

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
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McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
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SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 7, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 16—The Order of Manitoba Amendment Act

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 16, The Order of Manitoba Act; la Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Ordre du Manitoba, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this bill amends The Order of Manitoba Act that allows up to 14 people to be appointed to the Order of Manitoba in a particular year. The bill also changes the composition of the Order of Manitoba Advisory Council, the presidents of la Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface and University College of the North are eligible to serve on the council. Two additional members may be appointed by Cabinet. Thank you.

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

**Bill 220—The Health Care Accountability Act
(Health Services Act and Health Services
Insurance Act Amended)**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 220, The Health Care Accountability Act (Health Services Act and Health Services Insurance Act Amended); Loi sur l'obligation redditionnelle en matière de soins de santé (modification de la Loi sur les services de santé

et de la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides for accountability in health care and particularly with respect to timely access to health-care services, with respect to quality of health-care services, and with respect the right for individuals to be fully informed of their options when they're receiving health care.

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

PETITIONS

Bipole III

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I wish to present the following petition to the Manitoba Legislature.

This is the reason for this petition:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct its next high-voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba.

This decision will cost Manitoba ratepayers at least 640 million more in dollars than an east-side route. The Province of Manitoba is facing its largest deficit on record, and the burden of this extra cost could not come at a worse time.

Between 2002 and 2009 electricity rates increased by 16 percent, and Manitoba Hydro has filed a request for further rate increases totalling 6 percent over the next two years.

A west bipole route will invariably lead to more rate increases.

In addition to being cheaper, an east-side route would be hundreds of kilometres shorter and would be more reliable than a west-side route.

West-side residents have not been adequately consulted and have identified serious concerns with the proposed line.

The NDP government has not been able to provide any logical justification for a west-side route.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the cheaper, shorter and more logical east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, to save ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars during these challenging economic times.

This petition is signed by H. Emerson-Proven, R. Lemoing, Z. Ferby and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

Education Funding

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Historically, the Province of Manitoba has received funding for education by assessment of property that generates taxes. This unfair tax is—only applies to selected property owners in certain areas and confines, including, not limited to, commercial property owners.

Property-based school tax is becoming an ever-increasing burden without acknowledging the commercial property owner's income or the ability to pay.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth consider removing education funding by school tax or education levies from all property in Manitoba, including commercial property.

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth consider finding a more equitable method of funding education, such as general revenue, following the constitutional funding of education by the Province of Manitoba.

And this petition has been signed by Jonnathan Bell, Giles Pambrun and J. Ramanand and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Bipole III

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The reasons and the background of this petition are as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct its next high-voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba, a decision for which the NDP government has not been able to provide any logical justification.

Since this will cost Manitoba ratepayers at least \$640 million more than an east-side route, and given that the Province of Manitoba is facing the largest deficit on record, the burden of this extra cost could not come at a worse time.

Between 2002 and 2009 electricity rates increased by 16 percent, and Manitoba Hydro has filed a request for further rate increases totalling 6 percent over the next two years.

A western Bipole III route will invariably lead to more rate increases.

In addition to being cheaper, the—an east-side route would be hundreds of kilometres shorter and would be more reliable than a west-side route.

West-side residents have not been adequately consulted and have identified serious concerns with the proposed line.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the cheaper, shorter and more logical east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, to save ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars during these challenging economic times.

And this petition is signed by Larry Oakden, Gail Zimmer, Alvin Zimmer and many, many more Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:40)

Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Many seniors from the Morden and Winkler area are currently patients in the Boundary Trails Health

Centre while they wait for placement in local personal care homes.

There are presently no beds available for these patients in Salem Home and Tabor Home. To make more beds in the hospital available, the regional health authority is planning to move these patients to personal care homes in outlying regions.

These patients have lived, worked and raised their families in this area for most of their lives. They receive care and support from their family and friends who live in the community, and they will lose this support if they are forced to move to distant communities.

These seniors and their families should not have to bear the consequences of the provincial government's failure to ensure there are adequate personal care home beds in the region.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to ensure that patients who are awaiting placement in the personal care home are not moved to distant communities.

And to urge the Minister of Health to consider working with the RHA and the community to speed construction and expansion of long-term care facilities in the region.

This is signed by Annie Wiebe, Elisabeth Wiebe, Anna Friesen and many, many others.

PTH 15–Traffic Signals

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation stated that traffic volumes at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald exceeded those needed to warrant the installation of traffic signals.

Every school day, up to a thousand students travel through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts their safety at risk.

Thousands of vehicles travel daily through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts at risk the safety of these citizens.

In 2008, there was a 300 percent increase in accidents at this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate installation of traffic signals at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald.

To request that the Minister of Transportation recognize the value of the lives and well-being of the students and citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by Ed Shannon, Dan Grodsvetsen, D. Geerts and many, many other Manitobans. Thank you.

Ophthalmology Services–Swan River

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health has told the Town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program; however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

This is signed by Bert Jones, Merle Jones, Nancy Vinet and many, many others.

Medical Clinic in Weston and Brooklands Area

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Community-based medical clinics provide a valuable health-care service.

The closure of the Westbrook Medical Clinic has left both Weston and Brooklands without a community-based medical clinic.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider how important it is to have a medical clinic located in Weston-Brooklands area.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by Kathy Boushig, Kim Stokes and Lulie Concepcion and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Lakeside.

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH—

Mr. Speaker: I'm sorry. Order.

I recognized the wrong member. The honourable member for Ste. Rose.

You'll be next. You'll be next.

Mr. Briese: I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure

and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making an installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help project the safety of the motorists and pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by Stan Myker, Audrey Myker, Lawrence Myker and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, now the member for Lakeside.

Waste-Water Ejector Systems

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitobans are deeply committed to protecting the environment, and they want to be assured that provincial environmental policies are based on sound science.

In 2009, provincial government announced it was reviewing the on-site waste-water management systems regulation under the environmental act.

Affected Manitobans, including property owners and municipal governments, provided considerable feedback to provincial government on the impact of the posed changes, only to have their input ignored.

The updated regulation includes a prohibition on the installation of the new waste-water injectors, elimination of existing waste-water injectors at the time of property transfer.

Questions have been raised about the lack of scientific basis for these changes, as a Manitoba Conservation official stated in October 8th, 2009 edition of the *Manitoba Co-operator*, we have done a specific study? No.

These regulatory changes will have a significant impact—financial impact on all affected Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately placing the recent changes on the on-site waste-water management systems regulation under the environmental act on hold until

such time a review can take place to ensure that they are based on sound science.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider implementing the prohibition on wastewater injector systems on a case-by-case basis as determined by environmental need for ecological sensitive areas.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider offering financial incentives to help affected Manitoba property owners to adapt these regulatory changes.

It's been on behalf of Karen Shoup, Wayne Little, Lloyd Clegg and many, many other Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Order. Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from the Gillam School, we have nine grade 10 to 12 students under the direction of Mr. Joey Latta. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you all here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Football Stadium Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Since last Wednesday's news conference on the stadium deal, we've heard from this Premier four different versions of how the deal works. There was the deal that he outlined at the news conference last Wednesday, there's the deal that he misexplained in the House yesterday, and then there's yet another deal that he outlined in his media comments, and those are all at odds with what it actually says in the MOU.

So I just want to ask the Premier if he's now had the opportunity to read the MOU, understand the deal, and if he can explain it today to this House and to Manitobans.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the fundamentals of the arrangement we have entered into are the following: that we are going to move ahead and build a new stadium in Manitoba that will be owned—that will be a publicly owned asset owned by the university and the City of Winnipeg. It'll be

available for the enjoyment and benefit of the entire community. It'll be available for the use and benefit of the University of Manitoba, the Bisons and their other sports teams and the students—and students that come from all over Manitoba and, indeed, Canada will get the benefit of that, and of course it will be available for the benefit of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. That's the fundamentals of it.

* (13:50)

We're moving ahead to avoid up to \$52 million of repairs on a stadium that may last only another 10 years. We will realize \$19.5 million of provincial sales tax. These will allow the economy to grow and Manitobans to have an asset they can be proud of.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, those sort of fuzzy, rhetorical responses that leave Manitobans with no confidence whatsoever in this Premier's ability to do due diligence and enter into agreements that protect taxpayers, I just want to ask the Premier why it is that he said at the news conference last Wednesday that there was going to be a \$10-million contribution from Creswin Properties, when, in fact, what the MOU says is that they'll contribute up to \$10 million.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it is accurate. They will contribute up to \$10 million of services and development fees. This is a very significant contribution on part of Creswin. I would hope the member would acknowledge that.

And let's be clear, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite were the ones that said no to the MTS Centre and it worked out extremely well for Manitoba. The members opposite are saying no to a publicly owned facility for the Bombers. The members opposite are saying no to a publicly owned facility for the Bisons football team. The members are saying no a long-term solution to having to spend \$52.5 million to fix up the existing stadium. The members opposite are saying no to a \$137.5-million investment at the University of Manitoba.

These are just some of the things they are saying no to, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps they can explain how they're going to move Manitoba forward.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, we—the only thing we're saying no to is skyrocketing debt for the next generation of Manitobans and out-of-control spending by a Premier who clearly doesn't know what he's doing.

And I want to ask the Premier: He said a \$10-million contribution, now he's saying up to \$10 million. So what he's saying is that it'll be somewhere between zero and \$10 million that will be coming from Creswin, Mr. Speaker. I mean, we could have written in that every member in this House could contribute up to \$10 million and that's a completely ridiculous position to make publicly when it contradicts what's stated in the MOU.

And I want to ask the Premier if he could confirm that money that has already been spent by Creswin in the past, in terms of development activities, is being credited toward the up-to-\$10-million contribution that he thinks he's got in this MOU that doesn't even have a signature on it from Creswin.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The member talked about—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's be clear. When the members opposite were managing the Province's resources, they spent 13 and a half cents on the dollar to deal with the debt. We're spending 6 cents on the dollar.

Let's also be clear, Mr. Speaker, that Creswin and Mr. Asper have put significant resources into advancing a new stadium concept. Certainly, they will count towards their contribution.

Let's also be clear, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite are saying no to a better facility for amateur sports in this province. Let's be clear that they're opposed to 2,500 person-years of employment right now in the next two years to build a new stadium in Manitoba. Let's be clear that they are going to vote against a budget that will stimulate 29,000 jobs in Manitoba, 29,000 person-years of employment of which this will be a part.

And let's also be clear, they're opposed to a new fitness centre at the University of Manitoba and an all-season playing field. It goes on and on. They're the party of no; we're the party of let's get it done.

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

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And we are the party of no to taxpayer rip-offs, that is to be sure. We're the party of no to taxpayer rip-offs.

Mr. Speaker, the—he's just indicated now that he's going to—that the up-to-\$10-million commitment includes money already spent in the past that's going to be credited to this up-to-\$10-million contribution.

I want to ask the Premier: They've given an exclusive right to Creswin now to develop the \$115 million stadium. Can he indicate what share of that \$115 million is going to go to management fees payable to Creswin?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Bombers selected Creswin out of the options they had for developing the new stadium and there will be a contractual relationship between Creswin and the owners of the facility: the City, the Province and the football club, and they will manage those kinds of issues. Obviously, that kind of detail is not available here at this point in the Legislature, but the reality is there's been a significant commitment to move ahead on this stadium.

Mr. Speaker, there's—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there is a commitment to move ahead on this stadium at a time when it will avoid expensive repair costs to the existing facility, when it will generate additional employment opportunities in Manitoba, when it'll generate additional sales tax of up to \$19.5 million in Manitoba. All of these things will go towards building the kind of assets we can be proud of and generating economic activity at a time when it's needed, and the members opposite are the party of no.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I think what the Premier has just said is that he's signed an agreement that contains a contribution of somewhere between zero and \$10 million from Creswin, and he's signed an agreement that has management fees payable to Creswin on the development of the stadium, but he doesn't know how much they're going to be at this stage even though he's the one who signed the

agreement. He's the one responsible for taxpayer dollars.

If he isn't asking those hard questions before he signs an MOU like this, I want to ask him what gives him the right to sign a deal in the absence of any care, any caution or any due diligence on behalf of Manitoba taxpayers.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the due diligence will be part of the process of implementing the building of the new stadium, that'll certainly be done, that'll be done by the university, that'll be done by the Winnipeg Football Club, that'll be done by the City of Winnipeg, and we will work with them to do that.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, we had a choice of sitting on our hands like the members opposite did when they refused to support the MTS Centre. We could go back and remember all the people that voted against that and how well it's worked out. The reality is by moving now we solve a problem. We avoid very serious costs of upgrades for a facility that can only last another 10 years. We generate employment. We generate provincial sales tax. We move Manitoba forward while the members opposite continue to be the party of the monkey wrench.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier a week ago signed off on an MOU that commits his government to go out to borrow money this year and to give that money to the football club, and what he's saying right now is that he'll do due diligence later on about where that money goes.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier just admit today that he got railroaded in these negotiations, that he panicked, he got hoodwinked, he did no due diligence and he's not up to the job?

Mr. Selinger: What I can confirm today is the university, along with the City, along with the football club, along with the private sector and along with the Province, came together to solve a problem. They came together to solve the problem and they are committed to moving forward on a stadium that will be a publicly owned asset, and they are committed to working together to ensure all the due diligence is done.

The money will be not going to Mr. Asper. The money will be going to the university and the City, who will manage this resource with the help of the Province and the football club, and they will manage this in a way that ensures that the money only flows as the proper work is done to build the new stadium. There's no blank cheque being signed here.

Mr. Speaker, what's happening is we're moving forward on a project that we can be proud of in Manitoba, generating employment, making a difference when the member opposite is sitting on his hands.

* (14:00)

Addiction Treatment Lack of Services for Women

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Here's an issue that I think the government should be ashamed of, Mr. Speaker. In all of Winnipeg there are only 12 residential addiction treatment beds for women. Wait lists are for more than three to four months.

I would like to ask the Minister of Healthy Living: How is it that this NDP government can find an extra \$640 million to waste on a west-side bipole line and another \$90 million for a stadium when they can't even provide timely addiction treatment for Manitoba women? Where are their priorities, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to let the entire House know that, since 1999, we basically doubled the amount of money that's going to addiction treatment, prevention and trying to get kids and people off these substances.

Number 2, we're working with groups to expand the amount of woman treatment facilities as we speak.

And third, we're working on FASD in children prevention programs to make sure that we have less problems in the future. And that, Mr. Speaker, is proactive and that's actually action in the addiction treatments facility.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, the shortage of women's beds and the long wait list for treatment are not new problems. In January, the CEO of the Addictions Foundation said that there's been a historical—this has been a historical problem for five to six years.

Addicts who can't get help end up in emergency rooms, on the streets or tangled in the justice system. True investments in addiction treatment would result in long-term savings, cost savings, but this government prefers meaningless rhetoric to real action.

Mr. Speaker, why was this minister and why is this minister continually ignoring this very serious issue?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, this budget contains a million-dollar increase to addiction services and prevention and treatment in this province.

The members opposite will vote against that increase as they have voted against the doubling of addiction services in this province. If you look, we have enhanced services across the province, in the north, in rural and in the city. We continually look at prevention services and I'm proud of this government's record. I know what that government did when they were in power in the '90s. I'm proud of what we're doing in tough economic time, now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: Well, this minister is the minister for no. Manitobans with addictions are literally dying while they're waiting for help from this government. There are not enough detox spaces. There are not enough residential treatment beds. There are not enough transition beds. Addiction programming in schools has been cut. And wait lists have skyrocketed for programs like the methadone intervention program.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, whatever the minister is doing, it is not working. When will he stand up for addictions treatment at the Cabinet table and demand that his government get its priorities right?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that we are working on priorities to do prevention, doing things with youth and kids around the province. I'm pleased that we're expanding transition beds, and they have been expanded just recently. I am pleased that we've doubled—doubled the investment in addiction as opposed to when the Conservatives were in power in the '90s. I am pleased that we're working with multiagencies to make sure that we have a comprehensive system which deals with addiction treatment across the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest and enhance the addiction services unlike the members opposite when they were in government.

Health-Care Services Treatment of Non-Resident Patients

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Minnedosa, on a new question?

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): On a new question, Mr. Speaker. Back in January, Mr. Alan Power was visiting family in my constituency and suffered a massive heart attack. He was admitted to the Brandon Regional Health Centre, transferred to

St. Boniface Hospital, assessed and transferred back to Brandon to await emergency surgery scheduled for the next week in Winnipeg.

A week later, Mr. Power's family was told that the emergency surgery was cancelled because he was no longer a Manitoba resident. Finally, a week after his heart attack, arrangements were being made for Mr. Power to be sent to Regina for surgery. Tragically, while Manitoba Health was shipping him back and forth between hospitals and cancelling his surgeries, Mr. Power passed away.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health: How can Manitobans and visitors to Manitoba feel safe when this health-care system failed Mr. Power and his family so badly?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I want to say that I know every member of this House would extend their condolences to the family and say that—I can say that I'm very terribly sorry for their loss.

Certainly it's not in my purview to speak to the specifics of this case. I can say, Mr. Speaker, that there has been multiple contacts with the family, the vice-president of medical—of the—and diagnostic services of the Brandon RHA is serving as the point of contact for this family.

We're going to continue to work with the family in getting to the bottom of what happened. We know that there are circumstances in this case involving communications between the family, between the jurisdictions, and we're going to work together to ensure that all of these details come to light and that the family is satisfied with the information that they receive.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, the cardiac surgeon at the Brandon Regional Health Centre was extremely concerned and vocal. He stated that Mr. Power's condition was critical and required immediate surgery. Yet, Mr. Power lay in a hospital bed in Brandon for a week before preparations even began to transfer him to the Saskatchewan hospital.

I ask the minister: How could this tragic failure occur? What assurances can the minister give that more Manitobans will not die waiting for emergency surgery? This is a question that Mr. Power's family would like an answer to.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, again, I can say that we do have a direct point of contact with the family with the VP medical at the Brandon Regional Health

Authority. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and jurisdictions in Saskatchewan were involved in this case.

I would caution the member concerning putting facts about the case on the record, alleged facts about the case on the record, that may, through investigation, prove not to be so. I also want to caution the member that the family has been very explicit, in my information, to all parties involved, that their privacy is to be paramount in this discussion. We will respect that but, most importantly, we want to work with the family, with the regional health authorities, to ensure that any incidents that occurred in this that were inappropriate would be rectified and not happen to another family, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also caution the minister that the statements that she puts on the record should be factual as well and within the realm of the facts.

Mr. Speaker, the health-care system has failed Mr. Power's family not once but twice. It has been over two months since Mr. Power died. His family was told weeks ago that his case would be reviewed and a report would be expected within two weeks. That was two months ago.

The minister was made aware of this situation even before Mr. Power died, yet, in two months she has provided no answers to this family. Does the minister not think that this family deserves to know why the system failed Alan Power and his family? Does this minister not think that this review has taken too long and that the family deserves some answers?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, clearly this family is undergoing terrible stress. The loss of a loved one causes this for all families in Manitoba.

I can assure the member that the due diligence that is taking place in the investigation of this critical incident is being taken very seriously. There are three jurisdictions that are involved. There are investigations going on at each of the sites with numerous medical professionals. This investigation will be done thoroughly and will be done correctly in contact with the family.

I've mentioned before that the VP medical at the Brandon RHA is the point of contact. We're going to continue to have contact with this family to ensure that, through a critical incident review, any errors

that may have been made can be rectified so that no other family has to go through such a situation.

Sandy Lake Gated Culvert Removal

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, Sandy Lake, on the western side of this province, is a recreational and tourism lake that has hundreds of cottages dotted around the shorelines. For the last number of years the lake has been very high and cottages have been threatened by flooding.

Last year Emergency Measures authorized that municipality to install a gated culvert, Mr. Speaker. Water levels were reduced to a manageable level and today residents are pleased about that. But just recently the R.M. received a letter from Water Stewardship that the gated culvert has to be removed and the silted-in channel has to be filled in. This will once again cause enormous hardship and potential flooding to those residents.

* (14:10)

I ask the minister: Why is she not co-ordinating her efforts with EMO, who authorized the installation of this culvert, so that, indeed, residents in that Sandy Lake area are not threatened with flooding again?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact there is great co-ordination between Water Stewardship, MIT, EMO when it comes to water issues.

Certainly, last spring was a test that I think showed we work very closely together. The department is working on water levels throughout the province. We know that this spring was very positively not as negative as last spring, but the departments are working together, and I think it's important that the member not start to spread these worries for people that they're going to lose their cottages when there is work that is being done with the municipalities and with the different departments, Mr. Speaker.

This is a usual question that we get from the member trying to stir everything up when, in fact, there is a process in place.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister would do herself well to inform herself about what is really happening out in the west side of the province. Perhaps she could even contact the municipality and learn from them what the situation is.

Mr. Speaker, the municipality received a request from the Department of Conservation to do a 50,000-plus study on Sandy Lake, a study which they cannot afford. Sandy Lake is a huge body of water, and that should be the responsibility of either the Department of Conservation or the Department of Water Stewardship. The municipality has indicated they cannot afford that study. It is in response to the municipality saying no to the study that the Minister of Water Stewardship department has requested that the culvert and the silted-in channel be filled in.

Is that the way that she's co-ordinating her efforts with the Department of Conservation and the municipality?

Ms. Melnick: Well, Mr. Speaker, on one hand the member from Russell says there's communication between the R.M., between the different departments of government, and on the other hand he says there's nothing co-ordinated. He can't have it both ways, although that's the way he wants it. He's answered his own question by saying there's communication between the R.M. and between different departments in this government.

There's a process in place. I'd like him to respect it. I'd like him to recognize that we're working on water issues throughout the province with lots of municipalities, and we will continue to do so as we help to resolve high- and low-water issues throughout Manitoba.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister should read *Hansard* to just see how foolish her answer really is, and that answer I will send out to the municipality and the residents of Sandy Lake.

But Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister whether it's reasonable for her to demand that a culvert that was installed by EMO, a culvert that was authorized by EMO and paid for by the Province, is now being requested to be removed at the cost of the Municipality of Harrison.

Ms. Melnick: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm fine with *Hansard* being sent out to the good people of the Russell constituency showing that there is co-ordination throughout the departments in this government, that we're working with local people.

Is it the member from Russell who is the expert who will determine what will and will not happen? We rely on the expertise in the department. We rely on front-line staff who are working very closely with communities. We rely on the people who have the

broad vision of Manitoba, as water again is lower this year but still of concern in some areas. I'll go with the experts in this department and throughout this government and our partners in the R.M.s before I'll take the word of the member from Russell any day.

Provincial Road 340 Paving Project Status

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I have a question in regard to the unpaved section of Provincial Road 340 in southwestern Manitoba, and I'd like to paint a picture for the new Minister of Infrastructure.

The road in question runs from Highway No. 1 to Highway No. 2. Pavement extends 15 kilometres from the south end and approximately 15 kilometres from the north end. Approximately 13 kilometres in the middle remain unpaved. A bridge was built over the Assiniboine River on this section a number of years ago.

I'm simply asking the minister: When can we expect this section of highway to be completed?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to paint a picture for the member opposite. When his party was in government in the 1990s, they spent—well, I know they don't like to be reminded of that, but they spent about \$90 million a year on capital, which left us a huge infrastructure deficit. This year, for the second year in a row, we're spending \$366 million in capital.

And if I could finish painting the picture, Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering whether the member will add his signature on that capital agenda by voting for this budget. Or will he vote against it?

Mr. Cullen: Here's the NDP spending all this money and they still can't get 13 kilometres of road paved in southwestern Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to remind the minister of his letter, dated this past December, and he talks about—he actually admits that we now have high traffic volumes that passed the threshold. The road could be paved because of the threshold numbers, but he doesn't allow any time attached. The letter also goes on to say that MIT will continue to monitor PR 340 and maintain it to acceptable and safe standards.

Well, Mr. Speaker, just following that letter, I had a letter from the mayor of Wawanesa, and he

counters what the minister is saying. He's saying the road is—has dangerous conditions and the maintenance needs to be significantly improved. The minister has a copy of the letter already.

I simply ask: When is the minister going to stand up and look after this important road?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, maybe I'll try again. The member started his questions by saying that he was going to paint a picture. Maybe he should do it by paint by numbers.

Mr. Speaker, we're putting quadruple the capital budget in. We have the second year—match that again. We have record expenditures. We have a five-year capital program. I [*inaudible*] and he can reread the letter to look at that particular highway.

But I can guarantee you one thing, Mr. Speaker, we're doing a lot more throughout the province. There's a far greater prospect for fixing any of the roads in his constituency than anything that ever happened under the Conservatives in the 1990s.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind this minister and the new Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) there's also a provincial park that runs along the side of this particular road and this unfinished 13-kilometre stretch impedes access to the park.

This condition of this road is also detrimental to the economic development of the area.

Now it appears, Mr. Speaker, the NDP is taking infrastructure money to build a stadium in Winnipeg and, at the same time, ignoring infrastructure in rural Manitoba.

When can we expect some action on this particular road?

Mr. Ashton: Well, maybe I'll try one more time because I think, again, the member doesn't get the numbers. We're spending quadruple on the budget, Mr. Speaker, and I do point, by the way, that it's not just a question of the 1990s. I know we had a joint meeting with the Saskatchewan Cabinet. By the way, they've cut spending on their highway system by \$31 million in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, despite the tough—despite the world economic slowdown, what we have done is we've maintained record spending on highways.

I would suggest that the real message to the member and his constituents: If they want to see further improvements on the highway in that area,

they should hope that that side doesn't end up in government, that we continue to have an NDP government that's committed to rural Manitoba.

Bicycle Helmet Legislation Government Support

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, with the nice weather that's upon us, one of the things that is worthy of note is that we are seeing more and more children starting to take out their bicycles and going for the rides. And, you know, just a few years ago, that there was a survey that was actually conducted by IMPACT. And in that survey, between the ages of 12 and 15, less than 20 percent of those children were actually wearing bicycle helmets.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that there are head injuries that occur every year in the province of Manitoba and it is—there is an expectation that the government will, in fact, act in the best interests of our children. And I would ask the government whether or not they would be prepared this year to support a legislative initiative to make mandatory bicycle helmets in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): I'm actually pleased to inform the member we've been working with KidSport and also the Canadian Tire foundation to actually get a lot more equipment out to kids to make sure that they are more active, they are participating more in sports. And I think that's a very important thing.

I also would like to note—let the member know that we have a program that's run through schools where we have very inexpensive helmets that are going out to all schools across the province and, in fact, I was very, very impressed with the numbers yet again this year.

* (14:20)

I think what we want to do is educate people, get people involved, give them helmets if they can't afford them and have inexpensive helmets and have lots of opportunities for kids to be participating in sports and activities and that's what we're doing in this government.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, when ministers have demonstrated their inability to do the right thing you need to appeal to the Premier (Mr. Selinger).

And I ask the Premier, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier to recognize what other jurisdictions: British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince

Edward Island, Alberta, Ontario, and other municipalities in Canada, have, in fact, acted on legislating mandatory usage of bicycle helmets. That is the way you are going to be successful.

And, Mr. Premier, I'm asking for you to take leadership on this issue. Individuals, last year, died as a result of not having a bicycle helmet. There are head injuries that occur every year because of children not wearing bicycle helmets.

Why does Manitoba not recognize the need to have mandatory bicycle helmet legislation for our province?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, I hope the member opposite realizes it is leadership to provide free helmets to kids who are participating on sports and activities.

It is also leadership to work with corporate Canada to provide free equipment to kids who are participating in activity. It's also leadership to go through the trails, where we now have trails all across the province where kids are active and are participating. And with KidSport, we were leaders in KidSport to get kids active.

Now what we want to do is provide education, provide free helmets and equipment, provide opportunities to kids to participate, and work with their parents and the kids to make sure that they take appropriate action. Part of the solution is education. It's not always the stick, it's the carrot, and working with education so that people can make appropriate decision making.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, you know, General Motors and Ford corporation provided free seatbelts. It takes legislation in order to be able to save the lives of children in the province of Manitoba. It takes legislation in order to prevent head injuries in the province of Manitoba. This government has an opportunity to do something in which other governments across Canada have recognized to do, and they're standing up, and they're protecting the children of their respective provinces.

My question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, is: Why will the Premier (Mr. Selinger) not do the right thing and stand up for the children of this province by legislating, legislating mandatory bicycle helmet usage? It works. Why won't the Premier do the right thing on this issue?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, the right thing is investing in our children like the Healthy Child program that you vote against.

The right thing is investing in early infant care, which the Liberals, federally, did not invest in for a long term and the Liberals vote against provincially. The right thing is to have home visiting programs. The right thing is to have parent support programs. The right thing is to have a nurturing environment.

This government's investing in children. You, sir, continue to vote against those investments.

Manitoba Housing Authority Unit Renovations

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, members on the opposition want to talk about the 1990s. In the 1990s, under the mean, lean Filmon team, the private sector was offered social housing units to purchase. They said no. They didn't want them because they were so badly run down. Also, in 1993, the federal and provincial Conservative governments eliminated all funding to social housing.

Mr. Speaker, by way of contrast, our government believes that the best way to create safe, healthy communities for people is to provide safe and affordable housing.

Can the Minister of Housing and Community Development share the details with the House of the news conference that we had this morning about renovation of social housing units which we have been undertaking, and will continue to do, and progress towards 1,500 new units of social housing?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Mr. Speaker, today I was very proud to be joined at Lord Selkirk Park with the MLA from Burrows, as well as community organizations and tenants of Lord Selkirk Park, where we celebrated our commitment to the redevelopment of 314 units of the townhouses and apartments.

That investment is historical; \$17 million is going into that community to enrich the housing units themselves, to provide employment to the community, to look at redevelopment of the daycare, to continue to look at the adult learning centre, to continue to make those investments that make a difference. It was a proud day for all of us to talk about our commitment to the 1,500 social housing units where we were able to report to Manitobans

today 600 of those units will be completed by the end of this year.

Educational Facilities Southwest Winnipeg

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, throughout southwest Winnipeg, high-school-age kids are being bused throughout the city, huts are being added on to high schools in order to deal with overcrowding, yet this Minister of Education hasn't been able to make it enough of a priority to build a needed new high school in southwest Winnipeg in order to get it done, in spite of the very good efforts of the chair of the Pembina Trails School Board, Karen Velthuys. In spite of the excellent effort and the very good work on the part of the school board to manage this problem, they don't have a partner in the provincial government. Even with their no-fail policy they're failing families in southwest Winnipeg.

When is she going to make schools for kids in southwest Winnipeg a priority?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Mr. Speaker, I'm so pleased that as the newly minted Minister of Education that I'm being—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Allan: —that my very first question, Mr. Speaker, is from the Leader of the Opposition asking me for a school in his riding.

I'm proud to be a—I'm proud, Mr. Speaker, to be part of a government that believes in investing in education, and I'm proud to be part of a government that believes in funding schools here in Manitoba and building new schools here in Manitoba.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a minister who is part of a Cabinet that just signed an MOU to take future revenue away from schools as a so-called insurance policy for the stadium boondoggle that this Premier (Mr. Selinger) has signed on to.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister why it is that she says no to families, to school-age kids in southwest Winnipeg, at the same time as her Premier says yes to taking money away from school boards to put them into his pet projects.

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, last year this government, the previous Minister of Education, made a historic announcement in regards to our

capital budget. It was the largest capital budget that's ever been announced in the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Allan: It's the largest capital budget that's ever been announced in the history of this province. It was \$310 million for five schools, and I'd just like to remind members opposite that five of those schools are in Tory ridings, and—which they probably voted against. Thank you very much for that, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to invest in schools in Manitoba and we continue to watch demographic trends, Mr. Speaker, and that's what's important to our capital budget.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ducks Unlimited Teulon Chapter

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 20th anniversary of the Teulon Chapter Ducks Unlimited. Ducks Unlimited Canada works towards achieving a combination of natural, restored, managed landscapes capable of perpetuity sustaining population of waterfowl and other wildlife. The initiation of Ducks Unlimited Canada is set in Canada's Prairies during the Great Depression when wetlands were vanishing and waterfowl populations were declining due to drought, agricultural and urban expansion.

This year, Teulon Ducks Unlimited hosted their annual fundraising dinner on March the 21st, to raise funds for protect the wetlands in Manitoba. The fundraising dinner also served as an opportunity to recognize people who have contributed to the organization's success over the past two decades, including a few of its founding members. In the past, the Teulon chapter has collected over \$250,000 through its annual fundraising dinner for wetland conservation and habitat programs.

Teulon Ducks Unlimited has been associated with a number of projects in Manitoba, including the Rockwood Fish Hatchery, along with other 17 ongoing conservation projects in the immediate Teulon area, with a total investment of \$5 million. On the national scale, Canada has always had a bountiful supply of wetlands, waterfowl habitat, even though as much as 70 percent of this area has been lost in some areas of the country. Canadian wetlands have traditionally supported approximately

70 percent of North America's waterfowl, making its habitat an essential component to the country's ecosystems.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the Teulon branch of Ducks Unlimited on reaching their 20th anniversary. The work that they do in the waterfowl protection and wetland conservation is fundamental to the health of environment. I hope that the operation of Ducks Unlimited continues to be successful in the future and that Manitobans are able to follow their leadership and join the effort to preserve wildlife habitats.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

World Health Day

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, today is World Health Day. On this day in 1948, the World Health Organization was founded. As members will know, the WHO directs and co-ordinates health programs within the United Nations umbrella.

Since 1950 the WHO has marked their anniversary with World Health Day, a platform for action and awareness. Each year a theme is chosen. Recent years have drawn attention to health and climate change, international health security, collaborative health practices and mother and child wellness.

This year the World Health Day theme is urban health, an area of concern no less relevant in Brandon or Winnipeg than in Jakarta or Beijing. Living in densely populated communities like cities brings certain elevated risks. Poor air quality, physical inactivity, unhealthy diets and even traffic injuries are all serious examples of urban health issues.

Healthy cities are built around a handful of fundamental strengths. First, urban planning must facilitate healthy behaviour, including walking and cycling. Further, health-promoting infrastructure should be accessible to people of all ages and physical abilities. Next, basic amenities, including shelter and healthy food, have to be available to all demographics in all parts of our communities. Third, urban governance should be as participatory as possible with the mind that collaborative communities are healthy communities. And, lastly—and no surprise to a city familiar with large-scale

flooding—our cities must, as far as possible, be resilient to emergencies and natural disasters.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to voice my thanks and support for a number of initiatives and investments related to urban health pledged in our recent budget. Money is to be invested towards the construction of a mental health crisis response centre in Winnipeg and towards the cardiac care centre of excellence at St. Boniface hospital. Brandon will soon boast a state-of-the-art regional cancer care centre, a healthy living centre and a redeveloped Westman laboratory.

There is, as always, work to do, Mr. Speaker, but I am proud that on World Health Day Manitobans can not only plan for the future but can also celebrate all that we have worked together to accomplish.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

National Oral Health Month

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize April is National Oral Health Month.

I'd like to take a moment to recognize the important place that our oral health professionals and educators play in our health-care system. Our Manitoba dentists, dental hygienists, oral surgeons and denturists, as well as the Faculty of Dentistry and Red River College program for dental hygienists all play an integral role in helping Manitobans to stay healthy and lead active lives.

Not only do our oral health professionals look to our regular checkups, they also serve as a tool in the prevention of many oral cancers and diseases. Our highly trained oral professionals are able to identify some of the early stages of mouth cancers, for example, and can very readily and easily assist in early diagnosis and treatments.

Nowhere, Mr. Speaker, is the importance of oral health been clearer than the problems with dental caries in many of our northern communities and, indeed, in areas of the centre of Winnipeg, with very high rates of dental 'caries' which has led to high rates of dental surgery for children as early as two years of age.

This is a tragic situation and, since the very day that I was first elected in 1999 as an MLA for River Heights, I have been calling on this government to do a far better job in preventing these dental caries and improving the oral health, because it has not only short-term but long-term benefits.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like at the moment and today to officially recognize the valuable role of our Manitoba oral health professionals and educators in National Oral Health Month, and to thank them for their dedication to helping Manitobans to stay healthy and happy.

Cory and Val Chartrand

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I rise today to recognize Cory and Val Chartrand who, through Habitat for Humanity, have just today become proud, first-time homeowners in my constituency. I was proud to pass along the keys to their new home to them today at a ceremony as they were surrounded by their supportive friends and family.

Cory has worked full time as a craftsman with Kitchen Craft for the last 10 years and his wife, Val, recently started working as an administrative assistant for a heating and cooling company. Cory and Val have four children, ages eight to 14, and they're very excited for the opportunity to become first-time homeowners.

Like many families, while working full time and raising their family, they've always rented and struggled to make ends meet along with experiencing too many disruptive family moves. Increases in rent, apartment renovations or living in places where children had no room to play made life an unsettling experience for the Chartrand family. Currently they reside in a side-by-side, but the rent has now increased to a point where they were financially struggling no matter how much they tried to save.

Through a unique partnership of Habitat for Humanity, the Winnipeg Métis Association, Manitoba Housing and Community Development and many, many others, the Chartrand family has been given this exciting opportunity to build the financial equity and a more secure future for their family.

The family is now excited to be only a few houses away from their extended family, who are also Habitat owners, and the children look forward to having a safe and healthy neighbourhood in which to play.

I would like to welcome the Chartrand family to our community and thank Habitat for Humanity, the countless volunteers and community partners that have worked so hard to make the Sir Samuel Steele school site redevelopment such a success for the families and for our community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Brittany MacDonald

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): It's my pleasure to rise today to acknowledge an exceptional young person from my constituency, Brittany MacDonald, who was selected for the Association of Manitoba Municipalities' 2010 Young Community Leader Award.

A graduating student from Rivers Collegiate, Brittany is a devoted contributor to both her school community and the larger community. She is president of student council, co-editor of her high school yearbook. The immensity of Brittany's volunteer work is profound. She dedicates her time to Riverdale curling club, her church, the Masonic lodge, the Rivers and Area Lions Club, and is president of the local Leos Club.

Brittany is a positive role model to young people in the community. She teaches French classes to younger students in her school and has been an active supporter of the Rivers Elementary School playground committee, raising funds to build a new structure for the children of Rivers. As a lungs-for-life presenter, Brittany talks to schoolchildren in schools throughout western Manitoba about the harmful effects of smoking.

This young woman is not only a powerful role model for younger students but can serve as an example for all of us regardless of our age. Brittany's dedication to so many groups and causes demonstrates how much impact one person may have on the world if they are willing to put in the time and energy.

On behalf of all members of this House, I would like to congratulate Brittany MacDonald on her well-deserved achievement.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Regarding the previously announced meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on Wednesday, April the 14th, at 7 p.m., to consider the Auditor General's 2009 follow-up report, I'd like to clarify that the honourable Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross) and Ms. Joy Cramer, Deputy Minister of Housing and Community Development, will be called as witnesses during the considerations of sections 17,

20 and 23 of this report and that section 21 will not be considered at this meeting.

Mr. Speaker: Regarding the previously announced meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on Wednesday, April 14th, at 7 p.m., to consider the Auditor General's 2009 follow-up report, it's been clarified that the honourable Minister of Housing and Community Development and Ms. Joy Cramer, Deputy Minister of Housing and Community Development, will be called as witnesses during the consideration of sections 17, 20 and 23 of this report. Section 21 will not be considered at this meeting.

BUDGET DEBATE (Third Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and it's in the name of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou), who has three minutes remaining.

What is the will of the House? Is the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of honourable member for Portage la Prairie?

* (14:40)

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? That's been denied. Okay, we will now have a speaker.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this House to give my unqualified support to the budget presented to the House by our government.

Before I begin, however, I would like to recognize and congratulate the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) for being the first woman Finance minister in the history of Manitoba, and, obviously, thereby being the first woman MLA to present a budget in this Legislature. As a representative in Manitoba for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, I'm even more proud to be her colleague and here to recognize this landmark in Manitoba history. Over the years, I've had the opportunity to travel with this minister and share many thoughts and experiences. I found her to be very sensitive and insightful to the needs and issues within families, both in the rural area where she lives

and the city where she must reside during session. She speaks with experience, compassion and empathy in dealing with problems, and meets them head-on in a no-nonsense practical manner. I have utmost faith in her assessment decisions on what will benefit Manitobans most and how to proceed with ensuring the best outcome.

This budget illustrates to all Manitobans the continuing commitment of this government to the growth of Manitoba and the enrichment of the lives of Manitobans. This is a budget that, even as the world moves through the unparalleled damage caused by the global recession, continues to provide improvements to health care, education and training, family services and justice. All of this will be achieved by targeting 90 percent of new spending into those areas. What is important here, Mr. Speaker, is the commitment to the future for Manitobans represented by this budget. Such a commitment is also shown in investment of \$1.8 billion in infrastructure stimulus projects in our province. These expenditures will lead to the creation of 29,000 direct and indirect jobs for Manitobans.

The budget presented to this House at the same time commits, in terms of living costs and taxes, to keeping Manitoba in the top three provinces for—in Canada, for affordability in living. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a recent KPMG report, as reported by the *Winnipeg Free Press* of March 20th–30th, 2010, states: The 2010 version of KPMG's study on global competitiveness, called *Competitive Alternatives*, ranks Winnipeg No. 1 among 22 cities in this region when it comes to business costs. The study, released Tuesday, ranks 112 cities in 10 countries. It puts Canada second of the 10 countries studied.

Of special interest to my constituency of St. James is the statement in the article which notes that Winnipeg's cost ranking in the region has gone from fifth to first in aerospace manufacturing and third to first in electronic assembly. A tangible example of such a commitment to the future is represented by the coming opening of the new James A. Richardson terminal by the Winnipeg Airports Authority.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I've had the privilege of being included in the WAA's ongoing updates with the stakeholders in the community at large on the progress of this incredibly beautiful and complex project, which will serve this province for years into the future.

This budget also aims to return to surplus within five years and to continue to pay down our debt. To implement this five-year plan, we will be making changes to the balanced budget law that will require the budget shortfall to be eliminated over four years and returned to surplus in year five of the plan. It is important to note, Mr. Acting Speaker, that other governments in Canada are also adopting multiyear plans to reduce their deficits. In fact, the federal brothers of the opposition, the Harper Conservative government, projects six years to reduce its much larger deficit. The changes proposed to the balanced budget legislation do not change the legal requirement to have balanced budgets into the future, and it keeps a prohibition on increases to major taxes without a referendum. But it does set out a more aggressive paydown of debt than the current law does. If we don't change the existed balance budget law, we would have to absorb the full impact of the global recession by next year.

This would put at risk many important initiatives such as operating support for a new state-of-the-art medical equipment like the RT, which offers new hope to patients with otherwise inoperable cancer.

At risk, as well, would be construction work on the regional cancer centre in Brandon and the new birth centre in south Winnipeg and road work in every region of the province.

This budget, Mr. Acting Speaker, balances off these and other needs of Manitobans with the debt reduction requirements of the balanced budget legislation.

Some of the activities that have been demonstrating the commitment, optimism and hope in St. James are initiatives that the community has embraced and enthusiastically supported. For instance, the multiuse pathways which will run from Sturgeon Creek to Polo Park, the Military Family Resource Centre has joined in and the first phase will be known as the Yellow Ribbon Trail in honour of our troops.

Another recent announcement is the building of a playground which will service Linwood day care, Linwood School and Deer Lodge Community Centre. The board members of all three are joining forces to make this dream a reality. The Sturgeon Creek and Silver Heights community centres are amalgamating to ensure a safer and more accommodating centre, including a gym.

Bord-Aire Community Club has just become totally and impressively accessible. The community around Brookdale Community Centre is looking at a canoe dock this summer and the residents there are enthusiastically looking forward to and supporting the building of it. This will be around the dog-walking park many families enjoy. I'm told their yet-to-do list is lengthy.

Keeping St. James clean and safe is a goal for those who are able to help. The annual Truro Creek cleanup is coming up, and our hardy volunteers continue to come out to help keep our local jewels, like Bruce Park, clean and safe for our families. Again, our troops have come out to assist in this endeavour and their participation has meant that feats, such as removing large objects like a couch last year, could not have been possible.

In addition to our community clubs keeping our children fit, our Rods Football Club has grown and continues to thrive and nurture our future leaders.

Further testimony to the optimism evidenced within the constituency of St. James are the plans well under way for the third housing unit soon to start at Kiwanis Courts. They began with one of a planned four to be built every-one every five years. However, the first was so successful, they built the second one the next year and now the third which will replace the existing business offices and attached recreation room which are the oldest in the area attached to the courts. Their plans for future development are very ambitious.

There's also another development on the site of the old Silver Heights School. The developer has been very conscientious about inviting residents to consultation meetings and a very well-thought-out mixed-need housing has been accepted which will not infringe on any neighbouring housing concerns and address a real need in St. James. It is difficult not to have hope with all this growth happening.

Another jewel of St. James, Deer Lodge Centre, continues to exemplify the value placed and focus our government places on health care. As my colleague from Kirkfield Park stated—affirmed yesterday, as she spoke about a couple that the program, the PRIME program, has changed their lives and increased the quality of their lives enormously.

It's the most recent addition to the many programs offered at Deer Lodge Centre. It has been a huge success. It's a step after day hospital and

intended to keep seniors able to stay in their homes even longer and to reduce the need for them to go to the emergency rooms. It has proven itself.

* (14:50)

The Movement Disorder Centre also housed in the Tribute building, Women's Memorial Tribute building in front of Deer Lodge is now renovated into a state-of-the-art building, continues to serve many—including veterans—many elderly people and help them regain a sense of independence, and, most particularly, dignity.

The—speaking of Deer Lodge, I must mention—I can't resist mentioning it every time—that I don't like to miss a chance to express my gratitude to the then-minister of Health, Mr. Orchard, of the previous government, for motivating me to run in 1999. As a—I was a clinical social worker, and as a front-line worker was so angered at the state of care, and who can forget the horrendous frozen food issues, and he came to the centre one day and he absolutely infuriated me, and, anyway, I can thank him for being here today.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the budget presented to the House represents a budget of hope and optimism in the future for Manitobans. It is a budget that recognizes the devastating effects, globally, of the massive recession we are beginning to move out of. And it recognizes, as many budgets proposed across this country and around the world do, that this recovery is fragile and needs to be nurtured if it is to be sustainable.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I began with a congratulations before I began the speech, and I'd like to—before I end, I would like to also congratulate and welcome warmly our newest MLA in Concordia. He has big shoes to fill, but has already shown he is certainly capable and up for the job. Welcome and you do us proud.

It is, Mr. Acting Speaker, a budget that recognizes the new reality of the global economy but, at the same time, is in keeping with the spirit of our previous 10 balanced budgets. It is a budget I fully support. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Acting Speaker, I can't help but begin—on the—following up on the comments that were just made in terms of this being a balanced budget. That speaks directly to the credibility of the NDP government because in claiming under their own balanced budget legislation

that this is a balanced budget, they lose all credibility.

Having a budget which is in the operating area about 600 million, a little over, in terms of deficit, that this is very clearly deficit financing, going deep into the hole for this province in order to be able to spend, spend, spend, without being—managing anywhere nearly as well as they should be.

I would like to take a moment by noting that I'm rising today, now more than two weeks after the budget was initially delivered, because there was rather poor management of the legislative schedule. I mean, ordinarily, the budget should be delivered and we should proceed straight into debate so that things are fresh and we are able to comment quickly after the budget is delivered—[interjection] Absolutely. Up until this circumstance, the tradition has been. Let's get on with it.

This year, because of the approach that the NDP used right after the budget, and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), we had debate on Bill 11 for several days. We then had a break week, for a week, and so now it's more than two weeks after the budget was delivered when we're finally getting around to be able to debate it.

But, if the NDP think, Mr. Acting Speaker, if they think that they can divert attention by this tactic from the irresponsible nature of this budget, they are wrong. Nobody in this province is going to forget the deficit, the deficit of this budget and the huge hole that the NDP are putting in the history of this province and in the history of budgeting in this province.

The budget this year provides for a deficit of more than \$500 million. Last year, the NDP budgeted to have a deficit of \$88 million in the core operations and they ended up with a deficit of more than \$600 million in core operations, what they call about 550 million overall. And when you look at where this budget should have been, it's important to ask what is the nature of the structural deficit at the end of last year, and so my first question this session to the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was how come he couldn't stick to the expenditure estimates that he made last year. How come his expenditures ballooned and ballooned and ballooned?

And the Premier said that a lot of this was due to one-time costs on H1N1 flu and on the flood which were not going to be repeated. Well, fortunately, the flood was not a big problem this year so that won't be

repeated, and we don't expect to have another H1N1 flu epidemic, so that shouldn't be repeated.

But the reality is that we shouldn't have had a budget of more than \$500-million deficit. When you take away those one-time costs, you allow for a bit better management than we've seen. We should probably have had, because of the economy, a deficit in the range of—structural deficit of 2 to 3 hundred million dollars, not one of more than \$500 million. A reasonable budget this year would've had a deficit of about \$200 million. Interestingly, that's only a 2 percent difference from where they are now.

An Honourable Member: That's scary.

Mr. Gerrard: That is scary, but it shows that they could've changed things. Just by 2 percent they could've got to a budget of \$200 million which is where they should have been, instead of this ballooning, skyrocketing deficit they are not managing well. Last year's budget went off track faster than you can imagine and was much worse and much higher than ever expected.

So, Liberals, as I have talked about, believe in responsible budgeting and reasonable budgeting. We also believe in having a credible budget, not one that pretends to be balanced when it's got a \$600-million deficit. And, indeed, Mr. Acting Speaker, there are reasonable doubts that the NDP are going to be able to bring the budget back into balance within five years, as they say. In fact, the NDP have been so irresponsible in this budget as to bring in a budget plan which is totally illegal under current legislation. It's—it breaks. It is not according to the existing balanced budget legislation, and give the NDP credit; they recognize this. They're proposing legislation to change the balanced budget bill to suit their needs and to cover up their tracks. Oh, look at this, covering up their tracks because they goofed so badly. Typical NDP.

Let me move on and talk about some of the things that should have been in this budget. I've been there when there's been balanced budgets and responsible budgets. I've looked at what people have done to make sure that there's good budgeting and, given the deficit situation, the budget should've focussed major efforts in areas where there's a potential to reduce the provincial costs moving forward.

* (15:00)

Liberals understand that you must look for ways to prevent costs before they happen and then use

your savings to pay down the debt. The NDP, clearly, haven't grasped this concept, so let me put it in quite simple terms. Expenditures in a provincial budget can be divided into group A, expenditures which give rise to a long-run increase in provincial costs; group B, where the effect on the initiative is neutral to long-run provincial budget costs; and group C, where the initiative results in a decrease in long-run provincial costs.

This budget should have disproportionately focussed on expenditures in group C, which have a long-run effect to decrease provincial costs. But it didn't. One example, focussing an effort on this epidemic of diabetes which is raging in our province at the moment. This epidemic of diabetes is costing Manitobans, each year, hundreds of millions of dollars, and it's adversely affecting, very severely in many cases, the well-being and, indeed, the lives of many, many Manitobans.

Under this government, the proportion of Manitobans from—with diabetes increased from about four percent in 1998-99 to more than six percent in 2006 and probably now is up in the range of 7 percent or more.

The financial cost of diabetes to Manitoba's provincial budget can be roughly estimated as about 11 percent of the provincial health-care budget when we have an incidence of 6 percent—that's about 570 million—rising to about 13 percent of health-care budget when you have an incidence of 7 percent, say 660 million.

Well, there's certainly a range of estimates, and these may be high or low as may be the case, but the cost to the provincial budget in Manitoba is clearly and broadly acknowledged in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Effective action, 10 years ago, to stabilize the diabetes epidemic and start to decrease the incidence of this condition, as we proposed back then, could now be saving perhaps as much as 2 to 3 hundred million dollars a year in health-care expenses which cumulatively would be huge.

Insufficient action by the NDP has led to spiralling increases in the incidence of diabetes and massive increases in costs to the provincial Treasury. At the very least, the 2010 budget should have had a major initiative in relation to the diabetes epidemic to reduce the incidence of this disease.

There are numerous other areas where carefully targeted efforts are well established to result in major savings. Quality early childhood education is an

example where improvements in early childhood education can reduce the costs in our education system later on, in our child welfare system, in our health-care system, in our justice system.

It is said that when it's spent well, investment of \$1 can give a savings of \$7, and that's on the basis of good studies.

The 2010 NDP budget offered our early childhood educators a pension plan, but didn't address appallingly low wages, and the pension plan alone isn't going to alleviate the chronic shortage of early childhood educators which is one of the primary reasons for the shortage of child-care spaces in Manitoba. The NDP, of course, like to announce more child-care spaces. But parents beware; this is not—there's not now the staff to staff these spaces that are being announced.

Decreasing drop-out rates is also an area where it makes sense to focus as this helps to ensure our young people have opportunities and decreases costly expenses in child welfare and social assistance and in justice.

Targeting approaches in reducing FASD, which I've been calling on for more than 10 years, is another area. In spite of a lot of rhetoric and some significant dollars, we still haven't been shown the evidence that the incidence of FASD is decreasing in any way. Why is this government so lacking in providing outcomes and support which would show that what they're doing is actually having an impact?

Couple all these efforts with improved money management, for example, changing from global budgets in health care to budgets based on services delivered, and we'd have seen a far better budget than what we saw coming this year from the NDP.

I suggest to you, Mr. Acting Speaker, and others here, that the budget should also have focussed on areas where investments will facilitate economic growth. Investments in education are a good example. It's therefore disturbing to see the provincial government increasing tuition fees and decreasing support for student aid in the same budget, and thus making it harder, not easier, for Manitobans to get a post-secondary education, which is such a benefit and such a step forward in terms of economic development.

Not only—not only—is the government increasing tuition fees broadly by 5 percent, it's also looking at huge increases in tuition fees in some faculties. Up to 114 percent is being talked about in medicine, for

example, and increasing, for Master's in Business Administration students, tuition fees by \$15,000 is another. This was broadly reported and was the subject of public meetings yesterday. I think the Minister for Advanced Education should pay more attention to what's happening in public meetings.

Improving water management for farmers is a further area where focus could help decrease risk to farmers and increase production and economic output. Farmers in the Interlake have had a very rough time in the last few years, and much of this could have been prevented if there had been really good drainage and water management in the region. Helping to decrease risk and increase productivity at the same time makes sense, but, over 10 years, the NDP have never tackled water management adequately. Initiatives done well in research and development and innovation can also help. Once again, the NDP are short of what's needed.

Within this budget are also a variety of excessive expenditures. A good example is the removal of nitrogen from Winnipeg's sewage. Nitrogen is naturally present in the air. Indeed, 80 percent of the air is nitrogen, and the blue-green algae of major concern on Lake Winnipeg can get their nitrogen from the air. So reducing the nitrogen in the waters of the Red and the Assiniboine River won't help to reduce or eliminate blue-green algae in Lake Winnipeg and, in fact, to some scientists have pointed out it may actually increase the harmful blue-green algae.

Wasting dollars on a much longer and more expensive hydro-electric transmission line on the west side of Manitoba is another example, while two alternative lower cost options under Lake Winnipeg and on the east side of Lake Winnipeg are available.

There are many more things that should be said about this budget. Professor Allen Mills has said it's unimaginative government. It is impression management and talking points rhetoric. In deeds worse, mind-numbing rhetoric which should be dismissed as childish verbal flutter. As I have done, Allen Mills mentions that the failure of the government's wellness strategy is evident for all to see, and he goes on to emphasize that the Province is now in the world of a hope and a prayer.

Mr. Acting Speaker, Premier—the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has given us an amateur budget to go along with some amateur leadership. Manitoba deserves and needs better governing than this NDP government is delivering.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this budget is a failure for me, for my family. This budget is a failure for my constituency. This budget is a failure for all Manitobans.

I therefore move the following subamendment:

THAT the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words:

And further regrets that this budget fails to address the priorities of Manitobans by:

(g) failing to properly manage the finances of Manitoba and, as a result, building up a huge structural deficit which will hurt Manitobans for many years to come; and

(h) failing to acknowledge the damage the payroll tax has on economic growth; and

(i) failing to set high goals for our provincial education system; and

(j) failing to create an adequate action plan and funding for early childhood education in Manitoba; and

* (15:10)

(k) failing to increase student aid support to post-secondary education students and increasing tuition for university students by 5 percent, which is above the cost of living;

(l) failing to recognize the need for and address the establishment of a Manitoba science, engineering and humanities research council; and

(m) failing to reduce wait times for post-secondary institutions; and

(n) failing to put patients first by continuing to base RHA spending on global budgets, rather than services delivered; and

(o) failing to adequately address the diabetes epidemic facing Manitoba and to set a target for reduction of the incidence of diabetes in our province; and

(p) failing to ensure local community access to health care, as has happened with the Westbrook medical clinic closure; and

(q) failing to develop a Manitoba policy on what services community hospitals should provide; and

(r) failing to implement a plan to reduce child poverty rates in Manitoba; and

(s) continuing to ignore the need to set targets and hire sufficient enforcement officers to ensure progress on cleaning up Lake Winnipeg and other Manitoba lakes suffering from toxic algal blooms; and

(t) failing to support the agricultural sector by refusing to fund eco-friendly farming practices, such as a province-wide ALUS program; and

(u) failing to address climate change and not running a carbon-neutral government; and

(v) failing to address northern Manitoba housing issues; and

(w) failing to act on economic development for First Nations and rural Manitobans; and

(x) failing to reduce waiting times to a reasonable level in issuing nominee certificates.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): It has been moved by the honourable member for River Heights, seconded by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux),

THAT the amendment be amended by:

And further regrets that this budget fails to address the priorities of Manitobans—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Dispense?

It is dispensed. The subamendment—

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Sorry. I did not hear the "no."

Make yourself comfortable.

And further regrets that this budget fails to address the priorities of Manitobans by:

(g) failing to properly manage the finances of Manitoba and, as a result, building up a huge structural deficit which will hurt Manitobans for many years to come; and

(h) failing to acknowledge the damage the payroll tax has done on economic growth; and

(i) failing to set high goals for our provincial education system; and

(j) failing to create an adequate action plan for funding in early childhood education in Manitoba; and

(k) failing to increase student aid support to post-secondary education students and increasing tuition for university students by 5 percent, which is above the cost of living;

(l) failing to recognize the need for and address the establishment of a Manitoba science, engineering and humanities research council; and

(m) failing to reduce wait times for post-secondary institutions; and

(n) failing to put patients first by continuing to base RHA spending on global budgets, rather than services delivered; and

(o) failing to adequately address the diabetes epidemic facing Manitoba and to set a target for reduction of the incidence of diabetes in our province; and

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(t) failing to support the agricultural sector by refusing to fund eco-friendly farming practices, such as a province-wide ALUS program; and

(u) failing to address climate change and not running a carbon-neutral government; and

(v) failing to address northern Manitoba housing issues; and

(w) failing to act on economic development for First Nations and rural Manitobans; and

(x) failing to reduce wait times to a reasonable level in issuing nominee certificates.

Waiting for the page. The subamendment is now officially in order.

The honourable member for Russell.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Acting Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): On a point of order?

Mr. Derkach: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Well, no, usually—sorry then. Usually, the discussion for speeches goes opposition, government, opposition, government. We just heard from an opposition member and it goes back to government. I thought you were on a point of order, that's all.

The Chair recognizes the honourable member for Selkirk.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It's a pleasure to speak, actually speaking right now to the Liberal amendment to the amendment, I believe, Mr. Acting Speaker, which was quite interesting. The Leader of the Liberal Party spoke today about, you know, about his desire to see changes to the provincial budget but failed to even ask one question today about it and in question period. Instead, rather than focussing on the finances of the province, they focussed on bike helmets. That was the issue of the day for them, and I don't even believe members of the opposition asked questions about the—the official opposition, if they asked any questions about the budget today.

They were—they asked—they were talking more about leaving Manitoba behind when it comes to other communities in terms of their infrastructure for professional sporting teams, Mr. Acting Speaker, where they spoke out against, again and again, our government's plan to provide a new stadium for Manitoba's professional football team but also for the University of Manitoba's college football team and other important community groups.

First of all, Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to begin by just congratulating and welcoming our new member, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), and I wish him well. I know that he will have here in this Chamber a very long and productive career. Listening to him yesterday reminded me—I'm sure I'm not—wasn't the only one—reminded me that what an honour and what a privilege it is to—for us to represent our constituents in this House. I want to, as well, of course, thank my constituents who live in the

city of Selkirk, live in the R.M. of St. Clements, the R.M. of Alexander and the R.M. of Victoria Beach for their support and their advice over the last number of years.

I also want to—am pleased to report to the House that this past spring we didn't—occur—have any significant flooding in our community. And that, unfortunately, has become a bit of a rite of passage for us in our area, that we have to do some flooding, and every spring. I want to congratulate and thank my colleague, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) for her leadership on this—she's attended to our community—and, as well, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) as the minister of Emergency Measures, that they're taking a great interest in the needs of our community when it comes to dealing with this natural occurrence. And I want to thank them on behalf of my constituents.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to congratulate our new Finance Minister on her first budget. I'm honoured to serve as her legislative assistant and I'm—was involved with her in the process and I find it to be a very fascinating process in incredibly difficult times. Someone suggested this is the best of the times and it's the worst of times, but I believe, you know, we did what we could under very difficult economic times and I'll lay those issues out as I progress with this speech.

We—I had a chance to attend several of the budget consultation meetings hosted by the Finance Minister, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all those Manitobans who attended them, and they offered up their advice and they offered up their suggestions, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I know that many of their suggestions were, in fact, incorporated, and their ideas were incorporated into this budget.

* (15:20)

Mr. Acting Speaker, this budget, it has at its core a five-year economic plan which returns the province to surplus while continuing to support front-line services and growing our economy. I think what members—and this—I think, when we debate this issue in this Chamber, I think all members, when you look across what's happening across Canada and across the world, lines of ideology are sometimes blurred when you come to dealing with this economic—the results, truly, of an economic credit crisis, a worldwide economic downturn. And I don't believe there's a government in the world, at least not in the western world, that's not running a deficit at this time, that's not able to balance their books in this

incredible economic situation. There's not a government in Canada that's currently been able to balance their books. It doesn't really matter which political party you're coming from, whether NDP or Liberals or the Conservatives, and I'll talk about that later.

Every single budget that's been announced so far, that's been tabled so far, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I believe there's still maybe some provinces yet to go—I don't think New Brunswick has tabled theirs yet—but every single one calls for a deficit. The government—no matter, again, Liberal, NDP, Conservatives—find it necessary to use deficit financing to help them get through this economic downturn that we're in. And what, again, what I find fascinating is the Conservatives in this Chamber, both Conservatives and I might add the Liberals as well, they have no—really no credibility on financial matters. They don't seem to understand the difference between capital spending and operating spending.

Let's talk about—we'll talk about the—it's quite a—it's been an issue, it's been debated in this House—it's an issue that's been in the public forum and that is the issue of the Bipole III, the line that needs to be built, and they say, well, you know, it's going to cost \$640 million that comes out of this year's budget. Well, I have this year's budget in front of me and I've gone through it several times and nowhere in this budget does it state that there is \$640 million going to be spent on the Bipole III line.

The reality, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that Hydro will probably spend this year around \$20 million on preparation work for the line. They're going to be doing some surveying. They're going to be doing some consultation work. So they'll be spending about, I understand, around \$20 million this year, and they're going to be financing this line from Part B capital, so they'll be borrowing the money. So they borrow \$20 million and they'll be paying approximately 5 percent interest, so let's say they might be spending, this year alone, \$1 million on the line, not \$640 million. But, beside that, it does not come out of the core operations of this government; nor does the waste-water treatment upgrades for the city of Winnipeg does not come out of the core operations of this budget; nor does the stadium that's been debated in this Chamber as early as this afternoon. Again, the money for that does not come out of—it's not a matter of, you know, money for farmers or money for a hydro line. Those are two separate things and, you know, the members are

trying to confuse this. They're trying to confuse this because they know that they're not getting any credibility on any of the other issues that they debate, so they're trying to confuse Manitobans on this topic.

Mr. Acting Speaker, as I said, they fail to accept that almost every government, probably every—I know every government in Canada right now is using a deficit financing to weather the worldwide economic slowdown. And I want to just quote from the *Free Press*, and this was from—I'll tell you who it is after I read the quote: We have to run a deficit in order to help people in Canada during a recession that came from outside. That is a quote from Finance Minister Jim Flaherty. And I—they realize the federal government runs a deficit, the Conservatives in this Chamber say it's a necessary evil. When we do it, they question our management abilities.

I listened to the—several of the Conservative members yesterday criticize this government, but, you know, the reality is that, when it comes to deficit financing, there's no larger borrower of money in this country than the federal Conservative government and, for example, this year alone they'll be borrowing over \$54 billion, which, Mr. Acting Speaker, \$54 billion this year alone, then next year they're anticipating they'll be needing 49, then 27, 17, 8 and then finally \$2 billion. Before they return to surplus, which is five or six years away, they'll have added over \$160 billion to the debt of this country; \$160 billion of debt will be added by the federal Conservatives to the Canadian debt, which is an increase of over 35 percent to the debt.

And I heard members yesterday going on about kids in the gallery and us adding to their debt. Well, what about the Conservatives in Ottawa? You know, what about Merv Tweed? You know, what about Vic Toews? What about Stephen Harper? You know, all the Conservative MPs, all—it's all the Conservative MPs that these Conservative MLAs, they get up there and they hammer in the signs for, you know, for Vic Toews and they hammer in the signs for Merv Tweed. They give them money, Mr. Acting Speaker. They vote for them. Yet I never heard a single word from them, a single word of criticism against the biggest borrower in the history of Canada, and that is Stephen Harper government in Ottawa.

And it's shameful that they're able to get away with that, Mr. Acting Speaker, but, you know, we will do our best to let Manitobans know the situation.

In Newfoundland, the MP, the Finance Minister states there—his name is Tom Marshall—he states, this is not a time to slam on the brakes. He describes his budget as a strategy to steer the province to more fiscally secure times, Mr. Acting Speaker. It's about momentum. It's about keeping momentum going.

Mr. Acting Speaker, they have added several billion to their debt and they're stating the reason why is that because they have a very ambitious capital works program the government is using as an economic stimulus package, which is very identical, very similar to what we are doing here. They're stated that they didn't want to slash programs. They didn't want to raise taxes and they also stated that they have no idea when they're going to be returning to surplus.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we have a five-year plan to return to surplus. The Saskatchewan government of Newfoundland have no time frame. They have no plan whatsoever to return to surplus. And this is our Conservative friends.

The Liberal government in—well, what was the Liberal government approach in Québec, for example? Well, they raised fees, sales tax, fuel tax. They're now going to have the highest sales tax in the nation, Mr. Acting Speaker, nine and a half percent provincial sales tax. They're raising gas taxes a penny per litre for the next four years and they're bringing in a health-care fee which will start at \$25 and will increase to \$200 per family, I believe, by the year 2010.

They—they've also increased tuition fees, which rings hollow the concerns raised by the Liberal leader here in Manitoba, Mr. Acting Speaker, because I think the best way to determine how these individuals would govern is by seeing what their counterparts do in other jurisdictions.

Ontario, they have an eight-year plan to return to—the Ontario Liberals have an eight-year plan to return to surplus. We all know that they also have a deficit of close to \$20 billion, Mr. Acting Speaker, which is one of the highest ever, which—I believe it is the highest ever for that particular province.

When you look again—if you consider the federal government is spending 20 percent of their expenditures is by borrowing money this year alone—

An Honourable Member: Twenty percent.

Mr. Dewar: Twenty percent of their budget is borrowed money, this year alone.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if you take those percentages and apply that to our budget here in Manitoba it means we'd be running a \$2-billion deficit. We're—instead, our deficit is anticipated to be just over \$500 million.

I'm really quite interested in what's happening in Saskatchewan. You know, these Conservatives here like to—they like to turn to Saskatchewan and they like to state that, you know, we should be more like Saskatchewan. Well, let's just go through some of the Saskatchewan budget. The Conservative government in Saskatchewan—some of the things that they've done, Mr. Acting Speaker.

For example, they've had to defer over \$55 million in revenue sharing to the municipalities. They've also delayed \$53 million in property education tax reduction. Yesterday the Conservatives asked the question about more money for Agriculture, yet in Saskatchewan they cut \$108 million out of the Saskatchewan Agriculture budget, Mr. Acting Speaker.

*(15:30)

Enterprise Saskatchewan, \$9 million cut. First Nations and Métis people, \$1.7 million cut. And this is out of business—Métis and business—excuse me, The First Nations, Métis and Business Development Program. Health Care, \$160 million cut; Highways, \$17 million cut; Municipal Affairs, \$6 million; Parks, \$3 million; Advanced Education, \$18 million; Education, \$40 million cut; Environment, \$36 million cut. Not only that, Mr. Acting Speaker—this is in Saskatchewan—they're also projecting a summary deficit of \$623 million. Their debt has risen to 21.7 percent and they're—they've also drained their rainy day fund. And they've also taken—oh, get this, they've taken a dividend of all the profits from their Crown corporations except SaskPower. They've taken the dividends. They've taken every cent that the Crown corporations made in profits in Saskatchewan. As well, they have no new personal or business tax reductions.

Alberta ran a deficit of \$3.6 billion; British Columbia, \$2 billion. As I said, the Ontario budgets projects close to \$20-billion deficit. We know the federal government, even though Stephen Harper said only a year and a half ago that they'll be not running a deficit, will run over \$160 billion worth of deficits between now and they—when they return to surplus in about four or five years from now.

Mr. Acting Speaker, you know, another thing you could base—when you try to think what the Conservatives would do when they form government, you can speculate what their—the counterparts would do, but also the—but we also have—one of their colleagues recently released their budget—oh, excuse me, released their campaign platform at a—when he was nominated. This was the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), when he was saying that they will focus less on health care. They will focus less on roads; they will focus less on social services; they will focus less on agriculture. They will focus less on rural depopulation, and they'll focus less on First Nations and Métis people.

That is an incredible admission by the Conservatives of what they're planning to do when and if they ever form government. And that is why they said they have no credibility on these issues. When you listen to their speeches in the House, and I know I was just talking with my—our new colleague, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). He's quite amused by the Conservatives in this Chamber. They spend half their speeches, at the beginning part of their speeches, demanding that, you know, taxes be cut, demanding that the deficit be eliminated. Then they spend the second half of their speeches demanding more spending.

Well, just go through question period today, for example. They start off with petitions. You know, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), he wants to cut school taxes, eliminate that. My good friend from Pembina, he wants and needs a long-care personal care home facility. The member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), he wants to build a new bridge. The member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), he wants—she wants a new—some more money for health care. Our good colleague, a good friend here from Inkster, he wants more money for health care.

Yesterday in question period, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), he was asking for more money for agriculture. The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) was asking for more money for health care. And the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese), he was asking for more money for drainage. The member from Brandon West, he was asking for more money for health care.

That was yesterday. Now, today, we have the member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) demanding more money for health care. We've got the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), he was demanding

that more roads be built in his area. We got the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) popping up at the end of question period, worrying about his own constituency, asking for a new school.

You know, Mr. Acting Speaker—so this is the—so I said, the first half of the—of their—of question period, you know, they're trying to—they're asking us to reduce the size of government and then the latter part of it, they're demanding that it be doubled. One of the biggest cost drivers in this budget are trying to fulfil all the promises that are made by the Conservative MLAs in this Chamber. But, anyways, I know that, like he said, they have little credibility on those issues.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the—I want to, once again, just talk a little bit about our own budget and how we're trying to deal with, as I said, deal with an economic situation that, as Jim Flaherty stated—the federal Conservative stated—that was beyond his control, was beyond any of our control and that was a worldwide economic slowdown. Most European countries have seen their GDP shrink as, unfortunately, that we did as well. We're the shortest, or the—excuse me, we have the smallest decrease in Canada, but nevertheless, there was a situation where the GDP did in fact decrease.

But, as I said, we're planning on eliminating the deficit over five years. We're going to be using the \$800 million, which I think was when we came to government, it was \$200 million—\$800-million rainy day fund to help pay down the debt, and, in fact, we have been able to pay down the debt more aggressively with this plan than what was currently in the current legislation, Mr. Acting Speaker. We've been able to pay down this debt—*[interjection]*—under the current law, it was existing legislation would require deposits to the debt retirement account of \$440 million, 110 per year. The debt payments that we were making is \$550 million towards the debt. We were actually paying the debt down more aggressively than the current law states and I think few people realize that.

And definitely, as the member said, there has been an increase in debt, no doubt about that, Mr. Acting Speaker, but the tangible assets of this province have grown from 3.9 billion to \$8.5 billion, 118 percent growth, while the net debt has grown by 25 percent. We're investing in Manitoba. We're investing in important infrastructure. We're \$1.8 billion this year alone in infrastructure here in

this province. We're not going back to the '90s when faced with a similar situation.

I think, as you see, what they're doing in Saskatchewan, even though they are—Saskatchewan, they drain their fiscal stabilization fund. They've taken every penny they could out of every Crown corporation that they could, Mr. Acting Speaker. They're running a billion dollar—in the past fiscal year, they've run over a billion dollar summary deficit. They'll be running a deficit this year of over \$625 million in the current year and they slashed, as I mentioned, you know, like for example, \$100 million out of agriculture; \$400 million—\$40 million from education; \$36 million out of the environment, \$120 million out of health care. This is what Conservatives do when they get into power in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we're going to be—as I said, we're going to be using the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to help pay down the provincial debt. We've already made considerable payments against the pension liabilities. Manitoba's benefited a great deal from the fact that we're now spending only 6 cents per dollar on the servicing the debt versus the 13 cents when the Conservatives were last in government. You know, these great titans of industry over here—hey, these great giants of commerce, they know how to run everything. When they were in government, we were spending 13 cents on the dollar to service the debt. Now we're paying 6 cents on the dollar. Six cents on the dollar.

They also, as we know—we also know that when the member—when my good friend the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) was in the Cabinet, they ran up the debt—the highest deficit in the history of Manitoba of \$762 million, Mr. Acting Speaker; \$762-million deficit in one year alone. That is their legacy to Manitoba.

As well, when they were booted out of office, the—were paying—the net debt to GDP was well over 33 percent, I think, Mr. Acting Speaker. Now we've reduced that down to 25 percent, and that is an important figure. At the federal level, it's, I think—I just read it, there were—for example, Greece is like 150 percent and Japan is 200 percent. The United States is quickly approaching 100 percent.

So there is concern out there in terms of the amount of debt that governments are taking on, I'll have to agree with that, Mr. Acting Speaker, but relatively speaking, ours is still manageable. Unlike the federal Conservatives, which is 160—you're

spending 20 percent of your budget—is simply by borrowing money at the federal level. We're spending here about 5 percent of our next budget—is about 5 percent will be used—will be borrowing money to pay about 5 percent of our budget, significantly less than what the federal Conservatives are doing. *[interjection]*

* (15:40)

No. The member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) said 10 percent. No, we're—the budget is about \$10 billion, and we're spending 500 million of that—we're spending—we're borrowing 500 million to balance it, whereas the federal government, they are spending 50 billion this year alone. So I think the members should get their facts straight, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm—I'd like to conclude by just urging all members once again to thank the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) for her leadership. At times—at a very difficult time in our nation, a difficult time in the province, but rather than going back to the '90s when there was cutbacks to services, we agreed to take a different approach to invest in important services for Manitobans. And I urge all MLAs to support this budget and its five-year economic plan. I say, don't go back to the 1990s. I vote all members in this Chamber to vote for the future and to vote for this budget. Thank you.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Speaker, and I'm not going to begin my remarks by indicating that I'm proud to speak to this budget, because I'm not. I want to begin by congratulating, first of all, the member from Concordia for being elected to this Chamber, and I wish him a short and happy career. But, seriously, I think he needs to be congratulated for taking the step into provincial politics and contributing to the process of legislation and the, I guess, the process of establishing laws for the good of all Manitobans. And I do wish him well in his career as a politician.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I also want to thank and congratulate our pages who help us in the Chamber and I also want to acknowledge the work that is done by our table officers in this Chamber and, indeed, the Sergeant-at-Arms and his assistant to this Chamber, because these individuals do help us to conduct our affairs. And then I look at our translation and our Hansard people, who, you know, always provide us with a written copy of everything we put on record to remind us how well we do in our speeches and in our questions and in our answers.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, today, I want to address the issue of the budget and I—in addressing the budget, I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) on her appointment to the portfolio. And she is, indeed, made history in this province, but, in many ways, but I—I'm not going to congratulate her on her first budget because we can't all jump up and down and say that this has been a positive budget. She's had a challenging task in front of her. She inherited what I consider a bit of a mess from her predecessor, and she's got to make the best of it.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the New Democratic government that we see before us today is not the same that we saw a year ago under the leadership of Gary Doer. Gary Doer was a premier who seemed to be able to lead Manitobans in a way that few leaders do. He was able to deflect a lot of the issues. He was kind of the Teflon man of the province and, for a number of years, managed to do well because he had a pot of money that he could dip into called the transfer payments from Ottawa that few governments enjoy. And these transfer payments not only kept him alive, but kept him in the positive light. And he was able to do a lot of projects—a lot of pet projects—under his stewardship because of the transfer payments from Ottawa.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, I have to say that the previous government of the '90s that I'm proud—that I was a member of—did in fact leave this province in good shape with revenues that were coming in—in source revenues, in province revenues—for this province were exceeding the national averages because of work that was done in this province by a previous administration during the '90s. And I think that's acknowledged by any economist who takes a look at how this province has been doing—that what we built as a foundation for this province during the '90s created some important revenue for this province in the 2000 years that we've been enjoying. And that's been good for the province; that's been positive for the province.

But what was negative during those period—that period of time, Mr. Acting Speaker, during—after 1999, was we had a government that could not stop its spending habits, and even with the enormous revenues that were coming from Ottawa, they could not control their spending habits.

And so now all of this has culminated into a situation, Mr. Acting Speaker, that is fairly serious for Manitoba. And I go back to the 1980s, when

Howard Pawley and the New Democratic regime was in power, and they created a debt that was unseen in this province to that point in time, a debt that everyone was afraid of, and, eventually, Manitobans said enough is enough, and they removed that regime from government to one where we would live within our means. We created a balanced budget piece of legislation that I am very proud of, but one that has been decimated by this administration.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, not only have they changed it once, they have now changed it twice, and now we're going to have to change it a third time in order to be able to keep themselves afloat and to keep themselves out of the—out of some of the penalty box, if you like, that the balanced budget legislation imposes on Cabinet ministers if, in fact, they can't live within their means.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, I have to ask the question: What do you think Manitobans think of a government that can't live within the laws that it has created for itself? I remember Gary Doer standing as the leader and the Premier in this province saying that they would live within the balanced budget legislation. They believed in balanced budget legislation then, and they said they would live within it.

Today, under this Minister of Finance's (Ms. Wowchuk) stewardship and the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) stewardship, we have a government that can't live within the balanced budget legislation and has—and is being forced to either borrow or to change the legislation. And, to keep themselves out of the penalty box, they are going to choose to amend the legislation.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think that's the wrong way to go. I think Manitobans think it's the wrong way to go, and they are going to judge this government on the basis that—of how they perform by simply trying to change the laws when they don't suit their needs.

Mr. Acting Speaker, Manitoba is not in a good financial position right now. We have a debt right now that has never been seen before in the province of Manitoba; \$23 billion of debt in this province has not been experienced in history in this province, and, if I am wrong, I'm going to ask the Minister of Finance to correct me, because we have never had a debt in this province of \$23 billion. And they can try to finesse this and to massage it in any way they like, but it means that our single largest department of

government is soon becoming the interest that we pay on our debt, and that is tragic because that's taking away programs from Manitobans that Manitobans need badly. Every time you're sending money out in interest means that you're satisfying the banks in New York and all of the lenders in the world who lend money to governments, but you're not doing anything for the citizens of your province.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, we have to talk about priorities in this budget. This budget said that we had to cut back in certain areas and, in a depression, in a recession, I think all of us can understand that, that some belt tightening has to take place in order to accommodate those important programs that should not be cut.

And I was disappointed because the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) is the former minister of Agriculture, and we see Agriculture taking a huge hit in this budget, and, Mr. Acting Speaker, agriculture is still the foundation of the economy of this province, and the Minister of Finance knows that. She was the head of the Department of Agriculture. She knows the financial contribution that agriculture makes to this province on an annual basis.

We are not an industrialized province; we are an agricultural province. And, whether we like it or not, that's the reality, but yet that's the department that took one of the biggest hits under this Minister of Finance, and I wonder why. Here is a—we've seen the struggle in the agriculture industry, whether it's in the livestock industry. We've seen how this government has decimated the hog industry in this province, the cattle industry in this province. No matter where you look there's been a negative impact of this government on agriculture, and whether they're imposing new police to police the activities of agriculture in every respect rather than being there to help them, they are forcing agriculture to spend millions of dollars on meeting the restrictive laws that they are putting in place and regulations that they're putting in place.

* (15:50)

And I mention only one. I mention only the effluent ejector issue that rural Manitobans are living with. The minister of environment is here. He's the one who's supposed to be trying to fix this, and if he can fix it, I'll give him a lot of credit for it.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, today we see a government that has moved without any scientific

data, without any science to it, has moved unilaterally because it was popular to do that. And we see other jurisdictions—if the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) or the minister of conservation and environment would listen to some people who have experienced this kind of thing in Saskatchewan, where Saskatchewan went exactly the opposite way because of the environment, they may learn something.

But without any scientific data, without any science to it, Mr. Acting Speaker, they have imposed regulations on rural people that aren't needed. And I'm not saying they're not needed in a frivolous way. I'm saying they're not needed in every single area that this law has been applied to because there are jurisdictions in this province or there are regions in this province where it may very well be a prudent move. And I'm not going to argue that. Where we have the Canadian Shield and where we have areas that are sensitive to the—to this kind of an environmental issue, then we should address it.

But you can't just blanket the whole province with one brush and say, well, we're going to apply this to the entire province, regardless of whether it is needed there or not.

Mr. Acting Speaker, on the issue of debt, the debt in our province is—has been skyrocketing. As I said, it is standing at \$23.4 billion today. You know, it's up from \$21 billion in 2009. You know, this is a \$2.25-billion increase since 2009, and you have to ask yourself: If we're going to be going this way down the road, where is this province going to be in the next few years? Where is this province going to be in the next two years when government changes and there is a requirement to service a debt that has never been seen in this province?

And so, Mr. Acting Speaker, for the good of Manitobans, we have to raise the issue. We have to raise the issue about how important it is to address the whole debt issue and to ensure that, in fact, we do everything we can to minimize that debt, to minimize the interest payments and to move forward with the most essential programs that we can provide for Manitobans.

And, you know, I heard the member from Selkirk in his place this afternoon talk about, you know, the Tories want to spend more money on hospitals, more money on roads, more money here, more money there. Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, it's all a question of priorities. It's a question of a

government laying down a set of priorities that are important to Manitobans.

And to me it seems like roads and hospitals and care for people in alcohol foundations and those kinds of—and addictive foundations, especially the treatment of those people, is far more important than investing in a football stadium, Mr. Acting Speaker, at this time.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, when we have a government that, without any significant amount of consultation, moves unilaterally to put \$90 million into a football stadium of public money and then demands very little from the private sector, it seems to me that our priorities are all askew. We're all confused in terms of how we set our priorities.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, when I look at what this Premier (Mr. Selinger), who is weak, I think, in terms of doing any due diligence on major projects like this, and I see what he's been announcing in the last few weeks, it makes me wonder, you know, whether or not he is truly conscious of the fact that he's putting this province at risk and putting it into a deeper hole than what he even reported in the minister's financial budget, because I didn't see the \$90 million in the Minister of Finance's (Ms. Wowchuk) budget, that it was going to go to a new stadium, and if she can point out where that is, I'd be more than happy to see it.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, then they're using the TIF program to fund the project, and that means that this money is coming right out of education because it's the education tax portion that is paying for this. And, again, it's our children who need the attention, our children who need the investment, our children who need to have a priority placed upon their educational needs that are now suffering because this government, through its foolish leadership, has decided to invest into a football stadium rather than into major priorities.

Now, am I saying that a football stadium may not be needed in this city? Not at all. Not at all. But there are different ways to achieve that end. There are different ways of accommodating that need. And, Mr. Acting Speaker, that—those ways have not been explored adequately by this government.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it was just too ready to run to the table with a bunch of money and to drop that amount of money in there without doing due diligence, without even informing Manitobans and

indicating to them beforehand that this is where we were moving to.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, if we look at the MOU, and we take a look at the weakness of that document, we see how weak this Premier really is and he's demonstrating that every single day that he is in office.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think Manitobans, once they get a chance to decide whether or not he should be elected as premier, will do that, because at the present moment, he's in that category which says he's an unelected premier of the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when I look at rural Manitoba, I am somewhat discouraged by what this government has done to rural Manitoba over the course of this 10 years in office. The Department of Rural Development was taken out of existence; it got merged in with Agriculture. It became a very, very tiny part of Agriculture, very insignificant to that department's priorities, and we see where communities, as a result, have shown signs of deterioration over the course of the last 10 or 11 years.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, no matter where you look, that evidence is there. You can go down the main streets of many of our rural communities and see that there is a lack of any kind of assistance in terms of real growth, in terms of stimulating any business and industrial growth in our communities outside of the city of Winnipeg and we have to point at government as being responsible for this. You can't say that it's communities that are at fault, here, because every small community, every small business, needs a hand up to get it going and then it can generate the economy on its own.

Mr. Acting Speaker, all of those programs that were in place under the former administration and under the—under our government in the '90s were stripped away from our rural communities and never replaced.

And today, we see that—for example, I look at how much money has been going to economic development offices out in rural Manitoba, and it hasn't been increasing at all over the last 10 years. I look at conservation districts that haven't had an increase in their budget in five years, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Now, I can understand that, this year, maybe they shouldn't get an increase because this is a tough

year, Mr. Acting Speaker. But this government has made this, has exacerbated the toughness of this year, but, more importantly, they haven't recognized the value of these organizations in rural Manitoba by simply ignoring them and not giving them the funding that they have needed in the past.

And, it's a—Mr. Acting Speaker, it's not just simply asking government to pour more money here and there and everywhere. It's a question of saying to government: where are your priorities and why don't you address those priorities?

I want to speak for a moment, Mr. Acting Speaker, on the issue of health care as well and, specifically, health care in rural Manitoba. I have to say that once a patient is in the system, the patient is looked after extremely well by the professionals in the system. And I will never criticize anyone who works inside the health-care system.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when we look at the administrative side of the entire health-care system, we have to be critical of it because that is one area that government has not paid any attention to. They have allowed the administrative side, whether it's the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority or any other regional health authority across this province, they have allowed these authorities to balloon their administrative component.

*(16:00)

And, yes, there's always work to do in administration and nobody denies that. There has to be a certain amount of due diligence done in terms of assessing whether or not the kind of administrative bureaucracy that we have established is needed. And yet we haven't diminished the amount of staff that are in the Department of Health. So we've got another layer now, Mr. Acting Speaker, that has been built over the course of the last 10 years by this government in the administrative side of health care.

And I can go back to 1999. If anybody wants to go back to 1999 and take a look at the budget of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority or any other regional health authority in this country and then compare that to where we are today, you would be appalled. I think the regional health authority of Winnipeg went from about \$11 million to something like—what is it?—\$44 million today.

It's huge, but whether it's multiplied by four or five times, this government has not paid any attention to it, and yet Manitobans have been suffering as a lack of services out in rural Manitoba.

We went from the closure of the emergency services, Mr. Acting Speaker, then we started to close back the hospitals and reduce the staff there. Then the latest has been the closure of diagnostic services in rural hospitals. And diagnostic services are extremely important but hospitals have moved from having five-day-a-week diagnostic services, in some cases more, down to two days a week of diagnostic services. And when you ask the regional authorities why that has happened, they will tell you that, oh, well, it's because the demand isn't there.

And yet we have lineups for diagnostic services, and if you went to any of the waiting rooms, you would see that they are overflowing.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, that's the way this government's attitude is towards rural health care. Now, I happen to live in rural Manitoba and so I know exactly what is going on there, and you can't tell me that this government has paid any significant attention to what happens in rural health care.

We have put—you know, the NDP used to talk about hallway medicine in the '90s. That was a big thing. The member from Kildonan was, or Maples, was a leader in talking about hallway medicine. He used to drag cameras around with him and he'd haul them into the hospitals and talk about hallway medicine. Well, we've changed hallway medicine to something far bigger today. It's called highway medicine, and today we have highway medicine in every rural part of our province. You can see the ambulances screaming from our rural communities into the city with patients because there are no services in rural Manitoba.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, if you live in rural Manitoba, you understand that. Unfortunately, I see the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) yammering from her seat, but I'm not sure what she's saying, except that she's a little activated by the fact that we have today a situation in this province where the NDP are out of control in terms of their spending, in terms of how they're using programming. Whether it's in the city or whether it's outside the city, it is happening.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to wish this Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) well but, unfortunately, when she has to bring a budget like this forward, Manitobans are not going to judge her in a favourable way, and I regret that we had to bring in an amendment to this budget that points out the deficiencies of this budget, points out the flaws of the budget and points out where this budget has

really—where this government has really gone awry, in terms of providing the needed services that Manitobans want, Manitobans deserve.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we have unprecedented transfers from Ottawa coming to this province, for this year anyway, I wonder what's going to happen when those transfers from Ottawa start to diminish. What are we going to see? More taxes, higher taxes, fewer services. That's the characteristic of this government.

In 1986, Madam Deputy Speaker, people in Manitoba—or 1988, people in Manitoba decided that they had had enough of high deficits, high debt in this province and they threw a government out that was—that couldn't control its spending habits. I think Manitobans are probably prepared to start thinking about those things as we speak today because these high debt, high deficits cannot be sustained for any period of time.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I regret that I will not be able to support the budget as it's been presented by the Minister of Finance and I regret that once again, Manitobans are going to suffer as a result of the budget that was presented by this government. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today in support of the Manitoba Budget 2010. First of all, I will like to mention that we are fortunate to be able to welcome a new member to the Legislative Assembly, the recently elected MLA for Concordia. I congratulate him on his success and look forward to the contributions that he will make to both the Assembly and his constituency as a young, energetic and very dedicated legislator.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism, said: The person who analyzes the times and adapts according to the circumstances is a wise person.

On the political front, the saying can be interpreted to mean that a government that adapts to the economic realities of the time is a judicious government. The NDP is showing itself to be a judicious government with Budget 2010 and its five economic plan. It has looked at the fall-out from the global recession, the slump in government revenues and the need to stimulate the province's economy,

and concluded that balancing this year's budget does not serve the interests of Manitobans.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in their response to this budget, as to every other NDP government budget, the members opposite can be counted on to drone the same mantra: government spending is out of control. They do this in spite of what the Province's books say, what Statistics Canada says, and what the financial experts say.

The bottom line, says the ranking financial institution, BMO, is that Manitoba's well-diversified economy and solid recovery prospects, combined with some spending discipline, should allow the province to grow its way out of what is a relatively small deficit. Our 2009-2010 deficit, at 1.1 percent of GDP, is the lowest of all the provinces. CIBC's analysis also confirms that the NDP has put Manitoba on the right path. It states that, as in other provinces, net debt-to-GDP ratio is on the rise, but will remain comfortably below levels seen a decade ago, with debt affordability still manageable.

Failure to invest in social programs now only creates a social deficit further down the road, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is true, not only in the case of justice, but other areas, be they health care, early childhood development, education, housing or community development. There is a price to be paid for sitting back and letting problems develop. The price is set in terms of our economy, our competitiveness and the well-being of working Manitobans.

This is not necessarily a matter of total spending. Indeed, Manitoba ranks fourth in per capita spending of all the provinces, and over the last decade has had the second lowest increases in per capita spending. It's just as much a matter of how we spend, or rather what we invest in, because the well-being of our communities is not a cost, but rather an investment.

We very well know the difference between investing in our people and communities and throwing money at problems, as the members opposite tiresomely charge without looking at the facts. We are able to point to the dividends that these investments over the last decade yielded. Child poverty rates have been cut in half; post-secondary enrolment has shot up; health-care wait times have gone down; there are 345 more doctors and 2,034 more nurses; the percentage of high school graduates has surged from 71 to 79 percent; vehicle

thefts are down by nearly 80 percent since 2004, and over 5,000 housing units have been repaired, renovated or built for low-income families.

* (16:10)

Madam Deputy Speaker, Budget 2010 shows the NDP government is not going to turn its back on this progress because it knows, as the Filmon government demonstrated in the 1990s, that when you halt or cut back on these key investments, there are long-term consequences for the well-being of Manitobans.

The value of these investments is something that we can see internationally as well. As Dr. Gregg Olsen, one of our distinguished University of Manitoba professors, has concluded, the Nordic nations demonstrated that expenditures on comprehensive and co-ordinated packages of income support programs, social services, education and other public preventive measures, along with the protective social legislation, can greatly reduce poverty, social inequalities and other social problems, and foster greater security and solidarity. And, at the same time, notes Dr. Olsen, the Nordic nations have typically surpassed the relative free-market nations, such as the U.S., Britain, Canada on most measures of economic performance.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would now like to touch on some provisions of the budget that are of particular significance to me and the people I represent. My constituency, The Maples, is a young constituency, with a high proportion of young people motivated to establish themselves in rewarding careers. Budget 2010's undertaking to increasing its overall operating support for our colleges and universities by 4.5 percent is particularly important to them.

They have our government's reassurance that the fall-out from the global recession is not going to put a damper on their educational aspirations. They are also encouraged by the government's decision to cap tuition fee increases at 5 percent this coming academic year, keeping them among the lowest in the country. That Budget 2010 will allow them to claim part of their tuition-fee income tax rebate while they are still studying is another incentive for them to opt for post-secondary education and preserve until their graduation—persevere until their graduation.

The budget's continuing support for apprenticeship opportunities is good news for both

our young people and our business community. Madam Deputy Speaker, there are now twice as many registered apprentices now than in 1999, and our government will be boosting support for apprenticeship training by two million dollars this year. We will be hearing shortly the details of the six new trades that will be designated for apprenticeships.

My constituency boasts the highest number of new immigrant families in the province. I would like to note that our apprenticeship system welcomes applications from landed immigrants who are not yet citizens. If they have training or experience in a trade outside of Canada, they may establish their credentials here by writing the relevant Trades Qualification examination or by registering as an apprentice at an advanced stage of training. The system also allows them to make use of translators and readers when they are doing their certification examinations. New immigrants to Manitoba also stand to benefit from the province's Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition services that help experienced workers without formal qualifications obtain recognition for what they already know and can do. This can give them a head start on apprenticeship and other forms of post-secondary education.

The new Canadians in my constituency appreciate the fact that the government is able to keep funding for multicultural activities stable this fiscal year. Our government recognizes the importance of not only continuing to enrich the cultural fabric of the province, but also being able to welcome newcomers who are anxious to contribute their skills and experience to our economy. The Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson) revealed, just a few weeks ago, that Manitoba's population growth last year was the best in nearly 40 years. Much of this growth is driven by these newcomers and our community multicultural organizations can take some of the credit for making our province an attractive place for them to settle.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Manitoba was the first province to institute a children's fitness tax credit, paralleling the federal credit. During my time as an MLA, I have been advocating a provincial fitness tax credit for adults. Budget 2010 extends this fitness tax credit to Manitobans from 16 to 24 years, as of next year. This is an excellent move. Many people this age are leaving behind the compulsory physical education they received in high school, moving out from the family home, studying and embarking on

careers. The tax credit will encourage them, despite their changes in routine, the longer hours they must spend studying and the new expenses they incur as they set up their own households, to continue to keep fit. The fitness habits that they develop during this stage of their lives are likely to continue into later adulthood.

The benefits range from lowered health-care costs to increased productivity and, above all, higher satisfaction with their lives. For instance, a study published just last year in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* even concluded that young adults who are fit have a higher IQ and are more likely to go on to university. Medical researchers have also shown that young adults that low—with low aerobic fitness levels are two to three times more likely to develop diabetes by the time they are in their 40s or 50s than those who are fit.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the *Winnipeg Free Press* talks about fiscal belt tightening in reference to what our budget calls strategic management and a prioritization of expenditures. Our expanded fitness tax credit, however, will lead to some belt tightening in another sense, as more Manitobans become fit and shed a few pounds around their girth, enabling them to pull in their belts a notch.

And speaking of such matters, the Province, in response of my urging, has recently partnered with Ottawa and the City of Winnipeg to replace the existing cracked and unsafe track at the Maples Community Centre with a state-of-the-art, all-purpose track as part of their efforts to stimulate the economy. It will do more than just create jobs. It will provide a very concrete incentive for people of all ages in the area to become more fit, with or without tax credits. It will encourage even more of our kids, teenagers, moms and dads and seniors to take up regular walking, jogging or running.

In conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker, the NDP's budget and five-year economic plan for Manitoba are just what the times call for. It is prudent, focussed, forward looking. Manitobans can be thankful that it is an NDP government at the helm during these challenging times. Thank you.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I rise to put a few words on the record about the 2010-2011 budget, and indicate my extreme disappointment at where this government—the direction this government is heading. And when I listened to the speaker

previous to me indicate that this was a prudent budget, I can't for the life of me understand where the word "prudence" fits into a budget that saddles more debt on the citizens, the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba over the next five years than we've seen in the history of the province, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I have significant concern in the direction we're heading. And I certainly wouldn't call it prudent if I was looking at my own household budget and recognized and realized that it was costing me more to live than what I earned and I was paying already interest on debt and then decided to go out and buy a Cadillac and put it on my credit card. I wouldn't call that prudent and I certainly don't call the budget that I see in front of us today, not only for this year, but the long-term plan—so-called plan—that reaps and heaps more debt and more deficits onto Manitoba taxpayers.

It reminds me of my first few years in this Legislature, and I hate to date myself, but I go back to 1986 when I was first elected, and I was elected to the opposition benches in 1986 at the time, and we had an NDP government and Premier Howard Pawley at the time who spent recklessly out of control, didn't see a tax that he didn't like or he didn't hike, and those were the days, Madam Deputy Speaker, where the government lost the confidence of the House as a result of one of their members voting against the government's budget. And it's déjà vu to see again or to see still involved the then-defeated Minister of Finance, Eugene Kostyra, still playing a major role behind the scenes when his own party, his own colleagues, one of them, specifically, couldn't stand up in this House and vote for the budget that Howard Pawley and Eugene Kostyra brought into the House, but he still seems to be the dealmaker that seems to be pulling the strings in the whole negotiations on the new stadium where Manitoba taxpayers are going to be on the hook again for \$90 million. I guess some are saying that it's a \$105 million and that's probably closer to the truth when you look at the grants and the loans, but it seems to be Eugene Kostyra who put the province into bankruptcy back in 1988 when their government was defeated and he's still now the dealmaker for this government.

We're seeing the rack and ruin that's going to be created in our province again as a result of the old NDP, and, you know, I guess I'm not the only one that misses Gary Doer. I don't see him down the street on a daily basis anymore, you know, and I had the honour to represent him in this Legislature, but

when I look across the way and I see some of the looks on the faces of members of the government side of the House, I know that I'm not the only one that misses Gary Doer, because Gary Doer never would've made the kind of deal that was made by the new Premier of this province of Manitoba and he's moving as far back to the left as the good old days of Howard Pawley.

And, you know, there's an arrogance sometimes in government, when government has been around for a considerable period of time, and we're seeing that arrogance where we have a Premier now that believes he can do whatever he likes. He doesn't even have to understand the deal. He can do whatever he likes and he can arrogantly stand up and say that we're looking after the taxpayers of Manitoba. *[interjection]* Well, you know, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) sits in his seat and shakes his head in disbelief, but, you know, and I—*[interjection]*—well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we do know that governments don't rule by divine dictatorship and there does come a point in time in the political cycle of the province of Manitoba that governments do change. And, sometimes, when governments have been in for a significant period of time, they do become arrogant and they think that they can do whatever they like and Manitobans will just accept them for what they are and the decisions that they make. But that is not true.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have lived on both sides of this Legislature. I've lived in opposition, then in government and back in opposition, and the reality is, when the winds of change blow—and the taxpayers who feel that they've been duped by the government will decide that it will be time for a change. And that day will come, and so I don't think that anyone, those that haven't been around, maybe, on the government side of the House for a considerable period of time should feel too confident that they will always be there making the decisions and the choices on behalf of taxpayers.

And, you know, one thing that this government seems to forget, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the dollars that they're spending and the dollars that they're borrowing on behalf of taxpayers are not their money. It's the hardworking people of Manitoba that pay taxes that line the coffers of the government Treasury. And so government members, I think, have forgotten that it's taxpayers' dollars that they're spending, and they seem to be very generous when it comes to spending someone else's money. They don't

have that understanding or a concept of what deficit and debt really mean.

And what would happen if you ran your own household like they're running the government of the province of Manitoba? Madam Deputy Speaker, at some point in time you become bankrupt. And I think the taxpayers and the hardworking Manitobans that support the Treasury of the province of Manitoba through their tax dollars need to be extremely concerned about the direction this government is heading.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to comment on some of the changes that have been made since the new Premier has come to office. And I'm not going to be critical of all of the changes that have been made, but I am going to question some. And I question, in difficult economic times when we're running deficit budgets, why the Premier would increase the size of his Cabinet by one member, and why on earth he would change and move things around as much as he did.

Now, I do know that one of the reasons an NDP government would do this kind of thing is so that taxpayers and others couldn't follow the money, because when you move a part of one department into another department, you can use creative accounting with the books, and Manitobans can't follow the money trail. So that's one of the reasons I know that this Premier has changed the names of departments and the composition of departments over the last period of time.

But there was one positive decision for sure that I want to comment on, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that was the decision to separate the Department of Family Services and the Department of Housing into two separate departments. I think there could've been amalgamations other—in other places and there could've been heavier workloads. But I do want to say, and I have said on the record many times, that the issues in the Department of Family Services around child and family services and some of the poorest of the poor in our province deserve considerable attention. And the issues in the Department of Housing are significant issues dealing with some of the most vulnerable within our society, and it was an extremely heavy workload for any one minister.

So I do want to say that I'm pleased to see that that happened. I want to wish the new Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross) success in dealing with the

issues that she's going to have to deal with. And I know there's some additional money in the budget. I do want to point out to those that don't remember, when we were in government—

An Honourable Member: Well, we do.

* (16:30)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, in the Department of Housing, the money that was spent on upgrades on our housing stock came out of appropriation. I do know that this government has moved more and more to Loan Act authority in order to fund any housing improvements, and I think that that's a shame. Again, we're borrowing money and paying interest on that money when that money really—and housing should be a priority and it should come out of government appropriation and government budgeting, but I knew that—do know there are significant issues when it comes to bedbugs and mould and housing stock falling down around us, and I'm hopeful that some positive things will happen over the next period of time.

But I do also know that those that manage housing in the private sector do a better job of managing housing at less cost than what the Department of Housing does, and so I think that there is opportunity to take a look at some different ways of trying to improve our housing stock. And I know public-private partnerships are foreign to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) but, nonetheless, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's something that should be looked at, and I think something that could find the housing dollars that this government borrows, by the way, could find that that money could be used in a much better way to try improve our housing stock to the standard that it should be.

Now, I am hoping also that as a result of the Department of Housing and the Department of Family Services being split that the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) will be able to take the time to do the job that he should be doing and should have been doing on the Family Services side of things, especially in Child and Family Services. I know his workload was heavy in the past, but I do know that we have a Child and Family Services system that is in chaos in our province. And I'm hearing from more and more families, Madam Deputy Speaker, that are shaking their heads in disbelief when they look at the treatment that some of the most vulnerable children in our society are experiencing at the hands of this government, this

government's legislation, and this government's policy.

And you know, I don't blame the present Minister of Family Services for the mess that he's found himself in. I do blame, Madam Deputy Speaker, the architect of the devolution process, and that was his predecessor three back, Tim Sale, who did an abysmal job of moving forward the devolution process. And none of us are opposed philosophically to the principle of devolution, but the way it was done has left many Aboriginal children very vulnerable within the system, and I'm speaking as a result of front-line workers that are speaking to me that are indicating that it's very difficult to work in such a chaotic system today. They don't feel the support of this government and its policies, and they don't believe that children are being supported adequately within the system.

And we know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it was rushed ahead without the ability to ensure that standards were in place, that people were trained in order to meet the needs and the demands of the vulnerable children that are within our system. We have today front-line workers who are absolutely dismayed at the work that they're having to do and the lack of support that they're getting from this government. And those are the front lines. Those are the people that know and that understand and don't see—like to see children left in unsafe circumstances and situations.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't know why the government wouldn't take the time to sit down with front-line workers, bring them together, ask them where the problems are within the system, and ask them to be part of a solution to fix it, but no, but no, they don't want to do that. They turn a blind eye to what's going on within the system.

And, you know, as much as we see the deficit ballooning in this province and the government talking about all of the money they're putting into front-line services, I'm talking to external organizations that have foster homes, specialized homes, specialized programs for the most vulnerable children in our community, and they saw no raise or increase in their budgets last year, and they're seeing a zero percent increase in their budgets again this year.

And I don't know how this government can sit in its place and talk about supporting those most needy in our community when those organizations that have done and provided the kind of service that

needs to be provided for many, many years, many decades, in many instances, are saying that they're getting no more support, but they're being asked to do more by this government. Madam Deputy Speaker, we will see the end result of that being less support for those children, not more.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't know why this government—and I'll be—I have re-introduced—it's on the Order Paper, a bill, a private member's bill that asks for some consideration to be given to foster parents when there's going to be a change in placement. And, you know, I've heard from many, many foster parents that have indicated to me that they have no plan. They are asked—and this government talks about recruiting foster parents and treating them with respect. How can they possibly say that they respect foster parents when there's no information given to foster parents on what a plan might be for those children?

They're asked to take them into their homes, nourish them, feed them, love them, care for them for years on end, and then, all of a sudden, they're told that those children are going to be taken and moved. There's no rationale, no reasoning given and nothing put in writing. They cannot get information in writing from any of the agencies. And the bill and the legislation that I've asked to be brought into this House and passed would just show respect to foster parents in this province who open their homes and open their hearts to children, to ensure that they know when that child is being taken out of their home and placed somewhere else that it's in the best interests of the child, and it's in the safety interests of the child.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is not happening. And the minister knows that I've brought individual cases to his attention. It's not the kind of thing that I'm going to go public with, because I really believe that those people that come forward with issues have their hearts in the right place. They are doing what they believe is in the best interests of children, and they're being so terribly disrespected by this government that I know for a fact that they're going to have difficulty recruiting and retaining foster parents into the future.

There are those that are saying, I can't do it any longer when I'm not valued, when I'm not respected. And we're hearing the same kinds of things from the front lines when they're not valued and when they're not respected, Madam Deputy Speaker. They are going to be looking for options and opportunities

elsewhere where they feel they can make a difference and provide the kind of service that they've been trained to provide. So, on both counts, when you look at the front-line workers and when you look at those that are being asked to take children into their home, to take vulnerable children into their home, and then they are being shown the kind of disrespect that this government puts forth in its policies, we are going to see a significant deterioration.

*(16:40)

So I would hope, I would hope that the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) would take the time, now that he's got the time, to look at the child welfare system, to ask those that are working on the front lines in the system for their advice, and for the issues and the problems that they're seeing arise and try to fix them.

And I don't think any of us in this House want to see children that fall through the cracks. You know, God knows, we've seen enough of them over the years and we don't need to see another one. So I'm hopeful that the minister will take the time, do the right thing, and ensure that children, first and foremost, are being protected and are being well served by his system that has been put in place—and again, I say it wasn't he that was the architect but he's left with the mess to clean up. And I hope, I only hope, that he'll have and take the opportunity, now that he has a little bit more time on his hands, to fix the system.

There's one other issue in the budget when it relates to family services and the issues of disabilities. And I know that we have a new minister responsible for disabilities issues but, and I know that in the fall session I asked a question and expected her to stand up and answer and we still have the Minister of Family services answering for disabilities. And then it became very clear in the budget because we have a minister responsible for disabilities but she has no programming and budget for disabilities programs. They remain in the Department of Family Services. So I'll have the opportunity, I know, when we get into the Estimates process to find out how that all works because my thinking would have been that if we had a minister responsible for persons with disabilities, that the budgeting and the program would fall under that minister's responsibility but it's not so. The budget and the responsibility for all the programming remains in the Department of Family Services.

So it seems to me that there's a bit of an issue here that—and I'm just putting that on the record so that both ministers will have the opportunity to look at what is happening and try to explain to the taxpayers of the Province of Manitoba and to those of us in the Legislature and to those in the disability community that work very hard to try to ensure that the programming is in place, who they go to when they have an issue.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wanted to put those comments on the record about the Department of Family Services. I want to indicate that there is no way that common sense would allow me to support a budget that leaves the taxpayers of the—of Manitoba on the hook and my children and my grandchildren. And I do I want to tell you I have a four-year-old and a two-year-old, two granddaughters that are precious to me, and I do not want to see them having to pay for the mistakes that this government has made in this budget and the subsequent budgets to follow.

I don't think they should be saddled with the debt because of overspending, reckless spending, that this government has done over the years, at a time when they've had unprecedented revenues flow from the federal government. They still have had difficulties making their ends meet. And I'm sure, I'm sure, that the people in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia are getting tired of Manitoba having their hand out begging Ottawa for more money, and I'm sure the people in those provinces are getting tired of supporting Manitoba and subsidizing Manitoba so, Madam Deputy Speaker, with those comments I would just like to indicate that extreme disappointment on my part in what I've seen in this budget and am hoping that there's a few on the other side of the House that might see the light. I'm—

An Honourable Member: Call an election.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, I know that Jim Walding did force an election to be called but, you know, would, we could go back and revisit history but, and I was there and I was shocked, I was shocked to see the government fall that day but was quite excited to see the enthusiasm by the electorate when that election did take place in 1988.

So, with those comments, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to indicate that I will not be supporting this budget. Thank you.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It is indeed a pleasure to stand and speak about Budget 2010, my sixth opportunity

to speak to a government budget as a member for Minto, and I have to say what a pleasure it is to follow the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) as I believe I did in budget debate last year.

Last year I got up and I spoke a little bit about how long she'd served in the House, and I think she took it the wrong way. I'm glad to see she put on the record her own 24 years of experience as an MLA in this Chamber, and it's a real delight to follow the member for River East in debate, because what a great way to contrast the way things work with an NDP government in power in Manitoba and a Tory government in government in Manitoba.

Having a wife who got her social work degree and had to work in Family Services at the time when the member for River East was the responsible minister who cut apart the foster care system, who did things on the backs of social workers, and whose great, great contribution to improving the social structure in Manitoba was to set up a welfare snitch line. It's a delight—it's a delight to follow the member for River East. *[interjection]* And there she is, and she didn't have enough to say in her comments. She's saying how proud she was of this snitch line, to set neighbour against neighbour. Instead of doing what we do as New Democrats and going and empowering people in neighbourhoods, those Conservative opposition members tear apart neighbourhoods. They did it in the inner city for 10 years, and they're not going to have the chance again.

Indeed, the member for River East has been an inspiration in our House for political action, just as so many members on that side of the House have been a great inspiration. I love the comments, I love the comments of the member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) today, talking about her inspiration for getting involved politically. Don Orchard, the worst Health minister in Manitoba history, who got many doctors, nurses, other health-care professionals involved in politics, and I know I've heard so much from the member from Gimli, an award-winning teacher and other teachers in our caucus, who were so inspired to get involved in politics because of the disasters that happened in education when the Tories were in office in Manitoba.

But I think most—Madam Deputy Speaker, let me truly begin my comments by welcoming the newest member of this House, the new member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), who is indeed a credit to the governing party but also to this Legislature as a whole. I've had a chance to travel around with the

new member during the election campaign to see how he conducted himself on the doorsteps, the level of knowledge he has about his community, one of many fascinating communities across this province. And, indeed, we are all privileged to be here representing our own communities, and I know the member for Concordia will do a great job for a long time representing his community.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I didn't want to take a lot of time going through this, but it's obvious that members opposite really aren't too up on current events, so we'll do a little review of things. Since the fall of 2008, most people have noticed the world has been rocked by economic and financial meltdowns, which began in the United States, which have spread across the entire country, and I hear it's a bit of a surprise for some of the members opposite. There's lots of surprises out there, but there they are.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Now, the truth is, Mr. Speaker, that Manitoba has done very well on a comparative basis. Members on this side of the House have been very realistic, saying that Manitoba is not immune to the financial crisis, but we have done much better, and, indeed, in 2009—*[interjection]*—and I know the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) will be educated if he listens. In 2009, Manitoba actually posted the best economic result of any province in Canada. Now, that did not mean economic growth in 2009, which is why this budget makes some tough choices but also does the right thing to preserve the services, to preserve the infrastructure, to preserve the communities that Manitobans hold so dear.

* (16:50)

And I know, of course, in my former role as minister for the old Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, every month the statistics would come in, and every month we would have a meeting about the labour force statistics and every month we'd hear how many tens of thousands of jobs were being lost in every other part of the province—or part of the country, but, surprisingly enough, Mr. Speaker, not in Manitoba. And why is that? Because of the investments that this government has made in training, in apprenticeship programs, in our schools, in the people across this province. I know the member for Emerson—I will be delighted to hear the member for Emerson, to hear what he has to say, for his explanation as to why Manitoba has had the

strongest and the most stable economy over the past decade. I'll be delighted to hear it.

Mr. Speaker, we celebrate every day the diversity of our province; we celebrate the diversity of our people. Manitoba's getting more and more diverse every day as more people find their way to this province, and it's something we can all celebrate.

But, indeed, we are not immune, and we know various sectors and various parts of our province have been more negatively affected. We know that in forestry there has been low demand and low prices. We know in the mining sector, although there's been rebounds, there's been times of low demand and low prices. We know agriculture has struggled. Certain producers have had to deal with weather difficulties, with things like country-of-origin labelling being imposed on Canadian producers. I think we stand together in opposition to those practices and, as well, low prices. And we know that manufacturers in Manitoba, who are among the most creative and the most practical in the country, are struggling with a very high Canadian dollar. These are all challenges.

So Budget 2010 introduces a five-year economic plan, and there are five major planks to this plan. First of all, of course, is to continue to invest in vital front-line services, and that includes continuing to improve health care in Manitoba, to improve education in Manitoba, to improve training opportunities in Manitoba, to continue improving policing and public safety in Manitoba, and to support Manitoba families. And we know every day in question period is a new revelation. It truly is, Mr. Speaker.

The second plank is stimulating economic growth in Manitoba, something which apparently every single member of the Tory caucus opposes. Every other government in Canada believes in stimulating infrastructure. The federal government, which are some similar brand of Conservatives last time I checked, believe in stimulating the economy. Every state in the United States, the American government, every G20 country, everybody believes in stimulating the economy except the member for Emerson and his colleagues. It is quite amazing. Quite amazing.

Thirdly, of course, Mr. Speaker, Budget 2010 will manage government spending. That doesn't mean cutting government spending. That doesn't mean putting our services at risk, but that means responsibly limiting spending to ensure that

Manitobans' priorities come first and we direct most new spending into areas of priority.

The fourth plank is to restore balance. And, like every other government in Canada and the federal government, there is a multiyear plan to return to balance. And I know—you know, the member for Emerson is really—he should speak to his Member of Parliament, Vic Toews, and ask about the federal six-year plan to return Canada to balance. We're doing it quicker, but obviously the member for Emerson has a great deal of difficulty. And I love when people like the member for Emerson, the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) and other members stand up and really let us know what their Conservative policies are all about. It's enlightening and it's a lot of fun.

And the fifth plank, of course, Mr. Speaker, is to maintain affordability, to make sure we keep Manitoba as one of the most affordable places to live, to work, and to raise a family. And that's what Budget 2010 is really all about, and I'll be looking forward to voting in support of this budget in a couple of day's time.

And, Mr. Speaker, I try to listen to the opposition. I try to hear a single word about what it is they would actually do to save a single dollar in this budget year. And it's now several days into debate and I still haven't heard a single word about what would they do to save a single dollar in this budget year.

Now, they tell us they wouldn't go into shortfall. They tell us that's what they would not do, so we start to think, how is it that this opposition party is smarter than the Liberal government in British Columbia, which is rolling in oil revenue and had the Olympics, how they're smarter than the Alberta government, which is going to run a multi-billion dollar deficit despite billions of dollars in oil revenue coming in, and how they're going to be smarter than the Saskatchewan government, which is also bringing in a deficit despite having oil and potash revenue?

So we think about how that might be, and there's a couple of choices. Maybe they would raise taxes back to where they were in 1999. Maybe that's what they'd do. They would take a small business tax rate—maybe they'd take a small business tax rate, which is at 1 percent right now and going to zero later in 2010, maybe they'd put it back to 8 percent like it

was like last time they were in power in this province.

Maybe these Conservatives would raise corporate income taxes back to where they were in 1999 when the people of Manitoba threw them out. Maybe these Tories would increase personal income taxes back to where they were in 1999. Maybe they would start reducing the property education tax credit, which has been tripled by this government. Maybe they would go back and they would raise taxes on farmland back to where it was in 1999. Who knows? Who knows what they'd do, because they've voted against every single tax decrease in every budget since this government's come to power.

Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I honestly don't think that that's what would happen. I really don't think they'd be raising taxes, no. This crew would be cutting vital services all across this province. And how do we know that? Because we saw it. When the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) was a Cabinet minister and sat at that Cabinet table, and when all those other members were there, we saw what happened.

Mr. Speaker, we saw a health-care system that was decimated, a health-care system that lost doctors every single year, a health-care system that lost nurses every single year, a government that cut the enrolment for new doctors and new nurses. It's incredible, but that gives us a good window into what a future would look like if this group was to ever get power in Manitoba again.

What about family services? I've already spoken a little bit about when the member for River East had her chance to be in charge of Family Services. We know what happened there.

What about education? What about not just freezing spending, but cutting spending—cutting spending year after year, affecting teachers, affecting capital, affecting equipment, affecting the future of young people in Manitoba?

What about the highways and Infrastructure budget, which the very mild-mannered member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) had a chance to speak about in question period today? Would they be rolling back our investments in highways and infrastructure to one-quarter of where it is today, which is where they were in 1999? Maybe that's what they'd be doing. And what would they do? Would they be cutting funding to Justice? Would they cut the funding for

police officers, the funding for Crown attorneys, the funding for correction officers? I think they would, Mr. Speaker, because they've voted against every single one of those positions that's been added since 1999.

Would they be cutting from Conservation? I think that's pretty clear. And would they be cutting from Agriculture? You bet they would, Mr. Speaker. They'd be following their neighbours in Saskatchewan who've cut a huge cut out of the Agriculture budget instead of continuing to support farmers across this province.

But what else would they do? Well, we know that they wouldn't be building anything because, you know, when the Conservatives are in power, nothing gets built. Had there been a Tory government, there'd be no MTS Centre, and now we know where they stand. We know where the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) stands. He is opposed to a new football stadium for the people of Manitoba, for the people of Winnipeg, for the University of Manitoba Bisons and for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. I've known the member who's the Leader of the Opposition for a long, long time and, frankly, it is sad to see how much he has changed to now being someone who would stand in this House and denigrate the work by all the different levels of government and by private investors to build a great new football stadium for the people of Winnipeg and the people of Manitoba. But people do change, and I guess we have to deal with that every single day when we—when he stands up and we wonder what it's going to be in question period today.

We know they'd have been opposed to things like—well, we know they are opposed to things like the improvements to the Keystone Centre in Brandon. I was there last week with my family for MLA day at the fair, at the Royal Winter Fair, and what a great facility. The Keystone Centre's been expanded. There's a Jumbotron. And I know I'm very proud that Manitoba's going to be hosting the Memorial Cup. But, you know, if we had a Conservative government, never would have happened, never would have happened—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable minister will have 15 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 7, 2010

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