set the foundation for a good education so that you have articulate, empathetic people who can then go on to post-secondary schooling. And whether that's investments in apprenticeships, whether it's things like, oh, I don't know, maybe increasing medical seats—that's a thing that we did. Yes, because members opposite cut—but again, you can't train doctors and nurses if you don't have enough medical seats. You can't do that. So, again, as someone that's had the opportunity to train nurses, to have nurses in her family and among her best friends, again, I know how important it is and I know how much those medical professionals value the work that we do.

I think one thing that's also happened with my neighbours, now that they've had someone from this side of the Chamber represent their neighbourhood, is they've come to realize that New Democrats are builders. They know—again, people know the real difference between this government and the members opposite. We are builders. We are a safe pair of hands around the health-care system and we care. We build, whether it's bricks-and-mortar facilities to bring better health care closer to home, or whether it's relationships with the professionals who provide care to the thousands of patients that they see every day.

Capital freezes and long delays meant that health projects across the province were stalled or cancelled under the opposition. By contrast, just this week, I was proud to be at the Grace Hospital to announce

the construction is now under way on a magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, suite at Grace Hospital to ensure the timely delivery of diagnostic services in Winnipeg.

And I can tell you, we really are building at the Grace—five different projects in the time alone that I've been the member for Kirkfield Park. It started off with some stuff that might have seemed a little, you know, utilitarian. But parking is important, so we made sure that there was sufficient parking to accommodate the other projects, and these projects include everything from the MRI to the new emergency department that will be coming to the Grace.

Again, sharp contrast to what happened in the '90s, when our Grace ER was closed at night and on weekends. Talk about being a job killer. You can't employ nurses if they don't have an emergency room to work in. You can't employ doctors if the emergency room there is closed.

The opposition are job killers, whether it was cutting school—medical school seats or cancelling nursing education programs, firing nurses, running doctors out of the province or closing hospital beds. The opposition put a chill on health care and health-care jobs when they were in government. In 1995, they closed all Winnipeg community hospital ERs at night. They drove nurses and emergency doctors to strike. And, in 1996, when the Leader of the Opposition was in Cabinet, they permanently closed the ER at Misericordia.

I am happy to say that we do things differently here. In this budget, not only has our new Family Doctor Finder already connected nearly 28,000 Manitobans with a family doctor since it was launched last year, again, we've got the two new QuickCare clinics that I mentioned nearing completion in Southdale and Seven Oaks, bringing the total to seven. And over 122,000 patients have already taken—like, visited these innovative clinics, offering better, faster care for family doctors close to home. And, again, we've got construction on the new women's hospital scheduled to be complete in 2016.

Care is coming closer to home for rural folks as well, as I've mentioned, through things like the new PCHs in Winnipeg, Morden-Winkler, Lac du Bonnet. We're doing different things. We're investing; we're investing in health care, we're investing in health-care professionals.

* (15:00)

And among the other things that are included in this budget that I'm very proud of, and that I know my neighbours will appreciate, are the hundred—are the \$50 million in efficiencies as a result of the new Doctors Manitoba contract. Again, a contract where we worked with doctors to make sure that not only are they working with us, they're partners, they're collaborators. We're making sure that they're properly remunerated and that they're willing to work together to find efficiencies. It's about best care, best billing practices, it's about partnership. You can't work with doctors if they're fleeing the province.

Again, we've got so much that we're doing here that, again, whether it's the increase to supporting folks—again, members opposite love to chirp, but we've got the stats from the college of physicians that show the growth that has happened under this government and the exodus that happened under theirs; 665 net new docs. You can't argue with that.

But we're not just supporting folks in terms of that kind of front-line care. We know that with a growing seniors population we have more home-care workers, we have extended home-care hours. We've also got more hospital home teams and we'll be working with the International Centre for Dignity and Palliative Care. We're doing all of these things to support people at all stages of life. We're also increasing the prescription drugs. And, of course, we have the Home Cancer Drug Program. And, as a cancer survivor, that means a lot to me. Because I know that in the last election when the Canadian Cancer Society asked for this program—they asked all parties—we said yes; they said no.

So, in addition to these kinds of things which, again, I know means so much to my neighbours, they ask me about other things and what is it that we're doing. And I can assure them that we are investing in things like Alzheimer's and a dementia strategy, because again, my neighbourhood has one of highest populations of seniors—highest density—in the province. So that's something that I want to make sure is in place not just for my neighbours and my family, but for all Manitobans.

We're also making sure that our home-care programs remain universal. They exist without fees or co-payments and provide excellent care to thousands of families right in their homes, which is a stark contrast to the privatization agenda of members opposite.

We're linking even more doctors and Manitobans together, again, as I mentioned through

the family doc finder. And you know what's really interesting, is that the number of folks that I've met who have told me that not only did they call in, they got matched within a day. Now I know that can't happen for everyone, but I'm so pleased to see how many have been connected to a doctor in one day and are happy with the doctor and building a wonderful relationship.

Again, as a cancer patient and a cancer survivor, one of the programs that I'm so proud of is the In Sixty Cancer Patient Journey Initiative, which provides cancer patients with better care and shorter wait times.

As I mentioned before, the building of hundreds more personal-care-home spaces, adding a thousand more personal-care-home beds in support of housing units since 1999. Again, we're builders—that's what people know us to be. And we're continuing, again, as I said, with this best-in-Canada Home Cancer Drug Program, which has saved families over \$17 million in Pharmacare deductibles.

These are all the kinds of investments that I know matter to my neighbours.

I think one of the things that's happened in the most recent past is we've seen some change come to places that maybe didn't foresee it. I'm so proud of our colleagues out in Alberta. And I think many of the reasons why things changed in Alberta was because of the budget placed before the Albertans—the Albertans by a Conservative government that talked about user fees. And Albertans remembered the value of home care and they thought about Tommy Douglas who saw—foresaw public health care should be one of the most important things, the crucial part of a Canadian identity, and also its emphasis on prevention of illness and the promotion of health. And I think that's one of the reasons why there was change, because Albertans didn't want to be paying user fees. They saw that in a province like Manitoba, that's something that doesn't have to happen, when you've got the right government that builds health care, that is aware of and proud of the roots of medicare. Whether it's Tommy Douglas, Jack Layton, Tom Mulcair, those are the folks that will look after you. Our own Premier (Mr. Selinger) in his 10 years as Finance minister, budget-balanced the budget for 10 years to ensure that we had health care and we continue to invest.

Our commitments are in sharp contrast to the opposition. We have not and we will not oversee the withering of our public-health system in Manitoba or

fund it on the backs of patients or nurses as the opposition did when they were in government.

We will not fire nurses. We will not freeze health capital projects and close Winnipeg ERs at night. We will not introduce home-care user fees, cut services or move towards the privatization of this made-in-Manitoba program. We will not cut the number of medical school spaces and drive doctors away from our province in record numbers. We will not cut funding to dozens and dozens of rural hospitals, and we will not deny funding to operate vital diagnostic equipment. That is their agenda.

We've got a different agenda, a plan to build and to be on the side of Manitobans, and I know that that is something that my neighbours are proud of and that that is something that my neighbours and all Manitobans want whether it's in the form of their ACCESS centres, whether it's in the form of the Grace Hospital, whether it's in the form of the smaller class sizes that have come to my neighbourhood and many others.

I can stand very proudly behind this budget and with members on this side of the Chamber and say that we are doing what is right for Manitobans, that we're listening to Manitobans and that we're building Manitoba because we're on their side.

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Recognize the honourable member for Emerson.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): It gives me great pleasure to stand and put a few words on the record about the broken-promise balanced budget act or broken-promise balanced budget.

As we heard today that this year is supposed to be the plan, the plan going forward—we heard this from the Finance Minister, the member from Gimli. This is a plan that actually continues the same way that the last 13 budgets or 14 budgets have done. They run deficits. They have no intentions of balancing anything and, in fact, the Budget 2015 budget projects a deficit of \$422 million, up from \$357 million projected last year, and increases debt held by the Province from 33 to 36 billion dollars.

The member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) believes that you don't have to pay the credit card of the Province, that deficits are just unpaid taxes—she doesn't believe that either. But the fact is that's what they are; deficits are unpaid taxes. And I can see that the member for—is that Dawson Trail? *[interjection]* Dawson Trail, yes, the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux), he doesn't believe anything either

about the deficits being unpaid taxes. But, of course, many of his constituents do believe that.

I say—and also, just going back to what the member for Burrows said about Saskatchewan buys power, the amount of power Saskatchewan buys is probably less than what one wind tower produces in a year in Manitoba. You will find, though, that Manitobans buy a lot of potash from Saskatchewan because it's being developed there. It was developed in Saskatchewan five miles from the Manitoba border. And, in fact, we might even be mining underneath the border at this point because there is an incentive in Saskatchewan for people to invest, invest in businesses that hire people, that—and the people they hire support their communities, pay taxes. And Saskatchewan today is much farther ahead than Manitoba, much, much farther ahead not just in football, but in economics as well.

The ballooning debt matters because the debt servicing means Manitobans are paying a great deal more than their cousins in Saskatchewan—or Ontario, for that matter—and they're getting much, much less. The NDP spent \$872 million to service the Province's debt. That's more money than was spent on infrastructure, housing and conservation combined.

* (15:10)

But not only that—not only that—when they did a project, a \$22-million project as we've heard today in this House, in Steinbach, in a hospital that was needed by the people of Steinbach they put up a barrier that can only service a few of the people. The barrier—is a real barrier, and the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) said, well, no, you just don't understand. Well, I understand—I understand fully that when I took my wife there, who had just had a knee operation, a knee replacement, and it appeared that—a doctor at the walk-in clinic said to her it appears that you have a blood clot; you have to get to—into the hospital immediately. We got to the hospital and we couldn't get in. We couldn't get in because the ramp was ice. We couldn't get up the ramp. She couldn't climb the stairs.

So I went looking. I went looking and I did find an entrance, and when I went to use that entrance, I was told that that was only for palliative care. And I said, well, then where do we take people that can't possibly get in here? And I showed the individuals what this doctor had give us to take to the hospital, and they said, okay, you can come in this time.

What about the people that don't go to look? What about the people that decided to build this hospital and put up a barrier that you can't get into it? That's horrible. That's a terrible way to treat Manitobans. That's a terrible waste of money. That same money that's being wasted to redo that entrance could be used for many, many other things. It could be used to replace or—the displaced people that were in the gallery today—that, after four years, haven't been able to sleep in their own beds, haven't been able to sleep at their own—eat at their own kitchen tables and have had their children in so many different schools while, in fact, this NDP government has not missed a meal. Not one member in that House has missed a meal. They've been able to sleep in their own homes. They've been able to enjoy their family gatherings. The people that are displaced haven't been able to do that.

But the money that was wasted in just one instance—in just one instance—that money could've made a number of families get back together again.

In 2012, the Finance minister committed in that budget that we're on track to balance the budget in 2014. And we've heard that statement so many times from so many of the members opposite: We're on track. The only track they're on is the track that the love train just ran over them. And they're running over top of all the Manitobans, and while the Manitobans are down, they have vacuum cleaners in each one of their pockets taking any excess money that they possibly have with them.

But in 2014 that all changed with the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard). The former minister of Finance announced we're on track to return to balance in 2016.

So we've extended the track. We've extended the track and we've had more Finance ministers here than Liz Taylor's had husbands, and we've had that all in a very, very short time. At least she spread them out.

Then, in late 2014, the members opposite gave up their commitment to reduce waste in government in a meaningful way, stating it's the goal of our government to return to surplus in 2016-17.

I would remind you that the members opposite who went to the doorsteps of Manitobans and told them they would balance the budget by 2014; they also said they wouldn't raise taxes. They also said—help me—they would not—they would not raise the PST. And I expected some help from the member opposite over there, but he can't remember. You see,

when you tell the truth, it's so easy to remember, but when you mislead—not always easy to remember what you said. But four years ago, they walked to the doors and said we will not raise taxes, we will not raise the PST, we will balance the budget.

Well, that was then, this is now, and we're on track. I heard the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), the Minister of Finance by default actually, because no one else wanted the job, but what he said was we are on track with a plan. Well, if this budget was a plan, here's what that plan is: increase fees for subdivision applications, 2 per cent fee-per-service increase for those seeking to use Manitoba Food Development Centre, new application fees for Licence Suspension Appeal Board, increased application fees at residential 'tenancies,' new fees for credit guarantors, new fees for veterinary diagnostic services, increase to cottage lot fees in provincial parks.

That's a plan. That question was asked here today, and the new minister that's responsible for that—and I have to give him credit. He made a valiant effort on his second time standing in this House to try and address something—that this government has been taking advantage of the very people who have been putting money into your coffers. You just want to go and tax them some more because you think they're rich; they can afford it, and we've heard that. We have heard that comment from the other side of the House: Oh, they can afford that.

We see that there's increases to material fees for independent distance education and study students. The most vulnerable aren't able to come to Winnipeg. Many of them are northerners. In fact, most of them are northerners in distant communities that don't have regular access to the city of Winnipeg. But we are going to charge them more to learn, to move forward in life. And yet we often—and we believe this, that the road out of poverty is education. But you want to stop it. You want to put another roadblock up exactly the same as you've done at the hospital in Steinbach, put up roadblocks.

An Honourable Member: Barricades.

Mr. Graydon: Barricades, absolutely. Good, good term.

Increased registration fees for—to provide international education, but here's a kicker. This is the one that the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) doesn't get. She doesn't get it at all. Her vision is, I

think, we're going to have carrots tonight instead of peas for supper, but increases to capital taxes on chartered financial institutions because they can afford it. She feels that they can afford it. Where did they get their money from? Where do they get their money from? Where did they make money? And she says, well, you can't get anyplace unless you have a mortgage. Oh, but now the mortgage is going to cost more because the financial institution has to charge more because of the taxes. You just don't understand finances whatsoever. The people that have to have mortgages—and everyone does—they have to pay more because of your taxes in this NDP government.

We have also got increases to registration fees for Manitoba-affiliated international schools, and although that doesn't seem like a lot, it does make a big difference. And on budget day the Finance Minister told Manitobans that every year since 2009 our deficits have gotten smaller and smaller. Remember what I said earlier, that you have to remember what you say when you went to the door four years ago. You misled Manitobans then. The fact is he's misleading them with that statement.

Now, we know that he's a rookie in his position, but surely he should be expecting his 192 spinners to be accurate. But, I suppose, being in a backbencher for 15 years and then with no experience being thrust into the Finance chair because there was no one else available, the blinding light of the spotlight has erased any thought of honesty or relevancy.

* (15:20)

You see, only in 2013 and 2014 since 2009 has the deficit been lower than it was in a preceding year. This NDP government intentionally misleads Manitobans on purpose. They're addicted to power for their own 37—or fifty—37 individuals, not the fine Manitobans that they should be working for.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) took the—took office—when the Premier took office, the provincial debt was increased from \$19 billion to \$36 billion; 87 per cent of the Province's debt is attributable to this Premier's time in office, but he continues to tell us that he's on track. But it seems the harder he works, the worse it gets. Perhaps taking a day off once in a while would help Manitobans.

Took 137 years for Manitoban to—Manitoba to accumulate \$18.1 billion in debt in 2008, but it only took this Premier eight years to double it.

More than \$840 million per year is wasted on paying interest on our debt. This money cannot

be invested to protect front-line services, reduce health-care wait times or improve education results for our children. We pay \$2 million, at least, a day, in interest.

I heard the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk) talk about what his parents went through in the 1970s when they borrowed money. And they borrowed money, and I would suggest that they first borrowed money at 5 or 6 per cent when they borrowed money for their dairy, for an operation that was going to feed their family and a good portion of the people in the community as well, the businesses that they would buy from plus the product that they put on the shelves.

I was one of the individuals in the middle '70s that borrowed money at 5 and 6 per cent. And in 1980, I was paying 22 per cent. Before I got out of bed every day, I paid \$100 in interest. And I would suggest to the member of Thompson that here—[interjection] I—and I agree that you are sympathizing with me and I appreciate that, but at the same time this government has to understand that Manitobans cannot afford to have this happen to them.

And we have had zero interest rates, or basically zero interest rates, the highest transfer of money from the federal government for many, many years, and we are \$36 billion in debt. Where did the money go? We haven't invested in any hard infrastructure.

When I drive down the streets in the city of Winnipeg, it's pothole to pothole. When I come in the highways from rural Manitoba, the roads are not super smooth—no, they're not. There are potholes out there. [interjection] And I have heard in the background that highways that are smooth are the ones that Vic Toews did. And I have to agree. He was one of the best MPs that Manitoba's ever had.

The one-lane bridges were on different highways that the then-minister of MIT just wanted to slow up traffic because they were leaving to go to Saskatchewan, because the taxes were lower in Saskatchewan, the wages were higher in Saskatchewan, the working conditions—there were jobs—there were actually jobs in Saskatchewan and there weren't any here.

So—[interjection] Sometimes they love me too much. The NDP—you never know where the sickle and the hammer is.

The NDP doesn't even bother to pretend that the budget will be balanced in 2016-2017 anymore. Just

four months ago the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said we're focusing on meeting target. So we've got a target and we're on track for a target, but it's all just tax and spend, not pay down the deficit.

The government of Saskatchewan now pays \$359 million less in debt servicing costs than it did 10 years ago. That's a million dollars a day. Can you imagine what Manitoba could do with a million dollars a day? The 14 per cent increase in PST is needed just to pay half of Manitoba's debt servicing charges.

We've raised all the other taxes to pay for infrastructure; like, we've raised the vehicle registration fees for—pay for infrastructure, the 2 cents on the gas and so on and so forth. But we could have used—we could use this million dollars a day to eliminate the payroll tax, cut PST, spend 80 per cent more on infrastructure.

One other item that really sticks in the craws of Manitobans is that the PC Party believes in eliminating the vote tax and it will provide \$1 million of subsidies that the NDP are taking. It would provide that to do a lot of different things in Manitoba. The PC Party refused \$1 million because it was the right thing to do. You would go and ask Manitobans for money to support you, not go knocking on the doors and promise not to do things and know full well when you're making the promises that you're going to break them, you're going to break them immediately.

When we take a look at agriculture in this province, I would like to point out that Manitoba farmers are tired of the same NDP broken promises and want a change for the better, and they have a good reason to be tired of the broken promises. They promised to eliminate the education tax on farmland, and then they capped it at \$5,000. That amount of money that they took out of a farmer's budget—these are business people. These are people that have to do a budget every year. They have to make it balance. They have to pay their credit card bills because they don't have anyone to tax. They can't just say, oh, we're going to tax the cottage owners or we're going to tax the poor without letting them know. No, they can't do that so they have a right to be upset with the broken promises by this NDP government.

The NDP had once again broken a promise in 2011's election promise to exempt farmers from paying that tax. Also, they did not—they did not honour, as we heard today from the member from Arthur-Virden, they did not honour the contracts

they had for paying the farmers for flooded land. This land gets flooded five out of six years now. They passed a law that said they had to be compensated for it and they haven't been compensated. Why have they not been compensated? Forecasting a flood shouldn't be that difficult. Why is it not being addressed?

Under the NDP directive, Hydro employees are trespassing on farmland and obvious—oblivious to the reality of cross-contaminations of croplands. We're talking about generations of farmland, generations of farmers making a living, teaching their people how to farm to improve the farmland so it is productive, and here we have someone in the middle of the night just sign a piece of paper that gives a Crown corporation the right to trespass, the right to expropriation without negotiation. That is not Canadian way. That's not Manitoba's way. That's not the democracy that my mother, my father and many of my aunts and uncles fought for. That's not the democracy. Manitoba needs a strong agricultural industry and this cannot happen when producers are exiting the industry. The NDP has done nothing to support the livestock industry either and it has broken its promises to many, many farmers.

Manitoba's child and poverty rate is the worst among all provinces at 29 per cent and almost 10 per cent above the rate of Canada. That's a horrible, horrible statistic. Our children are our future, and we on both sides of this House believe that the road out of poverty is through education. But, my goodness, we have the worst poverty rate in all of Canada, something to be proud of. Estimates suggests Canada's poverty rate costs Manitoban's at least \$360 million annually; that's 14 per cent increase in the PST is \$360 million annually, and it still hasn't addressed the poverty.

* (15:30)

In 2013 and '14, there were 11 tragic child and youth suicides, and in 2013 and '12, there were 17. This continued increase in suicides comes after an announcement four years ago by the NDP to implement an \$8-million strategy to help prevent suicide. It's not working.

The NDP broke its promise to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to an amount that is at least 6 per cent less than Manitobans' total 1990 emissions. Budget 2015 just provides more rhetoric on climate change. They haven't come close to the target with no plan, but you're on track. That's the

saving grace—you're on track. You don't know where you're going, but you're on track.

We know that the NDP—Manitobans pay more with the NDP. Manitobans pay more and get less, and that includes on Bipole III, climate change commitments on all areas of government.

Budget 2015 continues the NDP's unfounded position to raise cottage service fees. I brought this up earlier. The fact is, there's no accountability and no transparency of where these fees are going to be used.

By the spring of 2015, nothing appears to have been done besides a PowerPoint presentation to deal with—to deal with the flooding and the issues around Lake Manitoba—nothing long-term. The lake is at the highest level that it's at before it starts to overflow. One huge rain event and we would be back to where we were a few years ago. Twenty eleven, that was the flood of the—200, 500—whatever years you want to put to it, because that changed daily. But all you've done, all that the NDP have done, is have coffee parties. The people there have no idea what's going to take place next.

So, as I move on to more broken promises, I just want to point out that the small business tax—income tax threshold was promised to go to \$500,000—not there—wasn't in this document, this plan, this one-year plan that's just an extension of the other 14 plans that you put forward. It just goes into more deficit, more deficit.

Family Services seeks to allocate more than \$1.1 billion to the Department of Family Services. You know, we listened to the minister yesterday, how she was proud to be sitting in a special—with a special blanket between two First Nations people, and, yes, she has a right to be proud to do that. But, at the same time, she has the right to stand up for them, same First Nations people, and she hasn't done that in this budget. She hasn't done that at all. And I can go back to give you the facts on that if you so wish, and I'm sure you do.

Manitoba has the second highest percentage of First Nations children living in poverty—second highest. The budget didn't address that. According to the C.D. Howe Institute, 63 per cent of Aboriginal high school students in Manitoba do not graduate, and I've said it many times today, we all agree that the road out of poverty is education. Nearly one-third of on-reserve First Nations live in homes that are

needing major repairs. Reserves are perpetually overcrowded or facing housing backlogs.

The second lowest life expectancy is among First Nations people across Canada. That's our reputation. Isn't that something to be proud of. But the minister didn't stand up. She didn't stand up for the very people that she's proud to sit with. Aboriginal people and northerners are tired of paying more and getting less under this NDP government. The NDP say increasing educational opportunity is a priority, but they negated this very claim by decreasing students' access to education by making distance education more expensive in Budget 2015. For many Aboriginal communities in northern and rural Manitoba, distance education is a golden opportunity, sometimes the only opportunity and now the NDP is creating a barrier. It's unfortunate that they would create a barrier.

So, with those few words, just pointing out the broken promises, the expectations that Manitobans had when the NDP went to the polls in 2011, the expectation of no taxes increase, no PST increase and all the broken promises—Manitobans know that it's time for a change.

Thank you very much.

House Business

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Recognizing the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business.

In accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce the private member's resolution that will be considered in the next sitting Thursday is the resolution on Severance Payments Costing Manitoba Families, sponsored by the honourable member for Steinbach.

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): It has been announced that in accordance with rule 31(9), the private member's resolution that will be considered on Thursday is the resolution on Severance Payments Costing Manitoba Families.

Recognizing the honourable member—oh, and sponsored by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Recognizing the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald).

Ms. Theresa Oswald (Seine River): Mr. Acting Speaker, it's really my pleasure to stand in the House today to put a few words on the record concerning the budget and a few comments concerning the proposed amendment by the members opposite.

I, of course, first want to, as always, offer my thanks to the people of Seine River who made the choice, repeatedly, I'm happy to—*[interjection]*—seriously. Repeatedly, I'm happy to say, to allow me to be their representative in the Manitoba Legislature. It's an incredible honour, and I'm very, very grateful to them for that.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of our newest member, the new member from The Pas, who gave her maiden speech just the other day, and a blockbuster speech it was. I am so delighted that the people of The Pas chose this member to be their representative. I'm delighted that we have a member of First Nations status, a woman for the first time, as I understand it, historically, and I'm so delighted that she has joined our caucus. I know that she will be a tremendous representative for the community of The Pas and she will add incredible insight to the debate in our caucus and, indeed, to the discourse that is going to happen in this Legislature. *[interjection]*

I'm so delighted, of course, that I have the attention of some members of the Chamber, not all members, however. I really, you know, would hope that there would be a moment of decorum, certainly, during our member's maiden speech. Certain members on the opposite side of the House couldn't quite contain themselves to listen to that. But I hold out hope that they will be able to listen to a few words that I put on the record today.

I also would like to acknowledge those members of our Legislature on our side of the House and otherwise who have made a very, I'm sure, difficult decision, a challenging decision to retire from politics come the next election. I know that—and I may be leaving some out here, I apologize if I do that—but I know the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) has made that decision. We have over time, of course, had our debates on issues, but we've also had very collegial conversations over time and have worked together to solve problems and to work through challenges, and I have appreciated his gentlemanly nature throughout and I wish him all the best in the years ahead.

I would say, also, I believe the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) has also made this decision to pursue other avenues after the next

election. Once again, I know that she has asked me over time many challenging questions. She's passionate about issues that concern the people in her riding and concern her family. And, you know, there wasn't—it wasn't every day that I felt like sending her flowers; that's just the nature of the work that we do. But I have never doubted her passion for the issues she brings forward, and I do wish her all the best as well.

* (15:40)

I would say the same to the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) who, I would say, of the three, I have come to know more intimately than the other two. Once again, it was never a great day when she stood in the House to ask me a question about health care or matters concerning Jobs and the Economy because I always knew it would be a difficult question and that there would be no easy ride coming from her. And so for that, I offer her very few to no thanks, but for her service to her community and, indeed, for her friendship—I will dare to say that in this combative Chamber—we have had many conversations about our children and our families and that which we hold mutually dear, and I will miss seeing her every day and I wish her all the best. Heaven knows that she has earned a peaceful retirement, and I certainly wish that for her.

I would also wish to members of our own team, the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) and the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), who have declared that it is not their intention to run in the next election—a challenging decision, I'm sure. They have represented their ridings, their constituencies, very ably, and have also cared deeply about the people that they have represented, and I wish them all the best. Thank you.

Also, I would one day hence like to acknowledge history having been made in Canada, and that is, of course, make reference to the historic win for the NDP in the province of Alberta. It was a remarkable win. There were many people—I might even put myself into that group—who thought that one might never see the day when the New Democratic Party had a breakthrough of this nature in the province of Alberta, but indeed they did, and there are a number of lessons to be learned from the victory. And I anticipate what members opposite will cry out on cue and that is, of course, that the electorate has signalled time for a change. And, indeed, what I—*[interjection]* Right on cue, one can always predict the verbal and applaud ejaculations

from members opposite. You can set your watch by them, absolutely.

But what we can clearly see from the NDP, absolutely in Alberta, is that the electorate, regardless of where they are in Canada, care very deeply about their services. They care very deeply about the fact that when they are told that health care is going to be snatched out from under them or that education will receive less support—that even, you know, after decades and decades of support for one particular party, when they hear a message that those things that they hold most dear are in absolute jeopardy, they will absolutely vote for their families and vote for the support for their families, absolutely.

And I think that there absolutely is a lesson to be learned in there, not necessarily the lesson that members opposite want us to hear from it, but I think the lesson that very serious, hard-line austerity in a time when you need to be investing in those things that matter to families, I think that the message is clear, that it doesn't matter where you are in Canada, families are families, parents are parents and people want to make sure that those very, very important services are protected.

It was delightful, of course, to see an energetic and intelligent woman be elected as leader of the province and leader of the NDP, a very, very dynamic, excellent debater, great communicator, a winning strategy to be sure. I really do wish Premier-elect Notley all the best and I hope that she's very, very successful in her future endeavours.

Now, I do want to spend a little bit of time talking about why I, in particular, will support this budget because, of course, this budget holds within it the kinds of things that my constituents speak to me about on a regular basis, the kinds of things that they hold very, very dear.

The people in my constituency come from all walks of life, but whether or not they live in a Manitoba Housing complex or they live in a very large and extravagant house in a wealthy area, you know, these are not people who have at their core, you know, materialistic ideals. They hold at their core a love for their family, a need to take care of their parents, a desire for their children to have all of their hopes and dreams come true. In many ways people are not particularly different when it comes to what they hope for for their parents and what they dream for for their children, absolutely.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And so there are many things in this budget, I think, that will speak to the people of Seine River and will absolutely support the things that they want. There are big investments in this budget on infrastructure. And I listened to the member from Emerson before speaking about roads and potholes and issues of infrastructure, and while I have to say I can count the number of times I've agreed with the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) on one hand with a number of fingers removed, I can say that I would agree with him on the point that we need to continue to do more work in investing in our roads. People don't like driving on roads that are crumbling, and you have to make investments in order to improve that—and it's not really just about a smooth ride, Mr. Speaker, which is enjoyable. It's also about investing in that critical infrastructure that will, in fact, help drive our economy. We need to ensure that our highways are such that materials can be moved swiftly and be moved safely. We need to ensure that we're investing in projects like CentrePort so that we can be an economic hub.

So investments like this aren't, as the member opposite would insinuate, you know, absolutely and entirely about spending. These are investments that are about growing our economy in the days ahead and, indeed, making life more comfortable for Manitobans.

This budget also speaks an awful lot about jobs and, in particular, training our young people and training those people that are perhaps traditionally underrepresented in our workforce. And there are plenty of initiatives that we can find in this budget that go to the very core of helping young people find that absolutely critical first job that can set a path for them, build relationships and set them forward into a career. And there are investments in this budget for those people that maybe just need a little bit more help. They need to have access to a daycare spot or they need to have access to a training program that can change the trajectory of their own lives and, indeed, the lives of their children, and these are investments worth making.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, of course, that one thing I think all members of the House will find agreement upon, and that is continued investment in education, whether it's K to 12 or post-secondary, are investments that change the lives of individual people, but also changes the face of our economy. And so shying away from making these investments in education in the name of having a single-minded focus in coming back to zero in the budget, I think, is

wrong-headed, and it's not something that represents any sort of foresight. You know, I'm not talking about some sort of crazy, you know, futuristic sort of budgeting that doesn't make any sense to the average Manitoban. I'm talking about having a plan, sticking to that plan, investing in our young people and ensuring that they have the opportunities that we all want them to have.

This budget also contains a number of things that are critically important to the families of Seine River: investing in more daycare spaces, some 900 spaces mentioned in the context of this budget. When I speak to young families in my community, there's probably nothing that's more important to them than having access to high-quality daycare. This changes everything for the family. It changes how the grandparents are able to interact with the family. It changes how the parents are able to pursue their careers, continue their careers. And it also changes things for the children themselves in ensuring that they have the kind of daycare that is of the highest quality and the kind of early childhood education that is so deeply important to having strong outcomes in the education system later on. So continuing this kind of investment, the kind of investment that enables all families to have access to that, not just the privileged few, by having a model or a construct that's available only to the wealthiest of families, I think is really, really important. It's important for us to continue to invest in these kinds of things.

* (15:50)

I also note in this budget, Mr. Speaker, that there's an incredibly important investment in Rent Assist, in ensuring that we get to 75 per cent of median market rent within the context of the year. And this has been the subject of quite a bit of conversation over the last couple of years, and I've noticed people lining up to take credit for this. It's a long line indeed. And, quite frankly, I think that collectively—I don't just mean members opposite who have patted themselves on the back for the model that they've put forward, insinuating that they somehow shamed our side of the House into coming forward with this particular kind of announcement, but it was a—sort of an antediluvian construct of sorts that they put forward, that was about building a welfare wall and ensuring that people who were receiving assistance would never be able to climb over that wall and move from welfare into work. And this is a fundamental point that I believe the members opposite miss when they pat each other on

the back and say that they were the ones that came up with this particular investment.

What they miss, Mr. Speaker, is that this investment not only provides additional resources for housing, but it's portable and it can travel with an individual as they make that transition from welfare to work. It doesn't cut anybody off at the knees. It allows them the support and that transition, which lowers fear, which inspires people to engage in the workforce where they may never have done that before. And it's a kind of construct that I believe leads the nation in terms of how it is we can transform the lives of people that may, up to now, maybe never really had a break, and I think that that's an important issue.

Frankly, there are some people that have said to me, well, you know, this is because of you or it's because of the member from Thompson, because of the leadership race—you might've heard something about that. It's because you both brought that forward and now the government had to do it. That just simply isn't true.

Every member of this caucus has been passionate about those that are living in poverty. And even members of our own caucus quietly who take credit and say, well, that's because I brought this forward, that's poppycock. This came forward because of the advocates that work with people with lived experience and have studied these issues so carefully and have looked at sometimes the perverse outcomes that happen when a federal benefit comes into play and something happens to a provincial benefit. Or the provincial government invests something and something goes upside down with a federal benefit. These academics and these advocates and, most importantly, these people with lived experience have come forward and they have candidly told us their stories and said this is how we need you to fix this. And that, Mr. Speaker, is how this benefit came into being and how it came into shape in this particular budget. And, if anyone should take congratulations, it's for those people that have fought so hard for this benefit.

I would say also, Mr. Speaker, that the continuation of raising minimum wage to \$11 in a few months hence is something that our government is very proud of. I know there are poverty advocates, members of the labour movement out there that would say, this is what we like to call an excellent start. You should keep going. It needs to be more. And I don't disagree, but I think that our consistent

approach of raising it every single year—in stark contrast with members opposite who hardly ever got around to it—I think that this is a really, really important issue.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker—and I know my time is running short—I would say to you that I'm also very pleased to see in this budget, for my own family and for the families of Seine River, continued investment in health care. We know that members opposite spend quite a lot of time speaking about the bottom line, and that's appropriate. All members of the Legislature should pay close attention to balancing the books and to seeking balance wherever possible. But I believe that that should also include true balance. I do not believe that when you endeavour to have a single-minded focus on getting to zero and resulting from that people get hurt along the way, that is not true balance.

And I could give you a number of examples; indeed, the list is long. But I'll give you one example of what I mean from the federal stage. We know that there is much pomp and circumstance concerning the balancing of the federal budget and there will be parades and balloons and the clinking of glasses. But we know along the way that decisions were made, like one particularly egregious decision concerning providing funding for health care for refugees. Refugees were essentially cut off at the knees by the federal government. It was mean-spirited, indeed, I hear members saying, but, more importantly, it was wrong-headed in an economic sense. When you don't provide excellent primary care for those people that are coming from environments where maybe there hasn't been terrific health care at all but coming from environments where people might not be very well in the first place, might be suffering, you know, from severe diabetes. If you don't provide good primary care and fund that care, then you are eventually going to be funding an amputation later on, and that costs a lot more than good primary care, Mr. Speaker.

And I am very proud that Manitoba was the first jurisdiction in Canada to stand up and say to the federal government that is wrong, it's more than a little bit disgusting and we will fully cover the costs of refugee health care in Manitoba. And other jurisdictions followed suit, and I'm very, very proud that Manitoba led the way on that.

But you know what? It wasn't free. We picked up the costs—the costs that needed to be covered for those individuals who came to Canada for a better

life, those people who needed us the most, we picked up those costs. But, as a result, it's going to take us a little longer to balance, but because we made that kind of decision and many, many more like that, it's going to take us a little longer to balance the decision—or to balance the books, but it's because we made a balanced choice to do what was good and just in the face of a decision that I thought, and many other Canadians thought, was very, very wrong-headed.

And so I would say to you that continuing to invest in front-line services so people have access to good primary care, they have access to specialists when their families are battling cancer, for example, making decisions like funding oral cancer drugs for the first time in Manitoba's history, it's not free; it will take us a little more time to balance the books, but we know it was the right thing to do. And that, Mr. Speaker, is true balance, which, I think, is what every member of this Legislature should be seeking as they have a conversation about our economic bottom line.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I know members opposite will, you know, have some sort of coagulation of thinking over there and decide that, you know, nothing that I've had to say about true balance matters in any way to them. You know, they will carry on with their single-minded view on the subject of balancing. They will take no time to, you know, masticate on the words that I have given to them, chew on it a little bit, you know, have some reflection on it. They won't do that. I live in hope—I live in hope—that that might happen.

But I for one, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of Seine River, will be voting for continued investments in health care, will be voting for continued investments in education, will be voting for investments in infrastructure, will be voting for training for good jobs for our young people, because I know that's what they care about most.

Thank you very much.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak up for people that I represent in my constituency of Charleswood. And I'm certainly very, very privileged, and I feel very privileged and honoured to be able to represent them.

We did have an incident just in the last couple of days in Charleswood that has been very disturbing,

where a young man chose to take his—a car and drive all over a skate park and a baseball field and try to run down people. And a very frightening experience when you see a 21-year-old that has chosen deliberately to try to harm other people and none of it makes sense. Nobody can understand what's going on, and it does make you, you know, really wonder what is happening to some people in our society, that something like this actually happens and something that you would just never expect to happen in your backyard. So there certainly is a feeling of concern in Charleswood over that particular instance and one I hope that we don't see any time soon again.

* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker, I find it quite strange actually to follow the ringleader of the warfare, the family feud that happened on the NDP side, and to listen to the words that she just put on the record. Because here she was and here she is right now standing in support of a budget put forward by a premier that she says is not a good premier and that she can't support. And yet she stands here and speaks very eloquently in support of this budget and it just seems so strange.

And you have to wonder where is the integrity in all of that process; that you get, you know, five family members that decide they don't like this Premier (Mr. Selinger), they take out the knives, they go after a sitting Premier in this province. And then you have the ringleader of that group actually stand in here and support the person she said is a disaster for Manitoba families. It is just really odd to sit here and have to listen to that and to have to listen to the lack of integrity around all of that, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed strange.

She also had indicated before that she felt that he owed an apology to all Manitobans around the PST issue. And we know the PST and what the NDP did in increasing it, in broadening it, in bringing it before Manitobans in the way that it was and to bring it forward without a vote by Manitobans is certainly—and I agree with her that this Premier owes an apology to Manitobans. But then here she is in disagreement with all of that and then standing here supporting a budget that continues down the road of, you know, taking all of that money out of Manitobans' pockets and purses, Mr. Speaker. So it really is quite an awkward situation to have to, you know, hear words like that.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think I have ever been as disillusioned with a budget in the whole time that I have been in this Legislature. And I heard it, and I

couldn't believe firstly how short it was and it was sort of an odd type of a budget. And then I went home that night and I read it and I really was quite amazed at the level of writing within that budget. It actually took—it looked like somebody in grade 6 had actually just sat down one night, late at night, and written that budget. And it is a budget that is certainly not one that anybody in their right mind is going to be able to support because it is not a budget that is good for Manitobans.

And, in fact, there isn't particularly a lot in there. What there is a lot of in that budget is a lot about spending. There wasn't anything in there that really talks about how do we grow our economy, how do we strengthen what is happening in this province so that indeed then we can take the money that comes from that and put it into essential front-line services.

I don't know where this NDP government thinks money comes from, but you can't just keep taking it from other provinces, you can't just keep taxing Manitobans and expect that that can go on forever. That doesn't go on forever. At some point it is going to drag everybody down and we're seeing it now; and it's not just dragging down our current generation, it's dragging down future generations.

And I have two young sons in this province and I hope they stay here. Those boys are now going to have to pay for this government's determination to spend all the money that they can get and keep borrowing more and plunge us into the worst debt this province has ever had. And it's not just going to be, you know, this generation, my generation, us in here that are affected by it; it is our children's generation, Mr. Speaker, and I find that very, very offensive.

Mr. Speaker, there was no vision in that budget. There was no plan for development. It was just a spending plan, and I think what it showed is a government that really has run out of ideas, although I can't really even give them a lot of credit for great ideas anyway in terms of growing this province, growing the economy, you know, doing the kind of things that actually will make us a have province. A lot of people want to see a have province here in Manitoba because that would give us a great deal of pride.

There is no pride, Mr. Speaker, in being a have-not province. But that is what we're getting and will continue to get from this tired government that has really lost its way and become a risky, risky bunch to lead us in any further direction in finding

our place in a great country and with the great potential we have. And this particular government is not doing what needs to be done to take advantage of the many good things, the great potential that this province has.

And, certainly, what we've seen in this budget and what we've seen now over time is that it's a government that is going to say anything to get elected. Started in 1999 with, we're going to end hallway medicine in six months. And it was a promise I know that they know they would never be able to solve, but they said it anyway. They said it and they said it because they knew they could win an election on it. I don't think they ever believed that they would be able to fix hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million, but, again, say something, get elected, say anything. Where's the integrity in all of that?

So they broke that promise, and that was their track record over the last—the whole time they've been in government. And, frankly, it's a legacy of broken promises and also, Mr. Speaker, I think what we're starting to see now is a legacy of lying. And I think that is something that is becoming very, very apparent and very disturbing, and more and more people are becoming much more aware that something like that is going on with this government.

Mr. Speaker, we had an NDP government that has talked about balancing the budget for I don't know how long. They keep talking about it and Gary Doer actually came into power saying that he was going to keep the balanced budget. Gary Doer left and then all of a sudden we've got a new government that has basically dismantled that whole legislation of balanced budgets. But Gary Doer, again—and maybe he had no intention of really keeping that balanced budget legislation either, but it sounded good at that time, so he said it, helped him get elected. But he took away the fear of the public that he was going to, you know, come in and make all these strange, you know, economic moves. Well, he did start to chip away at it. I mean, that is where it started. He was the one, the first one that started to dismantle balanced budget legislation, even though he promised that that wasn't what he was going to do. And then we've got this next government that has basically come in and totally annihilated the whole thing.

And yet, over the last while, they have kept talking that they're going to balance the budget, they're going to balance the budget, and yet, again,

what we've seen is that is not what is happening. In fact, this budget projects a deficit of \$422 million, and it's a structural deficit. They are actually, year after year, putting forward structural deficits. It's not like they're running into hard times and moving in the direction of having to go into a deficit during a bad time. These are structural deficits. That is a sign of a government that has no idea how to find ways to make an economy strong, to find ways to grow an economy. Instead, all we've got are a group of people that know how to spend and build in structural deficits time after time after time. That eventually builds up into a debt, and we now have a debt that is now \$36 billion. Who in the world, when this bunch took over, when they became government here, who ever would have thought that by now they would have taken Manitoba to a \$36-billion debt? Mr. Speaker, that means that for every man, woman and child in Manitoba, we all owe \$30,000 each towards that debt. And, if somebody decides they're going to want to start to come collecting, I'm not sure what we're all going to do.

* (16:10)

Mr. Speaker, the ballooning debt matters because we keep having to pay more and more in debt servicing costs, and we have been bringing that up in this House after every budget for the last decade, saying, you have to pay for that. That's not free money. Every year, you end up having not only to pay down your debt, which this government isn't doing—they just keep building it up, but what they're doing is allowing and making the deliberate choice to borrow more money, enlarge that debt, and then also see an increase in debt servicing costs.

Mr. Speaker, we are almost at \$1 billion that is being spent on debt servicing costs, and if we were all to step back and think about what we could buy with that kind of money, it makes one wonder why a government would choose to make that kind of a decision. Imagine the health services that we could buy. We could buy more diagnostic tests. We could buy more cataract surgeries. We could buy more hip surgeries. We could fill those vacancies in rural Manitoba where, as we heard the other day, there's a shortage of counsellors for mental health in rural Manitoba. Maybe if we didn't have all these debt servicing costs to pay we might be able to hire those workers in rural Manitoba to work with those kids and those families that need that help, but instead they don't have that help. We've got kids right now that are struggling with eating disorders. We've got huge waiting lists. Imagine if we took that

\$1 billion that they're spending on debt payment and put it into services for eating disorders or for any other of the waiting lists that are growing in Manitoba—MRI wait-list, CT scan wait-list, it goes on and on and on.

Imagine if we didn't have to take almost \$1 billion of debt payments—debt interest payments every year and put it into actual services. I think Manitobans would be a lot better off if that happened, but this government doesn't seem to want to go down that road. They have deliberately—and not arbitrarily, as some of them are now trying to say—they have deliberately made the decision to keep borrowing, keep spending, keep promising a balanced budget, keep moving that date back with no intention—no real intention at all to actually balance the budget. The integrity of their promises has taken a significant hit. And it appears, Mr. Speaker, that there is not much effort on their part to want to change any of that whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, there is and should be very significant concern when we look at our provincial debt increasing from \$19 billion to more than \$36 billion. That is showing a government that really is out of control. They are a risky government that really does not deserve to have the privilege that they have been given by the people of Manitoba to continue in their seats, because they have become too risky for the people of this province. It's no wonder that our current Premier (Mr. Selinger) now has achieved the title of less popular premier in Canada; there's a reason for that. He also has, you know, been labeled the worst financial manager in all of Canada by—you know, in place of all the premiers. And he's given those labels for a reason, and that's because his performance is poor.

His performance is very, very poor, and that is why the five renegades on that side of the House actually decided that they were going to take out this sitting Premier, and they made national news. It wasn't anything that we should have felt very good about; they humiliated this province. It was happening time and time again, to make national news for something that has never happened anywhere in Canada ever before, that you get a sitting premier that has been challenged by senior Cabinet ministers, and they made history. They're talking about Alberta now making history. Yes, Alberta just made history, but also at the same time this group of renegades made history, too, and it embarrassed this province.

But not only—Mr. Speaker, not only did it embarrass this province, what it did was it stopped the work of government in this province and, for six months, the things that should've been happening, weren't happening. That's why we have seen a budget that is so ineffective. This budget does not do what a budget should do in Manitoba. So they take the easy, lazy way out, and all they do is just spend more money and they don't do the hard work of looking at it and finding what they can do to find their waste, because there is waste in what they are doing. But they don't have the energy or the time because they're busy—too busy having internal wars to actually do what they should be doing as Cabinet ministers. So we have got a very risky government.

Mr. Speaker, with almost a billion dollars now going to pay interest payments, imagine what we could do with that money to improve students' education in the areas of science, English, math, literacy. Last night, at Women of Distinction, there was a Dr. Anna Stokke, who won in her category. What she has done is created programs because she is so upset with what is happening in math in Manitoba, and she stood there, in her acceptance speech, and she says, I hope all the MLAs in this room are listening, because she was saying, and she has said for years, that this NDP government is failing our students. And it was really interesting last night to listen to her speech, but to see that she has been acknowledged as a woman of distinction for taking on this major issue that this government has failed at and she is trying to ensure that our kids can do better and that they are not dead last in this country with their marks—and their marks in these areas.

How in the world are we preparing kids for a greater world if we've got the worst marks in those categories in Canada? That does not prepare our kids for the future. This government has failed those kids, yet they keep going and spending money here, building up the debt, and they take a billion dollars a year now to put against the debt in interest payments. Imagine what we could do for those kids in our schools so that they at least have a fighting chance to compete against other kids across Canada, and we are not giving them that chance.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of places that billion dollars can go, and yet what this government is doing is they just keep upping the debt, upping the, you know, deficit every year. Moody's is watching and Moody's is watching carefully, and, you know, let's hope that we are not going to end up in a

position where Moody's is going to decide that they're—

An Honourable Member: Downgrade the credit rating in this province?

Mrs. Driedger: Yes, that they're going to go—further downgrade the credit rating. And then what happens, Mr. Speaker? What happens to all those interest rates? We are really on an edge here. We're on a cusp and this government is taking us over that edge, and it's not a good way. We could be doing so much more in education, health care, if this government would just do a better job and do the job that a modern government should do in addressing the challenges.

And there are lots of challenges, and one of the things they failed at in this budget besides health care and education was certainly around the area of the child welfare system. That is another area that they are failing and failing grossly. They are failing our children here, too, and, you know, and if you look at this budget, where was there anything in the budget that would address all of the challenges within the child welfare system? Where was there anything in the budget that would adequately take us out of being the child poverty capital of Canada?

There is nothing in that budget that is going to do that because it wasn't a budget where they were looking at those critical areas of need. Instead, you know, they're cherry-picking, looking at the next election, and finding, you know, those little pockets of something that they can sell on the election road.

But there were parts—there were opportunities for them in a bigger way to certainly move Manitoba further ahead. Instead, what we always get with this government is they are spending more and getting far, far less than what Manitobans deserve. And, Mr. Speaker, the budget was a huge failure.

* (16:20)

The one thing also in health care that I didn't see in there, we've got our ERs in a crisis. There was nothing in that budget to address that ER crisis, and it is a crisis. What is happening in Winnipeg's ERs right now is compromising safe patient care in this province. And, you know, again, imagine if we had that billion dollars that's going towards interest payments what could we do to fix some of that crisis. And it needs to be fixed, and that is not what's happening. Instead, now we have got the worst ER wait times in all of Canada.

And I can just, you know, say that as a sentence, but when you look at the patients that are affected by that sentence, there are people that are falling through the cracks. There are people that are sitting in our ERs, and a couple of weekends ago there were people, very angry, sitting in our ER waiting rooms and the Twitter world was alight with comments. People were yelling, they were so angry, stuck in waiting rooms in an ER in a big Winnipeg hospital yelling that dogs get better care than what they were getting in that ER. They were so upset at what was happening, and there are so many things that they—this government could do if they didn't keep cranking up their spending and then having to put the interest payments down against all this debt and deficit.

So we've got horrible waiting times in our ER. Was there anything in the budget? No, it didn't address that at all. The WRHA recently admitted a failure to fixing the ER problems, and, instead of showing leadership, this Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) went into hiding. She went missing in action, never publicly addressed that issue where the WRHA said that patients are waiting too long to be treated; they're waiting too long to be discharged; they're waiting too long for a bed. They admitted that the ambulance off-load times were too long and that none of the targets that they set would be met.

Where was our Minister of Health showing leadership in that issue? She went into a hidey-hole somewhere and did not even make public comment on that issue. And, Mr. Speaker, that is very, very poor leadership for somebody, especially a Health Minister, to not even address that major challenge. And then there's nothing in the budget that even takes it any further.

This government in the budget also has the gall to talk about adding PCH beds to Manitoba. Where are they? In their whole period of time here they have created 330 PCH beds. How in the world is that fixing the problem of our elderly people that desperately need those beds? They've had 16 years and they set up just over 300 PCH beds. No wonder we have got the problems we have in the health-care system. That's why our ERs are the way they are. The ERs is a symptom; they're not the problem. They're not the centre of that problem. The fact that this government has totally messed up on the whole development of PCH beds is what is causing this crisis that we have in our health-care system.

So not only do we have the ER crisis, we've got the crisis now of a lack of PCH beds. We are never,

for about the next 30 years, going to be able to have the numbers we need, because this government did not do its job. And decades and decades and decades of pain are coming before us. How in the world could they have made such a big mess on an issue like this knowing that we have so many elderly people that are hitting the system? Like, where were they? Where is the priorities and the planning of this government? They've had none around this issue, and now it's our elderly parents.

It's all the elderly people that are out there that are stuck at home right now. *[interjection]* Yes, stuck at home. There's some stuck at home, and I happen to know some really well. They're frail, elderly people. They can't even get panelled. It takes about three to four months to get panelled, and then it takes anywhere from three months to a year to get into a PCH bed. Meanwhile, they desperately need it. How many are falling through the cracks? How many of their families are having to try to juggle their own kids and work and everything else to try to care for these people? This NDP government has really messed up in this area, Mr. Speaker, and we are just starting now to see the very, very detrimental effects that that is going to have. There is nothing that is dealing with all of these challenges in this budget.

This is such a hard, you know, budget to support, other than we do support that one thing that we have been fighting for for three years, and that is the rental allowance for people that know about it. We have begged this government to raise that for three years. Our new leader came in, and since he came in he has been pushing for that increase. This government refused to do it. They've had budget after budget after budget. They refused to do it. Finally, again, on the eve of an election, oh, all of a sudden they realize that they have messed up on something else, and they have now put it into place. It should be in place. It is needed and a lot of people will benefit. So that is one good thing that was in the budget and I will give them credit for that.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know, other than that, there was hard—it's hard to give this government credit for, you know, much else, because this is a budget that hurts. This is not a budget that is going to take Manitobans—it is not going to take Manitobans in a road—or down a road where they will benefit. We're seeing more spending, but we're seeing worse outcomes. They don't even bother to measure, because why would you put targets in place, because then you're bound to have to try to reach those

targets. Much easier not to set targets, because now you can just throw money at everything and hope it sticks. But this is not a government that even measures outcomes. Well, how do you know if you're succeeding or not? Well, you don't and that's the problem. They're spending more; they're getting less. They're breaking promise after promise after promise, and what they're doing with all this spending is they are creating a serious problem for essential services as we go forward because money at some point—imagine if we could redirect that billion dollars into essential services, into front-line care, into patient care or kids. That's all being jeopardized because we've got a government that is too risky for Manitobans.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is not a budget that we can support. Thank you.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): On a point of order, only, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table—*[interjection]* House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business?

Mr. Mackintosh: The Estimates order for 2015.

Mr. Speaker: It—for the information of the House, the Estimates order for the Budget 2015 has been tabled before the Assembly.

Yes, it's not a point of order, but I thank the honourable Minister of Justice for the information for the House.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): It is truly my privilege to stand up first and foremost to recognize the hard-working farm families of the province of Manitoba, the risks they take every year to bring food for people in the world and the province of Manitoba, but, more importantly, the economic opportunities that they provide for people in the province of Manitoba. And I think we should show a round of applause to all the producers that are in the province of Manitoba.

Today it's my privilege to address the budget that has been brought forward—a budget that brings positivity to the province of Manitoba for families, for more jobs, better roads and stronger services that we see. And we're very proud as a government that we've continued to deliver for a number of years and

we continue to move forward in that perspective for economic growth and benefit to the province of Manitoba.

* (16:30)

You know, I just have to refer to the recent election in Alberta, and I think that was a good signal where our government came through, where the members opposite talk about the rural component. If we look at the latest statistics, what the NDP party has done, it has definitely showed that the NDP party always stood behind rural farmers, behind producers. And that definitely showed up in the last election, because obviously the party that they thought were, were not doing what they were supposed to do. So I'm very proud to stand here. And I want to congratulate the NDP party in the province of Alberta with their majority government that they have, and future endeavours, and lessons to be learned by the Conservatives. And I hope the member opposite learns by what's been done in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many great things that I would like to talk about agriculture in our province of Manitoba. Let me first off by saying this. Agriculture is 9 per cent of our GDP in the province of Manitoba. It definitely is a great contributor to our economy, and it will continue to be because there is a need for food. And we will continue to improve on that, so innovation and research. And we definitely have put a lot of money in. Our government continues to put a lot of dollars into investment of research.

But, more importantly, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity of what we used to use, our flaxseed, what we used to use, the hemp seed, now has provided nutraceutical and pharmaceutical benefits for the farmers and producers. What it does create, added value of dollars that are being brought forward.

Last week, I was at the FibreCITY Composite Innovation Centre and had the opportunity to meet with numerous individuals. Who would have ever imagined 10, 15, 20 years ago, straw fibre from hemp products can now be used for aeroplane parts, can be used for bus parts, can be used for vehicle parts, used for tractor parts that are being hood manufacturing?

For example, MacDon Industries, a local produce industry that manufactures equipment, are in partnership with Manitoba farmers and producers.

That is the creative thinking that the department has done for a number of years and we continue to focus on. This is what this government's all about. We're working with producers, providing added-value components, that we take our own resources, and for the benefit of people in the province of Manitoba and for the betterment of agriculture and a new visionary.

Now, let's also look at the health component. As you may know, Mr. Speaker, flaxseed has been tested for a number of years at St. Boniface hospital. Theoretically, flaxseed is probably mostly recognized for cholesterol and also for high blood pressure. And this is an opportunity that we see of added value for the farmers that produce flaxseed and other things, such as barley, which we know, primarily, what barley's used for, but there's other health benefits, as well.

Farmery Brewery is one of the great companies that we see in the province of Manitoba. And we want to see them grow and we are helping them make them grow. We continue to look at added-value opportunities, not only in the Neepawa area, but also an opportunity for people that love the liquid beverage.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the farmers and the opportunities that, when the Canadian Wheat Board existed—unfortunately, we've gone through the transition of the single desk in the Canadian Wheat Board. Just recently, I had a conversation with some—*[interjection]* Well, I don't know if I'd be clapping right about now, at the end of the day, when I'm going to bring forward some statistical information that members at opposite don't want to hear because they know it's not good news. But the truth of the matter is—and let me just go through some of the documentation that's been provided with me.

Based on the calculation snapshot, as of February 24–26, 2014, the port price of 2-CWB wheat, 13.5-14 at the Grain Commission and Grain Transportation Agency at the port of Vancouver, the price was \$417 a ton. The farmer's price in the country was \$171. So let's do the mathematical equation, Mr. Speaker. So that leaves \$246 per metric ton for grain companies and for railways, all right. So now, subtracting the following: the average rail is about \$40 a metric ton, the primary elevation charge is \$15 per ton, the primary cleaning is \$5.70 a ton, port terminal elevation is \$10.15 in Vancouver and port terminal cleaning is \$5.72. Subtotal is \$77.07 per metric ton of deductions. So now, when

you go through the equation, you minus two forty-six from seven—it equates to \$168 a metric ton of unallocated dollars. So, at the end of the day, the farmer's only getting \$4.60 a bushel.

Now, let's go back on history. When the federal minister—and the members opposite didn't say nothing because, oh, that's a scary area, we don't want to go there because we don't know which way this is going to come out. Well, sadly, if you recall, an announcement said, farmers, don't start your augers in January and February because all your wheat's going to be gone and you don't have—you can probably go wherever you want to go because you could be sitting in the lounge chair and watch a hockey game in January. Well, let me—let's be honest about this. Today's prices, the farmers are getting \$4.50 a bushel in Swan River, Manitoba. Is that fair, when the members opposite kept their mouth quiet and the minister says, you guys are going to get \$8, \$10 a bushel, guaranteed, no problem? Is that fair? Well, we're talking about, Mr. Speaker, of the reality of fairness of distribution for the farmers who have worked very hard. And we talk about farm families. I question members opposite who sat quiet and never stood up for the Wheat Board that they know darn well was the right answer at the end of the day.

And we continue to struggle with those ideas. We talk about added value of opportunities for the farmers that existed. Today, farmers are faced with input costs that are continuing to rise, and, at the end of the day, with the new transition, there is no transparency of price, and they continue not to provide that. And KAP organization has asked for it; a number of other farm organizations asked for it. But yet the members opposite choose not to—choose not to get on that side of the fence because, oh, we don't know if we're going to get into ourselves into trouble. So let's sit quiet for a while. Mr. Speaker, this is what we've witnessed since 2012 by a decision that members opposite never stood back and supported Manitoba producers when we talk about the demise of the transition of the Canadian Wheat Board. And they continue to chirp, but they have no 'legitigle' answers.

Mr. Speaker, I have documentation that shows what the actual prices have been since 2010, and it's unfortunate that they continue—continue—to somewhat fool the farmers throughout the province of Manitoba of the wheat we've lost. We've lost opportunities. I had the opportunity to meet the high commissioner from China. He says, whatever is done in the wheat sales, do not lose the premium quality

wheat that you've been accustomed to grow. But today they are challenged because they come to me and they say, we don't know what kind of wheat we're getting. We're getting a whole bunch of varieties, and we cannot mill any of this wheat because the flour content is not what it used to be.

And I question the members opposite: What is the answer to that question? They choose not to. They choose not—we've lost the Canadian Grain Commission, of properly monitoring the grain system, so that our customers have an opportunity to have consistent quality wheat.

Let's go back to 2013, Mr. Speaker. Let's go back when we talk about 50 vessels of—ships waiting in Vancouver, and, unfortunately, at the end of the day, there was a demurrage charge that the Canadian—Manitoba farmers paid, out of their own pocket. But yet the Canadian Wheat Board was always their co-ordinators of the rail and the ship market. Members opposite choose not to go down this avenue because they know darn well that it's solely accurate and they choose not to accept it. They remain silent and they will remain silent. I will say that for sure, because the farmers have now lost \$3 to \$4 a bushel because the change of the Wheat Board and the co-ordinated effort that we had in the province of Manitoba and across Canada of purer quality and the professionalism that we existed.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that members opposite, the Conservative Party across from us, choose not to stand behind farm families and choose not to support the Canadian industry where it's at.

Mr. Speaker, I have to relay to the fact that, you know what, this budget has brought us a record of \$5.5 billion towards strengthening roads, bridges and flood protection. As we all know, obviously, we've gone through a number of flood events and the challenges do exist, and the challenges still continue as far as providing opportunities of protecting Manitoba residents, regardless where they live in the province of Manitoba.

* (16:40)

We hear the members opposite chirping that, you know, where's our money going? Well, you know what? Take a few minutes and look at what we've spent in the last number of years. Let's go back to the 2011 flood of \$1.4 billion, and we continue to work with producers around the situations.

And, unfortunately, cousins or not cousins to the west, choose not to, as it was discussed earlier

through question period, the fact that, you know, until there's an understanding of a watershed management organization—and to the benefits of the Conservatives who chose to get rid of PFRA, if maybe some of you may remember PFRA was one of the greatest organizations that existed between the three prairie provinces, that were a watershed authority, who chose to dissect—who chose to get rid of that organization, because they were the organization that were able to work across western Canada, so we don't have to deal with issues that we dealt with today. But yet they remain silent on that, and I question that, Mr. Speaker. Why is it they choose to be silent and then they choose to chirp whenever they feel they want to? So I challenge them on the fact that the Assiniboine River system and, you know, the southwest area of the province of Manitoba is drastically hit.

I went down and I met with a number of producers. I met with a number of municipal officials. And they kept saying, why is the neighbouring province not addressing the issues that we've witnessed? And yet members opposite choose not to talk to their fellow cousins in the neighbouring province, if they're of the same bloodline, if I may use that terminology, Mr. Speaker. But they choose not to. And I think that is not fair for them not to stand behind this government and try and create some additional communication so we can deal with the overland flooding and the additional water that we seem to be inheriting through normal predictions.

Mr. Speaker, our budget definitely is focused on health care, education and through our jobs and economy. This is a budget that will maintain jobs and contain growth in the province of Manitoba. And yet I hear members opposite chirping that 20,000 jobs that we've created—that's nothing to them. I'm really saddened that you figure that it's not a big deal to have 20,000 jobs. To be rated one of the best provinces to invest because of low unemployment rates, the best place to invest your money, and we continue to grow. We will continue to grow because this is the province that will provide incentives and we will continue to work with them.

You know, we are the province that will showcase our opportunities, what we have in Canada. And they choose not to listen to that, but that's their fault—too bad.

The new investments we've made in health care—and I know, Mr. Speaker, the opportunities of dollars that go into health care is key. And we can do a

cross-section throughout Canada, and there isn't one province that does not realize the amount of percentage of the budget that goes towards health care. And Manitoba is no exception to it. We invest and we will continue to invest to retain doctors. They're educated here at our university, and put them into rural, and we continue to work with them, whether it's rural or northern and into the large centres.

We're very proud of the programs that have been brought forward—cancer-care drugs. That is very key, and we continue to work with seniors. We continue to work on opportunities that this is a province that we will look after our people and we will continue to look after our people, regardless of what age they are.

So 2015 will provide 774 millions of—million dollars towards roads, highways and bridges; \$285 million towards municipal infrastructure; and \$48 million towards flood protection, Mr. Speaker. I think that's a pretty healthy menu of investment for the people to protect in the province of Manitoba.

We talk about the opportunity to seniors in the province of Manitoba who are in the aging population. We've taken an—a proactive reports to rebate of \$470 on the school tax rebate for seniors that we were continuing to work with, which will be a saving up to \$1,570 on their property taxes this year. Over 17,000 seniors' homes alone already have taxes that are fully covered by the Manitoba government education property tax credits and Seniors' School Tax Rebate. This year, an additional 6,700 senior households will no longer pay school taxes in the new Seniors' School Tax Rebate.

We are increasing the caretaker's tax credit by 10 per cent so you will care for friends, and family members can receive benefit of up to \$4,200 each. So we will care about accessibility and investing 900 new child-care spaces in the province of Manitoba. And we are also appreciating the volunteer fire department individuals throughout Manitoba and the fact that we're going to be offering a search-and-rescue tax credit for the volunteer firemen that protects small communities, regardless what size they are in the province of Manitoba. And if that's not a situation where we see an opportunity to appreciate and show our appreciation to people who have volunteered their services in the province of Manitoba.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the great things that Manitoba Hydro brings to our

economy and we continue to build on that, and we think about the opportunities what members opposite would like to do. Take for an example, Hydro. If their wishes are like they did to the Manitoba Telephone System, got rid of the cellphone service and sold off MTS, today *[inaudible]* the Conservatives choose to sell MTS, and we've now been challenged with cellphone service in areas. I questioned them, and the opportunities continue to surface all the time when we talk about Hydro, is that the wishes where they choose to sell off Hydro. They want to privatize Hydro. We know that darn well *[inaudible]*. The opportunity is 10,000 jobs would be lost based on cancelling Hydro jobs in the province of Manitoba. We're talking about jobs that have been created with road construction and the great things we do. Core infrastructure alone, Mr. Speaker, will generate 58,900 jobs, would be at risk if they had their way. And that is not what it's all about. Obviously, the Alberta election showed the red flag about we need to invest in jobs and economy, and we will continue to do that based on our budget that we brought forward.

If we want to go back on some history in the members opposite, let's just say 1995, \$167 million was cut out of the highway budget; 1996, \$161 million was cut out of the budget; in 1997, an additional \$152 million. No wonder we've got to do a bunch of highway repairs because at that time, they chose not to spend money on infrastructure and continue to not focus in that perspective. And today we are making those smart investments, and we continue to do towards infrastructure development in all factions because we all know—we all know—that it needs to be continued to upgrade the importance of highways.

Mr. Speaker—*[interjection]* the—well, they—the fact is let's get into another subject about DFA funding. And I don't think the members opposite don't want to hear this, but let me just share some information. I had the great opportunity to be MIT minister and Agriculture minister, and it's amazing what a great job Mr.—minister from Thompson is doing as MIT Minister, and it was my privilege to be there. But one of the things that really resonated in my short term as MIT minister is that to see the federal government chose—chose—to make a decision to cut back on DFA funding.

And let me give you an example, Mr. Speaker. Historically, \$1.3 million was our deductible, \$1 per capita. Today, in February's announcement is, all provinces across Canada will be paying a \$3 per

person deductible. So what we're saying is the federal government balanced their budget because on the backs of Manitoba citizens because now our deductible has gone up about \$3 million. Now we're talking about the 90-10 component that normally has worked well when they had major flood *[inaudible]*. On the old formula, it kicked in at \$6 million. Today's—February's announcement, it doesn't kick in until \$19 million.

* (16:50)

So, Mr. Speaker, what we're hearing from the Conservatives is that they're asking for more dollars to come out of the provincial Treasury department that historically has been a partnership between the federal and the provincial government, and they choose to fool people, I'm talking fool the Manitobans, because we can balance our books, but yet, on the backs of Manitoba's taxpayers, because we've been there to protect DFA funding to repair roads and bridges and connect communities, but yet they continue to fool Manitobans in that analogy and I did not hear one twerp from the members opposite opposing the new DFA funding. Why is that? I thought they represented the Manitoba taxpayers. I thought they represented the Manitoba rural roads and opportunities. They choose not to. That, to me, is somewhat challenging.

I—you know, it does bother me. And, you know, we talk about watershed management. The Assiniboine River Basin Initiative was put together to form a working relationship. We did not have one representative from Saskatchewan when we had the first meeting. This Province of Manitoba put \$50,000 into that component, but did Saskatchewan? Did anybody else? No. Well, I'm sorry your cousins chose to neglect your own second cousins in the province of Manitoba by putting no investment into the system. That, to me, is really a poor, poor scenario.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about the great things in the beef industry, and I want to thank the beef industry because they've waited a long time. The BSE was quite challenging. I personally went through that in the start of May 2003 and it continued to be a hardship for all of us in the cattle industry. We've been challenged and we continue. Finally the cattle producers are getting what's coming to them for a number of years.

But you know what? We are continuing to be challenged by decisions being made by other agencies. Community pastures was one of the

greatest things we had in the province of Manitoba. PFRA community pastures have a lot in common, and we talk about the ecological and good services that was provided community pastures, but it also mainly provided an opportunity for young farmers, young producers to go out there and put their cattle in the community pasture and be able to pay X amount of dollars. But yet we as a government of Manitoba chose to take a million dollars out of our reserve accounts and out of our budget to help out—maintain a co-operative rather than sell off the land that producers should be using and we continue to use as far as cattle producers. But yet members opposite chose not to say a darn thing about it, because someone else could balance their budget because—on the backs of Manitoba taxpayers, cattle producers, agriculture all together, and that to me is really a challenge where I see it.

Mr. Speaker, what we see is the members opposite being job killers. They want to get rid of anybody. They want to get rid of 1,000 nurses like they did historically, 700 teachers. They continue to balance their books on the sacrifices of health care and teachers. I just don't understand why they would even want to consider that as an option when we move forward. Manitoba is truly the province that everybody wants to live in.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to throw a compliment to the MAFRD staff and, you know, the rising concerns we have in biosecurity and the PED and the great, great work that our department has done to retain the number of risk of biosecurity through the hog. Avian influenza is another situation that we feel with the biosecurity situation.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are laughing at my staff, at the great work. And that's the Agriculture critic, and I would be somewhat embarrassed that he chooses to laugh at the great work MAFRD staff and our Chief Veterinary Officer, and actually the guy that's laughing about this is the man—is the person, the Ag critic who went against the disease amendment act that we tried to bring into legislation last year, Bill 71, and they chose not to bring that forward and risk the opportunity of disease spreading biosecurity in the province of Manitoba. So here's the Ag critic laughing about it. I don't think producers would much appreciate the opportunity to laugh about that, and it's truly, truly an embarrassment if I was the member opposite and—to choose that as a laughing scenario. It is a 'devastating' situation where you have disease come in and wipe out a producer.

Insurance-based programs are not covered underneath that, and to sit there and laugh about it and say that it's a laughing matter, I personally think it would not be, and I'm somewhat bothered by that kind of an attitude.

Mr. Speaker, today's budget—or this year's budget definitely has a number of great things and to a province that continues to grow and will continue to grow, as we've heard from a number of financial institutes. This is the province that will continue to provide opportunities. The Conference Board of Canada says infrastructure in our plan will bolster about \$6.3 billion, boasts exports of about \$5.4 billion and create almost 59,000 dollars—in jobs. This is truly a record-setting number, an opportunity of education. We talk about the importance of building apprenticeships, schools, in various locations throughout the province of Manitoba, providing rural opportunities for young individuals. And I'd like to thank the Education Minister for the proactive thinking about what we need to do to minimize costs for our young entrepreneurs, that we have an opportunity to not move out of the local community and have jobs created locally. They chose to cut; we continue to build on that premise.

And I do want to say that it's an honour and a privilege to work with all of my fellow MLAs and colleagues in the Legislature here, and, you know what, we definitely are working hard for all families. We all work hard for everybody, regardless of age and opportunities to be—to stand here today and talk about the great things the budget has brought forward to the province of Manitoba. And we will continue to grow as they all know, and I think, Mr. Speaker, that this is definitely my pleasure to come forward, not only talking about rural agriculture, because it definitely is a co-operation and an opportunity that we have added value. And we've only begun the opportunity for jobs and economy, not only through agriculture, but manufacturing, and an opportunity to have businesses internationally come to Manitoba and looking for investments, because they see this is the province, that it's the smart investments that we have through a number of tax credit incentives, but also the opportunity of the education system we have, that we will have apprenticeships trained that could work at these various locations to help enhance the opportunity for the economic development.

At the end of the day, it is truly my opportunity to stand here and recognize the great work, in closing, as I started off my speech, to the agriculture

industry, regard this added value, or the producers and the farm families that—the 19,000 farm families that support our industry. And I want to thank them, and I want to acknowledge them on behalf of our government on this side of the House, of the great work they do and the good, healthy food they provide. Shop local, buy local is my theme, as far as I'm concerned, and the small-scale food processors is a great thing that this government brought forward. And we talk about added value. This is another avenue of added value in the province of Manitoba.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been my privilege on behalf of the Manitoba government to bring forward the great things the budget of 2000 has brought to all sectors of the economy and jobs in the province of Manitoba. Thank you so much.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Once again, it is an honour to be in this Chamber, working for the constituents of La Verendrye and the people of Manitoba. I would like to welcome back all the members, the clerks, the pages and, of course, Mr. Speaker.

It seems like it's been ages since we were here last. But, then, I guess, it has been ages since we were here last. I would think that it would make more sense to be here in February and March and be out in the constituency in June. But there are a lot of things this NDP government does that does not make much sense.

I would like to welcome the new member from The Pas and wish her the best in her new career, but I would like to mention that it took the Premier (Mr. Selinger) a long time to call that by-election. Her constituents were without representation for a year. There are a number of MLAs that this will be their last budget speech. I would like to thank them for their years of—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for La Verendrye will have 28 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 7, 2015

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