

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 12, 2009

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

**Traffic Signal Installation—PTH 15
and Highway 206**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by Jake Buhler, Al Bodner, John Chop and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba's Premier and his NDP government have not recognized the issues of public concern related to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

The WRHA is building an administrative empire at the expense of bedside care.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority needs to be held accountable for the decisions it is making.

Health-care workers are being pressured into not being able to speak out no matter what the WRHA is doing or has done.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP government to call a meeting of a standing committee of the Legislature and invite representatives of the WRHA to appear before it.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by A. Allard, V. Allard, L. Agapito and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

**Neepawa, Gladstone, Ste. Rose, McCreary—
Family Doctors**

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

Access to a family doctor is vital to good primary health care. Patients depend on their family doctor for many things, including their routine health-care needs, preventative care and referrals for diagnostic tests and appointments with specialists.

Family doctors in Neepawa, Gladstone and Ste. Rose are unable to accept new patients. The nearby community of McCreary has not had a doctor available to take patients in months.

Without a family doctor, residents of this large geographical area have no option but to look for a family doctor in communities as far away as Brandon and Winnipeg.

Residents of these communities are suffering because of the provincial government's continuing

failure to effectively address the shortage of doctors in rural Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider prioritizing the needs of these communities by ensuring they have access to a family doctor.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider promptly increasing the use of nurse practitioners in these communities in order to improve access to quality health care.

This petition is signed by Archie Moar, Rachel Grudeski, Kevin Haney and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by Walter Friesen, Erin Froese, Joan Klatt and many, many others.

Midwifery Services—Interlake Region

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

Residents of the Interlake Regional Health Authority do not have access to midwifery services.

Midwives provide high quality, cost-effective care to childbearing women throughout their pregnancy, birth and in the post-partum period.

Women in the Interlake should have access to midwifery care.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider working with the Interlake Regional Health Authority to provide midwifery services to women in this health region.

This is signed by P. Kashuba, Barb Chimuk-Zdrill, Colleen Cobbe and many, many more.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee of Supply

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion presented.

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with section 42 of The Ombudsman Act, subsection 51(1) of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, subsection 37(1) of The Personal Health Information Act, and subsection 26(1) of The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Ombudsman for the year ended December 31, 2008.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Manitoba Day

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

I want to announce that, of course, today is May 12 and it's Manitoba Day. It was 139 years ago that the Manitoba Act received royal assent in 1870, officially creating our province as part of Canada. Across this great province, Manitobans are attending celebrations and events to mark this significant anniversary. These celebrations will bring people of all ages and origins together to commemorate our heritage in Manitoba, our achievements as a

province, and to reflect upon our hopes and dreams for the future of Manitoba.

This morning, the departments of Labour and Immigration and Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport hosted the Citizenship Court Manitoba Day event to welcome 32 new Canadians, people from many parts of the world who have chosen to make Canada and Manitoba their home.

Manitoba has always been and remains a land of opportunity filled collectively by the First Peoples and the many peoples and cultures that followed. It is the birthplace of the Métis nation and a model of successful immigration policy emulated across Canada. Manitoba's rich cultural diversity continues to be one of our greatest strengths as we move forward together as Manitobans. I encourage all Manitobans to celebrate Manitoba Day today. Thank you and happy Manitoba Day.

* (13:40)

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Today, Manitobans are celebrating a very special day, Manitoba Day. It was 139 years ago today that Manitoba entered into Confederation as Canada's fifth province. Manitoba has much to celebrate as we have made extraordinary accomplishments as a province in our short history as a political entity.

Manitoba is a province that was founded through a wide variety of people and ideas from the First Nations people and the Aboriginal Métis to the Europeans who came to the province during the time of Confederation and the immigrants who have since followed. Manitoba was created on the basis of multiculturalism and continues to support this notion.

It is through the people of this province that Manitoba has achieved greatness. Manitoba has a lot to be proud of as the people in this province have done amazing things in the 139-year history. There are a number of events taking place across the province today, including here at the Manitoba Legislature, to recognize Manitobans.

I had the opportunity to attend the Citizenship Court today where we witnessed a Canadian citizenship ceremony and welcomed 30 new Canadians. I encourage all Manitobans to show pride in their province and take part in many of these celebrations.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank and wish all Manitobans a happy Manitoba Day. I hope that all

Manitobans take time today to think about Manitoba's incredible history. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join all other members of the Legislature in wishing all Manitobans a happy Manitoba Day. It's a day to celebrate, a day to remember our history, a day to recognize that in 139 years, we've achieved a lot. We still have, I believe, quite a ways to go to achieve our real potential and what we can achieve in the future, but there is a lot to celebrate in terms of what we have already done.

This morning, I was at the LaVerendrye School joining students there in celebration of Manitoba Day, but also in celebration of their 100th year. It was quite an occasion. When we've got schools that are 100 years old in a province which is 139 years old, and a lot of other anniversaries, I think it's a pretty happy time.

I think we can also be pleased that this year we're going to have some movement on the Upper Fort Garry site to make sure that that's preserved and that people will be able to have the opportunity to visit a historic site for the birthplace of our province where the original provisional government was. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today the grade 6 choir group from Princess Margaret School under the direction of teachers Irene Penner, Joanne Hildebrand, and the choir accompanist, Joanne Kohut. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro East-Side Road Lawsuits

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to join with other members in wishing Manitobans a happy 139th anniversary today.

One of our province's greatest assets, Mr. Speaker, is Manitoba Hydro and our potential to develop that great resource for the benefit of future generations.

Leading engineers, Mr. Speaker, have recently raised concerns about the NDP west-side detour which, in addition to being a financial disaster, puts at risk the reliability of Manitoba's power grid. Engineers have said that the longer west-side detour increases the risk of power failures and blackouts for people in Winnipeg and southern Manitoba and puts the energy supply to Manitoba homes, in addition to other facilities such as hospitals and personal care homes, at greater risk than would be the east-side route.

The government has justified this position on the basis that they were worried that if they ran the power line down the east side that American activists would file lawsuits to stop it from happening.

After making this questionable claim, Mr. Speaker, the government then went ahead and announced an east-side road through the very boreal forest that they claim to be concerned about protecting.

I want to ask the government: How many American activist groups have filed lawsuits, to date, in order to try to stop the development of the east-side road?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, in his convenient sequence of events, fails to mention that we indicated that the Rice River Road or the east river road would be built well in advance of the position we took on the issue of the transmission.

Mr. Speaker, I would refer the member opposite to the Farlinger report and the Farlinger report that talked about the plus and minuses on either route, where he did identify that this could be a major issue of international importance with our very important customers.

I know revenue is not part of the equation for members opposite, but revenue is very much a part of the equation of the decisions we're making.

It's not, quote, radicals that we're concerned about. The member opposite stated, falsely, I might point out, that we wrote the Minnesota agreement on the back of an envelope. In fact, it has been certified. It was opposed by some activists in Minnesota and has now been confirmed through the good works of

the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) and the Member for St. Boniface the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). We think that activity was very, very important.

The Farlinger report talks about there are pros and cons of either route. We fully disclosed that, tabled it in the Legislative committee, and we didn't table it for members opposite to take things out of context. There is a legitimate debate but take it in all of the context, Mr. Speaker.

Bipole III West-Side Line Reliability

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Farlinger report that the Premier refers to also pointed out that the proposed west-side route cuts through one of the most in-jeopardy tracts of boreal forest in that part of the province.

He says that the route that they have chosen actually goes through an area of boreal forest that is, arguably, more in jeopardy than the forest on the east side of the province, Mr. Speaker. So, given the choice between a route that engineers say will jeopardize power supply to Winnipeg and southern Manitoba, that will cost \$640 million more to build, that will take four years longer to complete, including both approvals and construction, why would they choose the route that jeopardizes power to hospitals, personal care homes and homes in Winnipeg, rather than the more reliable route when, as the Premier says, there are pros and cons with respect to the environmental arguments?

The cause célèbre that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has referred to has not materialized on the road. It wouldn't materialize on a power line. Why not do the right thing and protect the power supply to Winnipeg?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I heard today that the member wanted to go back 135 years in terms of policy in Manitoba. We thought our platform in the last election of going forward, not backward, we didn't know it was 135 years we're talking about in terms of policy with the member opposite.

But the issue of reliability, Mr. Speaker—if we dealt with the issue of affordability and ease of building a transmission line, we would place it where the second transmission line was placed, the Bipole II, and that would be down the Interlake area where there's a right of way already established.

The advice that was made to members opposite and rejected, in the sense that they didn't implement it, is that the southern parts of Manitoba needed reliability to hospitals, the schools and all those other places the member opposite was talking about. They required reliability, and therefore a line should be built.

It also makes sense, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Brennan said at committee that having a line that has both reliability and more export sales produces more revenue to pay for the reliability. Rather than having a mothballed Conawapa, like we had with members opposite, a mothballed development of hydro, we have a growing revenue source from hydro to help pay partially for the reliability issue with the transmission line and partially for the new sales which we announced in Wisconsin just a year ago.

Bottom line is this is a very, very legitimate proposal because it's backed up, as Mr. Brennan has said, by \$20 billion in revenue. I know they like to look at the small picture, Mr. Speaker. They like to be the nitpickers and look at one part of it, but you've got to look at the whole picture: revenue versus expenditure.

Manitoba is going to be way ahead with the revenues from this project, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:50)

Future Bipole Developments

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Mr. Speaker, for him to say that \$2,400 per Manitoba family is nitpicking suggests just how out of touch he is for the regular Manitobans. I don't know whether it's a decade of losing touch with Manitobans that he would think he could take \$2,400 out of the pocket of every family in this province and let it evaporate into the atmosphere. How he can justify that is something that he needs to explain.

In order for Hydro to be fully developed, Mr. Speaker, the engineers have identified the need not just for a Bipole III but for a Bipole IV, as well, in order to fully realize Manitoba's potential as a hydro-exporting nation. The engineers have said that a Bipole IV cannot go down the west side; it cannot go down the Interlake route and the east side is the only option available if we're going to fully develop Manitoba's potential.

Why is the Premier cutting off Manitoba's potential by making east-side development impossible?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Again, the Farlinger report has a number of positive statements for the purposes of the environment. The west side presents the best options for woodland caribou in Manitoba. The woodland caribou habitat is very, very important. It goes on to talk about the undisturbed section of the boreal forest.

The Farlinger report shouldn't be taken out of context, Mr. Speaker, and I would point out, when the member opposite—this is what they did with Limestone. This is what they do with all Hydro developments. They go back 50 years. They go back a hundred years. They go back 135 years in terms of framing their policy debates. They want to go back to the horse and buggy, because of their policy analysis, Mr. Speaker. Everything is put in that prism.

I would point out that Limestone is producing revenues which, in turn, are making Manitoba's rates the lowest in North America. Expenditure, yes: The members opposite opposed the expenditure for Limestone. We argued against some of the chattering classes that revenue would far exceed expenditure, and that, today, has been proven correct. We then negotiated Conawapa. The members opposite mothballed it, again denying Manitobans a vision of clean energy export sales and economic development.

They would never develop Hydro. They would sell it, and that's why people trust us with this utility, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Hydro UNESCO World Heritage Site Designation

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think Manitobans want a government that looks forward to the future.

Mr. Speaker, I believe all Manitobans would like to have a UNESCO World Heritage Site here in Manitoba. As Jim Collinson, former chair of the UNESCO committee has stated: Hydro line development and road construction does not preclude a site from being selected.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, a hydro line already exists in the area to be designated for approval. I table, today, for the minister a map from Manitoba Hydro

showing existing hydro lines in Manitoba. The map clearly indicates a hydro line running from Winnipeg up to Poplar River, across to Little Grand Rapids and up into Paungassi.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this existing hydro line runs through the area to be designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. I just wonder if the minister could explain: Will the existing line have an impact on the designation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act):

Mr. Speaker, let's clarify. The existing local lines on the east side are alternating current lines for the benefit of local communities. The transmission corridor would be direct current, high voltage direct current, power that's not available for local communities, power that has no particular benefit for local communities.

We're talking, essentially, apples and oranges here. The transmission corridor, the bipole, would be primarily for export purposes. The small local lines, alternating current, are for local purposes. The member is comparing a bicycle to a bulldozer, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, in a tour to Poplar River last year, it was quite evident the hydro line right of way ran adjacent to the existing winter road there.

I'm going to table for the minister a photo taken during that trip there. It clearly shows bulldozers at work, clearing the new scrub from the hydro line right of way, a fairly wide swath through the minister's pristine boreal forest.

Now, it's clear that this right of way already exists halfway to Gillam, Mr. Speaker. We're just asking: Does this existing hydro line, is that going to have an impact on the UNESCO World Heritage designation?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I've just explained the difference in scale and purpose for the existing local alternating current lines versus the major HVDC, high voltage direct current, corridor for export purposes. I thank the member for the visual evidence.

I point out to him that in Ontario today over 60,000 petitioners just called on the government of Ontario— which is our partner in protecting the boreal forest, the southern boreal forest on the east side—to

adopt the principles of the Boreal Forest Conservation Framework. They want to protect the boreal forest. They say it's a home to major species of birds; save our boreal birds. They say it's an invaluable ecosystem which, intact, provides a carbon sink, which, intact, provides clean water, which, intact, provides a unique habitat for many species which are threatened, such as the woodland caribou.

That is just one of the three risks we're managing, risk to the environment, risk to reliability—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, Brian Schwartz clearly indicated that if we go on the west side, we're actually destroying more of the boreal forest than we are on the east side, and we already have an existing right of way on the east side of the province.

This government is also proposing to build an all-season road—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little decorum.

The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain has the floor.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, this government is also proposing to build an all-season road through the east side, through Bill 31. Again, I quote Jim Collinson, Manitoba's resident expert on UNESCO World Heritage Site selection: Compared to Bipole III, a road has a far greater immediate and long-term impact on the ecology of an area through which it passes.

Mr. Speaker, the actions of this government simply do not add up. They want to have a road but not a hydro line. They seem to want it both ways. Which way is it?

Mr. Selinger: The argument for the road is exactly analogous to the reason for local alternating current. The road is for the benefit of local people. It's going to be built with the input of local people. They are going to benefit from the jobs, and they see a permanent long-term benefit. Even the member of the public that the member quotes supports the road on the east side. He made that very clear in his article.

On the other hand, the transmission corridor for high voltage direct current puts at risk the environmental values that the people on the east side

want to preserve. It puts at risk our export markets worth up to \$20 billion, and it further puts at risk our ability to put reliability measures in place. We have to remember, in 1996, we almost lost our bipoles in the Interlake, and the members opposite, instead of actually pursuing greater reliability, spent all their time privatizing the telephone system.

Post-Secondary Education Government Funding

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): This government has not provided our universities and colleges with adequate funding to make up for the lost revenue due to the tuition freeze. According to Statistics Canada, per capita funding for universities and colleges provided by the Province of Manitoba is second last in Canada.

So I ask the Minister of Advanced Education: Why has she failed to provide our universities and colleges with enough funding?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): I thank the member for the question, because it gives me the opportunity to put some important information on the record.

First of all, during the time of the tuition freeze, we backfilled the 10 percent of the reduction every year.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, since we've been in office, funding to universities and colleges has gone up by 73 percent.

Thirdly, during the decade of the '90s, it went up 16 percent. That's five times more under this government.

This member has nothing to tell me.

Mr. Hawranik: And they're still second last in Canada.

The NDP government has repeatedly provided inadequate funding to our universities and colleges. Only New Brunswick provides less per capita funding than Manitoba. All other provinces provide more per capita funding for their colleges and universities than Manitoba.

So I ask the Minister of Advanced Education: Why has she failed to provide adequate funding for colleges and universities while insisting that they hold the line on tuition increases?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, when I was first appointed Minister of Advanced Education and

looked over the records of the '90s, I was truly shocked: minus 2, minus 3, minus 1, minus this. It was an absolute disgrace.

Instead, during the past few years, we've provided percentage increases of plus 7, plus 7, plus 7, and this year, in the year of an economic downturn, 4.4 plus a tuition increase of 4.4. I think we've done our work very well, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:00)

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, I'm also truly shocked when, after \$4 billion in federal transfer payments, we're still second last in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, last year, this government only provided \$406 in per capita funding to colleges and universities. Newfoundland provided \$637 in per capita funding. Saskatchewan provided \$591 in per capita funding. Alberta provided \$586 in per capita funding.

The Canadian average is \$491 per capita. Manitoba is 21 percent less than the Canadian average.

So I ask the Minister of Advanced Education: Why has she failed to provide per capita funding to a level at least equal to the Canadian average? Does she have something against higher education?

Ms. McGifford: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the member has neglected to put in his calculations is the \$750 million in capital that we have advanced to date, because we all know that when we came into government, the engineering building was leaking, the architecture building was being flooded, the arts building was falling down at the University of Manitoba.

So I put this together with our incredible support for students. During the '90s, of course, students fled from the province as they cancelled bursaries. There was no funding really available for Manitoba students, Mr. Speaker. So we have balanced funding to universities and colleges, capital and supports for students. We have a good system.

University of Manitoba Government Funding

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Well, only the NDP would clap at us being second last in Canada and being proud of that record, Mr. Speaker. That's unbelievable.

The University of Manitoba needed an increase in funding of 20.3 percent this year just to bring it up

to the level of funding to an average Canadian university with a medical school. Instead, the university only received an increase of less than 5 percent.

Given all the waste in government spending that we have outlined time and time again in this House, why has the Minister of Advanced Education not made funding of the University of Manitoba a priority? Why has she allowed such chronic underfunding for almost a decade?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Well, Mr. Speaker, that less-than-5 percent was about 9 percent more than was ever funded during the time in the '90s when these people were in government.

So I think if the member were to phone up the president of the University of Winnipeg or the University of Manitoba and asked whether they wanted less than 5 percent or minus 4, they would go with less than 5 percent.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, this minister and this NDP government have chronically underfunded the University of Manitoba. In 2001 and 2002, the university needed a 6.8 percent but only got 3.6 percent. In '02-03, it needed a 5.7 percent increase and only got a 1.7 percent. In '03-04, it needed a 5.3 percent increase and only got a 2.7 percent increase.

Each and every year the university needed more money than it received from the provincial government under this government's watch in order to deliver just basic programming. We now see what a decade of underfunding and a tuition freeze has done: overflowing classrooms and a decrease in programming offered to students.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Minister of Advanced Education allowed this chronic underfunding to happen under her watch? Why is it more important for the government to waste money on a hydro line to nowhere than properly funding our education system?

Ms. McGifford: Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that this government is very proud of is the fact that we have increased the number of medical spaces from 70 to 110. This was a government that cut them from 85 to 70.

Another thing that this government is very proud of is that the University of Manitoba—and I know these members want to trash the University of

Manitoba every time they get an opportunity—but the University of Manitoba—[interjection] Now, just calm down and listen. The University of Manitoba has more Rhodes scholars than any other university in western Canada, and that includes the very—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm very calm, Mr. Speaker, and I am listening and I know many Manitobans are also calm and listening to this minister as well.

Had the Minister of Advanced Education not underfunded the University of Manitoba every year since 1999, the university would have been able to offer decreased student-professor ratios and increased diversity of programming and more extensive and frequent use of technology. All of these things are imperative in order to increase the quality of education and graduate more students in our province.

Why has the Minister of Advanced Education allowed for such chronic underfunding to take place for so long? Why has she jeopardized the quality of education at one of the finest institutions in our country?

Ms. McGifford: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, really the members opposite are shameless.

During the '90s, when the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) was on the board of the University of Manitoba, students left this province in droves, went to every other place in western Canada because the tuition fees skyrocketed and more than doubled. So I just find it really incredible that this member, who is asking the question today, who has voted against every one of our budgets that have brought a 72 percent increase to universities and colleges, is up on her feet saying it isn't enough. I guess she voted against it because it wasn't enough.

Post-Secondary Education Government Funding

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I find it rather interesting that this government's arrogance is showing so clearly in the line of questioning today.

Mr. Speaker, we are second last in Canada, and that is something the government can sit back and be proud of. The University of Manitoba has left open the option to sell off assets next year to balance its budget. The University of Winnipeg is asking its employees to make wage concessions so it can balance its books.

In the past, the minister has responded to issues by saying, I certainly hope they do their work so they can avoid cuts. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a crises situation. The minister has to be paying attention.

Will the minister continue to push the universities to a state where they either have to sell their assets or ask for wage concessions to balance their books?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): You know, Mr. Speaker, when I was speaking about the increases to the universities and colleges in Manitoba, I neglected to point out that another thing that this government did which that government had failed to do for years and years was to eliminate property taxes, so that was another \$19 million to the universities and colleges.

The member opposite has just spoken about the University of Winnipeg, one of my alma maters, by the way, and the University of Winnipeg, I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that during the decade that we've been in power, has had an increase of 80 percent in grants from government, 80 percent–88 percent when we include that property tax that I just mentioned, 88 percent. I think that's something to be proud of.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, let's stick to the facts: 4.5 percent tuition fee increase at the University of Winnipeg will only raise \$760,000. The university vice-president of finance has stated that the net effect of the tuition increase was not significant when you consider a \$100-million budget needs to be balanced.

How does the Minister of Advanced Education expect the University of Winnipeg to build a strong education system when adequate funding has been denied?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, the University of Winnipeg has a very strong education system and is recognized nationally as one of the best arts and science colleges in the country and now is doing a wonderful job. I'm so proud of our president doing a wonderful job of outreach into the community.

Another thing that I want to mention since I'm on my feet talking about universities is the University College of the North. Now, I know members opposite determined in 2003, in that election, that they would cancel it if they were returned to power—which may explain why they didn't get a northern seat, Mr. Speaker—but we're very proud of the University College of the North. We're very proud of the work that we're doing with

Aboriginal people and other northerners. We're very glad that it wasn't cancelled.

* (14:10)

Mrs. Rowat: Second lowest in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations to the university to do well with less.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba universities have been chronically underfunded by this government for years and the results are showing. Programs and staff have been cut, causing classes to balloon. Wage concessions in collective agreements have already been enforced.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Advanced Education if she plans to continue down this destructive path, or will she, for once, show some leadership in 10 years and provide the cash-starved universities with adequate funding?

Ms. McGifford: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning of this series of questions, in one question they're asking us to cut and the next question they're asking us to spend, and this is, I suppose, a spend series of questions.

But the good news is we have spent on universities and colleges. Any problem that exists is the fact that there was such a hole coming out of the '90s. There was such an incredible deficit, and I do take this opportunity to point out to the member opposite that when the per capita calculations were done, they don't include that \$750 million in capital that we have advanced through our system.

Mr. Speaker, we've done a good job. We're proud of it.

Photo Radar Tickets Construction Zones

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, as of this morning, 1,071 Manitobans have gone on-line to sign a petition to express their outrage over the photo radar fiasco. One of those people who signed the petition is a single mother of two who had never before had a traffic ticket and got two photo radar tickets inside of a week travelling under the speed limit through a construction zone where there were no workers present. The first ticket didn't arrive until three weeks after the photo had been snapped, so the individual wasn't even aware, on the second occasion, that that ticket had been issued.

Mr. Speaker, this single mother of two young children who was taking her children to child care

said that she didn't have the time to go and appeal the tickets and was worried she wouldn't be able to renew her licence if she didn't pay them.

She paid those tickets. Does the Premier think it's right that he's holding on to her money?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I'm glad that it gives me an opportunity to talk about the fact that a number of people have called us today quite shocked—and many of them are mothers—that the Leader of the Opposition in his pandering on this issue is going to remove photo radar from schools and playgrounds.

Mr. Speaker, they were even more offended to hear the comment: We made it through 135 years of life in our province without radar; somehow we all managed to get to school safely.

I want to know, Mr. Speaker, how many parent councils has the Leader of the Opposition talked to about his plan to remove photo radar from schools and playgrounds in Manitoba?

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the phony damage control strategy on the part of the government and the NDP with non-issues—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have some decorum. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. McFadyen: The phony damage control campaign takes nothing away from the comments that I received from parents this morning, taking my daughter to school, who were talking about the fact that many of them had received tickets travelling under the normal speed limit in construction zones where no workers were present and that the greedy government that can't balance its budget is more interested in raising revenue by abusing photo radar than by placing a photo radar vehicle next to the school that I was talking to parents at this morning.

I want to ask the Premier: Will he refund the money to those parents who have had to pay money, who haven't had the time to go to appeal their tickets, who have paid money while travelling under the speed limit and not posing any threat to public safety? Will he leave alone the desperate damage control campaign and refund people their money, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we can talk about the comments from parent councils, and we can talk

about the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition: We made it through 135 years of life in our province without photo radar.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we didn't have cars then. The Leader of the Opposition wants to go back—his policies are to go back to the horse and buggy days.

If he hasn't consulted with any parent councils in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, has he phoned the chief of police? He's saying he's going to consult with police. Is that another phony pandering argument? We all know where the police stand on photo radar. We know where they stand.

Is he living on another planet or is he going to phone the chief of police and find out where they stand, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the mock outrage and damage control campaign is even more pathetic than their response to the Crocus allegations when they came out. That is absolutely sad.

It is no comfort to an individual like the one that we were contacted by this morning, a 68-year-old woman who went to visit her sick brother in hospital and made 81 trips into the city of Winnipeg in 2008 to visit her sick brother in hospital—68 years old, had never in her life had a traffic infraction, received one photo radar ticket travelling under the speed limit in an area where there were no construction workers present, didn't have the time to go and appeal that ticket because she was visiting her sick brother in hospital.

Does the Premier think it's appropriate that the government is hanging on to her money, that money which belongs to her and which should be refunded to her? Will he do the right thing and instruct his Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) to give this woman her money back?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite—and, of course, he was the campaign manager for the mayoralty candidate, Mr. Katz. They never promised to remove photo radar in their campaign. He was in contact with the City of Winnipeg police. He knows how this program works. He knows the City is responsible for deploying the photo radars through the city of Winnipeg.

I am shocked that he can call the police greedy on an issue of public safety, Mr. Speaker.

**Disraeli Freeway Resolution
Government Support**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we had an unbelievable situation in the Legislature this morning when a resolution was presented to support an alternative to the 16-month closure of the Disraeli Freeway. When representatives of all three political parties spoke in support of this resolution, members of the Premier's party refused to let this go to a vote.

Talking out a resolution is the time-honoured way of killing the resolution. I ask the Premier: When urgent action on this file is needed, why did the Premier's party talk this resolution out? Why did they kill this resolution, which is so urgently needed for people in northeast Winnipeg, for all of Winnipeg?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I seem to recall members opposite were talking out bills yesterday, and that's their right to do it in this Legislature. It's not called talking out. It's actually putting your comments on the record.

There are a number of us from northeast Winnipeg that want a comment on the record. We have, I think—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can't hear anything. Let's have some decorum here.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I can say that on this issue the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) has met with the mayor. He's met with the mayor on a couple of occasions. I've met with the mayor on a couple of occasions. We are working with the City of Winnipeg to try to find a solution on the issue of the closure, well before the member opposite raised it or raised it in the Elmwood by-election. We had raised it with the mayor of the city of Winnipeg, that this would be a major challenge in terms of northeast Winnipeg.

I actually am a person who lives in the area. I actually drive on the Disraeli Bridge once or twice a day, Mr. Speaker, so I don't need the loud voice from the member opposite from River Heights. I actually know what it's like to live in northeast Winnipeg, and we will represent the people of northeast Winnipeg. But, you know, the City is building it, and we're going to work with them.

* (14:20)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is doing everything he can to try to avoid taking the blame for the shameful action of his party this morning.

The Premier says he wants to support people in northeast Winnipeg. Why didn't the Premier support this resolution? Hey, by killing this resolution, by not allowing a vote to occur, the Premier is making what was a non-partisan effort—even the MLA for Elmwood acknowledged this resolution was crafted to be non-partisan, but now the Premier is making it an intensely partisan issue.

There should have been urgent action on this file. Why was the Premier not supporting a vote on this file? Why was the Premier not there to support a vote on the file?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The presence and absence of members in the House is against our rules. All members should know that by now.

The honourable Member for River Heights, please withdraw that portion.

Mr. Gerrard: Sorry, I withdraw that comment.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I did have a meeting with the Peguis First Nation this morning, and I'm dealing with some of the issues there. They are important as well. Certainly the Disraeli Bridge is important.

The issue of blame—and we had lots of that in the by-election, lots of allegations made by the Liberal leader, very unfairly I might add, lots of allegations made by the Conservative candidate, very unfairly I might add, about us working together with the City of Winnipeg.

This is a proposal. This is a planned proposal the City has asked for as part of their proposals, request for proposals, for construction companies to come back with proposals that will deal with the reduction, if not an elimination of delays. We have discussed that with the City. We will continue to discuss it.

We're not interested in blame. We're interested in solutions. That's what the Member for Elmwood is dealing with. The only person blaming people is the leader from River Heights, Mr. Speaker.

**Red Light Cameras
Accident Statistics**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is in relation to photo radar and the red light camera situation.

Mr. Speaker, we should be fairly clear on the issue that the City of Winnipeg police and the public as a whole are supportive of the concept as long as it's safety first, but over the last number of years we've seen more interest as this issue being that of a cash grab nature.

Yesterday, I asked the Premier (Mr. Doer) in regard to the number of vehicle accidents. What he said inside the Chamber is not what he said outside of the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. There is no 60 percent decrease in vehicle accidents in intersections.

Can the Premier tell us what percentage increase has there been in back-end accidents leading into intersections as a result of this policy?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely regret that the photo radar issue that's been authorized by this Legislature—and I should indicate the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) and the Conservative Party wanted us to extend it—has been very limited to the city of Winnipeg based on safety concerns.

The data that the Premier talked about yesterday was a decrease in right angle serious accidents if—well, you know, Mr. Speaker, you're a lot better off having a rear-end at a red light than a head-on collision at a corner. That's safety. That's why the member is making politics out of this. That's why we support the police and the application while the police say [*inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —and not making politics out of it, Mr Speaker, because we in this Legislature limit it to safety and we allow the police to make the judgment, not the Member for Inkster—

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

St. Boniface Hospital Cardiac Care Centre Expansion

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, the St. Boniface Hospital is the lifeline of my community. In my own neighbourhood, I know people who work there, children who were born there and others who have been healed there.

Could the Minister of Health please update this House on investments at the St. Boniface Hospital?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'm very privileged to stand in the

House today to announce that we were at St. Boniface Hospital today announcing that construction has begun on an over \$40-million project to bring a centre of excellence for heart surgery and cardiac care to St. Boniface Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this is going to include leading-edge technology. It's going to include first-class professional work at the bedside. We're going to see an expanded 32-bed cardiac in-patient unit, a dedicated 15-bed cardiac intensive care unit that includes an isolation protection bed, a new six-bed chest pain evaluation unit within the emergency department, development of a satellite pharmacy and, most importantly, it's going to continue to attract cardiac specialists to Manitoba.

We've doubled that number since 2004. That's more care for Manitoba patients, which is a great thing.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Springfield Public Library

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Saturday, May 23, 2009, is the grand opening of the new Springfield Public Library, with the ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11 a.m.

In August 2008, the R.M. of Springfield established the Springfield Public Library as an independent entity under The Public Libraries Act. With this independence came an opportunity for the Springfield Public Library to partner with both the R.M. of Springfield and with the Province of Manitoba to support a new library facility to serve the estimated 13,000 people living in Springfield.

Matching the R.M. of Springfield dollar for dollar, the Province had provided funding to replace the former 1,000 square feet of space in the old location with a newly renovated 8,000 square feet in the remodelled building that once housed the Costume Museum of Canada, near the crossroads of PTH 15 and Highway 206.

Looking back, the Costume Museum of Canada and the buildings that currently sit on the site were all built by a true pioneer spirit of volunteerism. It started from a humble beginning of a few pieces of clothing and accessories assembled from various Springfield attics and closets by the Dugald Women's Institute for a fashion show. Since then, it has grown

into a national renowned collection of over 35,000 artifacts spanning 400 years.

Now, looking forward, with the relocation of the Costume Museum of Canada into Winnipeg, the Springfield Public Library Board hopes this same strong volunteer spirit that has built and maintained so many of Springfield's community features and events will bless this new facility with increased opportunities to serve our great community.

In this same location where the people of Springfield once browsed through their very own Costume Museum of Canada, they can now browse through their very own Springfield Public Library. The people of Springfield are now welcome back into the facility to loan books from a catalogue of over 9,000 books and an on-line system that provides access to countless more books throughout Manitoba. Space in this building has also been reserved to house the archival collection of documents for the R.M. of Springfield, which was Manitoba's first municipality and is still its largest.

While the library already boasts a small but loyal band of volunteers and a full-time employee has already been hired, many opportunities still exist for our community to lend a helping hand at the Springfield Public Library that not only has books for loan and reference materials, but also provides increased community access to the Internet and a meeting room for community and family events.

Congratulations, Springfield Public Library Board members: Chairman Jack Stafford, Karen Lalonde, Sally Colomy, Kelly Dueck and Ron Burek.

Many congratulations to Springfield on another achievement, wishing each of you many happy hours of enjoyment.

As Elizabeth Barrett Browning once said: No man can be friendless who has God and the companionship of good books.

Mark Twain also said: Good friends, good books and a sleepy conscience; this is an ideal life.

National Nursing Week

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, May 11 to 17 is National Nursing Week across our country. It is an opportunity to promote and show appreciation for the vital role nurses play in the health system and the life of every Canadian. National Nursing Week provides an opportunity to educate citizens about important health issues, to

share information they need to make good decisions about their health and to promote the critical role of registered nurses in our health-care system. Nursing week coincides with the birthday of the nursing pioneer Florence Nightingale's birthday which is today, May 12.

Nurses provide many contributions to the well-being of our citizens. They are an integral part of our society and health-care system. I'm sure everyone in this House has, at one point, been touched by the care or work of a nurse. Here in Manitoba, we are proud of our nurses. According to the nursing college, there are 2,034 more nurses practising in Manitoba today than 10 years ago. Our government has worked to educate and retain nurses in this province.

Nurses are found in our communities, hospitals and schools. They lead many research and international development initiatives, and have a strong presence in the Canadian military. They are a catalyst for finding solutions to improve access to health services and are committed to adopting new approaches in models of care, giving increased attention to health promotion and illness prevention.

This week of appreciation is to thank nurses across the province and Canada for their hard work and dedication to the health of our citizens. We recognize them in the vital role they play in our society, and commend them on a job well done. Thank you.

* (14:30)

Dennis Brownlee

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate one of my constituents, Dennis Brownlee, who was recently appointed chair of the board for the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce at the 78th annual general meeting in Gimli this year.

Dennis brings with him nine years of experience with the Portage la Prairie Chamber of Commerce and has been with the Manitoba Chambers for the past six years. The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce was established in 1931 and is Manitoba's biggest, or largest, and most diverse business lobby organization. It represents over 10,000 businesses and community leaders across the province. The mission of the MCC is to foster a dynamic economy and vibrant communities, making Manitoba the best place to live, work and best to raise a family.

Dennis has been part of the Board of Directors for many years and brings with him stellar qualifications and a proactive personality to his new position as board chair. Mr. Speaker, I have personally known Dennis Brownlee all of my farming career. He has a winning attitude that has propelled his farm machinery business into one of the most successful in the province. Anyone who has had any dealings with Dennis can attest to his friendly nature and his professional approach to business.

Dennis's rural background, a perspective that is indeed part of his identity, will facilitate a more nuanced focus at the MCC which he's certain will see local chambers more active. He also hopes to facilitate greater collaboration and communication between the MCC and its members to ensure that both urban and rural interests are represented.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all of my honourable colleagues with the Manitoba Legislative Assembly to join with me in congratulating Dennis Brownlee on this prestigious appointment and wish him all the best as he moves forward in his new position as chair of the board of Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. Thank you.

Heather Acres and Alan Vowles

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak about a wonderful couple, two of my great friends and constituents, Heather Acres and Alan Vowles.

Heather is a community organizer in Flin Flon. I first worked with her in the 1980s when she was a member of the race relations committee. In 1999, she helped start Green Project, a community-wide effort to revegetate the Flin Flon and Creighton area, restoring the landscape to its natural beauty. She also started a school mentor program in the Flin Flon School Division. Heather received a Governor General's Award for establishing the Wolf Project, a race relations initiative, designed to promote respect and understanding.

In 2000, Heather brought the Virtues Project to Flin Flon, a global initiative that helps people develop their own character strengths. Heather is also co-founder of Healthy Flin Flon, a project that fosters collaboration between government and individual citizens.

Alan is a well-known and respected geophysicist with HudBay Minerals. On March 2, along with

geologist Kelly Gilmore, Alan accepted the Bill Dennis Award for a Canadian mineral discovery by the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. Alan led the company's geophysics team, which used an innovative technique to discover the Lalor zinc and gold deposits near Snow Lake. Not only is he an award-winning scientist, Alan is also a wonderful artist. One of his paintings hangs in this very Legislature in the Member for Selkirk's (Mr. Dewar) office.

Together, Alan and Heather invented the Wavemill, or WET EnGen, a breakthrough green technology that requires no fuel. It uses the energy of the sea itself to convert waves into clean electricity and fresh, potable water. In 1996, the design won first place at the Canadian Greenvention Awards given by the Canadian Innovation Centre for the best environmental invention of the year. With this invention, Alan founded Wave Energy Technologies, now based in Winnipeg and Halifax.

Mr. Speaker, Heather and Alan are exceptionally bright, generous and creative individuals. I'm so glad they put their talents to work in my constituency. Thank you.

Newborn Hearing Screening

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk briefly about the importance of universal newborn hearing screening. We desperately need this in this province, and this is the reason why.

What happens is that even when we're screening for those at high risk of congenital or early-onset problems with hearing, many newborns are missed, and when a child is missed in terms of hearing screening, what happens is that the very critical development of speech in the first 18 months doesn't occur normally. These children are at severe risk of major delays in their education, major shortcomings in their ability to speak. Indeed, children with congenital bilateral severe to profound hearing loss often leave the educational system far behind their peers, but this can be corrected if these children are picked up early, and this can be dramatically improved which is exactly what we should be doing. Indeed, I have a study here which shows the majority of children with early hearing loss or congenital hearing loss were not those with risk factors, and it speaks to the urgency of having universal newborn hearing screening in our province.

I would hope that members here would support Bill 208, The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening

Act when it comes for discussion later on in this session.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
(Continued)**

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Just on House business, prior to orders of the day. On House business pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private members' resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie). The title of the resolution is 90th Anniversary of the 1919 Strike.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to rule 31(8), it's been announced that the private members' resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one put forward by the honourable Member for Elmwood. The title of the resolution is 90th Anniversary of the 1919 Strike.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you might call for debate on second reading on Bill 30, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009; and then second reading on Bill 16, The Police Services Act; followed by Bill 21, The Labour Mobility Act; followed by Bill 26, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act; followed by Bill 14, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker: The order that the bills will be called will be Bill 30, and then Bills 16, 21, 26 and 14. Okay?

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 30—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009

Mr. Speaker: We'll resume debate on second reading of Bill 30, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Brandon West.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): On Bill 30, that's been brought back into this Legislature, Mr. Speaker. I think I speak for not only my party, but, certainly, for members on that side of the House when I suggest that Bill 30, being the BITSA bill, speaks to the implementation of the budget brought forward to this Legislature for either approval or voting against, which we voted against the budget.

Certainly, there are a number of issues within that budget that we cannot agree with.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, when Bill 30 was presented it wasn't presented quite as the budget was presented. There are areas, certainly, in Bill 30 that we talk about. There are certain tax implications that have been brought forward in Bill 30. There are certain changes to some of the tax regulations. There are changes to some of the other regulations in the budget. But what it doesn't speak to is the \$20-million debt payment that this government had indicated was going to be in the budget. The budget was there; it was voted on; it was passed, and there was \$20-million in debt payment. Now, this in itself is a bit of an anomaly, because not often does the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) bring forward a bill that doesn't reflect the budget, and it doesn't reflect the budget. In fact, there's a clause in that Bill 30 that says, no longer does the Finance Minister have to pay down or reduce the debt that the Province of Manitoba has incurred under this government.

* (14:40)

I should say that on Bill 38 about six months ago, six months ago, on Bill 38, the same Finance Minister had decided to not balance the budget anymore. What he suggested was, we're going to take—thank you, Mr. Speaker, just a little bit of distraction.

In Bill 38, when the minister brought forward his not-so-balanced budget legislation, there were a number of issues within that piece of legislation that we could take exception to, and we did take exception to it, because, back in 1999, the Premier (Mr. Doer) himself, had suggested that this government, the NDP government, when they were running for election, had indicated that they in fact would support balanced budget legislation. When they went into that election, they said Manitobans had demanded that the budget be balanced on an annual basis—and that's the core operation budget, Mr. Speaker. That's revenue in, expenses out, and then it's balanced. It should be, at the very best, in a best-case scenario, zero, or there could be a surplus.

That was in 1999, when the Premier was running for elected office and his party said, we will support the previous government's position on balanced budget legislation. We will make sure that Manitobans are well served.

Mr. Speaker, as part of that balanced budget legislation, as part of that previous balanced budget legislation, there was a debt repayment schedule, and the debt repayment schedule said that we will pay \$110 million per year to retire the ongoing operating debt of the Province of Manitoba. This government that was elected in 1999 accepted that debt repayment schedule. They accepted that debt repayment schedule in the previous balanced budget legislation.

Now, they not only accepted the \$110-million repayment of debt on an annual basis, they also said that they would balance the budget on an operating basis, Mr. Speaker. They did that the following election, and the following election, but this last election, they never made any comments. They didn't make any suggestions that they would get rid of balanced budget legislation. They just assumed that Manitobans would think that we'd go on with that financial position in mind, that we would retire debt, and we would balance budgets.

But in the last election, in 2007, there was no indication as to where they were heading. But all of a sudden, after the election, Mr. Speaker, they come forward with a fairly dramatic change in how the finances of this province are going to be dealt with. That dramatic change is that they are no longer going to balance the budget on a core operating basis. They're going to balance on a summary operating basis, which means they're going to bring in all of the Crown corporations. They're going to bring in Manitoba Hydro; they're going to bring in MLCC; they're going to bring in the retained earnings of the Lotteries Corporation; they're going to bring in the retained earnings of the Workers Compensation Board. They're all going to dump it into a summary budget, and they're going to say that we can balance on a summary basis, but if we can't balance on a summary basis, then we're going to do it on a four-year rolling average.

So not only are they not going to balance on a core operating budget, they're not going to balance with all of the revenues that come in from the other Crown corporations and entities, but now they're not even going to do it on annual basis, they're going to do it on a four-year rolling average.

Now, that's not enough, Mr. Speaker. They've also placed a substantial number of caveats in Bill 38 that said if there is a natural disaster in the province of Manitoba, that they no longer have to balance the budget because the natural disaster

would offset the requirement. Not only do they not have to balance on a core operating, not only do they not have to balance on a four-year rolling average, but now they don't even have to balance the summary budget if there is a natural disaster.

We tried to get a definition of natural disaster. Is it a snowstorm? Is it a forest fire? Is it a flood? Is it a heavy wind? We don't know exactly what that natural disaster could be, but we do know that they have the opportunity of simply declaring a natural disaster and not having to balance the budget.

Well, there was something else, too, Mr. Speaker, not only natural disaster: if there was a reduction of revenues that were generated from another level of government that were impacted. Now, the one that comes to mind initially would be, oh, let's say the 40 percent of their operating budget that comes from the federal government. On a \$10.1-billion budget, approximately \$4 billion comes from the federal government. If that is reduced, then they don't have to balance the budget. Normally, if revenues are reduced in a household, you go back and you try to readjust your expenses, you try to readjust your priorities and balance the budget in that fashion. But no, no, no, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) didn't quite want to have to do that, so what he did was he said, in this legislation, we're going to put in a clause that says: If there is a reduction in revenues that come from another level of government, we don't have to balance; we not only don't have to balance on the operating, we don't have to balance on the summary either.

So he tried to put an amendment in there and suggested that there should be a number that goes into that reduction. We suggested on this side that, all right, if there's going to be a reduction on transfer payments and equalization payments, and the equalization payments are around \$2.063 billion—with a "b"—if they reduced the equalization payments by a dollar, to \$2.062999999, would that seem to be a reduction that would offset the requirement to balance the budget? Yes, under this legislation, Bill 38, that's exactly what it meant. One buck. We suggested 5 percent, which is probably reasonable. If there was a 5 percent reduction in transfers or a 5 percent reduction in equalization, then perhaps that would be sufficient to not have to balance the budget, but no, they wouldn't even go with a 5 percent clause. What they wanted, Mr. Speaker, was to have a wide-open opportunity to effectively

spend whatever they wanted to spend and not have to worry about balancing budgets ever again in the Province of Manitoba.

So now we have Bill 38, and I did mention, Mr. Speaker, I think, that also in Bill 38, there was still an extension of that \$110 million that was going to be a continuation of a well-thought-out debt reduction plan. Now, families usually have a fairly reasonable financial plan laid out before them. What that plan speaks to is, we wish to have a mortgage on our house because we want to have a house for our families, and for the most part, people borrow money for large purchases like automobiles. But there's a reduction of those debts on an annual basis with the ultimate goal being debt free. I'm sure lots of people in Manitoba would love to be able to say that over a period of time I have a plan to reduce my debt, our debt, our family debt, to the point where eventually we can have debt free. I'm sure the members have heard of mortgage burning, where you have a mortgage, you know what the terms of repayment are, you pay it for the 20 or 30 or 40 years that you have your term, your amortization term. At the end of that term, you're debt free.

This particular government does not understand anything about debt free. They don't even want to pay down the debt that they've incurred on behalf of Manitobans right now, quite the opposite. What they want to do is they want to increase the debt that we have in this province, increase the liability to my children and my grandchildren, increase the debt to future generations in this province with no look to the future.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 38 spoke to that, but now we're presented with a piece of legislation called Bill 30. The budget was tabled, and the budget picked the \$110 million that was required under Bill 38 six months ago, that the Finance Minister tabled. If he didn't want it, why didn't he change it then? Why didn't we have this debate, this argument? Because he felt it was a good thing. They ran on it previously; they had better not take it out. But, all of a sudden in the budget, that \$110 million becomes a line item in the budget that says they're going to have a debt reduction payment of \$20 million. So automatically we've gone from 110 to 20 with the stroke of a pen. So all it was, the Finance Minister decided that he can't balance his budget on the core operating unless he has that \$20-million debt repayment instead of \$110 million.

* (14:50)

So, on the \$20-million debt repayment, we argued was the wrong thing to do, and if they wanted to make a change, then amend Bill 38, bring forward a Bill 38 amendment. Tell us to change that 110 to 20 and give us another repayment schedule. But that wasn't good enough for the Finance Minister. He wasn't prepared just simply to take an amendment to Bill 38. What he decided to do was to change the process of Bill 30, the implementation of the budget. He decided, Mr. Speaker, that he was going to do it in a fashion that's never been done before. So we have a little clause in Bill 30. That little clause simply says that the Finance Minister doesn't have to retire any debt. All he has to do is, over the next three years, balance the budget under Bill 30 with having no debt retirement whatsoever. That, Mr. Speaker, is wrong, absolutely 110 percent wrong.

As I mentioned, our debt has been going and growing since this government took office, and their excuse is that they're investing in infrastructure. They're investing in schools. They're investing in hospitals. You can invest in schools. You can invest in hospitals. You can invest in infrastructure, but you can do it without having to put more debt on the backs of Manitoba taxpayers.

There is a concept of paying for infrastructure improvements through cash flow. I don't know if you heard, Mr. Speaker, but I did mention there was \$2.063 billion that came to the Province of Manitoba last year in what's known as equalization payment. Any, or all of that \$2.063 billion could've been used for some of those capital projects that the minister and the Premier (Mr. Doer) and others suggest is the only way that we can build infrastructure in this province.

Well, as it happens, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity of sitting in on a committee meeting just recently with Manitoba Liquor Control Commission. Now the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission is going to pay the Province of Manitoba this year \$219 million. They're going to generate on a net basis \$219 million. It's going to go into the coffers of the Province of Manitoba, and that in itself is not bad if you believe in monopoly. However, what's going to happen—or what did happen is I asked—there was a line item on the financials of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission and there was a \$10-million item, and I asked the CEO exactly what that \$10 million was, and that CEO said, well, we built a

new distribution centre. I said, well, that's good business, that's really good business, you have to distribute the product in order to make the \$219 million in net profits. I said, but why are you showing the \$10-million debit on the bottom line. He said, well, we paid for it. We paid for the \$10 million out of cash flow. I said, what a novel idea, you can actually build infrastructure and pay for it out of cash flow without having to borrow money. He said, well, no, that's just not good business borrowing money all the time to build your own infrastructure.

So here we have a Crown corporation that knows a business model that's followed by a lot of corporations, but this government hasn't learned from that. So this government right now, today, Mr. Speaker, is going to borrow new debt for the Province of Manitoba this year. New debt for the Province of Manitoba will be in the neighbourhood of \$1.7 billion. New debt; \$800 million of that is going to be Manitoba Hydro.

Now, the government uses the justification that that's fine, Manitoba Hydro can borrow \$800 million because they have the revenue to then service that debt. Well, isn't that interesting, Mr. Speaker, that Manitoba Hydro is going to borrow \$800 million, because we heard today that, in fact, Manitoba Hydro was selling more power internationally. They were generating substantially more revenues. In fact, we heard that from the Premier (Mr. Doer) when we talked about the waste of the power line. We heard that Manitoba Hydro could spend another \$640 million, or waste another \$640 million, on the east-side line, because in fact their monies that they generate well offset any of the risk costs, and I use that fairly emphatically because these are risk costs that are going to be offset by spending \$640 million more than they have to spend to offset the risk costs.

But the issue here was Manitoba Hydro could debt-service that debt; \$800 million is going to be borrowed this year from Manitoba Hydro. It's going to take their debt somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$9 billion for Manitoba Hydro.

We're putting Manitoba Hydro in a situation where they're not going to be able to support that debt. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget, under revenue from Manitoba Hydro, the 2008-2009 forecast, which is the year ending March 31, 2009, which we don't have the final statements, but the forecast for Manitoba Hydro revenues to be generated is some \$314 million.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

That, in itself, is fair. It's not the best year they've ever had. They've got some debt of \$9 billion. They have quite substantial sales, and if we analyze it, perhaps \$314 million really isn't the best return on investment, that \$314 million, but it gets worse.

In the 2009-2010 budget, which has just been tabled, the one that said we were going to pay down, at a very minimum, \$20 million in debt, Manitoba Hydro has been budgeted for net earnings, as identified in the summary budget, the \$265 million. So they've gone from \$314 million this past fiscal year, which is probably a little nebulous, to \$265 million, Madam Deputy Speaker. They've reduced that by some \$50 million.

But here's the kicker. Here's the real kicker. We're going to give Manitoba Hydro another \$800 million in debt this coming fiscal year, and in this coming fiscal year, the 2010-2011 projection for Manitoba Hydro is net earnings of \$184 million. So we've gone from \$314 million this past fiscal to a budget this year of \$265 million to a projection for the following year, 2011-2010, of \$184 million. That scares me. It should scare Manitobans, and it should scare this government because they're using that 184 to balance their budget on a summary basis.

But don't forget, if there's a natural disaster, if there's less money coming from the federal government, if there's any numbers of ways that the government can get around it, they won't balance the budget. But we've now reduced from 314 to 184 the revenues that are going to come through from Manitoba Hydro, and I ask myself, if we're selling so much more internationally—because the Premier (Mr. Doer) stands up and he continually crows about the wonderful deals that we've got now for revenue that's being generated internationally—and if Manitoba Hydro is operating so well that, in fact, they can do just about anything to generate revenue, why is it that we're losing an extra \$200 million or \$150 million in 2010-2011?

* (15:00)

But we have another \$800 million on top of the \$8.1 billion that they have now that they're going to have to debt service. That's scary, because now they're killing the goose that lays the golden egg. But

it's okay. It's okay because they can borrow more money. They can borrow more money on the government ledger, and they can borrow more money on the Manitoba Hydro ledger. But the bottom line is the bottom line, and the money has to be paid back. But this government doesn't recognize that. They don't recognize it, and I can tell you how I can tell they don't recognize it, because they don't even have a repayment schedule. That simple repayment schedule of \$110 million, reduced to \$20 million, is now in Bill 30, and it says, we will not pay a red cent to reduce that debt.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this just takes us further down a road of mismanagement. They're prepared to spend \$640 million, which Manitoba Hydro, I just proved, cannot afford to waste. They're prepared to spend \$13 million on an enhanced ID program that is going absolutely nowhere and actually wasting \$13 million of taxpayers' dollars. They're prepared to waste money, more money than the \$20 million is wasted by this government before they wake up for breakfast every day, but they can't find \$20 million to, in fact, put it to a debt repayment plan, and that's awful. That's dereliction of duty. That is putting their political agendas ahead of a sound, strong fiscal agenda.

I know that this is going to come back at some point in time to haunt the province of Manitoba, but that's usually the case with this government, the NDP government. They have a tendency to spend, spend, spend, borrow, borrow some more, and not worry about the consequences because, at some point down the road, there is going to have to be a fiscally Conservative government that fixes the problems, fixes the problems that are now being put in front of this Legislature by a government who really does not know how to manage not only their own funds but certainly the funds of the Province of Manitoba, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So we have Bill 30, which has a clause that says, no longer will we have a debt repayment. Perhaps, I could just read some debt comparisons here. We do have this government go out and borrow money to offset the unfunded liability, and they'll stand up when we talk about debt, when we talk about balancing budgets and when we talk about summary or core operating, they'll stand up and say: Yes, but the Conservative government never did identify the unfunded liability of TRAF, and they didn't identify the unfunded liability for the superannuation plan; they didn't do that.

Well, this government has identified the unfunded liability, but what they did, is they went out and they borrowed money to offset the unfunded liability. They borrowed money, \$1.5 billion—this is how they understand finance. There was an unfunded liability sitting on the books, \$2.2 billion in pension liability. They went out and borrowed—because they like to borrow. It's sort of in their bones. If they can't borrow money on an annual or a daily basis, they probably have withdrawal. They like to borrow, borrow, borrow. They want more money.

So they went out and they borrowed \$1.5 billion on the market. They took the \$1.5 billion and they put it in an account, basically in the Finance Minister's office. It's an asset that he shows on his side. They give the money to TRAF and they let them operate. They let them manage it. The \$1.5 billion stays on the balance sheet of the provincial government. So they borrow 1.5, but they show it as a 1.5 asset. So really their net debt doesn't go up an awful lot. In fact, it doesn't go up any, because they still show it as an asset. But they've given the money now to TRAF, and that same \$1.5 billion over the last year, in the Finance Minister's own words yesterday, has lost somewhere between 14 percent and 18 percent. Let's say 15 percent. Madam Deputy Speaker, \$1.5 billion would be, oh, a \$225-million loss. I think that's the math, but they're not good at math, so I can say anything and they'd agree to what I said. So we have a \$225-million loss on a \$1.5-billion borrow. That's not good business. In my opinion, that's just not good business. Had they not borrowed the money, they wouldn't have lost \$225 million. How long does it take to regain that \$225 million? Well, the Finance Minister says, it's over a period of 20 and 30 years that we do actuarials. It's over a period of 20 and 30 years, but it's going to take a long, long time to bring the value of that \$1.5 billion back to \$1.5 billion. So we have that as another debt on top of debt.

But right now, Madam Deputy Speaker, the total debt including Crowns, this is a scary number, this is a scary, scary number and I hope they're listening. The debt including Crowns for the Province of Manitoba is now \$21.167 billion. That's today, \$21.167 billion.

The member had indicated—tell me about the assets. Okay, remember, you have \$1.5 billion shown as an asset on the balance sheet, but you borrowed \$1.5 billion so you don't show that as any debt. Yes, their assets are really interesting because now, in

fact, they're showing assets as infrastructure that they're building. In fact, they're building a huge amount of infrastructure in the province of Manitoba.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) stands up in this House and tells us quite often that there's going to be a \$4-billion plan. I wish they had a plan to retire the debt like they have a plan for infrastructure. But there's going to be a \$4 billion—like, \$450 million that's going to be spent this year by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is borrowed. They're going to go borrow—it's right there, it's \$450 million borrowed to go and put in the infrastructure. Now, isn't that lovely. Why don't you spend a billion dollars, go borrow a billion dollars? Wouldn't that be wonderful? It's an asset, we're doing assets. But the fact is your money has to be paid back and you really have no plan to pay it back and Bill 30 speaks to that.

Bill 30 is absolutely the wrong way for this province to go because Bill 30 says, we don't want to pay any of the debt back and we're taking it out of the budget totally. All we're saying is, go back to what you promised in the budget, \$20 million of debt repayment. We would prefer you go back to what you said in Bill 38 and previous balanced budget legislation that says, we would like to put in \$110 million per year. All we're asking—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I know that at times there is a bit of a challenge in terms of—as legislators, to be able to look at the bigger picture in terms of finances of the province. It's hard to conceptualize the type of monies that are actually being spent.

I have a great deal of appreciation for the many Manitobans that every day have to work through their books and their numbers and try to ensure that there's some element of balance to what it is that they're doing. I've always been amazed when I've had opportunity to talk to individuals that will make decisions and if it's a bad decision, ultimately, it's going to end up costing a great deal of that person's personal wealth. I've had discussions with individuals, to the degree which you get a better appreciation of the value of having individuals within the Legislature, that could really understand, comprehend and know how to balance the books or how a business operates.

*(15:10)

In listening to the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), in thinking in terms of that larger picture, I remember a couple of years ago, and I was able to actually pull the petition, not the petition, I should say, the questionnaire that I had sent out to my constituents. There were a number of questions, over 40 questions that I had posed to my constituents. I was really impressed with the number that actually came back to me. It was in excess of 450 that actually took the time to fill out all these questions. A number of the questions were fairly probing. There was one question that I had in particular, and I've had this question on other questionnaires that I had sent to my constituents, and typically, you know, I will get somewhere in the neighbourhood of, let's say, 8 percent return to 12 percent return. But this one particular question I asked was, if a government had to choose between doing one of the following three things, which would you prefer: increase taxes, increase debt, or cut government expenditures?

What I have found in asking this question is it's very easy for someone to say, cut government expenditures. In fact, that is what most people say, Madam Deputy Speaker. Out of the 460 that responded to this particular questionnaire, 414 said, cut government expenditures; 14 said increase debt; 32 said increase taxes. What I find is that, I try not to read too much into the question or the numbers, but rather, I take it over a period of time because it's one of the questions I ask on an ongoing basis in terms of my questionnaires and it amazes me to the degree in which it's consistent.

So I know that people really want to see government spend, what I would say, spend smarter. By spending smarter, I believe that we can actually address that particular question, because if we were able to demonstrate to our constituents, to Manitobans as a whole, that the money that we're receiving in terms of taxes is, in fact, being spent smart, then the public as a whole, I believe, would be that much more supportive of government being able to borrow money at times, to be able to increase taxes at times. At times, there is a need for cut.

But, for years, the public has not really perceived government as good spenders. I think that this government, over the last number of years, has amplified that issue, that Manitobans feel that there's a great deal of waste within government. And who can blame them? You know, if we talk about some of

the greatest expenditures that this government has had, we could talk about the floodway and the additional cost because of the government's policy in order to bring forward the floodway. It was estimated in the neighbourhood of \$60 million, and many members of the public will wonder, well, was that \$60 million well spent?

A better example would be one that we're trying to debate today, and that is Manitoba Hydro. If you really take a look at what's happening on the Manitoba Hydro front, and where we're going to build that next line, the cost difference is phenomenal. We're not talking about a few million dollars, we're talking in excess of tens of millions, going into the hundreds of millions of dollars. Yet it would appear that the issue of the dollar has no value to the government of the day. We've heard the west side, and that seems to be the side that the government seems to be fixated on. Whether it's the right decision or it's the wrong decision, they seem to be fixated on coming down the west side. They have not been able to clearly demonstrate that that is a good, sound decision.

Yes, they have political rhetoric that will say that it's good, but equally, there is another viable option on the east side. The government has failed in its attempt to be able to clearly explain why it is that the east side should be a no-go. We in the Liberal Party have suggested, why not going under Lake Winnipeg? You know, when the first discussion about Lake Winnipeg came up, we were told by officials within Manitoba Hydro, well, you know, the lines would leak oil, and it would cause environmental issues. What absolute nonsense, Madam Deputy Speaker. Do you know that we have hydro transmission lines under our oceans? If the technology is there that enables us to put those hydro lines under water, then why are we not as a Crown corporation looking at that? To the very best of my knowledge, this government has not taken a position on that issue other than the initial thought that came up at a committee stage a couple of years ago.

It was actually a former New Democrat, and actually he still might be a New Democrat, I don't know, Dr. Ryan, who advanced it and actually came out to a Manitoba Liberal Party's annual convention and sold it to the membership of our party—this idea. You have a New Democrat coming to a Liberal Party event talking about a good idea. We took the idea from Mr. Ryan, who got all sorts of attention even within the media as a strong idea and presented it to

the government, and the government to date has not discredited the idea.

Well, why is this important? It goes to the core of what I believe Manitobans want. What Manitobans want is they want government to be spending smart. When they hear stories of this nature, it's got to make them wonder.

I had a public meeting around the Seven Oaks Hospital emergency situation, and you wouldn't believe the number of people that say, Kevin, explain to me how the government can spend so much more money on emergency capital infrastructure, when at the same time cutting back on selected emergency services in our community hospital of Seven Oaks? It tells me and it tells the public that they're not spending smart.

There are so many cases that one could raise, and issues that one can bring up, to deal with the issue of spending smart—where the government has really let down the public. *[interjection]* Well, we bring up a lot of issues. We bring up a lot of issues, that if the government were to act on, at the end of the day would make a positive difference. The problem with the government is that, as much as possible, they try to resist adopting ideas that are good unless, of course, they're ideas that have been generated through their own caucus, or they can take sole 100 percent credit of, Madam Deputy Speaker.

That's unfortunate, because at the end of the day the people that pay are Manitobans as a whole. That's why I think the government needs to look internally as to how it is spending tax dollars. Health care is the best way—*[interjection]*—well, because you're not looking at what other people are saying. You need to re-assess internally what it is that you're doing, right?

If you take a look at it, Madam Deputy Speaker, imagine if you will. Let me explain this in a way in which even the New Democratic members of this Chamber can understand. Very simple, very, very simple. Take a look at health care. It's a big issue. *[interjection]* I can appreciate that. Big issue—it's our biggest expenditure. Well, look at it in this sense—okay. You have doubled the cost of health care in the province of Manitoba. Do you believe that the quality of service has doubled in the province of Manitoba? Absolutely not. I don't think there's a Manitoban outside of this Chamber that would say that the services and medicine have doubled in the province of Manitoba—the quality of service has doubled.

What you will find is there are many Manitobans, especially within the health-care field, Madam Deputy Speaker, they will tell you that this government has squandered and wasted millions, tens of millions of dollars in health-care bureaucracy.

* (15:20)

An Honourable Member: So what would you have cut?

Mr. Lamoureux: Health-care bureaucracy. The minister says, what would I cut? I would cut health-care bureaucracy, and I'm not alone. I have a petition and, I tell you, there's no shortage of people that want to sign the petition.

We're talking about—and that's the nice thing, Madam Deputy Speaker. You know, this is an issue which everyone understands and everyone agrees with. It's only New Democrats within this Chamber that disagree with what it is that I'm saying, and that is—and if you canvass your constituents, canvass your constituents, you will find that they support increased bedside care and financing of that than additional financing of health-care bureaucracy. That's what those were.

Well, why is it important? Why is it so important? Well, I believe, because if you're not spending smarter, then you've got to start coming up with other ways in order to deal with the cash issue. You either increase taxes or you borrow more money. I ultimately argue as much as possible you've got to strive for spending smart, and then you deal with taxes, and you deal with the tax issue and you deal with the deficit issue.

I'm not scared, as an individual, of deficit; debt can be a very good thing in certain circumstances. Debt can be a way and used as a mechanism, as a tool to ensure that the economic cycle is minimized during recessions. But it also needs to be reinforced in terms of things such as fiscal stabilization funds during economic good times.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's important here because the debt issue is something which the government politically has seen the benefits. The government goes out of its way to try to give Manitobans the impression that it knows how to balance the books. It has no reservations in terms of misleading the public on whether or not it is actually balancing the books.

I could go back to 2003-2004 budget.

An Honourable Member: How about '99?

Mr. Lamoureux: No, 2003-2004. Do you remember? That's when the government said that we had a surplus budget, when, in fact, there was no surplus budget, depends on what books you wanted to look at. The provincial—[interjection] That's when they took money from all sorts of things. They also said there was a forest fire, and because of the forest fire—they looked for all sorts of excuses. At the end of the day, they reported to Manitobans that they actually had a surplus. In fact, I had taken a banner into my constituency and I said, you know, here you have our Premier (Mr. Doer) dressed as a cook, because he was cooking the books. I had the provincial auditor saying we actually had a deficit into the hundreds of millions. That's what the provincial auditor was saying, while at the same time we had a government saying that we actually had, well, like a 3-million surplus or whatever it was. I think I have it here somewhere.

You know, I had here Premier, blank, blank—can't say the Premier's name—says we had a \$13-million surplus. Not true. Provincial auditor said it was more like a \$600-million deficit, and yet, Madam Deputy Speaker, the government realized—and the reason why they do that is because they know that Manitobans have a high expectation in terms of balancing the books, having balanced budgets. They do have a high expectation. That's why, in 1999, the government of the day campaigned to—you know, there were a couple of huge themes that came out in '99: one is that we were going to end hallway medicine. That was a big one, and we all know that that one crashed and burned—that thought, Madam Deputy Speaker. That never happened.

But we also had the promise of balanced budget legislation. Remember, the Premier and I both opposed balanced budget legislation in the '90s. Both of us opposed it. But both of us also came to the realization, at the end of the day, that this is something that Manitobans wanted and supported, and at the end of the day both of us supported it, right. In fact, in the budgets, if you look to—I mean in the elections, you look to point six, there are seven points. Point six was affordable Manitoba, affordable government—this is an NDP propaganda election piece—including raising school funding to 80 percent resulting in education property tax relief and then, balancing the budget. They say that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because they saw the value of it, and there's no doubt there was a great value in terms of telling Manitobans that you're going to have balanced budgets. Then what do they do? Remember Bill 38?

The Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) made reference to Bill 38. What Bill 38 really did is that it said on paper we have a thing called balanced budget legislation, but they gutted the legislation. They gutted the law. In essence, they took away what it was that they were promising that they wanted to see in previous elections. Yet they're still able to say, well, we have on our books balanced budget legislation.

On paper you might have something that's called balanced budget legislation, but in reality Bill 38 got rid of balanced budget legislation. You can talk about some of the clauses, and the Member for Brandon West highlighted a couple of them that I would make reference to. It talked about the natural disaster and rightfully so, the Member for Brandon West made reference to—well, how do you define natural disaster? We've seen the government make reference to natural disasters in the past. What about deduction of revenues? You know, this government has been blessed more than any other government in the history of our province in terms of percentage increases of revenue. No other government in Manitoba has been given so much money in such a short period of time than this particular government.

I have argued in the past that anyone can govern a province if you're being given the type of dollars that you're being given. You know, they stand up quite often and say, we gave an increase in this, we gave an increase to this, we gave an increase to this. Well, this is the government that has had their revenues shoot up, and it's not because of their performance. Some of their performance, which would say, because if, relatively speaking, compared to the rest of Canada, equalization payments is one of the reasons why your revenue has gone up. Well, when your equalization payments go up, that means, relatively speaking, in comparison to other provinces, you're not doing as well. That's the reason why that revenue point has gone up. Your revenue has also gone up because the population of Manitoba, at least in part, has grown. Yes, there have been some good positive news, and, yes, there have been some government programs that have been effective, Madam Deputy Speaker, but also Manitobans have really gone to bat for our province.

It's our diversification of our economy that has really allowed Manitoba to do as well as it is doing today because of the economic trends across Canada. We've seen the damage that's been caused to the province of Ontario with regard to this recession. As a number of members might gloat at the fact, I think

this is a sad story. What's happening in Ontario will have many impacts, one of which will be the equalization payments for the Province of Manitoba because Ontario was a great contributor to equalization payments in the past and, hopefully, they'll get back onto their feet sooner as opposed to later, because if the province of Ontario and other provinces are drawing upon equalization, that does have an impact on equalization for the Province of Manitoba, which then goes back to the Bill 38, in terms of the reduction. If there's a reduction in equalization payments in the province of Manitoba, then there is absolutely no need.

* (15:30)

I cannot imagine a situation that could happen in the province of Manitoba that would, in essence, use any sort of balanced budget legislation where a minister would actually get a decrease in pay. I cannot imagine anything that's in that legislation and today's legislation that will ensure that there is any responsibility of this government to actually balance the books in any form of a traditional fashion, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's because what they've done is they have gutted the whole legislation itself. So, as much as we might like to think that in the province of Manitoba we have legislation that has a title called balanced budget legislation, if you were to get rid of it today, it really wouldn't make that much of a difference because of what they've done to it in the past and what they're proposing to do to it today.

But, having said that, it does allow the Premier (Mr. Doer) to stand on a platform and say, we have balanced budget legislation. But he needs to acknowledge that today's balanced budget legislation is not the same as the balanced budget legislation that the Premier and I voted against back in the mid-'90s, but both of us had the road to Damascus and converted and said, yes, to it in the '99 election. The only difference is the Premier's done a complete 360, right? I stayed on my 180, I guess, on the balanced budget debate.

But I give the Premier credit because one of the things that the Premier did when he was in opposition is he learned so well in terms of the ability and the importance of communicating and spinning, Madam Deputy Speaker. He learned that well in the many years of being in opposition.

That's why I like to credit some of my success by looking at the types of things that the Premier did while he was in opposition and how important it is,

as much as possible, in order to be effective in opposition, is you've got to keep on standing up and talking about where the government needs to improve. I know at times government members get a little sensitive in terms of why it is I don't necessarily say as many good things as I maybe could, from their point of view. But my job is to point out where the government is actually doing a bad job and the types of things that they could be doing that would make things a little bit better because there is so much more that could be done, Madam Deputy Speaker. That's what I'm appealing to the government to take action on. Nothing has changed over the years. If you take a look at my comments when I addressed Bill 38, you will find that—and I haven't read it since I actually delivered this speech, but I'm sure you will find that there has been balance in terms of the types of things that I've been talking about.

When I talk about debt, I always talk, as much as possible, about the benefits. There are benefits to having debt, but you've got to have management of that debt. I often will talk about Keynesian theory, something which I personally believe, because I think that's the role that government has to play. Government does have a role to play and I encourage that, whether it's years past or the day in question, which would be today.

Today, in question period, as yesterday, I raised an issue of what's being perceived more and more by the public as a cash grab, that being the photo radar tickets and red light cameras. I agree with the public that on this particular issue, that safety should be the No. 1 concern. That should be the No. 1 concern, but I can tell the government that you're losing the support of the public because the public is starting to perceive this more as a cash grab. Because of that, you put into jeopardy the issue of photo radar and red light cameras. You lost control on the issue. At some point in time, you need to sit down, and I would suggest maybe even do some consulting outside of the Cabinet or outside of the Premier's office. You need to sit down and come to grips in terms of the damage you're causing this very important issue. If you're really concerned about the safety and well-being of Manitobans and the potential good that this issue—the issue of photo radar and red camera lights—can provide Manitobans well into the future, then you better get a better understanding of the impact you're having today because of the actions, or lack thereof, that the government is making on this very important issue.

If the government believes that Manitobans are of the opinion that this issue is now just about safety, well they're wrong, Madam Deputy Speaker. Manitobans today, I believe, are more and more of the opinion that it has to do with filling government coffers than it does about safety. Like when I posed the question yesterday to the Premier (Mr. Doer), and the Justice Minister stood up, I posed the question in terms of number of accidents because they tried to give the impression that there was actually a decrease in intersection accidents when in fact that's not the case, to the degree in which the Premier made reference to. Then, outside the Chamber, there was a change.

Then today the minister says, well, we're talking head-on. Well, they're not head-on accidents, either. They're t-bone accidents that they're referring to. There's been a decrease there, and there's great value to that, but don't distort the arguments. That was an attempt that was done yesterday by the Premier, but now we're getting a little bit more facts on the record. So let's talk about the facts.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I say, this bill that we have before us deals with how government is spending our money and when we don't have enough taxes and we don't have enough federal transfers we need to borrow money. So if we could spend our money smarter and have a fair taxation policy the reliance on borrowing money will not be as great. If government can understand that then I suspect that they would have more support for the types of things that they're doing and, yes, you know, political spin works. This government has demonstrated very clearly that political spin works.

This government spends hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars, on political spin and they have been effective but, at the end of the day, time will show that the political spin will only carry you so far. I think that, as we go into the next year or two, we're going to find more and more Manitobans wanting to see tangible results. That's why, especially on the health-care file, they need to start looking at how they're spending tax dollars and the money that they're borrowing and the money that they're receiving from Ottawa on that health-care file. That's our greatest single biggest expenditure and we need to understand and appreciate that the government has to come to grips—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): It's going to be an interesting opportunity today to rise and talk to Bill 30.

Bill 30 in itself is a very interesting piece of legislation that this particular government is bringing forward. I guess government is all about perception and government wants to leave a very positive, public perception out there with the residents. That's something that, as the Member for Inkster pointed out, this government—and I've been in government now for 10 years—has been very good at. They've been very good at spinning issues and making things look good in the eyes of Manitobans.

I guess that, when the now Premier (Mr. Doer) spent 11 years in opposition, he probably did learn a few tricks of the trade from the previous Conservative government here in Manitoba. If he was a Conservative sitting in opposition for 11 years, he certainly wouldn't have lasted as leader for 11 years. He would have been taken out, I'm sure, but, well, we'll see what the future holds here.

Conservatives are a different nature. Being Conservatives, we want to see things get done. We want to see things move ahead and we want to see things get accomplished.

It appears the government of the day isn't necessarily looking at the big vision, the big picture of Manitoba. If Manitobans take the time to read legislation like Bill 30, I think they will find out exactly what this particular government is up to, Madam Deputy Speaker.

* (15:40)

The irony of this thing is here we've got a whole bunch of legislation on the table and I'm sure there's lots of very valuable legislation coming forward from the government, but we haven't even got to second reading on a lot of that legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker. We'd certainly like to get some interesting debate going on all those other pieces of legislation that are coming forward, but we haven't got to second reading on that yet. Anyway, the government of the day has called Bill 30, and Bill 30 has to do with budget. It's The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act. We call it BITSA for short.

If you really have a look at BITSA, there are a lot of bits and pieces of legislation in here, and Manitobans should be having a really hard, serious look at all those bits and pieces of legislation that is contained within Bill 30, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The one thing that should really, really get their attention, should really send the flag up the pole, if you will, is in part 1 where they talk about amending The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act. Now, if that doesn't raise a red flag with Manitobans, it should.

At the end of the day we want to find out what this government's up to, Madam Deputy Speaker. Let's go back here; let's go back not too long ago. In fact, the existing legislation says we as the government of Manitoba are to pay \$110 million down on our debt. Okay, you know, most Manitobans, they set up a budget and they realize that they've got a mortgage, and they've got some car payments to make. They have a responsibility to make that mortgage payment at the end of the month. They've got a responsibility to make that car payment at the end of the month.

You know, they do that. They organize their finances in that way so they know what they're going to be taking in. They know what they're going to have for expenses, and they know they've got some fixed costs in terms of servicing their debt.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Province of Manitoba should be no different than the average Manitoban. The government of the day should be accountable not only to themselves, but to each and every Manitoban at the end of the day. When I look at what's happened here in Manitoba since 1999, in fact, the general purpose debt of the Province back in 1999 was \$7.6 billion, but the existing legislation had a plan in place to pay down that debt.

So what happened? Let's catch up to today. In this year's budget, 2009-2010, the general purpose debt of the Province is expected to be \$11.5 billion. That's almost a \$4-billion increase in the debt of this Province. Madam Deputy Speaker, each one of us around this room and each one of our kids are going to be responsible a tremendous amount of debt. Sooner or later this debt has to be paid off, and if you have a mortgage, you know that you're paying interest on that mortgage. Quite frankly, if we look at the government budget, the debt-servicing costs and this is, again, it's just for the core government operations. I'm not talking about Crown corporations or any other types of government corporations of any such, this is just core government operations. To service the debt on the core government operations this year will take \$250 million right out of the budget—\$250 million, Madam Deputy Speaker, is just the interest cost on the core operating budget.

If you want to throw in all the other Crown corporations then, other entities that report to the government that are included in the summary budget, we are looking at debt-service costs of \$766 million—\$766 million a year interest cost that we as Manitobans are paying.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, it stands to reason if we don't make some kind of an attempt to pay off the debt and stop with our spending habit, that debt servicing cost is going to increase year after year after year. It's just something that we can't get away from as Manitobans.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me help you paint the big picture here. We know the government is big on the GAAP accounting and the summary budget, which includes all Crown corporations and all other government entities. Let's talk a little bit about that. Let's look at the total debt. Now, this is the core operations and the total debt of all those other entities that are reported under the summary budget. Nineteen ninety-nine: the total debt at that time was just under \$13.5 billion. Thirteen point five billion dollars. Ten years later, that debt is \$21.1 billion, an increase of almost \$8 billion additional debt within 10 years.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) likes to talk about net debt, and I will talk about net debt. I'm not sure what the Minister of Finance thinks he's going to sell in order to cover the debt we've got, but that's the term he likes to use. Even with net debt at \$11.5 billion, it's a huge amount of money, but at the end of the day, we as Manitobans are paying interest on \$21.1 billion of debt, \$766 million of interest every year that we can't use for social programs, health care, infrastructure and all those other things that Manitobans are looking for.

We've seen relatively good times here in the last 10 years in Manitoba, in fact, all across Canada. What prudent provinces have done and what prudent Manitobans and a lot of prudent Canadians have done, they have recognized that we're in a relatively good time. So they're getting their financial house in order and they're paying down their debt, they're paying down their mortgage, they're paying off their cars. They're not making any silly decisions about financing.

Our neighbour to the west, Saskatchewan, has paid down a huge amount of debt there. They recognize that the whole idea of having debt and

interest payments can weigh you down as an economy, so they've made that decision to pay down debt in Saskatchewan, so they're in relatively good times now, relatively—they're down to about \$3 billion or \$4 billion of debt—and their debt-service costs are quite manageable. So when the rainy day comes—like it has now, where the economy isn't quite as robust as it was—there's a bit of cushion there, Madam Deputy Speaker. The government would have a cushion to work with. Alberta, we know, has certainly had no debt for some time. They've tucked away billions of dollars in their rainy day account, so now when they've had a downturn in the economy, they've got somewhere they can go to cover off their deficit.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when we look at net debt, Manitoba—and this is the interesting fact—has more net debt than Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia combined. If the government disagrees with that, they're going to have to prove otherwise.

The other thing that a province like Alberta openly admits to, when they produce their budget for this year and they present it to the Alberta people, if they're going to be spending more than they're taking in, they tell the Alberta people, this is a deficit budget. We are spending more money than we're taking in. There's no smoke and mirrors involved, it's a straight-up decision; we are spending more than we're taking in, it's a deficit budget.

Well, if we look at the Manitoba 2009 budget, let's have a look at the core government operations here. Once we get down towards the bottom there, we talk about income—yes, total expenditure estimate, \$10.2 billion. Subtract total expenditure estimates, \$10.1 billion. I just rounded it off. But the next line is the net result for the year. Net result for the year: \$88-million loss. Now, in my mind, and I think most Manitobans', if you spend more than you take in, you've got a deficit budget and the books clearly say \$88-million deficit budget. So how does the government say, well, we've got a balanced budget? Well, here they go, and here's the broken promise, Madam Deputy Speaker, the next line: transfer to debt retirement account, \$20 million. So, the government admitted, legislation today—yesterday—said, \$110-million debt service. The budget says—this was in March—\$20-million debt service. Bill 30 today, zero. What a big change for a government in just a matter of a few weeks.

* (15:50)

So there's the broken promise on the \$20 million. Now, what else are they going to do to try and portray this as a balanced budget? They're going to transfer from the fiscal stabilization account \$110 million. Then we've got a net income of \$2 million, and the government claims that is a balanced budget, Madam Deputy Speaker, when in fact all Manitobans know that is not a balanced budget.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) really did hit a very important topic, and it's really about getting value for the money that we're spending here in the province of Manitoba. We, as Conservatives, are certainly interested in making sure that taxpayers' dollars are being used wisely and in the best interests of all Manitobans. We've seen some things that we certainly don't agree with. Obviously, the government of the day thinks it's wise to spend their money in that particular way, and maybe it leaves a good perception and a warm and fuzzy feeling for the people of Manitoba. But, in the long run, it's not in the best interests of Manitobans.

Let's look at Manitoba Public Insurance, just as an example. I've always had a pet peeve, Madam Deputy Speaker, with the vehicle registration fees. I know there's a valid reason for vehicle registration fees. Obviously, there's a cost to register vehicles and that Manitoba road users and highway users should be paying that cost to at least administer the vehicle registration fees.

Well, what we've seen in the last 10 years, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a dramatic increase in the vehicle registration fees. In fact, they're \$119 per vehicle, and that's just for a personal vehicle. We get into commercial vehicles, trucks and all that kind of thing, and vehicle registration fees are substantially higher than that. But, at the end of the day, the Province of Manitoba collects approximately \$125 million on that one little tax alone. One little tax alone, and it's a backdoor tax that many Manitobans don't even realize that it's there and that they're paying for.

We know the cost to administer the whole registration process and driver licensing program is only in the neighbourhood of \$25 million, Madam Deputy Speaker. So it's pretty clear that the actual registration fee is way out of whack with the actual cost to register those vehicles. So that's just one of those little hidden costs you see in there. You know, I don't think Manitobans would feel as bad paying

that extra tax if they knew for sure that that \$125 million was going right back into repairing the roads around the province of Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we know there's a tremendous lack of dollars for infrastructure, and we just went through the first round of the Building Canada Fund. There were requests there for eight times the dollar figure than there were actually dollars available for that. So there certainly is a need for infrastructure funding out there around the province, and it's something that's very important that has to be looked at.

So, when we look at huge sums of money like \$766 million going up the chimney in interest costs, and we're looking at a tremendous infrastructure deficit on the other side, we have to ask the government why they're making the decisions they're making and not trying to service the debt, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it's important that you have a look at Bill 30 and some of the things that are included in there. They talk about a gasoline and motive tax and changes to the taxation there. They talk about a change to The Income Tax Act, which we all know something has to be done here in Manitoba, because we are one of the highest-taxed provinces in western Canada in terms of our income tax.

Another interesting one is the mining tax, and we know the mining industry has certainly fallen on hard times here. Mining industries are certainly having a hard time finding credit to carry out operations, and we know the price of resources has certainly dropped because there's a lot less global demand for those particular resources. The industry is facing a double whammy at this particular point.

So it's good to see that the government has actually acknowledged that there are some issues with mining, and they have made a small move, at least, to correct some things in the mining tax side of things. Unfortunately, it's probably not going to have a very big impact this year for the mining industry, because there are a lot of other issues related to the mining industry that the government has to address as well, and taxation is just really one component of it, Madam Deputy Speaker.

One of the other areas in this particular piece of legislation, too, are changes to The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act. Now, we know the record the government has here in terms of recycling in

Manitoba, and, again, it's unfortunately one of the worst in Canada. So what the government, instead of trying to encourage some kind of a positive recycling program, the option for them is to create a new tax, and that's exactly what they are doing in Bill 30 here. They're making changes to the WRAP act, and placing another tax on municipalities, and they're placing a tax on garbage.

Now, when I asked the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau), who is responsible for the WRAP act, you know, how is a new tax on garbage going to help your recycling program here in Manitoba, he said, well, I don't know, that's going to come through the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger); he's going to be doing all the regulations on that.

An Honourable Member: All the hocus pocus.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, the hocus pocus, as we would say.

Well, somebody on that side of the House has got to have an explanation of how this tax on garbage is going to improve the recycling here in Manitoba, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope someone's thought this thing out. I'm not sure they have, but I'm having a hard time getting a straight answer on that one. It certainly raises an issue with municipalities when it comes to, you know, garbage. They're having quite a time dealing with garbage and regulations as it is.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when we talk about waste here in the province of Manitoba, there's another little program that's certainly caught my attention and caught many Manitobans' attention. It also has to do with Manitoba Public Insurance, and it has to deal with their enhanced driver's licence program, and I know the Province had grandeurs that this thing was going to work out very well. I know that there was a need for something to happen there.

We thought, you know, we can agree with the government; let them go ahead in trying to work through a program. But we didn't have any idea that it was going to cost \$13 million—[interjection]

Well, maybe it's not costing \$13 million because it only had 1,500 people sign up. I'm not sure. Maybe the government can come forward with us and tell us exactly what the facts are on this one, are going to be. I know the Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) has asked questions in the House several times on the enhanced identification and I haven't heard any numbers. Nobody is saying that it isn't costing \$13 million.

An Honourable Member: Where are you getting those numbers, then?

Mr. Cullen: Well, these are the numbers we've got, and if the government wants to prove otherwise, we'd certainly like to hear it.

Now we know they've hired a whole bunch of extra staff. We know people have got to get in lines to ask questions. It's far easier to get a passport here in Canada than it is to get an enhanced driver's licence in Manitoba, and we're not sure why that is. The other fact of the matter is we've only got 1,500 people signed up to go through this arduous process, and it's quite overwhelming for Manitobans. Obviously, there's an expense there. We'd like to know what it is and what are the ongoing expenses.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we know we're getting our driver's licences printed in Saskatchewan. As far as we know the enhanced driver's licences will be printed in Ontario, and if there's any difference in that we'd certainly like to hear it. But that's just, you know, in our view one place that maybe we could look at some options for Manitoba. You know, if the cost to deliver these things is going to spiral out of hand, like Saskatchewan did, you can sometimes put the brakes on and change course. We know the government can change their mind from time to time. That's just something, maybe we can get to the bottom of that and get all the facts out, and have a real day of reckoning on that one.

To me, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we talk about financial waste, we could call it, I think, are the political decisions being made on behalf of Manitoba Hydro

Madam Deputy Speaker, I brought forward a resolution last week, and the intent of the resolution was to have an open and honest dialogue about the options we have in Manitoba to get hydro-electricity from northern Manitoba down to southern Manitoba. We've got at least two, maybe three options that could be valid.

* (16:00)

I know the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) talked about Dr. Ryan. Manitoba Hydro was supposed to have a report done on Dr. Ryan and his proposal for the underwater route, but we haven't seen that from Manitoba Hydro. Yet so it's hard for us to put any judgment on that. But we do know the east-side route is certainly, from a financial standpoint alone, going to be a lot less if we put it down the east side of the province.

As I tried to point out to the minister responsible for Finance and Hydro today in question period, we have a right of way that's fairly significant right of way already, running up the Poplar River, which is about halfway to Gillam, and it's a right of way in place already. That particular right of way runs adjacent to the winter road there, so it seems to me it would make sense to, you know, if we have to widen the trail a little bit there, it probably could be done, especially when you take into account the government of the day, through Bill 31, wants to add an all-season road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

When we look at what we do as Conservatives, we look to the experts in the field and get their opinion on how they feel how things could work and what the impact would be, and we looked to Jim Collinson. Jim Collinson, a two-term president of UNESCO World Heritage Committee, has said quite clearly that a road has more environmental impact than a hydro line, Madam Deputy Speaker. So, on one hand, the government of Manitoba wants to run this road up the east side of Manitoba which will obviously have a fairly substantial impact on that particular region, but, at the same time, they don't run a hydro line on the east side of Lake Manitoba. They want to run it all the way to almost Saskatchewan and then back to Winnipeg.

You have somebody like Brian Schwartz, who has studied this issue quite extensively, and his comment is very clear as well, Madam Deputy Speaker. You take a western route west of Lake Manitoba, it will impact significantly more boreal forest than a line that runs on the east side of Manitoba, and you add in the fact that we already have a line halfway there, where the boreal forest has been removed, a swath has been cut in it. It would just make sense to save \$640 million or whatever that extra figure is going to be in terms of line development and leave it in the pockets of Manitobans, and let them invest it in our province.

What I asked in the resolution was just have an open and honest dialogue about those options. Let's put all the economics on there. Let's put all the environmental issues on the table. Let's let Manitobans have a look at it so they can have an opinion at the table, and we could have an independent review and study done on that particular issue.

We know Manitoba Hydro's going to make some developments in the north, and we're certainly happy to see some dams being constructed there, but those

things come at a cost, Madam Deputy Speaker, and Manitoba Hydro is going to have significantly more debt added to the bottom line. That debt is going to be added to our bottom line as Manitobans.

The Public Utilities Board, in their latest ruling raised that issue. They raised the flag, and they said, you know, you as Manitoba Hydro and the Province of Manitoba have to know where you're going with this. If you're going to incur another \$18 billion of debt, you have to have a way to pay that debt off.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that's exactly the same kind of parallel we have with a provincial budget. If you, as a provincial government, are going to go full steam ahead and continue to borrow money the way you are, you have to have a plan to pay off the debt. Well, we had a plan, but what Bill 30 will do, it will basically take that plan we've had in place for the last 15 years, take it all off the map and we're going to start over from scratch.

Madam Deputy Speaker, even when I go home and try to explain this to my kids, they realize that there's got to be a little common sense at the table. If you've got a car loan, I said, son, you know some day you got to pay this thing off and if you don't pay it off you know what's going to happen. They're going to come and get your car.

Maybe that's what the Finance Minister is banking on. Maybe he's going to think the creditors are going to come and melt down the Golden Boy and take it and pay some debt. I don't know. If he's so big on net debt, he's got to have some kind of thing he's going to get rid of, some kind of entity or some kind of equity that we've got here that he thinks he can pawn off to pay off debt. I don't know what he's thinking about. We do have one bridge in Letellier, I think, but I don't think he's going to get very much money for that bridge in Letellier, Madam Deputy Speaker.

What we have to be, at the end of the day as a Manitoban economy, is we have to be competitive—not just with our neighbours, not with just our provinces, but we have to be competitive globally, Madam Deputy Speaker. What you have to have to be competitive is a long-term vision of how the economy is going to work here in Manitoba. You have to have a vision of how government debt is going to be paid down, and have a vision that debt won't grow out of reality so that you're continually paying more and more interest on that particular debt.

We know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that interest rates are not going to stay low forever. If you reflect back to the 1980s, we had high, high interest rates, 15 to 20 percent interest rates. If we get into a situation like that, with the kind of debt load we've got, we're in very serious financial trouble.

I guess in terms of just trying to wrap things up here, we need some vision on behalf of the government. We need a government that has to be open and honest and be transparent with all Manitobans. We've seen a lot of misleading phrases put on the record, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's time that the government stood up for all Manitobans, had a real serious look at Bill 30. It's not too late to amend Bill 30; put back some good positive legislation in place for the best interests of not just Manitobans today, but for Manitobans for generations to come.

Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): It is indeed a pleasure for me to rise this afternoon and participate in the second reading debate of Bill 30, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009 as proposed in the House by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

The first reading of this bill took place on April 30 and we have had since then, significant debate about the budgetary initiatives of the current government. I will state on the record that I took the stand in this House and voted against the current government's 2009 budget on the basis that the bottom line was not in the best interest of Manitobans, that being an addition to the net debt of the Province, which I, as an individual, have always professed to stand on one's own two feet and not look to my children or future grandchildren to pay my way in this world.

*(16:10)

That's what this government is all about. They're looking at their kids and I hope they look them right in the eye, and their grandchildren if they have any, to say to them, I can't stand on my own two feet. I cannot provide for myself enough money so I'm going to borrow on your back, on what you are going to make in your life. So you will have to work harder, longer because I'm not prepared to do so. I'm not prepared to live within my means.

This goes without saying, is that it's recognized right across this great nation of ours that here, in Manitoba, we can't make it on our own. Because the

federal government has within its purview a formula called equalization. They've looked upon Manitoba as sinking farther and farther and farther behind other Canadians in this country. So we have seen an increase to our equalization granted by the federal government which comes from our hardworking Canadians from other provinces, and the current government has had its tin cup out and has kept saying year after year after year, more, please. More, please, because I am incapable. I am so underprivileged. I'm not willing to work any harder to do what is necessary to stand up on my own two feet.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Because Canadians are a compassionate lot right across this nation, they look upon Manitoba's government, which is currently serving us and saying, well, we understand, they understand that tough times are in Manitoba and so we will add additional money. But the additional money is not even comparative to any other position that we can correlate with. It's not our population, the consumer price index, the TSX.

Here in Manitoba, the current government crows that our economy is doing better than anywhere else in the nation. We have lower unemployment than anywhere else in the nation, and yet why, then, are we looking to our neighbours for more money, Madam Acting Speaker? It doesn't make any sense—*[interjection]* The honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) says all Canadians do contribute to that, and it is called equalization because they want to keep all Canadians availing to programs provided for by government.

But each provincial government is responsible for providing those services to its constituents. Here in Manitoba it's recognized that other Canadians are having to contribute to Manitoba because here in Manitoba, we are unable to do it for ourselves. Why? I have no idea, Madam Acting Speaker, because the government is saying one thing that our economy's doing better, our population is rising and our unemployment is low so everyone would expect that we would be doing better than other places in Canada. Then why is this province receiving more and more and more from other hardworking Canadians through equalization?

Equalization is the formula that recognizes what your performance is in your province. So, obviously, the government is putting forward a position that the facts and the figures do not support. So it speaks

volumes about this government, and what they're saying is that they can't back it up, and therefore, I can't say that the government is lying, but all I can say is that perhaps the statements made by government are not as accurate as—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. I just want to remind all members that we do have the loge that they can have a private conversation if they wish to make use of that. Thank you.

Mr. Faurshou: Thank you for that, Madam Acting Speaker.

Indeed, so let's be clear about all of this. We cannot be saying that you are doing better economically and then, on the other hand, receiving increased equalization funding from elsewhere in Canada. It just doesn't add up and anybody that wants to try and debate that, go right ahead because the bottom line speaks for itself.

Let's talk about the bottom line because right here in Bill 30 we've got the implementation of a budget; a budget that was coined by this government as steady and balanced. Balanced means that you are not adding to or subtracting from what you had the year before. You've got exactly the same. It's in balance, but Madam Acting Speaker, that is not the case. The government's own bottom line is—they were introducing the legislation today, are talking about the long-term debt of the Province, and we are, in fact, seeing that our net debt in this province of ours as increasing.

We are most fortunate to have a climate of low interest rate otherwise this government would be, without a question, adding more debt that we currently are. It's really something to behold.

Madam Acting Speaker, the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) continues to cackle away and yet there has been opportunity after opportunity to stand this afternoon in this Chamber and put officially on the record his comments, but he's afraid. But I'm not going to say he's a coward or anything of that nature, but he is sitting in his seat. He has been allowed the opportunity and has not taken advantage of it, and so, therefore, he must either be ashamed of what he's saying because he's not willing to put it on the record. So he continues, as I say, to cackle from his seat, without the intestinal fortitude to put his own words on the record because maybe he sometimes might have to justify that particular record and his statements to his

constituents, and we see the black-and-white figures before us today.

We don't have to go too far back into the history books to talk about a glaring disadvantage here in the province of Manitoba, and that being the investment in post-secondary education here in the province. We have official Canadian statistics in regard to a comparison, a very clear comparison, apples to apples.

I know the honourable First Minister, this First Minister (Mr. Doer) made a statement that all of us heard in the Chamber, and then it was repeated by the honourable Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford), and that being that the calculations did not include the capital investment in our universities. Well thank goodness these figures do not include the capital investment because all across this nation, you go to Alberta, you go to B.C., Saskatchewan, Ontario, all of our neighbours, they are investing even more in capital in their post-secondary educational institutions than we are.

So this government might thank their lucky stars that Stats Canada has chosen not to include the capital investment, but this government is just woefully inadequate in their knowledge of finances that the minister would, in fact, stand and crow about the capital investment. She actually should be extraordinarily embarrassed about the level of investment in capital for the universities and colleges here in the province of Manitoba.

One asterisk, that perhaps I might enlighten the honourable members opposite, that Stats Canada is using July 2000 population estimates and 2008 expenditures. If, in fact, this government is accurate in its population growth in this province and we factored in the additional population and then recalculated, we might beat out New Brunswick as No. 10 and this government just doesn't get it, just doesn't get it.

*(16:20)

In addition to that, we here in the province of Manitoba have the lowest percentage of any province in the nation as a percent of population with post-secondary education. Well documented. I'm afraid that this government is not going in the right direction, in fact, we're going in the opposite direction.

Another factor into this, how this government plays a shell game and tries to confuse the population of Manitoba. But I will say Manitobans are a lot

smarter than this government gives them credit for. Let's just take a look at adult education in this province, adult education. Adult education—*[interjection]* Well, the honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) continues to cackle, and I know you, Madam Acting Speaker, have asked him to go to the loge, and he hasn't taken up your suggestion. But I will make that very clear that I'm looking forward to him standing next when my time has lapsed.

So I would like to express how this government plays a shell game with finances in regard to the adult learning centres here in the province of Manitoba. Now, the adult learning centres here in the province of Manitoba are funded, and funded primarily by Competitiveness, Training and Trade. Now, we know that the level of funding that has been going forward has been barely adequate—barely adequate. So we have adult learning centres that are very, very close to deficit on an annual basis. Well, the policy by this government—now, not too many people really even knew this, and I will say, inclusive of the ministers opposite, when I asked the questions during Estimates, were unaware that if an adult learning centre in Manitoba has a deficit, that deficit cannot be carried over. It has to be satisfied. It has to be paid off, and what, by legislation, is the body that is responsible for that deficit? It's the accrediting body of the adult learning centre, and in for most cases, it is the school division in which the adult learning centres are located.

Well, in Portage la Prairie, the Portage la Prairie School Division has listened to the advice. In fact, it's more than advice; it is a directive from the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) that they will not increase school taxes if they are to get the greatest level of support from the provincial government. So the Portage la Prairie School Division has not raised taxes the last two years. But how, then, if they are not to raise taxes, can they possibly pay for a deficit in their adult learning centre? The answer is, they can't. They can't satisfy the deficit of the adult learning centre in Portage la Prairie.

So what have they done? They have served notice to the adult learning centre in Portage la Prairie that they cannot risk being responsible for a debt, and, therefore, they are no longer going to be the accrediting body for the Portage adult learning centre. So now the Portage adult learning centre is now looking for an accrediting body for persons taking courses there,

that they can get provincial recognition, because adult learning centres are not recognized as an accredited body and cannot give out high school diplomas. So they need an existing institution to do so. So they're out shopping now for an accrediting body. But this is the same way all the way across this province. So where are they going to find an accrediting body?

The shell game continues. There is funding from one department, an operational mandate from another department, and then another department is responsible for the school divisions, which now we all learn are responsible for the debt of the other two departments: Competitiveness, Trade and Training, and Advanced Education. The Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) was, to my knowledge, unaware that the school divisions to which he's responsible for were now saddled with this additional burden from his respective colleagues in Cabinet.

This is how government looks upon education. They'll talk about education as being very important, but when it comes to funding, it's a pass-the-buck type of operation. Hopefully, somewhere along the line, somebody else will pick up the tab or someone else will forget about it, because perhaps they believe that media is slightly lazy, they won't follow the shells under the cups and might not get to the bottom of it. Hopefully, Madam Acting Speaker, we on this side of the House, in opposition, can make people aware of the shell game that this government is playing with the future of Manitobans, because, indeed, education is the future.

Prosperity is based upon education. There is no more prudent investment in the future generation than a dollar expended towards education. All of whom we are and all of whom we aspire to be is based upon our education, and, unfortunately, this government only pays lip service to the educational needs of our young people and those that are wanting to improve themselves through education.

This government also says that they want to see more persons get a post-secondary education and, again, crow about the level of support for students through bursaries and loans. Yet persons want to go to school and they can't get into school because of the long waiting lists. If one were to check out how long it is to get into nursing or how long it is to get into teaching or how long it is to get into any other profession, the wait list is one year, two years, three years or four years, in some cases, in order to secure a spot in our colleges and universities. I believe that

speaks volumes of the performance of this government on post-secondary education.

Also, too, we want to look to seeing young people stay in this province. I don't know why the government would not track, after graduation, the students' careers and employment opportunities, because I think we'd all be very, very surprised to learn how many students are taking up employments outside of Manitoba.

In fact, I had the opportunity not so long ago to sit down with 10 nurses who were graduating with their Bachelor of Nursing degrees. It is a good thing that they were graduating. It was a great thing to listen to their enthusiasm, and they're such learned individuals of their profession. But, you know, nine of those 10 were leaving the province, nine of 10. One was staying for a term position, waiting for her fiancé to graduate from computer science, and upon graduation he had potential employment in California. So 10 for 10, this government is at. If one works on averages, the investment in those students graduating, more than 70 percent of the cost of their education was borne by Manitoba taxpayers. All we have to do is do the calculation on what each program is costing is.

* (16:30)

Let's look at the class from dentistry. They graduated 25 individuals. How many of that graduating class of 25 stayed in Manitoba? I hear silence from opposites. Well, I'll answer the question. Madam Acting Speaker, 23 left the province, two stayed.

This is this government's ideas of prudent investment in Manitoba's future. You're driving away our best and our brightest to other careers outside of our province. I would like this government, instead of shaking their head, to say it's not true; to actually come forward with the statistics as to where persons are practising their new education skills, and then we'd all know for sure, and let's adjust accordingly.

Madam Acting Speaker, shortly after my election to this Chamber, I put forward the policy position that I believe we should invest in our future and make it so that the persons want to stay in our province, not only because they believe it is a nice place, but also financially rewarding to stay here as well. I made the proposal that the education or post-secondary educational institutions should, in fact, be covered by student loans 100 percent. Every single person going to school here in the province of

Manitoba be eligible for a student loan, regardless of their background, regardless of their bursary positions, regardless of any other factor at present, as long as they were enrolled and maintaining a grade point average that would see them through to graduation, that they would be supported through a student loan.

Upon graduation, that student loan would be either required to be fully repaid if the individual was graduating and leaving the province, or, if they chose to stay in the province, that student loan would be forgiven through tax credits over a course of a number of years. So, basically, our province was going to be benefiting 100 percent by the individual staying in the province. Right now, this government crowded for nine years they were holding tuition down, but the cost of education continued to go up, so all that was happening was that we as taxpayers were investing in more and more and more money in individuals that end up leaving the province. That is not prudent money management.

This government actually did listen to my position on education tuition tax credits and have implemented—I'm pleased that the government did take an idea from the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie and start to put it into play, but, again, this government only goes in half measures, enough to capture a headline but let's follow through, let's make it 100 percent. Let's make it 100 percent and try and capture the students that are still leaving the province and make it so they will want to stay here in Manitoba, not only because it's a great place to live, but also that it's financially rewarding for this government and themselves.

I don't know how much time I have remaining. I've only just brushed the surface of the concerns that I have regarding Bill 30, because it does implement a number of different taxes here in the province of Manitoba. I know this government crows about one thing, but they say they're giving you money back or not taking as much money out of the right-hand pocket. In the meantime, they've got their other hand digging deeper into the other pocket. The most glaring example in the headlines that were made here throughout the province that this government was no longer going to charge Manitobans an entry fee into provincial parks. Madam Acting Speaker, you only have to look at the next line, the very, very next line in Conservation here, whereby the reduction from \$12.557 million in park fees last year being reduced to 9.05 this year on the projection of estimates of revenue, but what is happening to the operations fees

and cost recovery? Those are the campsites; that is the garbage collection. What is happening to those particular fees and costs? Well, last year's revenue was \$4.944 million. What's happening this year? They're estimating \$8.886 million, almost a doubling in their cost recovery on fees charged within the parks. A net, Madam Acting Speaker, this is an increase in the costs to Manitobans visiting our parks—an increase. Yet they crowed about no park fees at the gate, but just you wait to go around the corner and we'll get you.

Their own figure states so. There's not a person over there that can shake their head, because it's in their own document. The honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) is shaking his head. Perhaps you might want to pass the budget book over to him, he can take a look at the actual figures of revenue under Conservation. I would very much encourage him to do so.

I've just wanted to move further into the mandate here, because there is a change. We've already spoken about the additional tax grab that we have been asking questions about here in the House regarding the photo radar here and the placement thereof in areas of construction where the roadway is not encumbered and workers are not present and still the photo radar has been active. Once the individual has got the ticket, in order to go to court, this government has seen fit to change The Summary Convictions Act, increasing from 35 to 45 the prescribed assessment of court costs. This government is really, really out to take any and all opportunity to fleece Manitobans and then go crowing about it to the news media and to garner a headline that they believe is positive, but then turn around and chuckle and say, Manitobans sure are suckers for our government because we know how to extract additional money from them. Indeed, that's what this government is doing, because the revenue that this government is expecting from Manitobans cumulatively through all of the expectations that are taking place is really truly phenomenal.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

* (16:40)

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I welcome the opportunity today to speak to Bill 30, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009. I understand that this is a bill that encompasses a lot of different changes that have been brought in in the budget that need to be enacted.

What I find particularly interesting in this bill is not the first entry into the explanatory note, not even on the first page, Madam Acting Speaker, but on the second page, where—and I think this is very telling—when it says: suspends, for the 2009-10 fiscal year and the next two fiscal years, annual transfers to the debt retirement account, accompanied by Part 3 of The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act.

Again, I'll speak to that because that is a misnomer for the name of that bill because, as we know, it is not a balanced budget.

In these years, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) may make such transfers to that account as he considers feasible.

So what this entry into the explanatory note in this bill does is give sole discretion to the Minister of Finance to decide whether or not he will or will not pay down debt in the next two to three years, Madam Acting Speaker. I think that's quite dangerous. It's dangerous to allow this Minister of Finance to have his hands on the button, so to speak, when you're talking about the debt repayment in the Province of Manitoba.

But, Madam Acting Speaker, I want to just sort of reflect on how it is that we came to be in a position where this has to be brought forward. What has happened is, over a time period when this government has been in government, they have had unprecedented amounts of money coming from the federal government, unprecedented amounts coming from the federal government every year. Times have been good until the last year, year and a half, two years. Times have been good. So when the money is coming in and times are good, just like we all know—when times are good in our own financial lives and we're making money, we should save some money, save some money. We should look at fixing the things that need to be fixed while we've got the money, fixing the roof while the sun shines. We look at using that money to pay down the debt, to manage the fiscal priorities of the Province and yet be able to save some money for when times become not so good, as we have entered into that time right now. We need to reflect on how it is we got to the position that we have to have this Bill 30 and some of the provisions in it.

I'd like to just say that this government campaigned on balanced budget legislation in the 2007 election. They didn't go to the electorate and say, you know what, elect us because we're going to

rip apart balanced budget legislation. We're going to then not pay down the debt. We're going to give ourselves the ability to not pay down the debt for three years. Madam Acting Speaker, we're going to borrow—actually, we went in the budget from promising to pay down \$20 million of debt and then just a few weeks later to saying, well, no, we're not going to pay down debt for three years. I don't believe anybody in this province saw that on their campaign brochures, Madam Acting Speaker. The people of Manitoba were duped by this government. They did not know that this is what was going to happen with this government, that they were going to completely tear apart the balanced budget legislation, give themselves a blank cheque to write themselves monies for the next three years and not pay down the debt in this particular time.

This could have been avoidable if they had managed their spending priorities with the unprecedented amount of money that came from the federal government, we would not be finding ourselves in this position, or Manitobans would not be finding themselves in the position that this government puts them in today. Last year we saw the NDP introduce changes to the balanced budget legislation, Bill 38, which then allowed them not to balance their operating budget each year, and instead, just roll it over into four-year averages. Now, we know that this was an unpopular move. This was an unpopular bill with Manitobans. Many Manitobans came out to speak at committee and told the government they didn't think this was prudent. They didn't think it was sound management of the provincial dollars. When we're talking about the money that the government manages, let's be very clear: it's not their money, but they have been given the responsibility to manage the money for Manitobans. It's the money that belongs to the hardworking Manitobans in this province who have asked this government to manage in a prudent, fiscally responsible way.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Yet this has not happened. That's why Manitobans came out to speak at committee on Bill 38, because they didn't believe that they heard anything on their campaign literature about breaking the balanced budget legislation and they came out to speak against this. I remember Mr. Clayton Manness, two MLAs ago for Morris, who spoke very intelligently on this issue because he had been in government when balanced budget legislation was brought forward. He has subsequently also warned

that this year the government might be able to scrape through with their budget, but he's warning that future budgets are going to be very difficult for this government, Mr. Speaker.

But it just defies logic how you don't campaign on tearing apart balanced budget legislation—in fact, you campaigned on keeping balanced budget legislation—then as soon as you get elected, you break that campaign promise. You repeal balanced budget legislation and allow yourself to only balance the budgets over a rolling average of four years.

Then, Mr. Speaker, in this budget, in budget 2009, instead of making the legislated \$110-million payment against debt—that they just put into their Bill 38, their new unbalanced budget legislation—they would instead be reducing their minimum debt payment to \$20 million. That raised some red flags with Manitobans. Okay, why now are we having to reduce our debt payment? That wasn't enough. That wasn't enough. Just weeks after that, after their budget, they now bring in a bill that gives the Finance Minister the authority to determine if he's going to pay down the debt for the next three years or how much he's going to put into that.

I'd just like to ask the Finance Minister how many people in this province came to him and said, Mr. Finance Minister, I want you to not balance the budget for the next three years. It just defies logic, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe that there'd be one person that would come forward and say, you know, balanced budget legislation's a real bad idea; I think you should give yourself the legal authority to not pay the debt down if you don't want to. Now, I'd sure like it if somebody came to me and said, you know, I think I'm just going to give you—I'm going to write a bill that says, you know, Mavis, if you don't want to pay your bills, you don't have to. That just doesn't make any sense, does it?

Maybe we would kind of like that for the short term, but it doesn't work in the long term. We all know that. We all know it's fine for the short term. It's fine for the short term, but it's not good for the long term. As mature, responsible people, we recognize that. When we were children, we couldn't manage the need for instant gratification; we had to do things right now because we just had to do it. But, as we grew older, we realized there's a better way to do things. You recognize, with maturity and responsibility, that you can't have that because there are consequences into the future. So there is a maturity here of recognizing what is going to happen

in the future. It's not just about now, Mr. Speaker; it's about what happens in the future.

I listened to the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) as he was using the example that he did about people saying to their children—if parents say to their children and their grandchildren, I really don't think that I want to look after myself, so I'm going to not do that. I'm going to just leave my debt to you, and you're going to have to look after it because I don't want to. If I thought of that, if I thought of how hard my parents worked, so that I would not be saddled with their debt—that's the message I want to send to my children. I want to take care of myself so that I can pass on something better to you so that you are not saddled with my debt.

* (16:50)

But not this government. That's not the way they see things, but I noticed that, when the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) was saying that, every member on the opposite side of the House put their head down, Mr. Speaker. They put their head down because they were ashamed. They recognized that he was right.

When we talk about paying down the debt, here we sit in the province of Manitoba right now with a \$21-billion debt. That's \$8 billion more than it was in 1999. That is total mismanagement, mismanagement of the funds, because they have had so much money coming in from Ottawa, from the federal government every year. They haven't been able to manage their spending priorities. It's about priorities. If the priority is to keep the money, don't pay down the debt, and here's what we're going to do: we're going to make sure all of the interest groups that support us are going to get a little bit of the money. Everybody's going to get a little bit of this, so it's quid pro quo. Right? If we help you, you help us. Isn't that the way it goes? There's always going to be that. We can just imagine, imagine the spending that's going to be going on over the next three years by this government.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that we do have a recession, so that we recognize that there is stimulation with injecting some dollars into the economy. We understand that, but it's the way it's done and to whom the money is provided that we must take a very close look at. This government has the responsibility to protect the interests of all Manitobans and not their own political interests, and that is exactly what they are doing with this bill. It has nothing to do what's good for Manitobans, but

everything to do what's good for the NDP and their supporters.

That's the real sad part of this. That is the real sad part of this bill. We can imagine, as we run up to the 2011 election, how much money this government will be spending, and whom they are going to be spending it with, Mr. Speaker. Also, I want to emphasize again the responsibility of running the province for all Manitobans, not just for their own political parties and governing for the best interests of the future, and they're not doing that. They're not looking to the future. They never look to the future. They only look to tomorrow. They only look till tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues that are going to be coming up, and I think that, if the government hasn't reflected on this, then they should. There has been a huge hit to the economy as we all know, and what does that say to pension plans? What does that say to seniors, people that are going to be retiring? We also know that there are a huge number of baby boomers going to be hitting that era of pre-retirement and retirement and pensions. That is going to be something that has to be looked at now and should have been looked at before, but we know that just spending the money now isn't being prudent as to be looking into the future. We also know the health-care costs are going to be escalating because of the population, the demographics of the population.

Unfortunately, this government tends to spend all for political reasons. Everything is political with them. It's all about getting themselves in office, and it has nothing to do with the future of Manitobans. We see this all the time. There're so many different ways they could actually prioritize their spending, Mr. Speaker.

We see wasteful spending on an east-side line—east-side hydro line which we have encouraged them to do on the east side, and, instead, they want to go the longer route around the west side of the province, Mr. Speaker. I think about this, and I think how anybody could look at a map and see how ridiculous this is. Obviously, it's going to cost a lot more money, and there's the line-loss factor, but they keep saying it's about the boreal forest.

Nobody is against conserving nature; that's not the issue. But, if you're going to run a road down the east side of the province and then claim that this doesn't impact on the environment, I think that you had better think again. I don't know if you know

much about building roads, Mr. Speaker, but do you know about how much blasting that has to go on in the northern shield? Do you know how much dynamite has to be done to blast to build roads? Do you know how much swampy areas have to be filled in? Do you know how much that's going to impact on the environment? Yet they say it's going to have no impact on the environment.

I think that it just defies logic that they cannot see what the experts are telling them. The experts are telling them, you can do this. You can build the hydro line down the east side, and it's not going to have the negative effect that you think it will. It's not going to have as much of a negative effect on the ability to have the preservation of the boreal forest.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just reiterate: we didn't need to get to the position where we needed to have a bill which allows the Finance Minister to not balance the budget for three years. That could have been avoided by prudent management and priority spending, rather than spending where they thought it was going to do the best good for themselves. That's the biggest problem with this government: their priority is NDP first, Manitobans last. That is the

priority of this government, and that is absolutely wrong.

You know, they have no plan for the future. They have no plan. They're just saying, okay, we'll do this until 2011-2012 because if they don't get elected, they don't care, right? They don't care. If they don't get elected, they don't have to deal with this. But then, if they do get elected, then there's a bit of a—well, maybe then we can change the law again in 2012. Is that the plan? Is that the plan again?

So, if we get elected, yes, if we get elected, it's just the same old story. The NDP has a big party, throws a big party, makes a big mess, and the Manitobans say, okay, we've got to kick these guys out, bring in the Tories. The Tories come in and we have to clean up the mess they left. It happens every time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) will have eight minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 12, 2009

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