

First Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 2, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the annual report of The Fatality Inquiries Act for the year 2015.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations please proceed with her statement.

TRC's 94 Calls to Action

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to remind all the members in the Chamber today that on this day, June 2nd, 2015, the truth and reconciliation committee's executive summary, along with the 94 calls to action, was released.

This historic document provides all Manitobans, including government, with recommendations as to what we can and should do to address the reconciliation and healing from the intergenerational legacy of residential schools. Our government continues to use the document and its call to action in the ongoing development and implementation of legislation, policies and programs.

The measures to advance reconciliation is part of The Path to Reconciliation Act which received royal assent on March 15, 2016. The Department of Indigenous and Municipal Relations have been proceeding with work to implement The Path to Reconciliation Act.

We have and will continue to engage all stakeholders to promote initiatives to advance reconciliation across all sectors of our society and continue to recognize the contributions of indigenous peoples to the founding of Manitoba.

We look forward to tabling a copy of the path to reconciliation progress report to this House by the end of this month. As well, my department has started the process to translate the report into seven indigenous languages as outlined in the act.

A celebration of this very important time in our history is taking place here at the Legislature this Saturday morning, starting at 10 a.m. The Mass Blanket Exercise is an important event to help people understand our history and to demonstrate our society's ongoing commitment to the truth and reconciliation and to its calls to action.

Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Madam Speaker, I was in the room in Ottawa a year ago today when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission tabled their summary report and the calls to action. The room was electric. It was truly an historic moment.

Justice Murray Sinclair said something that is an uncomfortable truth to hear, that the residential school system was part of a period of cultural genocide. It's uncomfortable, but it is indeed the truth, and acknowledging that truth is an important first step towards reconciliation.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to tell you that that attempt at cultural genocide failed in its attempt to destroy indigenous languages and cultures.

I speak Ojibwa and I practise our traditional spirituality, and, importantly, so do my sons.

Thanks to the NDP, the government of Manitoba is now legally required to have a plan to implement

the calls to action of the TRC. We look forward to this new government fulfilling its legal obligation.

The motto of the TRC was: the child taken, the parent left behind. Fittingly, the TRC report gave many of us greater insight into the actions that caused so much suffering, and, for myself and many others, some insight into the behaviour of our parents. Through the calls to action, the report laid out a blueprint for all of us, indigenous and nonindigenous alike, to build a better future for all of our children, a future that will be realized by following the path to reconciliation.

As an honorary witness for the TRC, as a member of this House, but most importantly as the son of a residential school survivor, I am proud to stand for reconciliation.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I ask for leave to respond to the ministerial statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Klassen: Chief Justice Murray Sinclair and his fellow commissioners have ushered in a new era in respect to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I was distraught to hear the—that the stories of these residential school survivors might be destroyed. I myself have attended two residential schools in my lifetime. My experience was not so traumatic.

But can you imagine a young five-year-old child, my friend's mother, taken away and forced into a school, the terror she must have felt? This young child only knew her native tongue. Each time she spoke, she would be strapped on her hands by a hard wooden ruler, across her tiny five-year-old hands over and over again. Picture her X-rays of her adult hands. She was never medically treated. Every finger broken repeatedly. This caused permanently disfigured hands.

Let us all commit, now, and in the future, to the honouring of the mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and to ensuring that we achieve this together with reconciliation, real improvement in the lives of indigenous people in Manitoba and in Canada.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I rise today in an exciting—to recognize an exciting event in Winnipeg from June 2nd to June 5th.

* (13:40)

Madam Speaker, this week, 1,500 municipal leaders are in Winnipeg for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Annual Conference and Trade Show. They are here to learn new tools to build stronger communities across Canada. This four-day event has 20 workshops, 25 study tours, 200 exhibitors and over 2,000 participants. It is also Canada's largest gathering of municipal leaders. This federation has been around since 1901 and includes over 2,000 municipalities, and is here to build a stronger network across Canada, not to mention the international community. An illustrative way to show that Canadians always work better together.

This annual conference is also bringing politicians from 'maneral'—many federal parties to address as keynote speakers and I'd like to welcome: the Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Mrs. Elizabeth May, Mr. Tom Mulcair and Ms. Dianne Watts to our beautiful province, and we look forward to developing partnerships with our friends in Ottawa.

An opportunity for leaders from all over a chance to experience the unique Manitoba friendliness and caring, we welcome all that are attending this event and look forward to working with all of you.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba is open for business and we are excited for the opportunity to start developing partnerships. We encourage more dialogue and consultation with all stakeholders and are going to continue to build a better Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

CKSB Radio

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): Madame la Présidente, la station de radio CKSB, située sur la rue Langevin à Saint-Boniface, est un point de ralliement culturel et social au Manitoba depuis 1946. Ce mois-ci, elle fête le 70^e anniversaire de sa création.

CKSB-AM a été inaugurée comme station commerciale francophone au 60, rue Collège près de

l'ancien emplacement du Collège de Saint-Boniface. D'ailleurs, le grand-père de mon épouse Claudette était un des membres fondateurs. Il s'agissait de la première station de radio francophone à l'extérieur du Québec. Elle a également diffusé sa programmation en plusieurs langues autres que le français, aidant à refléter la diversité croissante du Manitoba.

En 1973, CKSB s'est unie avec le réseau CBC / Radio-Canada, contribuant ainsi à la promotion de la culture francophone au Manitoba. Aujourd'hui, vous pouvez écouter des émissions telles que *Le 6 à 9*, animée par Martine Bordeleau et réalisée par Joëlle Morgan et Dominic Delisle – qui sont dans la galerie aujourd'hui – ou *L'actuel* animée par Geneviève Murchison.

Pour commémorer la création de cette station de radio, le département de français, d'espagnol et d'italien de l'Université du Manitoba a organisé un colloque et un forum communautaire en collaboration avec Radio-Canada et la Société historique de Saint-Boniface. Cet événement a réuni de jeunes chercheurs, des employés de CKSB et plusieurs représentants de la communauté franco-manitobaine.

Le colloque a commenté plusieurs facettes de l'histoire de CKSB, rappelant non seulement le rôle des figures emblématiques de CKSB qui ont marqué l'histoire de cette station de radio.

Félicitations à CKSB, aux organisateurs du colloque et à la communauté franco-manitobaine pour leur dévouement à l'égard de la promotion et de la diffusion de la langue française au Manitoba.

Merci.

Translation

Madam Speaker, radio station CKSB, located on Langevin Street in St. Boniface, has been a social and cultural rallying point in Manitoba since 1946. This month, it celebrates its 70th anniversary.

CKSB-AM was launched as a commercial French-language radio station at 607 College Street, next to the former location of the Collège de Saint-Boniface. As a matter of fact, the grandfather of my spouse, Claudette, was one of the founding members. It was the first French-language radio station outside Quebec. The station also broadcast its programming in a number of languages other than French, helping reflect Manitoba's growing diversity.

In 1973, CKSB merged with the CBC-Radio Canada network, thereby contributing to the promotion of the

*francophone culture in Manitoba. Today, the station broadcasts programs such as *Le 6 à 9*, hosted by Martine Bordeleau and produced by Joëlle Morgan and Dominic Delisle, who are all in the gallery today, and *L'actuel*, hosted by Geneviève Murchison.*

To commemorate the founding of this radio station, the Department of French, Spanish and Italian at the University of Manitoba organized a conference and community forum together with Radio-Canada and the Société historique de Saint-Boniface. The event brought together young researchers, CKSB staff and a number of representatives of the Franco-Manitoban community.

The conference focused on several facets of CKSB's history and recalled the role of the emblematic figures who marked it.

Congratulations to CKSB, to the organizers of the conference and to the Franco-Manitoban community for their commitment to the promotion and dissemination of the French language in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Lieutenant Governor's Award Recipients

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I am proud to recognize the recipients of the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Historical Preservation and Promotion.

On Thursday, May 12th, Her Honour Janice Filmon presented Mr. Gordon McGill of Clearwater and Mr. Raymond Phillippot of St. Claude with an award and recognition of their individual achievements.

For well over 30 years, Gordon McGill has been involved in the restoration and development of the Boundary Commission for the North West Mounted Police region.

In 1991, Mr. McGill organized a re-enactment of the historic trail ride, the original of which brought the rule of law into western Canada, and in 1998 he became the chair of the Boundary Commission North West Mounted Police.

He has seen to the improvement of facilities along the trail, including museums; he has located and shared various historic resources, and made sure local governments are aware of the tourism opportunities that the trail provides.

Her Honour also recognized and awarded Mr. Raymond Phillippot of St. Claude in recognition of 25 years of dedicated, unrelenting services as a

member and president of St. Claude's Historical Society.

During his time as member and president, Mr. Phillippot contributed to the development and expansion of the St. Claude Dairy Museum and to the advancement of the archives section of the society.

The St. Claude Dairy Museum is a unique experience, drawing visitors from across Manitoba, across Canada and around the world.

Madam Speaker, historical preservation clearly does much more than preserve bricks and mortars. It recognizes how our local history connects us in tangible ways with our past and provides context for the places we occupy and the world we live in.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to recognize the achievements of Mr. Gordon McGill and Mr. Raymond Philippot for their dedication and preservation of the great history of Manitoba.

Karen Irvine

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Today I would like to acknowledge a truly exceptional constituent. Karen Irvine is a long-life-long volunteer who has made a significant impact in Seine River for decades. She was a founding member of the Dakota community club, which opened in 1987, and has volunteered there ever since.

She helped plan the community centre's expansion that allowed for a gymnasium to be built. She has spearheaded the community centre's craft sale for 28 years, which now has grown to having over 75 vendors.

Karen also started the Dakota 55+ Lazars program, which serves the older adult population in the community.

Karen is also the co-president of the St. Vital Agricultural Society, which promotes the love of gardening in St. Vital. She has long and deep roots in the community, and there is no doubt she plays a key role in enriching the lives of many.

On May 30th I had the opportunity to attend the ribbon-cutting event to unveil Karen Irvine Crescent in River Park South. The community is very fortunate to have a street named after such an outstanding volunteer. I ask all members to join me in congratulating Karen for receiving this honour.

Thank you.

Indigenous Community—Plan of Action

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, I would like to start today by taking a moment to acknowledge the passing of 26-year-old husband and father Errol Green, who died from an epileptic seizure because he was denied his medication while under provincial care.

I would also like to express my concerns for the two victims in the Selkirk Behavioural Health Foundation incident. I pray for their healing.

Where I'm from most people carry box cutters because you never know when you will come across a child hanging from a tree. This is our nightmarish reality.

I put my name on the ballot because I'm tired of burying my people from highly preventable causes, something I have termed as unnatural deaths.

I have asked this government to place value on the indigenous, because indigenous lives matter. I have been met with hope and optimism, which led me to think that, with this government, we would see real change for my people.

I eagerly awaited the 2016 budget, but was devastated to learn that within the sea of the majority, those voices which echoed the voices of my people had been extinguished.

Madam Speaker, a plan of action is needed today. The government has told me they need to commence discussions with our indigenous leaders, and I wondered why are they now only starting. Did they not have a critic for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs these past 17 years?

I don't doubt everyone here is committed to the people of southern Manitoba. When I look at this budget I see NDP, Tory, same old story.

To the Manitobans ignored by this budget I will say I will work tirelessly for the cause—for your cause. All peoples' lives matter to me. I will continue to educate all members here because, clearly, there is an ignorance to the real life-and-death situations that people north of the 52nd parallel face.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today my guests, Carol Vandale and Kiersten McDonald.

* (13:50)

And also I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Morinville, Alberta, Deputy Mayor Rob Ladouceur and Councillor Gord Putnam, who are the guests of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson).

And, in the public gallery also, from Shady Oak Christian School, 14 grade 7, 8 and 9 students under the direction of Cam Friesen. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Cabinet Ministers

Salary Increase

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, this is a government that clearly doesn't care about everyday people, with no commitment to affordability for low- and middle-income Manitobans. They brought in a budget that froze the minimum wage, gave people chump change and clawed back \$44 million from Manitoba seniors. At the same time, they are giving themselves an increase of 36 per cent in Cabinet salaries.

My question is straightforward: Why should PC Cabinet ministers get paid more to do less for everyday Manitobans?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Deputy Premier): I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

And, in fact, I am very proud of the budget that was brought in by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), and it does a number of things for low-income Manitobans. In fact, by raising the basic personal exemption, Madam Speaker, it takes 2,700 people off—at least—off the tax roll, and that's a very significant thing for Manitobans.

We also announced, Madam Speaker, the downsizing in Cabinet from 19 Cabinet ministers to 12. That will save some \$4 million to average Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim Official Opposition Leader, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, the members opposite aren't up to the challenge of government with their targets on everything except their own actions. They complained about measures that they are now keeping, and, if not for some accounting, their budget deficit is bigger.

Yet the members opposite feast on their offerings as if it were Christmas in June. What are their rewards? A big, fat salary increase for the Conservative Premier (Mr. Pallister) and ministers, and an even bigger lump for cold and hard-working seniors and low-income Manitobans.

How does the Premier justify his heartless attitude?

Mrs. Stefanson: And, again, I thank the Official Opposition Leader for the question.

I think there's nothing at all heartless about taking 2,700 Manitobans off the tax payroll in this province, Madam—Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker. And I just want to remember—remind opposite—members opposite that they spent for the past 17 years getting us into this very difficult financial situation that we're in today and that we're facing.

There are difficult times that we are facing as Manitobans, but I believe that this budget takes us in the right direction. It's a direction that Manitobans asked us to take us in in the last election, and that's exactly what we will deliver on for them.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim Official Opposition Leader, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Marcelino: We're already hearing from PC voters who are outraged by this Premier's actions. Seniors like Mr. Charlie Levasseur tell us that he voted PC and feels betrayed by a tax increase on seniors, and the Premier vowed he would not do. In fact, this Tory tax increase hits households making as little as \$40,000 a year.

Our focus would have been more for those—our focus would have ensured those making over \$170,000 per year pay a bit more, while 300,000 Manitobans get a tax break.

Why did this government claw back millions of dollars from seniors while increasing their own Cabinet salaries by 36 per cent? Did they think the public—

Madam Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, I want to thank the Official Opposition Leader for the question.

We did hear, all of us, from seniors, and their main concern was the lack of access to health-care services for them. In fact, according to recent CIHI reports, under the NDP government we had among the longest wait times in our emergency rooms in the country. And that is nothing to be proud of, and that was the legacy of the previous government.

We will ensure that those front-line services are there for those Manitobans and our seniors for when they need them.

Thank you.

Seniors' Tax Credit Increase Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, indeed, our phones have been ringing off the hook this week with seniors from across the province who found out in Tuesday's budget that the seniors' tax credit was not only being slashed but was actually being clawed back to the beginning of this year.

This morning, I had a chance to speak with Louise, a constituent of mine who was counting on the money from this year's tax credit to just get a little bit of work done on her home, to upgrade her windows. For Louise, this money goes a long way to making life more affordable.

What does this Minister responsible for Seniors have to say to Louise and to all Manitoban seniors who are counting on the seniors' tax credit?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): We know what we heard from seniors and, in fact, many Manitobans during the election campaign is that they were frustrated with the access that they were getting to health care. They were frustrated that they were waiting in long lines in emergency rooms. They were frustrated that there are long lines for diagnostic tests, and that's what they said needed to be a priority of this government.

I wonder where this member for Concordia was in defending Louise when the government brought in a 1 per cent tax on everything. He didn't seem to defend Louise then.

Madam Speaker: The member for Concordia, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wiebe: I also had the opportunity to talk today with Charlie, who is a resident of Seine River. He also had plans for this year's rebate, for Charlie was to buy new bicycles for him and his wife so they could stay active this summer and get out and enjoy a great Manitoba summer.

This minister talks about affordability. This minister talks about campaigning on putting more money on the kitchen tables of Manitobans. For Charlie, all he sees on his table is a salt shaker and a tax bill for \$1,200 more.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, this is a government that heard, clearly, the priorities of Manitobans. They told us that they needed better access to health care. They told us that you shouldn't have to wait in pain for so long for a medical procedure. They told us that the ambulance fees were so high that we needed to start to reduce them because they were making a decision about whether or not they had to walk to an emergency room or call an ambulance.

And I would say to Charlie, you know, when the government of the day, the NDP, put on the PST on to home insurance, they took that bike right out of the garage and a whole lot more than that, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, Louise and Charlie are just looking for answers. When Louise contacted the seniors' tax credit office, she was directed to call a 1-800 number instead and put on hold. When Charlie visited the seniors' tax office on June 1st, he found the doors locked and the windows shuttered.

Louise and Charlie feel lied to. They feel totally deceived by this government that campaigned on one thing and delivered another. And they're just looking for answers.

Charlie is with us here in the gallery today, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker. Will this minister agree to sit down face to face and explain to Charlie why they deceived him and why the—these plans weren't made clear that there was a massive tax increase coming their way?

* (14:00)

Mr. Goertzen: We heard consistently throughout the campaign that seniors and many other Manitobans were concerned: concerned about the access that they were getting to emergency rooms, concerned about

the access that they were getting to diagnostic testing, concerned about the access they were getting to many other procedures in the medical field.

We decided to ensure that there was resources put into those facilities, into those procedures, to ensure that seniors could get the medical procedures and help that they needed when they needed it.

Women Earning Minimum Wage Need for Wage Increase

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I think it's absolutely shameful that this government will not meet with Charlie and other Manitoba citizens.

Madam Speaker, according to the Manitoba Federation of Labour, women are 38 per cent more likely to earn minimum wage than men in Manitoba. Despite representing half of the Canadian workforce, women make up 60 per cent of the number of minimum wage earners. Industries that typically pay minimum wage, like the service industry, have a disproportionately high number of female workers.

Recognizing this, the NDP government raised the minimum wage every year while increasing the basic personal tax exemption eight times.

Does the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. Squires) agree that there is a pay-

Madam Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I want to thank the—Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the question.

And ensuring that people have more money in their pockets is a big priority for this government. Ensuring that we increased the basic personal exemption is something that we're extremely proud of. When you have over 2,770 people that are taken off the basic personal exemption as well as enhancing changes with the tax brackets, we think is extremely important.

So we think that will allow people to have more money in their pockets, and we encourage the members opposite to support that budget. That's our priority.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Fontaine: Manitoba's minimal—minimum wage earners need and spend every dollar they earn and spend almost all of it right here in our province, consequently creating jobs and supporting our local

economy, yet a single mother working full time on minimum wage actually earns \$8,000 below the poverty line.

This government talks about their increase to the 'basic' personal tax exemption, yet Manitobans living on part-time wages or EIA don't even benefit from this increase.

Will the Minister responsible for Status of Women agree raising the minimum wage reduces poverty and improves the lives of women and children in Manitoba?

Mr. Fielding: I want to thank the members opposite for the question. And, if you look at the people that are living in poverty has dramatically increased with this opposition—in fact, it's gone up by over 16 per cent since 2008 alone.

We truly think that enhancing the basic personal exemption is something can make a difference. We also think that enhancements to the Rent Assist program is something where people will have more money in their pockets to allow them to afford a better lifestyle beyond that.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, this Cabinet, predominantly filled with men, have ignored the services working women depend on while topping up their own salaries.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) calls minimum wage symbolic, but this government's decision to not increase the minimum wage not only symbolizes but confirms how little they care about the livelihoods of Manitoba women.

Does the Minister responsible for the Status of Women agree that in order to work towards pay-closing the pay gap for women, this government must immediately increase the minimum wage?

Mr. Fielding: I appreciate the question from the member.

I know she's passionate about this issue, but I think she could probably learn to—or from her colleagues who refused to increase the basic personal exemption for taxes, which we think is something that's extremely important to do, to put more money in the pockets of Manitobans.

And another thing, Madam Speaker: In terms of talking to her colleagues about—she should probably ask them about the increase of PST which is something that has dramatic effects on families here in the Manitoba.

Government Employees Indigenous Issues Training

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Madam Speaker, I'm a little disappointed that the PC side hasn't updated their message track since the campaign.

Anyways, I was happy to hear the ministerial statement announced today—or mention today the TRC report, because we heard no mention during the Throne Speech or during the budget.

So I would like to ask the minister responsible for reconciliation about a call to action No. 57 which mandates that every government employee of a provincial government get training on indigenous issues.

Will the minister commit to implementing such training here in Manitoba?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his question today.

We are working with all stakeholders within the truth and reconciliation, and we intend on supporting fully this endeavour moving forward. We accept and hope that all participants will carry on and do the work that needs to be done.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Rouge, on a supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, in this case, the party that needs to carry out the work is the provincial government. They are the ones who are called to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under call to action No. 57.

A review of departmental budgets as well as the budget of Civil Service Commission suggests that this indigenous issues training could be accomplished in a fashion that is revenue neutral.

So will the minister responsible commit to implementing this training on indigenous issues for government employees?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I appreciate my friend

raising the issue on this very important day, Madam Speaker, and it is an important day to remember.

And I also remember in this House when the roles were reversed in the House, and we as an opposition asked that the government bring forward the TRC bill because there was a short time and it didn't look like it was going to pass.

In fact, we demanded the members who were in government at the time to call that bill because we thought it was so important that it pass. And we were glad that the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus saw that bill pass, and, I would say, pass unanimously in this House.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Rouge, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I'm very excited to hear that the Minister for Health has found a part of the NDP record that he is willing to celebrate, and so I'm very encouraged by that bit of bipartisanship.

Now, of course, we know that it is because of leadership of people such as the Honourable Murray Sinclair that bills such as The Path to Reconciliation Act actually came into place.

So I'd like to know, specifically, what is the plan on the government side to implement call to action No. 57, and who will they be consulting with in terms of indigenous knowledge keepers, leaders and academics to ensure that that training is robust?

Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, you know, unlike my friend from Fort Rouge, I don't actually think this is a matter of trying to take credit from one side or the other.

I think it's important that the bill was passed. That's why we called for it to be passed unanimously in response in particular to his question.

And I'm glad to hear that in the Department of Health there is already training that is going on to ensure that there is an understanding of indigenous issues. That training will continue and I'm glad we're taking action on it.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to proceeding with oral questions, we have some other students in the public gallery.

From Riverside School, eight grade 7, 8 and 9 students under the direction of Andrew Toews.

And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook).

And we'd like to welcome you here today.

* * *

Madam Speaker: We will now proceed with oral questions.

East-Side Road Construction Federal-Provincial Partnership

Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, developing the full all-season east-side road network means a lifeline for 13 isolated First Nations communities to improve access to health care, training and good-paying jobs.

Federal assistance would dramatically cut the timeline needed to complete this project. The Prime Minister, in fact, has promised to provide that support, saying, yes, we will be a partner that Manitoba needs to develop the east-side road.

Can the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade tell us what steps he has taken on behalf of these 13 First Nation communities to make this important partnership with the federal government a reality?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I thank the member for that question because it is important to have access. Importance of access for all Manitobans, remote First Nations, northern Manitobans, wherever you live in Manitoba, accessibility is important.

* (14:10)

And as part of that we are dismantling the NDP bureaucracy known as the East Side Road Authority. The waste and mismanagement that this—the former government was so good for is—we're going to turn that money into building roads for remote and northern communities.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a supplementary question.

First Nations Agreements

Mr. Chief: I'm sure that the minister, before making any decisions that related to those First Nations, took the time to consult them, Madam Speaker.

Our—as part of reconciliation, as part of the TRC's call to action, governments and the private sector, to ensure that indigenous people have access to employment and training, developing the east-side

road network involves 13 isolated First Nations signing multi-million-dollar contracts that make sure those communities participate and benefit from the projects. The communities' hard work has meant training over 1,000 First Nations people.

Knowing the importance of reconciliation, can the minister tell us what assurances he has offered those 13 communities that these agreements will be honoured?

Mr. Pedersen: I thank the member for that question because in order to have an open and transparent government, we will be consulting with all stakeholders here.

And this is something that the previous government would not do. They would not consult with anyone. They were more interested in building their bureaucracies.

As we begin to untangle the web of the East Side Road Authority, we are finding the east-side communities are very much behind this, and they really, truly want to see the action happen there, and we will make that happen.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Chief: Madam Speaker, last week, MKO Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson outlined a 10-point plan to support economic development in northern Manitoba. As part of the plan, the grand chief addresses such concerns as employing more indigenous people in isolated communities and creating access to healthy and affordable food.

Will the minister support the grand chief call to action as well as the TRC's call to action and say yes to investment in First Nation initiatives by committing to build the full east-side road network?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I do appreciate the member's question. It's a very important question as we move forward.

Clearly, we're excited on this side of the House about actually having a department responsible for economic development and growth. That's something we haven't had for 17 years under the NDP.

Madam Speaker, just, actually, over lunch, I had an opportunity to meet with the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce, and we were talking about economic development in Manitoba. And I look forward to continuing that dialogue with the Aboriginal community.

Northern Manitoba Communities Nutritious and Affordable Food Access

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Healthy food and clean, running water are basic necessities of life. These are being denied to too many people in the North, having catastrophic health impacts.

It is more affordable for a mother to feed her child a can of pop and a bag of chips than it is to give them fruit and a glass of milk. The people in our North are dying of malnutrition and diabetes every day.

My question is to the Deputy Premier (Mrs. Stefanson): How can you justify the lack of funding provided to our northern communities for clean, running water and nutritious food? If I brought in a cup of water from one of my—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, the member for Kewatinook raises a very important and a very real issue, and there a number of different aspects to it.

When she talks about the need for a clean water supply and she mentions diabetes, and I'm glad that she raised that because we have a significant issue with diabetes in the province of Manitoba.

The lack of an adequate water system, in some ways, prevents dialysis from happening closer to home in the communities that we need it to happen. It's certainly one of the issues that I'm going to raise, specifically, at the federal level.

We certainly need support in ensuring that clean water's available not only for drinking but for other life-saving treatments, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Kewatinook, on a supplementary question.

Health-Care Budget Commitment

Ms. Klassen: Madam Speaker, due to the failing health-care services in northern communities, thousands of my constituents are forced to live away from home in Winnipeg to seek medical treatment. In Canada, we are supposed to provide universal health care for all citizens.

I ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen): What amount of the health-care increase is—in this budget will be directed to our northern communities?

Mr. Goertzen: And, again, that's a very significant and important question.

I know one of the things that concerned me most directly and most immediately when I became the Minister of Health was learning how many people had to live in Winnipeg away from their communities in the North to receive dialysis treatment.

It's one of the reasons that it's going to be, when I have the opportunity, which I think will be soon, to raise with the federal minister the importance of ensuring that there is a clean water system and the infrastructure in place so that individuals who are receiving dialysis can do so closer to home.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Kewatinook, on a final supplementary.

Nutritious Food Access—Diabetes Rates

Ms. Klassen: Madam Speaker, the cost of food in the North has become unmanageable. Something as simple as a four-litre jug of milk is highly priced, while pop drinks remain at a relatively normal price. This is absurd.

Madam Speaker, in Manitoba, over 100,000 people now have diabetes. Far too many are indigenous. Type 2 diabetes rates are very high in our First Nation communities.

What steps will the minister take to ensure something is done to address the price and the staggering amount of diabetes?

Mr. Goertzen: And, again, the member for Kewatinook is correct. We do in Manitoba have a higher rate of diabetes, type 2 diabetes in particular, within Manitoba and in particular within the indigenous community.

That's one of the reasons I was extremely concerned that there were so many individuals who would call the North their home who aren't living in the North, who aren't living close to their home because they're not able to get dialysis treatment closer to home largely because the infrastructure isn't there to allow that treatment to take place.

It is one of the key issues that I'm going to raise at the federal level and the national level, and I would ask, and I'm sure that she will, the member for Kewatinook to join me in that call on the federal level.

**Basic Personal Tax Rate
Indexed to Inflation**

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): Madam Speaker, in the budget our new government decided to index income tax brackets and personal exemption to inflation.

Can the minister explain how important these tax measures are to Manitobans?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): It's a very good question from the member. Thank you very much.

This budget is something that we are very proud of in terms of the tax relief. When you talk about the basic personal exemption, when you have 2,770 people that are taken off the tax rolls, we personally think that is something that's specifically going to help people, people that need the help the most.

Same thing with bracket creep, in terms of that. That's a commitment that we made. It's something that will help and will put money in the pockets of Manitobans, and we're very proud to be a part of a government that will support this in our budget.

**Minimum Wage Increase
Ministers' Salary Increase**

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker, in Monday's budget the Finance Minister flatly refused to increase the minimum wage to support those making the least in Manitoba, and yet yesterday it was reported that while minimum wage earners will not be getting a raise this year, every member of Cabinet is getting a \$14,000 increase and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is getting \$22,000 more this year.

Can the Finance Minister explain this unconscionable double standard?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Acting Minister of Finance): I appreciate the question from the members opposite.

What was also mentioned is the fact that we consolidated some of the Cabinet portfolios that end up saving \$4 million or more for taxpayers. We think this is something that can be spent on essential services such as health care, such as education, which will make a difference for Manitobans.

I also had an opportunity to take a look at some of the stats, Madam Speaker, from Statistics Canada that look at the poverty rates that have been associated here in Manitoba, and the poverty rates

have gone up by over 16 per cent, compared to 9 per cent, in the province of Manitoba under the NDP's reign.

* (14:20)

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, you know, in refusing to answer that question, it sounds like the minister already, mere a five weeks into this government, is already entitled to his entitlements.

Will the Finance Minister agree that it's hypocritical for him, the Premier and every member of Cabinet to give themselves a huge raise but refuse to give minimum wage earners a mere 50 cents an hour increase this year?

Mr. Fielding: I do appreciate the question.

The basic personal exemption is something that can make a difference in people's lives. When you're able to take off 2,770 people off the tax rolls, it's going to make a difference. When you're able to invest \$45 million, no, \$46 million more in housing, a 58 per cent increase, that is something that is going to make a difference, Madam Speaker. When you're able to increase Rent Assist programs for low-income families, that's something that's going to make a difference.

I encourage the members to join us to support our budget to help support Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member of Fort Garry-Riverview, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Allum: The Premier is on record as saying that increasing the minimum wage is merely symbolic, but I would suggest that giving themselves a raise while denying it to low-income working families is symbolic of an elitist government that's more interested in corporate welfare than the well-being of more than 100,000 Manitobans who rely on the minimum wage to put food on the table.

So I ask the Finance Minister again: Will he abandon his Scrooge-like decision not to increase the minimum wage this year and give working families a raise? After all, Madam Speaker, they've earned it. These guys haven't.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, let's talk a little bit about abandoning, like when the NDP government abandoned Manitobans by taking \$400 million out of the pockets of hard-working

Manitobans. They abandoned them when they increased the PST. They abandoned them when they put the PST on home insurance. They abandoned them when they put the PST on haircuts.

And even after they took the \$400 million from hard-working Manitobans, they still couldn't pay for their own Winnipeg Jets tickets. They still had to get Jets tickets off the taxpayers' dime. That's the record of that government, Madam Speaker.

Cabinet Ministers Salary Increase

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, it's hard to understand why this government won't meet with Charlie, who's here in the gallery today, to explain why they're clawing back his seniors' school tax credits.

I'd like to ask a question of the Premier (Mr. Pallister), and it concerns his whopping increase of 36 per cent to almost 40 per cent in his case, increase in his and his Cabinet's salaries.

The Premier raised his and all Cabinet salaries by 36 per cent at a time when he's clawing back seniors' school tax credits, slashing the highways budget by \$48 million and raising the deficit to \$911 million.

How can he justify his 36 per cent increase in his Cabinet ministers' salary to Manitobans?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, I'm glad that the member for Elmwood has found his voice because, you know, we didn't hear it; we didn't hear it for so many years.

When Manitobans were asked to pay 7 per cent more on their home insurance, we didn't hear the member for Elmwood speak up. When Manitobans were asked to pay another per cent on virtually everything they bought, we didn't hear anything from the member from Elmwood. All we know is that they were the first in line when they could get those free Jets tickets on the backs of taxpayers, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Elmwood, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Maloway: And my question is to the Minister of Infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, given his 36 per cent increase in his Cabinet salary, I'd like to know how he can

justify getting paid more for delivering \$48 million less in his highways budget.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, you know, year after year, the NDP would reach into the pockets, deep into the pockets of Manitobans and take more money. There was nobody that was spared.

In fact, even when we thought finally they would have enough money for everything, they still took more money. They brought in the vote tax and they decided to give their own political party money to run their political party. They took money from Manitobans and gave it to their political party.

We're going to change that and put that back into the pockets of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Elmwood, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, I can't believe they won't let him answer a very simple question about how he can justify a 36 per cent increase in a Cabinet salary while he's doing less for the money.

My question to the Premier is how can he justify increasing Cabinet salaries at a time when everyday Manitobans are faced with higher costs, thanks to his support for the sale of MTS that will get—people will get nailed with a \$40-a-month-more increase in their cellphone rates?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I want to just inform that House that at noon today I was over at the conference on regional collaboration within capital regions, and it was a really interesting meeting. I was able to address them at noon and to tell them Manitoba is now open for business.

An Honourable Member: Where'd the cheering go?

Mr. Pedersen: I feel neglected. I don't hear the cheering from the other side now, so I just—Madam Speaker, this is about partnerships within the Capital Region. It's about this government working in partnership with the Capital Region, and we will do that.

And unlike the previous government, we're open for business.

Minimum Wage Increase Request

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, the Manitoba advantage of lowest Autopac,

hydro and gas rates in all of Canada is gone in this budget.

The Conservative budget, I think, is an attack on the poor.

Now, is there any chance that perhaps the Premier (Mr. Pallister) will change his mind and provide minimum wage for those who deserve it?

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): I'd like to thank the member for the question. Great to see him up in question period, because this allows our government to put the facts on the record.

What is gone from the Crown corporations is political interference.

And let me say to this House, let me point out to this House, what did political interference get us?

Ten years ago, the Bipole III line was going to cost \$1.2 million and it was going to pay for itself. Today the bipole line 3 is well over \$4 billion and it is costing Manitobans every day. That's what's gone, is political interference.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a supplementary question.

Manitoba Hydro–Bipole III Public Utilities Board

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, so let's deal with Hydro.

There's a certain sense that there's a deception somewhere, somewhere that when the Conservatives were campaigning they said that they will refer the Bipole III issue to the Public Utilities Board.

* (14:30)

And now, Madam Speaker, the minister responsible, the junior Minister for Finance, is referring the matter to the board that he–

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Well, I would like to thank the member for that question, so we can put some facts on the record.

Since being government, we have made it very clear that there won't be the kind of political interference like members opposite. *[interjection]* And I'd like to point out that the member chirping right now got out of his office, walked into the Crown corporations, used his political interference

and raided Jets tickets after Jets tickets after Jets tickets. Each and every one of the NDP members took Jets tickets for themselves personally.

That is gone, Madam Speaker. No more political interference.

Yes, we're going to ask the professionals at Hydro. Yes, we're going to ask the board to come back with recommendations. And we're not going to ram down the corporation's throat a political agenda.

We need no lessons–no lessons–from members opposite.

Madam Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I believe we are prepared to resume debate on the Throne Speech–or on the budget speech.

BUDGET DEBATE (Third Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the budget motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), and the amendment and sub-amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Fort Rouge, who has 15 minutes remaining.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Madam Speaker, again, you know, picking up where I left off yesterday, I was speaking about the issue of reconciliation being absent from the budget and also absent from the Throne Speech.

Again, quite fitting that today is the one-year anniversary of the executive summary, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report being tabled, as well as the calls to action.

Now, it's significant because there are certain measures that can be undertaken to implement the TRC calls to action which might not have any financial impact on the provincial coffers. For instance, you know, earlier in question period I outlined the possibility that implementing call to action 57 might actually be accomplished in a revenue-neutral sense.

However, there are other calls to action around economic reconciliation, around improving health outcomes, around improving outcomes in the criminal justice system, which almost certainly will require some investment by the provincial government. And so we're left with the question, why is it that we saw none of this in the budget document that was tabled earlier this week, the Estimates document or the speech that was delivered by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen)?

Now, of course, bigger picture, when we look at the overall approach that the PC government took in tabling their budget, again, I think that they have a credibility problem because they just finished a campaign in which they tried to demonize the NDP for purportedly raising taxes and running deficits, and then they turn around and with their first budget raise taxes and table a \$911-million deficit.

And regardless of the spin that they want to use to try to sell that to the public, the fact is that that is their record. That is now their record. They've tabled a budget with a \$900 million—some-\$900-million deficit and increases in taxes on seniors.

Now, of course, my political ideology is such that I'm okay with a progressive taxation scheme. I believe that that is the right approach to generating government revenue. I also believe that it is important to have leeway to run deficits in times of economic turmoil.

Economic history tells us that during great depressions, during recessions, it is necessary for a government to borrow money and to use that deficit financing to spend in the economy to keep the economy moving. This has been borne out by the economic record of almost every industrialized nation since the, you know, 20th century.

That's completely squared with the message that I took out to people in the Fort Rouge constituency during the campaign. I told people we take the ability to levy taxes very seriously. We're very responsible with government money, and given the current economic climate in which most other provinces are moving into or are already in recession, it is appropriate for the provincial government in Manitoba to borrow money to keep the economy moving. However, that is not what Progressive Conservative candidates spent this spring telling their constituents.

They spent the entire spring telling their constituents: The NDP are terrible because they raise

taxes. The NDP is terrible because they ran a deficit. And now, they've turned around and done the exact same thing. So I just want to put on the record that already the first steps that they have taken in government contradict the actions, which they purported to represent during the campaign. And so that's troubling.

But I ask myself, why would the Minister of Finance, why would the Premier (Mr. Pallister) undertake a plan which contradicted the message track that they were espousing during the campaign? Well, it seems to me, that perhaps the responsibilities of governing have actually begun to sink in. And they now understand that protecting front-line workers is important to keeping the economy moving here in Manitoba.

After all, the government of Manitoba is a large employer, and when we take a look at the teachers, the RHAs and the other impacts that public money has in our economy, we know that an austerity program, we know that deep cuts would be harmful and could actually be very damaging to both GDP growth, but also to other indicators of economic well-being, particularly those indicators that attempt to measure income inequality in our province.

Now, I realize that the messaging that we're going to hear, over and over again, is that this is the NDP's fault. And, again, we hear it in question period daily. We hear it in the media every time they have to scum and explain the \$911-million deficit. We hear that it was the NDP's fault. But, you know, I would just like to counter and say, you know, everyone recognizes that this is, in fact, their record. And the media, in their reporting, seemed to show that they're astute enough to recognize that as well.

So the truth is this: They had a choice, you know, in developing their budget document, and they chose to bring forward the budget that they tabled earlier this week. And so, you know, my thoughts go out to my colleagues on the PC side of the House who spent the spring trying to demonize deficits and trying to demonize tax hikes, who have to now go back to their constituents this summer and explain why they chose to raise taxes and why they chose to table a large deficit.

Again, had it been an NDP government doing the same actions, it would have been fine because we were upfront and we were honest about the economic reality that this province is now in. And we were open and honest about the conversation that we were having with our constituents. *[interjection]*

I see the honourable minister from—or the honourable member, rather, excuse me. He wasn't named to Cabinet. I don't mean to twist at all. As I mentioned, that the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) is making some reference to the provincial sales tax again. I know that he's a frequent viewer of my Twitter account, and he has seen that I have put on the record that I don't believe that a sales tax is a progressive taxation measure. But, again, I haven't backed away from those comments, you know. And that is the hallmark of a strong democratic party, that within our caucus we can have differences of opinion and have a strong, robust discussion about what is the economic—what is the best economic way forward.

I've seen no evidence that the Progressive Conservative party is capable of doing the same. Rather, it seems as though there are decisions made at the highest level, which are then handed down to the rest of caucus and, you know, these members are given their marching orders therein.

So, again, one of the things that concerns me greatly is the prospect of income inequality increasing if we are to pursue this path that has been begun under the budget that we heard about this week, because already we're seeing that some middle-income seniors will be paying some higher taxes in this next year, at the same time that a very small class of income earners—the high-income earners, those in Cabinet and the First Minister, will have ever more resources at their disposal, right?

*(14:40)

And so the reason that, you know, we are concerned about this is that that is just an indication of where their priorities for this new government lie, right, and that the priorities likely lay in increasing opportunity for those who are well off in our province.

For instance, we've heard much made of the indexing of the basic personal exemption and income tax brackets also being indexed, but we should note that that puts more money in the hands of those in the higher tax brackets than it does into the people—than it does to the people on the lower socio-economic side of the spectrum. So we should be very conscientious about the real impacts that that will have on the pocketbooks of Manitobans and the impacts that this will, of course, have on, you know, the people that we are here to represent.

Now, again, just to put on the record, we see in the Estimates documents that the ministerial top-up, the ministerial salaries will be going from an additional \$37,000 to an additional \$51,000 a year, which some of my colleagues said was a 37 per cent increase, but, when I did the calculation, I rounded up and saw that it was a 38 per cent increase, year over year. But, you know, again, 37 per cent, 38 per cent, we're in the same ballpark there. Again, I would contrast that with the year-over-year increase in the minimum wage, which was zero per cent.

When it comes to the First Minister's salary, his top-up will be an additional \$56,000 a year—would have been; that's what the previous premier received. And now the new First Minister will receive an additional \$78,000 this year, which is a 39 per cent increase year over year. Let's contrast that with, again, what was the increase to the minimum wage, year over year. Well, that was a zero per cent increase. And so, again, this speaks to where we may be headed in this province over the coming years.

So, again, budgets, as with many things in government, are about choices, and there were choices made by this administration in bringing this budget forward. They chose to run a \$911-million deficit. They chose not to spend on child care and enhancing access to affordable and safe daycare spaces. They chose not to spend money on implementing the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And they also chose not to spend on the North.

Well, when you're running a deficit of \$911 million, I would ask: Why not spend money on child care? If you're going to run a \$911-million deficit, why not spend money on implementing the TRC report? If you're going to run a \$911-million deficit, why not spend money to help the North? And, unfortunately, the only answer that I can come up with is that, you know, the only reason you wouldn't do those things is that you don't care about those things, or, at the very least, that you don't care enough about those things.

Similarly, we've heard a lot of rhetoric about the deficit, and though the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) has only been office for a few weeks, he's always—he's already revised the deficit figure several times. And what I'd like to know is: If you are serious about fighting the deficit, why not boost the minimum wage? As my colleague, the member from St. Johns, alluded to in question period earlier today, there's actually a multiplier effect at work

when you boost the minimum wage, because people on the lower socio-economic strata side of the economy are disproportionately more likely to spend their additional income immediately, whereas we know that when higher income earners, such as members of the Progressive Conservative Cabinet or the First Minister get more money in their pocket, they are disproportionately more likely to hoard that cash, to save that money, that money therefore being pulled out of the economy, sitting at—sitting on the sidelines at a time when the Manitoba economy needs all the liquidity that it can get.

So, again, if we were serious about slaying the deficit, we would see an increase to the minimum wage, because people who work on minimum wage are more likely to spend that money immediately, thereby injecting money into the economy, thereby, you know, contributing to sales tax revenues and, of course, thereby increasing income tax revenues. So we would see greater GDP growth. We would also see an impact on government coffers. And these things would, in turn, help bring the fiscal house in order.

And I'll be honest, Madam Speaker, you know, campaigning in Fort Rouge this spring, I heard the message. Many people are concerned about the deficit. Many people do want a fiscally responsible government. However, I would argue that we have yet to see that from this new government.

And, again, you know, the NDP had a record of using deficit spending to keep the economy moving. And that is the right approach during the current economic climate, especially when we look at where deficit-to-GDP ratios are in this country, and we see that Manitoba is pretty much in the middle of the pack. And, again, when we look at debt-to-GDP ratios across this country, and we see that Manitoba is pretty much in the 'minim'—in the middle of the pack, rather.

So, again, if you're going to run a \$911-million deficit, it's very difficult to justify not spending money on child care, very difficult to not spend money on helping the North, very difficult to not spend money on improving infrastructure in highways in our province.

And, again, the only reason I can think of that they would not choose to do those things, while running the deficit that they have, is because they don't care about those priorities, the priorities of real Manitobans. And, again, for us, those are very, very important.

So, to me, that means that this budget is flawed. And, as a result, we can't support it. And that's why the official Leader of the Opposition has moved this amendment to the budget. And that's why I am very proud to second that amendment to the budget, so that we might see a budget that is more in line with the economic reality of Manitobans and that is more in line with the priorities of Manitobans everywhere in this province. Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On House business, Madam Speaker.

I ask leave of the House for agreement to defer requests for recorded votes on the afternoon of Tuesday, June 14th, to the afternoon of Wednesday, June 15th, and the requests for quorum counts on the afternoon of Tuesday, June 14th to be waived.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House for agreement to defer requests for recorded votes on the afternoon of Tuesday, June 14th, to the afternoon of Wednesday, June 15th, and for requests for forum counts on the afternoon of June 14th to be waived? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate, the honourable Minister of Families.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Madam Speaker, although it has seemed like a long time since I've been in the House answering some questions, I haven't had a formal opportunity to thank a lot of people that got me here. I was hoping to do that during the Throne Speech, but there wasn't time for me to do that. So I'd first like to mention that.

You know, a part of election campaign—I have now been elected three times, two different levels of government, in the same area, and I can tell you that every time you do get elected, a sense of fulfillment, a sense of gravitas, I guess, I would say, to represent your good citizens. And that's—is something that I—and I know members are the same. They take that responsibly very seriously, and they want to represent their citizens as best they can.

And so I just want to, first of all, thank my residents of Kirkfield Park for allowing me to stand as their elected representative for a number of years, not just on City Council but as well here, in the Legislature. And I'm honoured and blessed to have their support once again.

When you do run for elected office, as many people do know, that you really need the support of your family to be a part of that. And, for some of the newer members, once you are in this job, you know, it does become consuming. It becomes something that is a part of your life. And I very much have enjoyed that and I've embraced that.

Sometimes you'll be going out to the grocery store, and you're trying to get groceries at the last minute, and someone, a constituent, wants to come up to you and talk to you. It's really important that we take time to listen to our citizens. And, when they have an opportunity to see their elected representative, you have an opportunity to do that.

* (14:50)

And so I've been—and a part of that, of course, is the family piece, right? And so sometimes for people that aren't in politics, you know, if you've got your kids with you, you're trying to go to a soccer game or you're with your spouse, trying everything else, it is something that is somewhat—they have to have some patience. And my family has had extreme patience with me, and I'm—I truly feel blessed to have them with me along the whole way throughout my career.

My wife, my beautiful wife, Michelle Lalonde is someone who, you know, has run a very successful business, is very busy in all aspects of life, and has been there a part of my life. Although, she—I wouldn't say she's a political person; she is someone who is very common sense. And I use her quite a bit to vet ideas, you know, does this sound right? Does this—is this kind of a common-sense approach? And so she's a fantastic sounding board, and sometimes I have to explain the nuances and the politics behind things and—which is a very complicated process sometimes, because as elected officials sometimes you're making decisions on a whole bunch of different variables as opposed to a straight-out issue.

And also what's important is fly through the flak with these things. As people—whether people from the opposition or people from our side, it's important to really focus in on the issues. And one learning that I've had over the eight and half years that I've been elected to office is, you know, when you're making decisions, you know, go back to that person in the community club. Maybe it's that person that you think has common sense or, you know, maybe it's the fella at the legion. And, if you can explain it to them in a way that they're going to say, you know, it makes a lot of sense, then, I think, we're on the right track.

And there's a lot of times, too, where you're off track. And I know there's time on City Council where we made some decisions, like, you know, at the end of the day, I tried to listen to my constituents is what I'm saying. I've got a whole bunch of calls, and I change my opinion. And I think that's natural and I think that's very good for the political process, and so that's what I'm very excited about.

As mentioned with my lovely wife, Michelle, there's also my children that are part of this process. My daughter, Paige, who's 12 now. Paige has been with us in all our elections—and this was an interesting election because this is the first time that she truly understood about the process that was going on. And one of the best things that I've always had in my political life is the ability to talk to her class, and I had an ability to do talk to her class about the elections and explain the process. And I tried not to do it is a partisan way; that's a part of it.

And so it's overjoy to have my children with me. My daughter, Brynn, is always there asking me important questions upon the day. And my son, Beck, who is four years old, was fantastic.

And I'll tell you this funny story. The day after the election came, I took Beck, we—he goes to a nursery school at our—Montessori that we go to—and, of course, the class knew that I was involved in elections. And so Beck was involved in all the festivities after the election. And, you know, I asked the nursery school teacher, you know, it's—you know, how was school for today with Beck? And Beck explained to me—she said, told me all about the special day that you had last night with the election. You were on the blue team. You went to two parties and, you know, you had a whole bunch of fun with tattoos, because we had tattoos. So anyway I very much support—appreciate their support.

My parents have always been there for me, and I'm—they're there no matter what. They've gotten a little bit older throughout the elections that I've been involved in, but they've been always there, supporting of me and are there full time.

There's also my in-laws and people that are special to me. There's also people in my campaign that were key to my success. And I know it's—I just need to name a few—or I'm going to name a bunch because these are important people to me.

My—first of all, is Don Timmerman [*phonetic*] is someone who has substantially helped me, our riding association president. There's a fellow by the name

of Andy McMaster [*phonetic*], who has been extremely helpful. Sabrina; we've got a couple named Carl and Marge Kuman [*phonetic*], who were there all the time for me; Sheldon Novak, who banged in so many signs—unbelievable, and the—you know, the competition that people have at your election campaigns, they get involved in it. It's exciting seeing them from that. There's people like Rene Zugalski [*phonetic*], who helped in a whole bunch of ways for me.

So, once again, I'm very excited to be here. I also want to say that I'm very excited to represent Kirkfield Park. There's a number of things that I want to just represent about Kirkfield Park and tell you why it's such a fantastic place.

Number 1 is the Grace Hospital, and the Grace Hospital is something that has been in the community for many, many, many years and is very important, as I know the Speaker knows, being from the general area that I've been. And you know, we've—we're excited about some new developments. Obviously, the ER is there, that—course, and trying not to make this too political—but there has been large wait times that have been associated with that. So excited for that to happen, excited for an ACCESS centre that, obviously, is up and running as well. That's a part of it.

There's also some fantastic communities in my area. There's the Woodhaven community, which I was, you know, represented for a number of years. It's a beautiful green space that's right in the heart of my constituency. People are just, you know, fantastic, that are there. There's areas like the Westwood area. There's good, common-sense people that make some good, common-sense decisions. There's people that live in Assiniboine area that are kind of around the Moray bridge as well as these areas. You know, they are just littered with people that are caring, that are just common sense and are good natured. There's also people that live in a newer development, in The Oaks, which was an important development that brought some new—much needed new development that happens in the area. So these are all really important areas that I represent in some of the areas.

Also there are some real landmarks. If you ever get a chance to come to Kirkfield Park, and you probably do because there's lots of stuff going on there, there's places like the Grant's Old Mill. And Grant's Old Mill, if anyone knows about it, is fantastic. It's the—it's probably my favourite place in

the world. It's a green space. It's right in the heart, right off of Portage Avenue, Sturgeon Road. It's an area that I played in as a little boy, and we still have a lot of times where I take my family or we have barbecues; it's just a fantastic facility, and it's a celebration of the past.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Also our community clubs—there's a number of community clubs that are there, specifically Woodhaven community club and KW community club. They're just a hub for activity in our communities, which is important to support. And when I was on City Council, I very much supported, loved to support, infrastructure renewals for it. I still want to do that on—as a member of the Legislative Assembly. You know, there's some great granting programs through the Community Places Program that really helps community clubs.

There's also organizations and agencies such as the St. James 55+ centre, which is a group. In fact, St. James has about the most amount of seniors in the whole province. And so it really is a very active group that's there that lobbies for seniors' issues and facilities, upgrades that are there.

There's ANAVETS Winnipeg, which is another hub of activity in my area and obviously represents people from military and aviation backgrounds.

There's other areas like the YMCA that is a fantastic—this is a community model that is fantastic made. It's got a community board. It enhances—it's a fantastic place. There's child care there, there's sports facilities. It truly is a fantastic place, and the St. James centennial pool is also there.

One thing that I talked a lot about in my campaign was my commitment to public consultation. And that is something that I've done, and I feel I do talk the talk—the talk—I walk the talk on this—in this point. Throughout my times—and one thing I know the member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux) here—and this is something that I think her dad has done extremely well, is consult with people. I know he had generally—I'm not sure if he still has that, but he has meetings on a weekly basis with constituents at McDonald. In fact, I—in my early political career, I ran against her dad and got my clock cleaned from him, from that area, of course. But he does a extremely good job, I think, in communicating and representing the people.

I tried to model this not just on what, you know, Kevin Lamoureux does, but also in terms of

consulting with people. I have regular town hall meetings; I enjoy that. It's a venue, it's an opportunity for people to come out and say exactly what the issues are, right? And so I generally have four or five of these a year. In fact, when I was on council, through my eight years, I had over 60 town hall meetings. Some were on issues; some are at local locations; some are general, overall. And you know what? Some are well attended, some aren't. I mean, there's some where I would have six or eight people in the middle of winter that were there, but I also had some where there's 200, 300 people that were part of that process as well.

But, getting into the core elements of this thing, I just want to talk a little bit about the budget. And I think this budget is an extremely important document for this Legislature and, really, for the province of Manitoba. And I truly think that this really is an opportunity for us to change course. And there's a lot of analogies that go around about turning canoes and kayaks and all that sort, but I truly think this is a starting point. It's a starting point for our government; it's a fresh start, if you will, for our government.

And I think that in this budget, I mean, some will argue that we didn't go far enough; some will argue we went too far. But I think sometimes when you do get criticism like that, the happy middle ground is probably the place you want to meet. And I think we've made some strides toward that. Budget's not perfect, but I think it's some good steps in the right direction, which is important to me.

* (15:00)

The past, you know, I'm not going to hinge upon it too much, but I will address some issues that I think need to be addressed. And, of course, the members—you know, the opposition were NDP and, you know, I can't say that I think that everything they did was horrible, but I think that there was some dramatic improvements that need to happen. And really what I heard from constituents is there really needed to be a change, and I just think that's a healthy thing in our system when you have a government that has been in power for 17 years. And so I'm excited to be a part of that change.

I truly think that the process, in terms of the amount of taxes we are taking in, was growing too much. We know about the PST. We know about other tax measures that were taken, which I disagree with, and I disagree with how the consultation happened, which is even more important. You talk to

the average person about the PST, what they'll clearly say is, it's the process. It's the process of having, you know, to take the provincial government to court to ensure that they had to change the budget-balanced budget legislation, and the surprise of it. So not consulting with people, I think, is really, really important. And we needed a change.

There was also the spending that's there. And we know that this year, there was over \$1-billion deficit that was there. And that is unsustainable, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker. So a part of that process, it's about turning that ship and changing course to a better direction, in our opinion.

One thing that I would also say is that, even with the finances, when you do have more—you know, I think a logical person would make the assumption, you know, if you're paying more in taxes, even if you agree with that premise, which I don't, that we should be paying more taxes, you could reasonably make the argument, well, if you're paying more taxes, at least you're getting better services for those dollars that you're collecting. And we know that, unfortunately, that wasn't the case. We are paying a lot more and we're getting less in services that we're taking about. We've got the higher PST. We have some of the higher spending that I talked about, the deficits that are there. We know some of the results, as mentioned, and they've been gone through. They've become political lines here and there. But there is truth to these things.

And I can tell you from the Grace Hospital point of view, the Grace Hospital had the longest wait times in the country. This isn't a political party that's saying—this is a national body that's looking at all of the wait times that are associated with hospitals. And last year was the longest wait times. It kind of improved this year to about fourth.

But I'm truly excited about making changes there, and the changes that are going on, and I know that part of this budget talks about a task force to look at wait times. I'm excited about that. I think the people in my area, if you have to go and wait—you know, I think Grace Hospital is over eight-hour wait time to get in there—they would be excited about that too. And there—no one is going to have all the answers to the health-care system. It's an aging population. There's going to be some challenges that we need to face. But, I think, we can make a difference with it, and so I'm excited about that.

I think there's also things in terms of the education. We know that some of the facts, when

you look at education, we've got some of—well, in fact, we have—we've finished last in terms of reading, writing and arithmetic. That's a part of that. And that's something that I think everyone, no matter what side of the House you're on, what political philosophy, we need to improve. We need to make some changes to it. And we truly think that some of our plan makes a big difference.

A part of that, of course, is really focusing on some of the core subjects—the literacy. Literacy is key. We've talked about our commitment to literacy through three—literacy is something—and this is something that the member from St. James over here has helped me understand about literacy, that it truly is the balance. It's kind of the foundation that you really need to work on. Once you're able to work on literacy, you're able to get to the math, you're able to get to the science. But you really need to get the literacy numbers up.

And another thing with education is that we're truly passionate about ensuring that people aren't just passed through the system, right, you're not just passed through the system. So I think focusing on these things—I'm excited about that. I know there's a new Minister of Education. He's excited to get going. It's an important process.

There's also things—an area that I'm involved in now, of course, with the child protection agency, being the Minister of Families. And I'm extremely excited about some of the process there. We know that we've got some of the longest—or the most amount of children that are in care.

We also know that, on average, we've seen an increase in poverty levels go up by over 16 per cent, compared to a national average about 9 per cent, just in the last five or six years alone. So dramatic improvements need to happen. A part of this, with the Families budget—I can tell you that what I was so excited about is that this budget really invests money in the most vulnerable people that need this work. There's dramatic improvements, I would say, enhancements in terms of the money that goes towards the Rent Assist program, ensuring people that—you know, you've got 75 per cent of the makeup of your market rent. That's something that can make a difference. And we're proud of the fact that this side of the House really pushed the government and I know in the last days they did implement the Rent Assist program. But that's something that we really think makes a difference for people.

There is dramatic increases, I think, important increases for housing that we talked about, and that's been upwards of \$46 million or 56 per cent increase in spending for housing which we think is important.

We also think that the child protection—that there's absolutely too many kids that are taken in protective custody, and what I think is really important is the early intervention of prevention policies that are part of that. We need to focus in on these areas to ensure that people are being reunited with their parents, which I think is extremely important. And that's why we're so excited about the protecting children act that I think you're going to hear more about in the coming days.

What this is—and if you look at what Justice Hughes had said in the Hughes inquiry, he talked about the importance of sharing information—service agencies, governments, everyone sharing information, law enforcement services—that truly is key for the growth, for the—to allow the children not just to stay in care, but—or rather to stay out of care, but for the care and nature of the children. So that's really a focus for our government.

We also have made substantial investments in community living and disability. There's upwards of \$49 million—an extra \$49 million have been allocated to this budget to ensure that wait times aren't out of control, and we're enhancing that. We're very proud of that; we think that it will make a big difference.

I mentioned improvements in employment and income insurance that's a part of it. I also meant in early childhood and learning and, of course, our—we truly think that our plan for child care is one of the best that we're going to have. We're committed to having great access and quality care for our children. On accord of that we've talked about the importance of home-based child care, of course, is something. We've talked about things, like, bring up the red tape, I guess, if you will, in terms of starting these facilities. We've talked about the importance of bursaries that are given to ECEs, you know, part of the school system. We've talked about partnerships in school systems to create more spaces, which we think is important.

So I truly think this budget is an important piece. It's an important step forward for our—not just for our province, but for the most vulnerable children that are out there.

In closing, I very much support—and I can tell you I—with the finance piece. I chaired Finance for

the City of Winnipeg for six budgets and this is a very well thought out budget, and this is something in the short period of time that we had, I think, there was some real care given in terms of the future direction. Sometimes in politics it's easy just to talk about the next year or the year after, the year after. But this is some long-term thinking that was a part of this. This was setting a course—setting a new course for our province that I think makes sense and it's a big part of it.

So, with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I very much am supportive of this budget. I hope that we'll have unanimous consent to this budget from all levels from all different parties because I think there is some important advancements not just for vulnerable youth in our province, but all citizens.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Speaker, allow me to begin in my comments on the budget with the most frequently brought up issues that I heard from my constituents in Burrows this past year and a half. I explain this to all the members for perspective. It is the reality of what is on the minds of Manitobans.

Here I go, and it's no particular order: Crime and safety: all Manitobans deserve to feel safe in our communities. Is that not true? Is it not true that safety is the No. 1 priority? If all Manitobans deserve it and it is the No. 1 priority, how come there is a significant backlog in the courts, and the former government allowed restorative justice programs like youth justice committees to be ineffective by not prioritizing, not funding and not measuring outcomes? Despite their proven effectiveness in reducing recidivism and saving money long term, it's obvious that community safety was not a priority in this budget or for this government.

The next topic I heard at the doors was improved health-care services. Manitobans deserve to have an understanding of how this government plans to lessen the wait times and keep doctors in the province. Manitobans deserve to have a dedicated stroke unit; dedicated stroke units literally save lives. Why are we falling behind in not facilitating one?

Our hospitals aren't perceived proudly when they truly should be. Canada has free health care, and provinces, in our case Manitoba, has to learn how to utilize it. You know how many times I hear people in the North End refer to the Seven Oaks hospital as the seven jokes hospital? This is sad. The Seven Oaks

hospital is a wonderful facility with very skilled health-care workers. The problem is the way in which the facility is functioning, yet the government has deemed no plan to change this. We need to focus on the real issues and allocate money towards them.

*(15:10)

Then there's education and access to post-secondary schooling. You know, the other day, on budget day, I was speaking to some grade 9 Sisler High School students here at the Legislative Building. I told them how our budget was being announced and then I asked them, if they could choose where to send the money, what would they pick?

The kids collaborated a little bit and then they told me that they would pay teachers more. To be honest, this was the first time I heard this specific request, but I found it interesting, because even these grade 9 students know that education is key. A good education is fundamental.

The government has committed to capital, but it is not enough. We need more classrooms. We need specialized classrooms and programs. We need better meal plans. Did you know, when I was in high school, it was cheaper to buy a poutine than it was to buy a salad?

We need to consider different forms of teaching; for example, perhaps less hardcover textbooks and more e-books. That way, you can spend some of the school budget on other things rather than constantly having outdated textbooks.

Post-secondary students also need cheaper tuition or better incentive. People are in much far too deep of debt, at too young of ages, all in hopes of finding a decent job that pays the bills after graduation.

The constituents of Burrows also frequently brought up the Provincial Nominee Program. I'm sure the House is starting to get sick of me bringing this issue up, but seeing how it is us Liberals that seem to be the only advocate for immigration, I will continue to fight for it.

The Provincial Nominee Program is crucial to our province. When every sixth door I knock on either knows someone or is part of the Provincial Nominee Program themselves, it means it is important.

I'm so, beyond words, dissatisfied with the lack of—or, rather, zero—mention of immigration from the

government. It was not mentioned in the Throne Speech. It was not mentioned in the mandate letters. It was confusingly placed under Education and Training. And, not surprisingly, no mention of it in the budget.

Resources need to be allocated for this program in order for it to continue functioning. I truly hope that the government starts taking the relevance of immigration seriously.

Then there is child poverty. There is another one—this is one—another one of those subjects where Manitobans deserve to have more detail.

Child care works towards reducing child poverty, and this government campaigned on finding new ways to increase daycare spaces, yet the budget only dedicated an additional \$6 million towards Early Learning and Child Care, when the wait-list is over 12,000 children.

The government says that they are going to shorten the wait times, but I ask how?

Just two more subjects before I get into responding to the budget directly.

Housing—I'm happy that housing has been discussed a fair amount here in the Chamber. The NDP invested so much money, so much time, resources, into housing. Yet many of these projects still remain incomplete and mired in controversy.

What is the government's plan to better deliver safe and adequate housing to those who need it most?

Lastly, infrastructure—now, for the sake of time, I'm only going to talk about the needs of infrastructure in Burrows, but we all know that there are huge projects across Manitoba that need to be addressed, fixed up, audited and built.

When I was knocking on doors, the constituents of Burrows were concerned with the streets such as Mountain, Machray, Artillery. They were also concerned with sidewalks, especially in front of schools, bus stops and nearby crosswalks.

We need to keep it simple. We need to fix our roads and our sidewalks before starting new projects that haven't already been put forth into motion.

Now that I've listed the issues—I heard face to face from the people who live in Burrows, ask yourself, what more could the government have done to have a positive impact?

I explain this to all the members for a perspective. And, like I said, it is the reality of what is on the minds of Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since explaining what I know the people of Burrows would want to have in the budget, I would now like to express some thoughts in response to the budget directly.

Tuesday's budget was not a huge surprise as to what I had expected. With that said, I didn't expect the government to have taken money away from seniors by raising the school tax rebate threshold; I expected quite the opposite.

Allow me to elaborate. I believed that we would've fought for seniors on low income. This is my third or fourth time, and it won't be my last, mentioning the dire need for free ambulance services for seniors on low income. It is downright wrong for seniors to be fearful of calling an ambulance when they get hurt because of financial reasoning and factors.

Let me tell you an example I had when I was knocking on doors in this past election. There was one house that I walked to the back on and an elderly woman let me in. She explained to me how just a few months back she tripped out of her house and fell. Her neighbour called her an ambulance. She went to the hospital, had herself checked out and returned home the same day. With just a few short weeks later, she received a bill of \$550. This woman is on a fixed income. How is this fair? What is she supposed to do?

I would also like to make note of the fact that ambulance fees were supposed to be cut by 50 per cent in the first year, yet it appears to have only been cut by 5 per cent.

Moving on, the idea of cheaper prescription medication also needs to be discussed. Seniors are having to choose between eating healthy, paying rent and taking their prescribed medications. Did you know that 9.6 per cent of seniors needing prescribed medication do not take it because of the affordability?

Think about the long-term facts for a moment. If seniors have cheaper prescription medication, they are less likely to get severely sick and have physical accidents. Cheaper prescription medication would mean cheaper health care here in Manitoba. Allow me to give you an example: A senior who has bad vertigo needs prescribed amarus [*phonetic*]. If this senior cannot afford it, they will likely take a tumble

which will lead to ambulance fees, it will lead to hospital fees, bed fees, beds being used up. It will lead to further medication fees, and even the possibility of broken hips and knees.

This government needs to be considerate of seniors, and there are many, many ways this can be done, whether that's through the cutting ambulance fees, lower prescription drug costs and other ideas, like Winnipeg Transit during non-peak hours for low-income seniors being free.

Let me tell you what else is missing from the new budget—the allocation of money towards youth and young adults. What happened to the campaign promise of government helping students in post-secondary? During the campaign the Conservative Party said they would increase the scholarship and bursaries, but with minimal increase in the budget, post-secondary education is still out of reach for too many students here in Manitoba.

My first question in this House was regarding the strong need for youth justice committees. During question period the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) said that she would hear me out, and one of her colleagues even told me that they wanted to work with me. Youth deserve to have every opportunity possible, even if they make a mistake. I don't believe in being tough on crime; I believe in being smart on crime. If a youth commits a crime but is truly remorseful and is completely abiding to the Province to pay back their dues, whether that be through community services or financial penalties, they should be given the benefit of a doubt. Youth justice committees would permit for this.

Youth justice committees, I would also argue, would be another way to save money in the near future—less court fees and less hardening of criminals likely to be incarcerated. The committee would be community-based so it would also be beneficial for these communities. It would bring the community together. It would help them feel safer and it would encourage communities to be actively involved in our justice system.

You know, above all else in this House, I believe in the betterment of Manitobans. Because of that I will continue to give the governing party the benefit of the doubt, but myself, along with many others on this side of the House, we do have every reason to be skeptical.

During the election the Conservatives made many promises about balancing the budget within

their first four years. Now, I can appreciate how hard that would be, but they shouldn't have said it if they weren't able to follow through on it.

My colleague the MLA from River Heights was right when he said yesterday that the Conservative government had sufficient time to prepare for this, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) was the Finance critic for the past three years, so he should have had a better understanding and a plan for this budget.

With this I am anxious to fight hard for the constituents of Burrows and all Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): It's my first opportunity to be up here speaking, so I'd like to congratulate both yourself and Madam Speaker on your new roles in the House as Speaker and Deputy Speaker. I know both of you will do a great job and your decisions will be fair to everyone in this Chamber.

It's an honour to be back in this Chamber for the 41st Session of the Manitoba Legislature. We can all be extremely proud of being here in this Chamber to represent Manitobans. I want to thank the clerks, the Chamber staff and pages for all the hard work they do to keep this Chamber functioning. The more time I spend here, the more I appreciate the work that they do.

* (15:20)

There are a lot of new faces in this Chamber, mostly from our side of the House. Even though I'm sitting on this side, I consider myself our side of the House, the government side of the House, the new government. I would like to welcome them, along with all of my colleagues that were re-elected from both sides of the House. I would also like to thank all the candidates that ran but were not successful. It takes a lot just to enter a race for public office, and I commend them for that.

Being an MLA takes a lot of commitment and dedication, but the reward of helping Manitobans makes it all worthwhile. I would like to invite the members opposite to work with us to make Manitoba a better province, a province that our children, grandchildren will be proud to call home.

La Verendrye has always been home for me, so I feel it is a great constituency to call home. Some of my colleagues may feel that their constituency is the best one in the province, but I would have to disagree

with them. After all, just look at the number of Manitobans that call La Verendrye home on weekends. La Verendrye is a very diverse riding, with agriculture, forestry and small business, serving as a bedroom community to Winnipeg, cottage country for a lot of Manitobans with the Whiteshell Provincial Park, Lake of the Woods and a lot of provincial forest for other recreational needs. It also has great people from many different ethnic backgrounds, a lot of history that has been part of making Manitoba what it is today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to thank all the volunteers that worked on campaign La Verendrye in this last election. There are far too many for me to mention all their names, but I will mention the key ones: my campaign manager, Michael Batiluk; office manager, Chantal Fontaine; and chief financial officer, Bill Osachuk. Finally, I would like to thank my family: my wife Gwen; our four sons—Christopher and his wife Melissa; Justin; Tyson and Lisa; Brandyn and Kennedy—and our grandsons, Nash and Briggs. I would like to thank them for all the support and the help they gave me, especially with door knocking. In other ridings, not even my own, but, in the city, they came along, and they were more than willing to help me door knock and help other candidates out, which, to me, I think that's fantastic. Without their blessing, it would not be possible for me to be here today. So I want to thank them, because it does take a lot from a family when an MLA is always in the city and doesn't spend as much time at home as possible.

Deputy Speaker, Budget 2016—it is a privilege to be here today speaking on Budget 2016. This is the fifth budget that I've been present to be part of, in this Legislature, since I've been an MLA. But it is the first one that I can support. It is the first budget that demonstrates a commitment to getting Manitoba back on a responsible fiscal track. While campaigning, there was something I heard loud and clear: Manitobans were tired of a tax-and-spend government. They were tired of a government that could not bring their spending under control. They were concerned about the future of their children, their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren. Who is going to pay for the reckless spending of the NDP?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as parents, we're all guilty of wanting a better future for our children. Our parents were guilty of wanting a better life for us. They worked hard to give us the tools we needed to be successful in life. It is not fair for future

generations to be saddled with such a debt load that it will hamper their ability to achieve their dreams or even to have some of the services that we enjoy today. To ensure the protection of front-line services, now and into the future, we must correct the course and move our province back towards balance.

This is extremely important for our future generations. We all have kids; we all have grandchildren. And it is something that we really need to work together to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government's first budget will set a course for Manitoba, a new course that will lead to lower taxes, better services, and a strong economy.

I would like to thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) for all the hard work he has done in the short time he had to do it. He was able to bring forward a budget in barely a month. The NDP would not bring forward a budget before the last election. We now know why. It would have been all bad news for Manitobans. Instead, they chose to try and fool everyone by putting out inaccurate numbers. The current projection of a \$1.012-billion deficit is the largest in our province's history, adding to an already high debt load.

Manitobans' debt is far too high, and Manitobans are tired of the reckless spending of this NDP—of the ex-NDP government. They expressed their frustration on April 19th and voted in a new government. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is an old saying in business that the customer is always right. Well, in politics I think the saying is it's the voter that's always right, and they did a—excellent job in this last election choosing a new government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've only been in session for two weeks. We've already had a Throne Speech to tell Manitobans our plans for this great province. Now we have released a budget. Our goal is to make Manitoba the most improved province in this country. Manitoba's had 17 years of an administration that spent beyond its means resulting in the accumulated debt and ever-increasing taxes. Every bit of debt out there will have to be paid, and that's just another form of tax that's going to have to eventually be paid.

Manitobans understand finance and they knew that Manitoba was on the wrong path with the NDP. Even some of their own members knew this and tried to revolt and dump their leader. That didn't work, and it cost an election.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the last number of years Manitoba has enjoyed some economic growth, record transfer payments from the federal government, and the biggest advantage of all, low interest rates. With these advantages there's no reason for Manitoba to be facing such a high debt. Today we pay around \$900 million just to service this province's debt. We all know how much more could be provided for Manitobans with \$900 million, whether it be in infrastructure, education or health care.

I believe that this budget is one that will begin turning Manitoba in the right direction. As a new government we know that there are many challenges facing us. We know that there's a lot of hard work ahead. With the team we have under the leadership of our new Premier (Mr. Pallister) we will make Manitoba the most improved province.

This budget has much to offer Manitobans. Budget 2016 has no new tax hikes and gives Manitoba–Manitobans a permanent tax break that will keep up with cost of living by ending bracket creep and indexing income tax brackets at the rate of inflation. Budget 2016 will not draw from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which the previous government was known to do on quite a few occasions.

On this side of the House we know how important economic growth is. We will appoint members of the Premier's Enterprise Team creating an advisory panel of top business leaders who will work with our new government to create new jobs and economic growth in our province.

We all know that education is key for future success of a province, this province. A 0.4 per cent increase in funding for education and training over the current 2015-2016 projection, including a 2.55 per cent increase in funding for schools, operating increases of 2.5 per cent and 2 per cent respectively for universities and colleges. Budget 2016 provides a 6.2 increase in funding for the Department of Families over the current 2015-16 projection.

*(15:30)

Enhance the Rent Assist program—75 per cent median market rent for low-income Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, health care is a topic that is front and centre with all Manitobans. Hospital wait-times are some of the worst in Canada. We will appoint a wait-time task force that will 'consult'—consult front-line health-care workers, provided—

provides providers to develop a plan to reduce waits in our health-care system. Our government has committed to reducing ambulances in—ambulance fees, by half, during the mandate.

Manitoba faces a shortage of personal-care-home beds. We're developing a funding model to fast-track the construction of those beds in partnership with non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, community leaders, in all regions of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, yesterday, during debate, members opposite made comments that the debt and deficit that they had created was now a problem for our government. Well, we're not afraid of the challenge, but I would like to remind the members who made those comments that the debt they are leaving is not just our debt. It is the debt of all Manitobans. It is the debt of their children, their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren. So, therefore, what they're doing—they should not be extremely proud of that when they sit here and heckle about things like that, because, unless they're extremely proud of their—of—[interjection] They should be telling the truth; you're right. Since the members opposite were the ones that created this mess we're in, and, for the good of all Manitobans, I would ask them to support this budget.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So, Deputy Speaker, I'm going to be talking today about the budget and giving my response. And I'm really happy to see both the minister for indigenous and municipal affairs and the minister for status of women and the Minister for Families in the House today, as I give my response to the budget.

My colleagues, on this side, have given a myriad of different reasons in respect of why we are not supporting Budget 2016. I can go through all of that, but I know that everybody's been listening to my colleagues and have heard some of those things. I actually just want to concentrate my response in respect of our motion number (h), which is the failure to commit resources necessary to address the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In particular, I want to concentrate my response in respect of the omission, whether strategically and methodically or just haphazardly, of any mention of MMIWG, missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and their families. So not only is there no mention of that in the budget,

there's no mention of it in the Throne Speech nor was there any mention of it in the mandate letters.

So we know that today is the year anniversary in respect of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. One of those calls to action, as I'm sure that the members of this House know, was the call to action in supporting a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

I want to give this House, because I'm pretty sure that it's never been shared and discussed in this House before, the history on how we got to the call for a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, which was actually just this past December. The Liberal government announced that it would be establishing a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

And why I think it's really important to voice that and share that history with this House is because that history didn't just develop in the last year or two years. In fact, that long journey is 30 years in the making and specifically is borne off of the blood, sweat and tears of families who have had their loved ones missing or murdered. And their courage and their strength and their resiliency and their unconditional love for their loved one, which has literally bought us to this moment and to this moment where I sit in the House to bring this to everybody's attention.

I want to preface that what I say today in my response, I say in the most respectful, loving way. I know that we're at different opposites of the House, but what I share today, I hope that it will pierce people's soul and their spirit and their hearts so that we will put into action things that are critical for the most vulnerable of Manitoba.

I share with this House that for the last 30 years, families who have had daughters missing, sisters murdered, aunts murdered, mothers murdered, grandmothers murdered—in fact, what I'll share with this House is that Manitoba has one of the oldest cases of a grandmother, who was actually from my reserve, who was raped; she was raped, she was 69 years old, she was raped and she was murdered. And it's these women's families that for many years, when nobody was listening, went to policing institutions across this country, from coast, to coast, to coast, and asked for some semblance of justice or some semblance of resources to be applied for their cases.

Now, I'm not sure if people understand what that means for indigenous people. Indigenous people in this country have the very tragic consequence of not trusting policing institutions across this country. Most people will understand that actually the RCMP were actually established to actually thwart indigenous people's freedom and movement within Canada, and actually were established—if you understand history, you'll know that the RCMP were established to actually help western settlement as we went across Canada. But that came at the detriment of our—of my own people.

We also know that the RCMP were implicit in respect of taking children, again, as young as four and five from communities, from parents, from grandmothers. I'm not sure if everybody understands that the history of our country is that if you were a parent or if you were a grandparent, you literally had no control over your lives and your children's lives, that you could not say no to an RCMP officer who came into your community, often on a train or a plane, to take your children. And I ask people in this House to put yourself in those positions and just for imagine—a moment, imagine your children being taken away from you.

So, when I say to you that families across the country, you know, every month or every week or year after year after year went to policing institutions across this country demanding justice for their loved ones, for their daughters, what that means is that that was a very courageous act in a very foreign and intimidating environment. And yet people did that, families did that, week after week, year after year, month after month.

Indigenous women have played a fundamental role in bringing us to where we are in respect of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, because it was actually indigenous women that stood with families demanding justice, having walks across this country, having vigils across this country, having feasts and ceremonies, going to meetings with policing institutions and demanding that justice.

* (15:40)

It was families, and if we can look at BC, for instance, it was families that in the midst of what community and families knew that something was going—that women were going missing. They would juxtapose the narrative that, oh, no, she's on a drunk or she doesn't want to be found. She just needs a break from her kids. It was families that kept saying that's not true; there is something going on here.

I think that it's extremely important for people to realize in this House that families have suffered on this journey and have manifested that trauma and that suffering in a myriad of different ways. For some people it's manifested in addictions. In some people it's manifested in committing suicide. In some people, on the other spectrum, it is just a profound sense of agency that has propelled families to be in the media everyday, to be walking everyday, to be fasting everyday, all of these things that I previously mentioned.

You know, I want to mention some of our Manitoba families here. I work with a phenomenal amount of families and I've been—personally been working on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls for about 18 years. And I've been so blessed to work with some of the most courageous people I've ever met in my life, and that this House would do well to gain lessons from as well.

I work with a mom, her name is Brenda Osborne. Her daughter, Claudette Osborne, has been missing this summer for eight years. Claudette, as a consequence of the residential schools and all of this colonial history, was traumatized and suffered, and her trauma manifested itself in addictions and being exploited and sexually exploited on the streets. Claudette had just given birth to her daughter, Precious, and—two weeks previous to her going missing. I watched Patience—actually, Patience and Isiah, I watched them just grow up without their mom. And Brenda Osborne walks every single year from Norway House all the way to Winnipeg, meeting up with the No Stone Unturned concert.

No Stone Unturned concert is a concert that Bernadette Smith, the sister to Claudette Osborne, started organizing about seven years ago. And now it's families that meet all along that path, and when you see them come into The Forks—the No Stone Unturned concert is held at the Oodena every year. This year it will be held August 21st. I invite everybody to come out there. When you see families come in and they're tired and they're dirty and they're sweaty and they're in pain, that is the manifestation of their love: to bring attention for their daughter, to bring attention for all missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

I also want to share another story. I work with the Solomon Osborne family. Darlene Osborne is actually the sister to Eric Robinson. She is the grandmother to Felicia Solomon Osborne. Felicia

Solomon Osborne went missing in July of 2003; she was 16 years old. When she went missing, her family travelled from Norway House, everybody coalesced down here in the city and searched and searched and searched on their own time alone with community support. And in July of—July 20th, Felicia's body parts washed ashore of the Red River. Matilda, her mom, got a arm and a leg back from her 16-year-old daughter. Eleven years later, Tina Fontaine's body would be found almost in that exact same spot. Darlene Osborne and Matilda, Felicia's mom, are very active, and, in fact, I remember having many vigils and memorials actually at the site where Felicia's body parts washed ashore. And they have continuously brought attention to the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Now imagine for a second to continuously do that. We ask families, and they take on that role and responsibility for themselves to constantly talk about their loved one, but imagine the trauma that gets retriggered.

Even myself, it is always so spiritually and emotionally difficult to relay these stories to people because it is the lives and the journeys and the narratives of people that I know and love.

So I want it to be explicitly clear that where we are today is from the work of some of these few families that I've shared with you, and there are a myriad of different stories, and, in fact, I'll share one more story.

I will share some of the work that we've done and why the appointment of a special adviser on indigenous women's issues is so important and why it is so important to ensure that this government is committed to the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and to carry on the work that we've done that I'm extremely proud of.

One of the things that we just did this past February was we hosted the second National Round Table on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The first one was held in Ottawa. That first meeting was the first time ever that Canada, the provinces, the territories and families sat in the same room to discuss this issue; 30 years in the making to be able to have those two days of meetings.

We, the former government, offered to host it this year, and so just this past February we had premiers and ministers and families from across the country and national Aboriginal organizational leadership as well. Every event that I've put on for

families, I always have a memorial table. And, in fact, I've over the years collected photos, and photos have been gifted to me from families. And so they—as soon as my office is painted, they'll be in my office. You're more than welcome to come and see them.

When, on that third night, this mom from BC came up to me and she said, well, Nahanni, she said, I have to leave. And she says, but my daughter's photo is on your memorial table. And I said, okay, well, I can go and get it for you. She says—well, she says, I'd really like to gift it to you. And I said—oh, I said, thank you. I said, I'll honour that. And those photos travel with me everywhere. I said, I want you to know that I will always take your daughter's story with me where I go. I said, but can you tell me what your daughter looks like? And she says, oh, well, she looks like this. And she was wearing a T-shirt, but I was confused as I was looking at the T-shirt because I was thinking—I said, well, is this when your daughter was young? And she says, no. She says, my daughter was six years old; she was raped and she was stabbed to death. So these are the families that we're talking about.

I also want to take a minute—and why I'm concentrating my response on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls is because for years families have also fought to include transgendered or two-spirited women in the discussion on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. And it just so happens that today, this morning, the—one of the only, actually, cases to date so far from Project Devote, which I'm sure everybody would know what that is; it's a partnership between the RCMP and the WPS that is specifically looking at files of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. It is the only file that's actually been concluded and have been charges laid against an individual. That individual, Theodore Herntier, was actually being sentenced this morning for the murder of Divas Belanger, a transgendered woman, who is extraordinarily loved by her family.

* (15:50)

I work with her cousin, who is considered an MMIWG family, Alaya McIvor—and Alaya McIvor is so active in the community and, actually, was so active on my campaign, helping me. But I wanted to bring that today, to everybody's attention, that even today as we meet, there's an individual getting sentenced in the horrible, horrible murder of Divas Boulanger, who her family attends every single

memorial, every single vigil and all of the events that take place across the country, just ensuring that transgendered women are including in this narrative.

I want to just discuss a little bit about the work that our former government did. I want to note that when I was appointed, in November of 2010, as the special adviser on indigenous women's issues with a particular focus on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, up until Premier Notley's government, I was the only special adviser across the country. And, in fact, other provinces and territories have started to emulate that, including Premier Notley's government.

One of the things that I was advised, when I was first appointed, was we want Manitoba to have a provincial strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Within a couple of weeks, I had developed a strategy, in partnership, with MMIWG families and our community stakeholders. Nothing that I did was ever done in isolation of those voices and those recommendations and those directions.

Some of the things that we've done—just before the election, we had actually gotten up to phase 4 of our provincial strategy, which I will also point out—holy heck, oh, includes the monument and the Wiping Away the Tears gatherings, which are so important for families, to be able to meet every single year together to look at—to be able to network with one another and to be able to have their supports for one another.

So, again, I ask this House and I ask my colleagues across the way that have those ministerial positions to please, please consider what I'm saying.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Good afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker and fellow members of the Legislative Assembly.

I stand in the House today to acknowledge the new Progressive Conservative government's commitment to serve all Manitobans. The May 31st budget presents a great first step forward to a mandate given on April 19th by the people of Manitoba, a mandate that was essentially written by the people through a series of public policy surveys, meetings and ongoing communication. The honourable First Minister and the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) put forward a responsible and strategic fiscal plan that addresses many priorities

and provides better value and service across the province.

As a government, we also must ensure Manitoba grows economically, in a sound and efficient manner, which I truly believe we are now out of the starting gate to do. Many members of the Legislative Assembly as well as the public know this is not an easy task, and there will be challenges left by the previous administration.

We also know the progressive government—the Progressive Conservative government is ready to face these challenges to correct Manitoba's path to provide a better future for everyone. Before the budget, and with less than 100 days in office, our government has already taken steps towards growth and providing better management and government, including meeting with the western premiers about the New West Partnership Trade Agreement and building relationships with our prairie neighbours to prosper at home, openly supporting the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement to open Manitoba businesses to the Asia-Pacific region, which will provide benefits from abroad, strategic—oh, sorry, strategically combining infrastructure departments to better serve the need of co-ordinated and strategic infrastructure strategy, which now includes the merging of the East Side Road Authority with the Department of Infrastructure; and proposing that by-elections are held within 180 days of a vacant seat so communities are not left without an elected voice in the Manitoba legislative.

These steps are only the start to a better Manitoba. With a generation of children and grandchildren behind us who will grow to inherit our actions, we are committed to ensuring they have a future built on innovation, investment and stability.

For far too long, we have seen the financial situation of Manitoba crumble. We have seen this through the previous administration's many examples of trying to solve issues with a bank full—with a bank book full of blank cheques.

I'm proud to stand here today and commit to working hard at the core on today's issues and to finding a smarter way to run government and better stewardship of taxpayer money.

I support this budget and believe it will continue to strengthen our province. Some of my personal highlights from Tuesday's budget include how we will provide tax relief for all Manitobans through indexing tax brackets based on inflation, which will

remove 2,770 low-income earners from the tax rolls; ensure the front lines of government are protected for Manitobans, especially families in need, which includes a 6.2 per cent increase to the Department of Families which will allow us to take a proactive approach versus a reactive one; establish a duty-to-consult framework for respectful and productive consultations with indigenous communities—having grown up in a Metis home, I personally understand the importance of these relationships; prioritize flood protection efforts to keep communities safe—growing up, I have also experienced many floods while living in a flood-prone community; provide over \$1.8 billion to our infrastructure, which is guaranteed and will enable better civic and business planning.

Although these are only a few of the commitments—although these are only a few of our commitments, as we move forward over the next year, we are—they are great examples of a government who will work harder for the people.

The contribution of—the combination of the economy, health care and social services, strategic planning and giving people more benefits through services and their own financial situations will ensure a better future for all.

I am part of an amazing team of qualified members in this House, where we bring an array of experiences, skill sets and leadership qualities. And each one of us committed to work tirelessly and passionate for all people.

I also want to commend the team that worked on this budget. It's only been a short time to prepare, not knowing if there were any surprises left from the previous administration.

Today I would also like to take this opportunity to address the many people from my constituency, the Progressive Conservative team and my family and friends. Without them, I would not have the privilege to stand before you.

Many of you know—who know me, know that I entered this race as Bob, an average guy who did average things. But they also know that we have all seen more than enough failures in our past government, one of which was the first-hand dysfunction of the social services system. There were so many in fact, I personally felt I must do something better for Manitoba and the future generations that will be affected by today's decisions.

I reaffirm today that I will continue to be the average guy who works for the people and on the issues that make my constituency and Manitoba a proud, prosperous, vibrant province.

* (16:00)

Leading up to the April 19th election, I set out to gain wisdom from my fellow neighbours, listen to their needs and collect their input. During this time, I was also committed to staying on the front lines, not only as a leader to my team but also a foster parent.

But as—some examples of the Dawson Trail concerns range from flooding of land to Hydro project lands, drainage and crumbling or nonexistent infrastructure in our community. This experience has left me what—much wiser to the concerns and needs of my constituency. It has also made me more determined to carry out my duties as an MLA.

I would like to thank my family and friends. Their love and support is what made the long days great days. My beautiful wife of 19 years, who's up in the gallery today, for standing behind me and supporting me in my various ambitious plans. Her dedication to the adventure we embarked on and her guidance to my campaign team and myself was truly invaluable. I may not always appear to listen to her, but, without a doubt, this wouldn't have happened without her love and support. I've taken on many things where she has had to share my time with others, but always know I hold a special place for her in my heart.

Also, a special thank you to my five children: Seth, Zayne, Eden, Navailynn and Ahmaris, the next generation of Manitobans. They brought a genuine excitement and ambition, which kept the experience positive and light. Having them involved made every obstacle worth it and every triumph that much better. Their willingness to come out and knock on doors was greatly appreciated, even on days where it was a bit more difficult and required special treats such as ice cream to get them out at the end of the day.

One day, all our children will be able to cast a ballot, and I truly believe that early involvement will only strengthen our democratic system and responsibility. I was blessed to have many experienced mentors as MLAs themselves, including the member from Steinbach, Portage la Prairie, Lakeside, Lac du Bonnet and Emerson. Their time, advice and encouragement went a long way in making sure we made progress every day. Jenn Plett, from Landmark, was very instrumental—was a very

instrumental member of my team. Her dedication and expertise helped drive a successful and organized campaign. Her positive and energetic approach kept the campaign constantly going.

My never-ending gratitude goes out to the support of men and women who dressed in layers, walked the long driveways and introduced Bob to Dawson Trail. These people answered calls for assistance and were there every day, no matter the hour, to help. Ted Schellenberg, Fred—Frank Derksen, Jim Teliglow, Patrick Dunlop, Ian Pheiffer, Kent Wayne Koop and Jesse Dyck: their dedication and consistency was never ending. I am forever indebted.

I must also thank my sister-in-law, Robyn, who graciously allowed her husband Jesse to help and giving him a night off from chasing their twin boys—twin three-year-old boys. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my grandmother, Lucia Robert. She was the rock in my life growing up; through the times when the world wasn't right, she was there every time I tried running from it.

My grandfather, Armand Lagassé, for teaching me strong worth ethic. If something wasn't right the first time, you go back and fix it.

My father, Louis Lagassé, who gave all he could for his children, including working very long hours and weekends to provide for us, and my mother, Diane Lagassé, who lost more than enough sleep—sleepless nights and worry over me.

Between my thanks and gratitude, it comes, with needing to say, it hasn't always been an easy journey. At only 10 days old, I was adopted into a loving French-Canadian-Metis home. As I grew up, I was diagnosed with ADHD, which makes for some trying and difficult times in the school system, which wasn't prepared for a child like me. I can remember the school keeping me back from a field trip to this very same building that I now work in.

In kindergarten, it was my first fight, and I had to what seemed to be an end—what seemed to be endless hours in the hallway and principal's office. By grade 3, a teacher felt it necessary to tell me how I would never amount to anything. It wasn't until grade 5, where I remember the first teacher, Rosanne Sylvester, who took the time and patience to believe in me and my abilities. I only wish she could have been here today to see that her faith in me was not lost.

Eventually, I entered private school and graduated in St. Norbert, and continued on to bible school with the intentions of becoming a youth pastor. In 2012, my family and I moved out of Landmark—moved to Landmark, Manitoba, where we still live and raise our children. Being from a small town, I have developed close relationships with my neighbours from both our town and surrounding communities.

The Dawson Trail constituency was created in 2008 and serves approximately 19,530 residents. I'm proud to say that I'm the first elected Progressive Conservative MLA to represent the riding. Although it is a fairly new riding, there is a lot of history in Dawson Trail. The Dawson Trail itself, also referred to as the Forgotten Trail, was a significant piece of Canadian history. It was named after Simon J. Dawson who was a surveyor on the expedition that led to the 1868 construction of a road that would eventually unite the country from east to west.

The trail runs along the north side of the Seine River from Winnipeg through Prairie Grove and towards Lorette to Ste. Anne and east through Richer. Richer is also home to the Dawson Trail Museum. Another museum to note in the Dawson Trail constituency is Philip's Magical Paradise, the only museum of magic and illusion in western Canada. The magic museum is a tribute to Philip Hornan, a 15-year-old boy who passed away from cancer. His last request was for his family to make a special room for all to share what he enjoyed most, magic. The Hornans have done this, and open the museum on weekends from June to September, and by appointment and chance during the weekdays to share Philip's passion. Magicians from around the world have donated many items to the collection, and each holds a magical story to tell.

Beyond the history, we also hold many great annual events in our community. From the Richer Roughstock Rodeo in July to the Dawson Trail Days in September, there are always things to do for families.

I would like to finish by saying how privileged and honoured I feel to be an elected member of this House. The experience has left me humble but ambitious to work hard for all Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly and guests, thank you for the opportunity to stand here before you today.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): First of all, let me start off by taking a closer look at the way that the budget of 2016 has been prepared.

We were told that there were consultations that were done, and of course we were just wondering where those consultations were made. The consultations that have been referred to during those answers on question period have always been, well, vague, ambiguous, speculative, illusory, shadowy.

* (16:10)

And it's amazing how, in the process of preparing a budget, the budget itself, when it was presented, mirrored some of the best things that the NDP government has proposed.

And there were some accounting techniques that were done in order to promote the idea that the deficit is over \$1 billion. And it is something that really bothers the minds of those who are not accountants. I am not really good at numbers. That's why I became a lawyer. And my difficulties stem from the numbers that were put in where we were told that there were sufficient numbers of Manitobans who will be taken off the tax rolls.

And when we crunched the numbers, with the help of those who know numbers, and some calculators, it appears that the benefit will be \$10, not per month, not per day, but per year. Ten dollars is something that we spend, say, two lattes at Starbucks. And that's per year, annually. So, in 2017, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) gallantly and generously gave \$10 for each and every one of those Manitobans that they said will benefit.

It is an illusion which is quite good. Like most magicians, it is the sleight of hand that usually gets you. It is the sleight of hand that usually hides the agenda. It is the sleight of hand, and mirrors, that usually try to deceive you.

And I am aghast, amazed, surprised, that the Minister of Finance says that he's doing something different. He calls the budget Correcting the Course. I don't know if he was correcting the course for Manitoba or just for his friends.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And the friendship that started when MTS was sold in 1987, and the effects of the sale, not really the services yet, but the profits that were made by friends of the Conservatives at that time—they made tons of money.

Well, maybe, I'm just envious. Maybe I should—I would have made the same profit if I were there, if I had the inside information, if I had the courage and the thick skin that goes with parading most of the voluntary sales of shares by using the social insurance numbers of high school students. It was fraud and it was bad.

Now, let us see what the budget of 2016 really does, or what does it not do. The first budget of this Conservative government does not provide the necessary supports to families, nor to seniors, students, women and low-income Manitobans. There was not—there was no mention of minimum wage.

The minimum wage—well, let me tell you a story about minimum wage. When I first came to this country in 1980, the minimum wage then was \$3.15. And I was offered a job as a tire retreader at Highway 101 near Main Street. But it was for \$4.50. I figured, \$4.50, it was good enough.

And I was making good money as far as I was concerned, \$4.50 per hour. And it used to be, well, enough to pay the rent when I was still residing at 1180 Ingersoll, renting there, right at the constituency of our friend, the MLA for Minto. We lived right across from the constituency office of Stanley Knowles, and the office of Stanley Knowles was right there where the Salisbury House now is.

And it's amazing that in the same year that we arrived in Canada, I was offered to become a member of the New Democratic Party. And I chose to become one not because I understood what it meant to me. But then I realized that the interests of the poor, the newly arrived and those who need government help the most intersect with the principles and ideals of the New Democratic Party. And the way that I have approached my politics is that I have had unwavering loyalty to the principles of social democratic principles and dogma, which means, as far as I'm concerned, government should be able to help whenever they are needed, wherever they are needed, whoever needs it. Government needs to put its resources in order that the poorest of the poor and the lowliest of the low will not suffer longer than what is needed or humane.

And the way that I see the budget of 2016 is that it does not lift everybody. It only lifts the friends and maybe the relatives of those 1 per cent, leaving the 99 per cent behind. And it pains me a lot. It pains me a lot, it hurts me a lot, that in this day and age we still cannot think about the bigger picture of our society as a whole. Our society, that's the Canadian

society, is supposed to take care of each other. We know what it is to share. We know what it is to be there to help each other. We saw that at the Fort McMurray firestorm. They went through a disaster, losing their homes, having had to evacuate, and Canadians from all walks of life and from all political stripes came to help.

* (16:20)

And, during the disaster of 1997, the flood that came here from the south, my family and I, because we were not, well, threatened by the waters because we lived somewhere safe, we helped in the sandbagging and we helped in saving some of our friends that we never knew we had, some from Petersfield, some from Selkirk, some from Turnbull Drive, and the way that I see it is that Manitobans help each other always. They do not pick and choose who to help.

This budget does not do that. It has failed to be helpful to everyone. I'll give you an example. Leaving out and not mentioning the Truth and Reconciliation report is not good. Leaving out minimum wage is not good. Telling people that they should fend for themselves is not good. When you cut \$44 million from the Seniors' School Tax Rebate, even after promising that it will be there for them during the election campaign and then suddenly changing their mind is not good.

And there is a message—there are code words that have been used all along in this budget. We are told that this is an open and transparent budget which will signal the way that this government of the Conservatives will be conducting themselves. How can we say that it's open and transparent when even the fiscal audit is confidential once it's done? The report will be top secret as if it was some kind of a military maneuver. And we are at that point in our lives where the reality strikes us all that when Manitobans voted for change, in less than 30 days they found this is not the change that they wanted.

And I'm amazed at the temerity and the courage of the minister—the junior minister for Finance, who happens to be the Minister for Crown Services, to dissolve the board of directors of MPI and Liquor & Lotteries and Hydro and fishery board and replace them wholesale with their own people and on the next day claim that it will be free from political interference.

How can you even justify taking out some of the best people that have been appointed to those boards

and say that there will be no political interference? It is not good.

Now, let me tell you something about my background. I come from a very close family, and as such we're used to having only enough—enough food, enough shelter and enough clothing. I was the eldest of six, and my mom and dad used to tell me that your God will always protect you. Your God will always be there. And I believe that. And up to now, I believe that.

And, if this is the kind of government, during the next four years, I hope, that will not lift everybody together as a society and leave some people behind, God help us.

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I rise today, such a privilege and an honour to be the new PC MLA for Kildonan.

As we were going along the campaign trail, I'm remiss if I do not mention my predecessor, Dave Chomiak, who served the people of Kildonan since 1990, although some of my volunteers were born and lived while he was MLA. So certainly a man of the community. And I wish him all the best with his family as he moves on to his next stage in life. And certainly we were—*[interjection]*—hear, hear; thank you so much, yes—every time we would see each other on the campaign trail, always a kind word. We'd say, hey, it's raining today, Dave. Yes, it is, yes. And it was great that we were kind of an island of calm in the sea of the chaos of the campaign.

I also must say, as a history student, I would be remiss without mentioning that, similar to a few of my other rookie colleagues, never before has there been a Progressive Conservative MLA in the northwest of Winnipeg, north of the tracks, west of the river. And it is a privilege to be able to represent a new way of, representing the people that is, a new way of looking at the problems that we face in the North End, problems that certainly are sometimes unique to the rest of Winnipeg.

So, and in Kildonan, there have been Conservatives for many, many years, many Progressive Conservatives who have worked tirelessly—people like my good friend, Joey Saindon—Emile, as his first name, legally—who has worked tirelessly. He's lived in every corner of Kildonan and smiles all the way. People like Maxine Diamond, who grew up on the street I now live on and has worked in the association there for quite some time, as she would say, her entire life; people like Rick

Henkewich, who everyone knows in Kildonan, as I go around, hey, Rick from football or from lacrosse to everything—as it turns out, when I played lacrosse as a young lad, he was the commissioner at the time, so small, small worlds; people like Carole Urias, who knew my family, and I bumped into her and she took a lawn sign, helped us out campaigning. Then my parents walked in, oh, Carole, how are you. It's the smallest worlds we live in. People like Fred Odger, who, for 70 years, has never taken a lawn sign; he has never openly said he'd vote for anyone, and I knocked on Fred's door, rainy day, and he said, Nic, yes, I like you, I'm voting for you, took three lawn signs and he worked with us every second day; people like Garry Frankel, who came to my first fundraiser, I mention, I go, do you know John Frankel? He's like, don't mention his name, he's special forces now, and that's where I've trained with this man's son, and he came out to our first fundraiser.

Speaking of people I've trained with, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) talks about diversity in what we're doing with our budget, it's easy to just see 39 PC MLAs and say, okay, that's it. That's—well, that's not all of Manitoba; 57 of us is not all of Manitoba. And the people who helped get me elected were members of the LGBTTQ* community. They're Metis. They're First Nations. They're Ukrainian, Jewish, Jamaican, German, Polish, Italian, Irish, Norwegian, Scottish, Dutch, Mennonite. Some were former foster children. Many were French Canadians or had French as a second language. They're teachers. They're union workers. They're civil servants, small-business owners.

And I'd be remiss without mentioning my fellow soldiers. My background through the army reserve definitely benefited some of those colder nights. Many people would comment, they saw us on social media when it was cold, and they said, wow, that looked really cold. Yes, it was really cold. Some of the gents, they were coming back from places like the Northwest Territories and Resolute Bay, said, Nic, I'd rather go back to Resolute Bay. People like Walker Brown and his brother, Morgan Brown, who, trouble in Alberta, and he came back and he saw all the work we were doing, and Morgan Brown has returned from Alberta to stay with us back in Manitoba; people like Ian MacAoidh, a Saskatchewan gent, who has a small business as an arborist, was about to pack up and he couldn't be more happy with the work we were doing, he'll volunteer and he's staying here in Manitoba. People

like Frank Volavich, when I appreciate the members opposite when they talk about workplace safety.

* (1630)

As a soldier, I myself have been injured at work being a soldier. Many of my friends have been injured in other ways, certainly mental, and, unfortunately, Frank Volavich took a wrench to the chin, dislocated his jaw and that didn't stop him from doing rehab. And he drove me around a couple of times. He had trouble going to the door, but he would take me out. My heart goes out to him.

People like Liam Roscovich, a former soldier of mine, who, you know, thought I was ordering him to go out; people like Mel Carriere-Vandall, Mark Gillan, Jamie Felix himself, telling me, Nic, let's get out and do all these other volunteerings with First Nations youth, and I'm going to be meeting soon with him as we work with youth in the North End there. Griff Donley's lived there forever; people like Jordan Pessagno—he said, Nic, I was going to help you out at first but the other guy was running, and then he came out once with us and he was set. Max Holoweczynsky, his entire life in Riverbend; Alex Dunning, Rudy Wouda, another one of my troops who, again, thought I was ordering him to go out in -40 weather; of course, I was not and he finally got the picture and came out and spent 12 hours on election day. People like Josh Aimola, who himself is a veteran and suffers from injuries from Afghanistan couldn't give us a lot of his time, but he gave me a couple of days, and I couldn't be more privileged with that. People like Darrel Patterson, I've known for over a decade; my good friends Neil Mitchel and Alex Torrchin, I took leadership training with.

And, on the record, I saved Neil Mitchel from drowning on his leadership course. He was the top candidate and he could not swim, and I saved him from drowning, and now that's on the record, Neil. He's a Rifle there, honourable member from Minto, so helped save a Rifle.

Colin Brooker and Marko Senchuk, my two good Cameron buddies, who were always with me, always kept me honest, and when I have friends like them sometimes politics can, of course—any job can change your perspectives, but these guys will never let me cheat at anything and themselves will cheat to keep me honest I'm sure. Chris Toews, when I met him, he was 16 trying to sell haircuts on our basic training course to make ends meet. He has two small businesses now and is a sergeant in the Canadian

Forces. People like Josh Fordham, Ward Lentz, Grant Rieve-Demal; my officer friends in the Camerons, who I'm now leaving them unfortunately to go on to a different job, they can't stand it because now that's one less junior officer drinking buddy for them, although maybe the member from Minto and myself will still see them at the officers' mess in Minto armories; guys like Dustin Loxton and Jon Avey, newer additions, of course, the Camerons, but guys who live in the area, and they couldn't be more happier; guys like Johnny Trenchard and Brian Trenchard, who may or may not have memberships to members opposite parties and would never let me stop talking my policy ideas and they would also never stop coming out in the -40 weather to help a good buddy. There's a few others with me in those terrible days sometimes—guys like Corey Taylor, who at one point, -40 weather, he goes, Nic, you going to win this? And I: Well, Corey, I'm not here to predict the future. If you don't win this, Nic, I might have to take a shovel to you. So I'm appreciative that the good people of Kildonan elected me to keep my friend Corey Taylor out of jail.

Darwin Avena, who came out—just by accident came with a friend; they were stopping by McDonald's and I said, Darwin, are you going to come out and canvass, and so we got him out a bit more. Guys like Chris Conrad, our first dog bite attack, he survived that and he kept on walking with us; guys like Dillion Contois, every time he'd be five minutes late, hated it because again he worked two jobs and was in the army reserve; my buddy Sebastian Snidal, who will always claim that he's outranked me, I think now as an MLA that may have some precedence, but Lord knows who's going to become a sergeant major one day and claim precedence again; People like Justin Bernier, I'll be at his wedding soon, honoured that I serve the basic with him. He'll be soon a warrant officer 10 years strong; Leaf Olafson, who used to be our little gofer who'd fix the stoves, now he's a strong master corporal leading young troops.

The sergeants who trained me, James Clark, Mike Sinnock and Steve Smith. Steve Smith once gave himself push-ups in the field because he forgot his own razor to shave in our patrol hide. So, Steve, you gave yourself push-ups; it was the craziest thing I've seen a warrant do, and that's also on the record now.

Jim Blackmore, who went to every one of his family members to raise 50 bucks from all of them for me, and we got up past a thousand. Thanks, Jim.

Cameron Buchanan, my first colonel, when I told him I was running, he's like, well, Nic, how much do you need? That's the kind of family that we get in the Camerons where it's not, you know, are we almost done? It's how much more do we have to go.

Don MacDonald, a trustee at Seven Oaks, when I found out I was running in a Cameron, he's like, when are we getting Seven Oaks hospital there; it's more improved, some good things, and we have the hospital—more things to come.

Bill Warden, the strongest handshake from an old cop you'll ever find. His family served in Camerons for three generations, including his son and his grandson soon, son Will Warden and his son-in-law, Tim Seeley. Tim goes back so far in the PC days, and I spoke to him election night. He's like, Nic, I was giving you money; I was coming out with you. I never thought you'd win. What the heck were you doing winning in such a place like Kildonan? And he's lived there for some time.

I'd be remiss, of course, also, the honorary colonels in my regiment, Nick Logan and Bob Vandewater, who, when I was in—this is important for me with Bob Vandewater. Unfortunately, in 2008, a drunk driver was going the wrong direction down Bishop Grandin. As my friends commented, Nic, why were you going the right direction? And so there was a collision; I almost lost my left leg. Luckily, it was only crushed, and I woke up in a hospital bed thinking, this isn't good. And Bob Vandewater, a newly appointed lieutenant and honorary colonel of the Camerons, he was there. He chipped in to get me the TV box. I got to watch world juniors that Christmas. I also had to get Christmas and New Year's in the hospital. But the Cameron family was there for me, including men like Bob Vandewater, and that was so many years ago now, and he couldn't have been more happy that his help went through.

Many other members such as Katrina Westfall, her dad helped my good colleague from St. Norbert. Alan Haley, Andrew Crawford, some teachers themselves who came out and helped. Robert Barnes, he came out from Ottawa, was a month in Winnipeg, and helped us and a few other candidates. People like Jeremy Slot, who was able to sell his dad a membership for me. My buddy, Rob Oke, an intelligence operative, as he likes to call it, but he does a lot of collating; I knew him from his basic training. He has three tours from Afghanistan, and I

keep telling him he's my hero, and he keeps buying me the beers for it.

Shayne Swandel, Brandon Desjardin, Jamal Tajin, Farhad Davudov, all members of Phi Delta Theta, Manitoba Alpha, my fraternity. Farhad is from Baku Azerbaijan. He is in Azerbaijan right now and still he will send likes to all my social media. Farhad would bus from the University of Manitoba to Garden City mall so many nights, and he'd say, Nic, just drive me downtown. It was only after a while I found out he had an hour commute to come help me. And this is a gentleman that I only know through my fraternity family, and this is the team who we put together.

People like Adam, Darius, Jessica, helpers from the party themselves. My distant cousin, Mike DeLuca, that apparently everyone knew was a bigwig in the party except for me. People like Brad Dowler. My buddies, Jesse and Mandy Beach from high school. My friend, Kyle Gilson, who definitely will never have a PC membership and grilled me for an hour, and once I was done answering his questions, he's like, okay, Nic, where are we canvassing? And I couldn't have been more grateful for his support and, again, a friend who will always keep me honest. My good friend, Brad Bazinet, who will always tell a strange story of when we first met, but I've been dear friends with him since high school, and I'm always happy that I'll have a movie friend to go out and see the latest action flicks. People like my buddy, Derek Holowachuk, who himself—him and I are very much like brothers, and that's how we've shared households together, shared laughs, and it's something where I consider him family to this day. Matt and Liz LaPage, I've known them since their relationship started, and Matt is one of my friends that I've known since grade 4, and he's kicking around here as well.

Furthermore, the people who really pushed me across, my command team: Levin, Peiter Prinsloo, Caleb Dowler, Tyler Thomas and my campaign manager, John Bernuy. These guys, they were the ones who dragged me across. Caleb would endlessly call people, Tyler managed the money and kept himself sane while I was trying to keep myself sane, John was always there to remind me to be honest and careful, and Levin was always there to kick me out the door and knock on more.

Of course, thank—that I've not wasted my time, my family. My distance family has always been there. My new adopted—or my family-in-law, excuse

me, my new sisters, Sarah and Angela. They social media'd everything. And their generation, they really do think it's cool that their brother gets to work at that neat building with the golden statue on top, and that always makes us aware that we're in awe at this place. My father-in-law, Lou Gervino, who will always need a little extra explaining of all these legal things. You know, I can't get any special privilege with speeding tickets. Of course, he thinks otherwise. But he's always been there behind me, the 60-Second Driver himself, which sometimes got me into doors, sometimes not.

I can't forget my grandmothers, who have both passed on, and—which is—it's really tough to go through with your family where many of them you know are watching from above, but it's hard still nonetheless. My grandma, Jean, who was a nurse and always had that sense of humour that only someone who worked endless nights and raised seven kids would know, my grandma, Ruth, who always taught me to be polite, but when someone was treating you terrible, you just bite your tongue because you know they're having a bad day, too, sometimes.

* (16:40)

People like my grandfather, Walter Curry, helped build, you know, the Canadian success story in many ways. Now, many times I'll explain to people Curry is a Scottish name, confusion sometimes because of the food type, but people like my grandfather, when, after the Second World War, him and his brother Casey, they're having trouble finding work, and Ladislav Kurkofsky became Walter Curry. I have no grand—great-grandparents named Curry, and it's a heritage that is unfortunate to a lot of Canadians, lot of people in Manitoba, lot of people in Kildonan, lot of people of eastern European descent, many other places, and many of my colleagues across, of indigenous and Metis, know that those stories also permeate, that many Canadians have suffered discrimination and lost their names, and I know that we're in a state now where no one has to lose their name in Canada, where we enjoy all of our cultures together and we're in such a blessed time that we're working towards that inclusivity.

The group of people who pushed me across the finish line that I mentioned, come from so many different nationalities, that all feel comfortable in their own skin here in Canada. And my grandfather, an inspiration to me in terms of his work ethic, in the 1970s, he started a small business. In terms of speaking to the budget, he could tell you more about

the last 50 years of budgets, I'm sure, than many people, and he keeps us honest in so much. He told me, Nic, you know, sometimes things don't change; you know, what are you really going to change? Well, Grandpa, this, this and this. I mentioned things like indexing tax brackets and we're going to work on the PST, and he's happy, but he knows at the end of the day there's only so much government can do. If you have a great idea, if you invent something back in the 1970s and you keep selling it, eventually, people like my father are going to take up that company and sell that product internationally. And that's what they do at Curry Industries, and I couldn't be more happy that I worked there before I was probably allowed to work, and I worked there even to my university days and helped innovate some of the products that my grandpa started inventing back in the day.

My other grandfather, unfortunately—my grandfather, Walter, is still with us; he's still at the shop, and you can find him there talking to customers.

My grandfather, Don Robson, was—is my hero, and when we talk about what's important with ambulance fees, about eight years ago, right up after my grandmother passed away, my grandfather and I, we spent the whole summer playing golf, and we'd go everywhere, and there was an August day, and he got to my door. He was knocking. Okay, yes, I'm coming, Grandpa. And the knocking got pretty persistent and it stopped, and, oh, what's going on, Grandpa? Well, he was clutching his chest, and he couldn't stand. And he said, Nic, let's go. I said, let's get an ambulance, you know, we'll call it. It's like, Nic, just drive me, because that was his third time. And the other two times the ambulance really took far too long. And he said, Nic, let's just go.

And that wasn't the last time I drove him to the hospital. Blessed that at no point did waiting for an ambulance cause him the harm that eventually cost him his life, but it's those stories where we know that not everyone is going to be saved. Not everyone's going to benefit, but enough people will be able to get that ride to the hospital they need and will not have to worry, the stress of it costing too much.

People like my parents are why I'm here in many ways. My mother, Laurel, my father, Mike, every value I have is based off of their loving marriage they put together. I couldn't be more happy to call myself their son. Of course, my brother, William Curry, is my greatest fan, and I couldn't be more

happy that he was there every day for us. I almost wanted to mention him last because there is no one who came out to help me more than me—than my brother. I may not have always been the best big brother; I certainly am not the best I wanted to be, but he's the best little brother I've ever had. He has always been my greatest advocate, and he has almost started fights on my behalf for things that I always wonder, William, it's okay.

And, of course, my wife, Ellen Gervino, is my everything. She is my partner. She has always been a part of me. We're inseparable; even geographic divides will stop us sometimes. We did grad studies in different cities. My work in the military took me across this country, but we've always been a part of each other. We'll always be the everything to ourselves. We're there when we laugh; we're there when we cry. I will speak with no one, my last words, except for her. And the saddest part is that eventually one of us may go first, and I expect that to be in decades, if not over 100 years, because I'm not leaving her.

Now, the important thing with this budget is that the people who put me here, they wanted something a bit different. Now, with politics, it's frustrating sometimes where, you know, we talked about it; it's either too fast or too slow. But, at the end of the day, the moderate changes that are going to happen are something that's going to help people like the small-business workers at my friend's arborist business. They're going to, you know, help my grandpa a bit easier, you know, when he's going to start maybe needing ambulance rides. It's going to help people with some of the schools that we're developing. Certainly, education will always be there, but we know that we're going to continue these efforts to improve Manitoba, and moderate changes are things that the team that put me here is going to be very happy for.

I haven't gotten those angry calls that other people keep talking about. I keep getting the happy calls, like Nic, you can do it, and having fresh energy, new perspectives I have from various groups that put me here will always keep me honest to do my hardest to be honest and always, always work for the people who put me here.

Thank you.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, Kewatinook is comprised of 14 First Nations: St. Theresa Point, Garden Hill, Wasagamack, Red Sucker Lake, Bloodvein First Nation, Little Grand

Rapids, Poplar River, Berens River, Pauingassi, God's Lake Narrows, Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation, Hollow Water, and Shamattawa.

We also have two towns—Gillam and Churchill. It is the largest land mass riding in Manitoba. It is set in some of Canada's pristine boreal forest. It is truly set in our Creator's country.

Indigenous people had to be enfranchised before they got the right to vote. They had to give up their treaty rights before they were allowed. Finally, in 1960 we received the right to vote unconditionally. Since 1969 Kewatinook has been NDP—47 years. I am the first Liberal to win the North.

Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to Budget 2016. It is with the utmost sincerity in my heart that I must address some of the very key issues that have been left out—that have left out the most vulnerable and the most impoverished people of this province.

I wish to honour Jordan River Anderson, a First Nations child from Norway House Cree Nation, who was born with complex medical needs. Jordan spent more than two years unnecessarily in hospital while the province of Manitoba and the federal government argued over who should pay for his home care. Jordan died in a hospital at the tender age of five, never having spent a day in a family home.

Jordan's life must not be in vain. He exemplifies the jurisdictional battle between the federal and provincial governments when it comes to our First Nations people. Jordan was one of our people's most valuable assets, and when this young First Nation's child needed health care, he was treated by both governments as a mere expense.

As legislators we have failed Jordan. Jordan's Principle passed as a resolution. Bill 203, The Jordan's Principle Implementation Act still collects dust on a shelf as this government continues to treat the bread-and-butter issues of my people as a federal issue. We must always keep Jordan in the forefront of our actions.

Madam Speaker, jurisdictional battles regarding the indigenous people is an old and tired argument. Budget 2016 does not take steps to improve the quality of life for First Nations people of this province. Clearly this new government is looking forward to creating a reactive approach rather than proactive when it comes to finances. They talk of balancing only in their next term. They seem to think

their future is secure, but I am here to say it is not as secure as they think if they continue to leave my people impoverished because I am not my predecessor.

The budget rightfully mentions the fact that the number of kids in care has doubled, but one is left hanging as there is no further discourse regarding any solution that will address our First Nation's children's plight. There is zero investment to ensure every Manitoban has access to running water. There is zero investment in regards to safe, clean drinking water for our isolated communities. Having to haul water from the lake to have drinking water in 2016 is a travesty in a country as wealthy as ours.

* (16:50)

There is zero investment to ensure affordable nutritious food for northern Manitobas—Manitobans. These people will continue to be financially enslaved with the high-cost, unhealthy food available in our communities.

There is zero concrete commitment in road connectivity for the communities on the east side of Manitoba, which would have enabled Kewatinook's chance at economic development. MTS will be sold to Bell. The new government boasts of the access for those along Highway 75. I am tired of them forgetting the North. The people of the North also deserve Internet connectivity. May I table the provincial map of Manitoba so that the government can remember what our entire province looks like.

There is zero investments towards addressing the First Nation housing crisis that perpetuates chronic illnesses, family breakdown and criminal activity. There are suicide 'crises' plaguing many of our First Nation communities, yet I see no investment targeted to suicide prevention, nor is there mention of any type of northern health-care strategy. There is zero investment addressing our daycares, our recreational programs, nothing that I can go to my youth of Kewatinook and say, here, here is some hope for you. Northern children should not have to feel so hopeless. They should not have to feel as though they have no reason to live. This is a grave concern, as our people continue to die of unnatural deaths. When, Madam Speaker, will this government acknowledge that First Peoples deserve a decent quality of life?

Budget 2016 is one that does nothing to better the lives of Manitoba's indigenous people. I can now safely assume that after you have seen the numbers, you agree with the former government's fiscal policies, that my people's poverty is just seen as injecting higher federal transfer payments, and that is really what keeps this province alive.

I implore the government—yes, I am outright begging you, as government—to make First Nations on-reserve investments in the critical areas of health, water, nutrition, housing, road and access development. Investments in improving the lives of indigenous people are also good steps to improving the economy and well-being of our whole province. Investments in improving the lives of indigenous people are good steps forward to reaching reconciliation.

I sadly only hear the word indigenous four times, and one was only in reference to the minister herself. The Winnipeg School Division, not any northern school, will get increased resources. The Master of Social Work program will get increased resources, perhaps so that many more of our children are apprehended. And, yes, of course, commence discussions: Why now, in 2016, are they only starting to talk to our people? We are all Manitobans, and we deserve to have our provincial government make investments that will improve our lives. My people are not an issue; we are people. And my people deserve better. A Manitoban is a Manitoban is a Manitoban. Commit to making all Manitobans, even indigenous Manitobans, a priority. We all deserve quality of life in our province.

Looking at page D1 in the Summary Budget, off reserve and indigenous are only considered. Madam Speaker, the era of ignoring First Peoples is over.

I will close with this final thought. While you are generating your reactive-thoughts government, allow me to congratulate you on the items that will increase and flourish under your new budget: the diabetes epidemic, the number of kids in care, First Nation mortality rates. Tax burdens due to staggering health costs will flourish. And, of course, PC friends', families', business acquaintances' personal-net-worth statements will flourish.

Madam Speaker, miigwech, ekosi, tansi, thank you.

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): I am proud to be a member of this government and proud of our first budget. We are setting a new course for Manitoba, a

new course that will lead to lower taxes, better services and a stronger economy.

I also feel proud and honoured and blessed to have been elected MLA for Thompson. This honour didn't just happen, and I'm eternally grateful to those volunteers that helped to make it happen.

I'm thankful to our PC Conservative association members and the PC MLAs who braved the cold mornings to attend their breakfast meetings, our PC team and our PC team leader, now the Premier (Mr. Pallister), all of whom offered sage advice, encouragement and support, and believed in me even when the odds seemed to be stacked against me.

I'm indebted to my neighbouring PC candidates in the ridings of Flin Flon, The Pas and Keewatinook. Although they weren't successful this time, they made it possible for me to win my riding by keeping my opponent busy in their ridings.

I'd like to congratulate the MLA for Charleswood, the House Speaker, on her elected appointment, and thank her, along with the MLA for La Verendrye, for first planting the seed with me getting into politics close to three years ago, and for encouraging me to do it only if I thought I could make a difference.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my campaign manager, Stacy Martin, for her sacrifice and dedication to the campaign and for making me listen and follow good advice even when I didn't realize it was good advice. The sacrifice of her husband, my friend and PCIV Chair Dave Martin, who looked after responsibilities around the home while Stacy was working on my campaign. No small feat, because they're raising two young boys, Oliver and Liam, who let it be known they missed their mommy whenever she had to leave them.

I'm thankful to the hard-working ladies at the meat shop that I own, Kristine Juneau and my younger sister, Dawn Bindle, who worked extra hard to pick up the slack when it seemed I constantly had to leave to tend to obligations to the campaign, many last-minute and unexpected. Those girls are the best. I couldn't have done it without them, and their support is also sincerely appreciated.

I want to thank Wayne Hall, our association president, who, along with his son, Larry, and among other things, turned lawn sign placement into an art form. They enthusiastically took on the task and

thoroughly enjoyed themselves. You couldn't ask for more dedicated talent.

I'd like to thank my sister, Dianne Dick, and my nephew, Treston Bindle-Jonasson, for delivering door-drop literature on those cold and slippery days of the campaign, as well as the other volunteers that helped in many different ways. Your support is humbling, heartfelt and sincerely appreciated.

My older sister, Dianne, in particular—is particularly tickled pink these days grandparenting her daughter Darlene's newborn daughter, my grandniece, Olivia, every chance she gets.

More recently, I'd like to thank my older brother, Allen, his wife, Gail Bindle, and their sons, Connor and Jesse, for letting me overnight at their place in Lundar on my many trips driving back and forth to Winnipeg to attend galas, campaigning and member training and this assembly, and to my sister, Patricia Wyer, and husband, Mike Wyer for housing me during the week at their place in Teulon.

I was born, raised and still live in Thompson, and, like both my parents, when the time comes for me to retire, I plan to stay in the North. I'm very familiar with northern issues and I feel proud, honoured and blessed to stand up for northerners here in Manitoba's 41st Legislative Assembly.

I am a second-generation white settler. I know what I am; I'm a second-generation white settler. My father and mother were born in Canada, but their parents were settlers. I lived, and we live on land where indigenous people had been for hundreds of generations. I'm second generation; they're hundredth generation.

Through British colonization, the doctrine of discovery and the doctrine of terra nullius, the doctrine of empty lands and historical false science, proclaiming that people with darker skin are inferior, institutionalized race.

Discrimination has been embedded in society so much so that it is being internalized by many in the population over the decades, to the point it is believed to be normal and acceptable practice. Many people don't even realize they've accepted discrimination as normal, and they don't believe they're racist.

This has resulted in terrible injustices being committed against the indigenous people since colonization. They've had their land taken from

them, their social safety net of family, and language, culture and identity eroded through residential schools, '60s scoop, flawed child and family service systems, and left them marginalized, many without hope and many in poverty and despair.

The only difference between the indigenous person on the street and me is skin colour, I was given the opportunities—

Madam Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle) will have 15 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 2, 2016

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<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>