

**Fourth 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**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 24, 2010

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 12—The Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Fund Act

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation):** I move, seconded by the honourable member from Minto, that Bill 12, The Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Fund Act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable Minister for Conservation, seconded by the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Swan), that Bill 12, The Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Fund Act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Blaikie:** This bill is to establish the Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Fund Act, which is a fund designed to support the project on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to secure a UNESCO World Heritage Site in that part of Manitoba.

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

### PETITIONS

#### Long-Term Care Facilities— Morden and Winkler

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Many seniors from the Morden and Winkler area are currently patients in Boundary Trails Health Centre while they wait for placement in local personal care homes.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Betty Guenther, Mildred Andersen, Chris Andersen and many, many others.

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

#### PTH 15—Traffic Signals

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by Glen Desautels, Kelly Zacharias, Glen Nolin, and many, many other Manitobans.

#### **Ophthalmology Services—Swan River**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by Myrna Garreck, Terry Chaykoski, Delores Chaykoski and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

#### **MPI—Independent Claim Representative**

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

And these are the reasons for the petition:

Several citizens of Manitoba who have been injured in automobile accidents are being denied by Manitoba Public Insurance the right to choose who may be their agent or personal representative when appealing a decision to terminate benefits.

This has created serious challenges for claimants who feel that they need someone to represent them. The choices suggested by MPI: a lawyer, claimant adviser, or someone of their choosing, such as a family member or friend, who is not being paid.

MPI suggests it's the Law Society which is advising it not to accept independent claim representatives who are paid a fee. However, The Legal Profession Act specifies that only claims founded in tort are subject to this provision regarding the unlawful practice of law and The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act confirms that the claims for compensation are not—are non-tort claim.

Furthermore, neither The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act nor MPI's Web site specifies that claimants may be hired—may not be hired an independent claims representative who is not a lawyer. Consequently, claimants feel that their rights have been arbitrarily discriminated against.

Claimants in all provinces under similar non-tort Workers Compensation legislation and claimants in other provinces with public auto insurers are allowed the right to choose and/or hire an independent claims representative.

As MPI is a Crown corporation and a monopoly, it has a profound duty of care to ensure that citizens' rights and freedoms are not discriminated against.

\* (13:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act to consider introducing MPI-instructing MPI to allow claimants the right to select an independent claim representative of their choosing, whether paid or unpaid, whether a lawyer or non-lawyer, as claimants with similar claims in other provinces are permitted to do.

And this petition is signed by Alex Oyas, Reg St. Doming and Angela Albert and many, many more fine Manitobans.

#### **Education Funding**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

And this petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by Gillian Woodfield, Morris Silver, C. Morrison and many, many other concerned Manitobans.

#### **Westbrook Medical Clinic**

**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:

Walk-in medical clinics provide a valuable health-care service.

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

And we petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by I. Holiday, T. Reimer and M. Reimer, and many, many other fine Manitobans.

#### **Waste-Water Ejector Systems**

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

In early 2009 the provincial government announced that it was reviewing the Onsite Wastewater Management Systems regulations under The Environment Act.

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

The updated regulations includes a prohibition on the installation of new waste-water ejectors and the elimination of existing waste-water ejectors at the time of any property transfer.

Questions have been raised about the lack of scientific basis for these changes, as a Manitoba Conservation official stated in the October 8th, 2009, edition of the *Manitoba Co-operator*, "Have We Done a Specific Study? No."

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately placing the recent changes on the Onsite Wastewater Management Systems Regulation under The Environment Act on hold until such time that we can review—that a review can take place to ensure that they are based on sound science.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider implementing the prohibition on waste-water ejector systems on a case-by-case basis as determined by environmental need in ecologically sensitive areas.

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

And this petition is signed by Larry Oakden, Alvin Zimmer, Gail Zimmer and many, many others.

### Bipole III

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by Guy Rouire, Cheryl Lehmann, Dwayne Schulz and many, many more concerned Manitobans.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today students from Red River Community College under the direction of Marianne Cerilli, former MLA for Radisson, who are the guests of the honourable Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino).

And also in the public gallery, we have from HBNI-ITV System out of Fairholme School 21 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Evelyn Maendel.

This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou).

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Budget Projected Deficit

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Starting in 1998 and carrying on for the decade that followed, we saw dramatic increases in federal transfer payments and a robust Canadian economy.

Mr. Speaker, predictably, that sort of growth was not going to go on forever, that run didn't last and

here we are today with budget projections of over \$2 billion in deficits over the next half decade under this NDP government.

Will this Premier, who was Finance Minister for the past 10 years, take any personal responsibility whatsoever for his complete and total failure to plan for this predictable downturn?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, we were very proud to balance the budget 10 times over the last decade, and if the member read the budget yesterday, he would note that as we move forward with this plan, this plan to invest in key services like health, like education, like infrastructure, like services to families, with this plan to stimulate the economy and create 29,000 jobs next year, with this plan to manage government expenditure by putting the focus on key services while holding the line and actually reducing the departments, spend with a plan to rebalance the budget within five years while keeping Manitoba one of the most affordable places to live.

He will note that we will be paying down the debt more aggressively than in the past; \$600 million for a net \$1.4-billion difference; \$600 million adding error.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where he's coming from with some of the statements that he's just made. Last year, at this time, he predicted a balanced budget; nine months later, it turned out he was \$600 million off. He's got no credibility when it comes to five-year projections, never mind one-year projections, and he completely and totally failed as Finance Minister to plan for a predicted downturn the way other provinces did who paid down debt in the good times. He did the opposite; he built up the debt. Today, the debt is at a record level—over \$23 billion—no contingency for rising interest rates predicted by the Bank of Canada.

Will he, today, try to—will he stop his practice of trying to blame others? Will he take responsibility for his complete and total failure to plan for this predictable downturn?

\* (13:50)

**Mr. Selinger:** The Fiscal Stabilization Fund last year stood at its highest level ever in the history of the province, more than two and a half times—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Let's give the honourable minister an opportunity to answer. One question's

already been raised. We'll deal with one question at a time.

The honourable minister has the floor.

**Mr. Selinger:** As I was saying, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund stood at over \$800 million, more than two and a half times the \$264 million that members had left us. We didn't sell off any Crown corporations to do that. We built it up during the good times to have it available during the tough times, which is why we'll be using this Fiscal Stabilization Fund to pay down debt as we use operating revenues to sustain vital services inside Manitoba.

That's a plan that will move us forward in this province with more assets, better educated people, and will return us to balance without the horrible cuts that the members made in the '90s when they—need I mention this?—laid off doctors and nurses, laid off teachers, put people at risk, put people on the unemployment rolls. That's not the era we want to return to. We know that approach failed. We have a better plan for Manitoba, one that will grow the economy.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, in 1998, the Canadian economy started to take off and, in the interests of not being partisan, the federal Liberal government started to restore transfer payments in 1998. That's what he inherited then. He spent the next 10 years squandering it, and today we find ourselves in the position of half a decade of projected deficits, half a decade of gloom and doom, caused by his failure to plan.

Responsible finance ministers all over the world, Mr. Speaker, know that you hope for the best but plan for the worst. All he did was hope for the best; he failed to plan for the worst. He failed to plan for this downturn, and now seniors are paying the price, now Manitobans across Manitoba are paying the price for his failure.

Will he stop passing the buck and will he show some leadership today and acknowledge personal responsibility for the terrible financial situation we now find ourselves in?

**Mr. Selinger:** We acknowledge we've had six credit rating upgrades in the last decade. That's very significant. We acknowledge that the debt as a proportion of the economy has shrunk from 33 percent when members opposite were in office down to just shy of 27 percent today. We acknowledge that they paid 13.5 cents on the dollar

in their budgets for the debt and our contribution to paying down the debt today is 6 cents on the dollar.

Yes, things have gotten better in the last decade, and they will get better in the next five years as we follow our five-year plan to generate jobs, build hard assets, educate our citizens, and do it in a responsible way that is affordable and keeps Manitoba moving forward.

### **Balanced Budget Legislation Government Adherence**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, the real problem that this NDP government has is a spending problem, and in order to further fund their spending habit, they now need to change legislation to do it. Balanced budget legislation was put in place to protect Manitobans from a government like this one with an out-of-control spending problem.

Mr. Speaker, why has this NDP government chosen to further fuel their spending problem by gutting balanced budget legislation rather than do the prudent thing and get their spending habit under control?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, if we followed the example of the Conservatives during the last recession, we would see higher taxes, we would see people losing their jobs, we would see less nurses and doctors. All we have to do is look at their record. We have to look at their spending record and we have to look at their record of cutting. It was a cruel budget that hurt many, many people.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken a different approach. We have taken an approach of putting in place a five-year plan, a five-year plan that will invest in vital front-line services, stimulate economic growth, manage government spending, restore balance, and maintain Manitoba's affordability.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans know that this government has a spending problem, and rather than choose to do the prudent thing and get their habit in control, instead they have chosen to change their laws to allow them to continue down this destructive road of overspending.

Mr. Speaker, why won't this minister address the real problem, their spending problem, rather than force Manitoba taxpayers to foot the bill for their destructive spending habit?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is really interesting. Yesterday they had a whole bunch of

petitions and questions where they wanted us to spend more money. Yesterday was a spend day, today's a cut day for the members opposite. They can't make up their mind what they want to do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've listened to Manitobans and Manitobans have said they don't want to go through the '90s again. They don't want to see the cuts that they saw in the '90s, and Manitobans want us to maintain vital front-line services. And Manitobans—and we are listening to Manitobans to make sure that Manitoba stays affordable and that we restore to balance over a period of time, not one year and have dramatic cuts.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the real priorities of this government: wasting \$640 million of Manitoba taxpayers' money on a west-side bipole line; \$350 million on the removal of nitrogen from waste water in Winnipeg. The list goes on, and that's their priority. It's nothing but waste and overspending on unnecessary things.

Mr. Speaker, future generations of Manitobans don't deserve to be left to foot the bill for this government's inability to get their fiscal house in order. Will they agree to do the right thing today and curb their spending habit before future generations are forced to foot the bill for their spending problem?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we know what the Tories would do, just from that comment. We know what the Tories would do. They would cut health care, they would cut stimulus, and they would raise taxes, and they would sell Hydro. Just as they did in the '90s, they sold a Crown corporation to balance—they would sell Hydro.

And the members opposite should tell the truth or they should look at the budget. They know full well that the \$600 million that they are talking about the west side is not in this budget. The spending on that is a Hydro spending, and it won't happen this year. The members opposite are going to roll the dice on a \$20-billion sale. They don't care about revenues or generating revenues for Manitoba; they roll the dice and [*inaudible*] it all down.

### **Balanced Budget Legislation Government Adherence**

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** In 1995 in this province, a landmark piece of legislation was introduced, the balanced budget and taxpayer protection bill. At the time, Mr. Speaker, NDP members, including many members opposite, fought that bill. They opposed it.



They criticized it. And then by 1999 the then-NDP leader, Gary Doer, brought his party into the modern age and promised that he would keep the balanced budget law—the new balanced budget, for all Manitobans. He did it in spite of the opposition of his party.

Can the new Premier now confirm, with Mr. Doer out of the way, that the old socialist NDP is back with a vengeance?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, what I can confirm is we have a plan to move Manitoba forward based on listening to Manitobans. They have told us very clearly they do not want to go back to the dark days of the '90s when people were being laid off. They don't want to go back to the dark days of the '90s when there were welfare cheat lines out there. They don't want to go back to the dark days of the '90s when young people were sent out of school—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I'm sorry, I can't hear the honourable member. Order. Let's have a little decorum, please. Order. Let's have a little decorum here.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

\*(14:00)

**Mr. Selinger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People of the public have told us they want us to invest in priority services: health care, education, services to families and children, infrastructure, justice. They've told us they want us to keep people working. This budget has \$1.8 billion of stimulus which will generate 29,000 jobs in this province. This budget will manage expenditure by reducing it or keeping it flat in 11 departments while focussing in on key priorities. And Mr. Speaker, we will restore balance over five years while keeping Manitoba one of the most affordable places to live in the country.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the other thing that Manitobans have said clearly in these difficult times is they want the government to cut waste and mismanagement, to get rid of waste, to get rid of some of the unnecessary spending that this government is bound and determined to pursue: \$640 million in waste on the west-side line, \$350 million to defy the advice of the scientists on Lake Winnipeg, and millions of dollars more in bureaucracy at the bloated WRHA. Those are their priorities. They're not the priorities of Manitobans.

Why is this Premier putting at risk front-line services by building up a massive debt, just like the NDP used to do before the days when they at least paid lip-service to balanced budgets, which they no longer do, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Selinger:** The debt during this recession is far lower than when the members had the government controls. They had a higher debt-per-GDP ratio. They spent 13.5 cents on the debt in every budget; we're spending 6 cents.

And yes, the members opposite, they want to roll the dice on \$20 billion of export revenues that are coming from the United States. They want to roll the dice on that and damage a world-class opportunity to have a UNESCO World Heritage Site that—we know they're reckless. We know they don't care. They just want to score political points.

We want to build Manitoba. We want to build Manitoba for the future of all Manitobans, and that's what we're going to do.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as Mr. Schroeder, the former NDP Finance Minister and chair of Hydro confirmed at committee only two weeks ago, there is a single document that is there to justify that decision, and that document says that the west-side environmental issues are more significant than the east-side issues. Everything he says—everything they say about threats to power sales are completely made up, completely fictitious, completely false.

We want to get the line built a year ahead by going down the shorter, cheaper, cleaner, more environmentally friendly east side, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're going to do. If they reversed their decision today, we can get it done a year early, get the power flowing, save hundreds of millions of dollars, get this province on track, growing our way out of it.

I want to ask this Premier: Why is he so bound and determined to squander the future of this province on wasteful spending, and can he confirm once and for all that they've completely discarded any commitment to balanced budgets, as the Finance Minister said yesterday to the media?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to roll the dice in the foreign market on our hydro export revenues. Our customers have told us they want a clean, highly reputable, reliable source of energy. Members opposite want to put that at risk. They want to take Hydro and make it a subject of

international controversy, which will lower the price for our product, if anybody will buy it at all. That's a \$20-billion roll of the dice.

The members opposite may want to do that in opposition, but I can tell you, when you're in government you don't take those kinds of risks. You do the responsible thing. You do what's best for Manitobans. You do what we have to do, build more hydro, do it in a reliable way and maintain a world-class opportunity for a UNESCO Heritage Site. That's what we'll do and that'll be the future of Manitoba.

### **Budget Projected Deficit**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** What we want to do, Mr. Speaker, is save Manitoba before they spend all of their money through Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier, the former Minister of Finance for the last decade, had a chance to do the responsible thing and save money during the good years to help pay for the tougher times and ensure that services would continue to be delivered to those that need them, but instead he chose to spend it. Now Manitobans are left to foot the bill for his government's spending problem.

Mr. Speaker, projected growth for next year is 2.5 percent, yet projected spending is expected to be double that, some 5.2 percent. How can this minister justify a double-spending double the rate of growth? Does she not see that there is a serious problem here?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** I'm—the—and unless the members can't read, I'm very proud of our record and how we did, in fact, put more money into fiscal stabilization plan in order to meet a time like this, where there is now over \$800 million in that plan. There has never been that much before, Mr. Speaker, and we did not have to sell a Crown corporation to put that money into that fund.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite would just say, cut, don't spend. Our plan is different. We tabled yesterday a five-year economic plan and I will not apologize for investing in front-line vital services, in health care, in education, in training. I will not apologize for spending money on stimulus. You know, the members opposite all want projects in their area but they don't want us to spend money. You can't—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Spending, Mr. Speaker, at a rate double of that of expected growth is not prudent fiscal management for this province and it's why we're in the difficult position that we're in under this NDP government today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that this Minister of Finance has inherited this problem from her boss but it's still her responsibility to protect Manitobans from a Premier that has a serious spending problem.

Mr. Speaker, will she admit that had the former Minister of Finance taken steps over the last decade to save for the tougher times that Manitobans wouldn't be faced with the kinds of deficits that we are faced with today?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Speaker, we have the second lowest expenditure growth of all jurisdictions during this time.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite would like—you can tell from these comments what the members opposite would do. We're saying that we are spending more. We are spending more than we are generating revenue because we want to invest into the future. According to what the member opposite is saying, they would only spend 1.4 billion, the rate of growth. What that would mean is they would cut everything. Ladies and gentlemen of this House, you should know what the agenda of the—of members opposite is. They are saying that in a time of recession, you should not keep the economy going. You should not make investments. You should cut. I don't agree with them and I'm very proud of the five-year plan that we have put forward and I will be very proud to support it and work on it for the next five years to ensure that Manitoba is moving into the future.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Mr. Speaker, this government had over a decade to prepare for the tough times. The problem is that they didn't set the money aside to prepare for those tough times. They failed Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, how can they justify a 5.2 percent increase in spending with expected growth at only 2.5 percent? How can they justify those kind of expenditures? Why are they facing—why are they forcing future generations of Manitobans to pay for their significant spending problem?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Speaker, we have spelt out in our plan that we are going to spend on front-line services. We are going to spend money, along with the federal government, on stimulus and we are going to ensure that we have government spending reasonable and we are going to recover balance over a period of time, over five years. And if the member opposite would look at the numbers of what we spent last year—and what we actually spent last year and what we're budgeting this year, it's an increase of 1 percent.

### **Manitoba Hydro Bipole III West-Side Location**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** It is clear that Manitoba Hydro prefers an east-side transmission line, and is also painfully clear this NDP government wants a west-side line at whatever the cost. Now, we know the cost will be at least \$650 million more. Manitobans will be on the hook for this decision for decades and it is not too late to make the right decision.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Is she prepared now to revisit the west-side decision?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act):** Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro has done a lot of work. They've been consulting. There's been three rounds of consultation. They're working the line—the path for the line.

\* (14:10)

The members opposite would rather roll the dice and take a chance that we might not get those sales. I'm not prepared to say roll the dice on \$20 billion, Mr. Speaker, which is revenue for the province in the long term. The members opposite would roll the dice on a lot of things.

First, the Leader of the Opposition said he would get the line built by 2020. Way too late. Then he said 2017, and the next day he changed his mind and said, oh, I can get it done by 2016.

He doesn't know what he's talking about, Mr. Speaker, and we will take the advice of the people that we take advice from. We are getting the job done and we will get those export sales and we will get \$20 billion in revenue for this province.

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are looking for a government that will act in their best interests and not cater to American lobbyists.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the government has announced that we'll be operating in the red for the next several years. As a result, the debt load of every Manitoban will increase. The west-side bipole will add debt unnecessarily.

If the government claims that we're in these difficult economic times, it's more important than ever that governments make prudent decisions.

Why would this government not revisit the decision they're making on the west side and have another look at it, do what's prudently right for Manitobans and look at the west-side decision?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Speaker, you know, I am proud of the way we are handling this and we are taking all things into consideration.

We are not prepared to roll the dice, Mr. Speaker, and lose export sales and lose all of that revenue. If you listen to what Bob Brennan says, the CEO says that it will be our export customers who will pay for it. It is those export sales that will pay for the cost of building that line.

We need that line for reliability; we need that line to meet our export sale commitment. And we have—there's been a lot of work done. We cannot roll back as the member opposite is saying and take a chance that we might be able to build on the east side and lose our sales. We're not prepared to put Manitoba—Manitobans—at risk that way, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well Mr. Speaker, the PUB is saying a different story.

Now, we've seen the rates go up 16 percent under the NDP government, three percent this year. Hydro is expecting another three and a half percent for each of the next ten years. Part of that is going to be on the backs of Manitobans.

The debt is piling on under this government. As a result, interest charges go up as well. We, as Manitobans, our children and grandchildren, will be forced to pay for the decisions this government is taking today. NDP interference in Crown corporations has cost, and will continue to cost, Manitobans into the future.

Will the NDP allow Manitoba Hydro to do what they planned to do for a decade? Build a Hydro line on the east side of the province which is in the best interest of all Manitobans.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is wrong about the finances of Manitoba Hydro.

Manitoba Hydro is in the best financial situation it has been in. Their debt-to-equity ratio is 75-25. It has not been that good before. Not under your administration, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite, if we—says if we would allow Hydro to do their job. Hydro is doing their job, Mr. Speaker. They've held three rounds of consultations. They've picked three possible lines—sites where the lines will go. They will be making a decision very soon on one of those lines and when they make that decision on that line, they will do further consultations with the areas where the line is going through.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite would shut it down, just like they shut down Conawapa, they'd shut all of Hydro down.

#### **Manitoba Hydro Bipole III Community Consultations**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** A week ago today, I hosted a public meeting in the community of Haywood in my constituency regarding Bipole III. Manitoba Hydro first accepted, then declined, to attend this public information meeting. Over 125 people attended this meeting looking for information about Bipole III.

Why is the minister directing Manitoba Hydro to not consult with landowners and residents about this project? Is it because Manitoba Hydro cannot or will not justify the waste and mismanagement of this project?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act):** Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro has been consulting. They've been doing studies; they've been looking at all aspects of where the line will go.

Mr. Speaker, they've had three rounds of consultation. They are on the way to selecting one of the three routes. When Manitoba Hydro selects the route that they are going on, then they will have consultations with those people where the line is going.

The members opposite, Mr. Speaker, have tried to whip this up as if this is a—they want—their idea to move on the east side is going to save money. The

members opposite are wrong that this has any effect on this budget.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Speaker, I just want the minister to know that I didn't need to whip up 125 people to show up there; they came on their own accord.

The minister says the government consulted with the east-side communities. Why does she not want to consult with west-side communities? Is it because you cannot justify the \$640-million waste and mismanagement or maybe you just don't care?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I know what I care about, and I'll tell this House what the member opposite cares about. It says, and I quote the member from Carman—he says, the Tories will put less focus on other issues, such as health care, roads, social services, agriculture, rural development and First Nations. And he says, I quote, we were not going to win an election based on these issues.

So the member opposite thinks that he can win an election on these issues and he's going to avoid and not talk about the most important issues that people have identified for us, Mr. Speaker, and that is maintaining front-line services in health care, education, training, policing, support for families. And we will listen to people. And that's what we're doing.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So if the minister really does care, will she agree to further public meetings with Manitoba Hydro involvement to address the waste of at least \$640 million and mismanagement of government making decisions for Manitoba Hydro? Have some more meetings out in our area to hear what the people really have to say about this crazy project.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to focus on the priorities that people have identified for us as a government, and I'm going to let Manitoba Hydro—Manitoba Hydro determined where each of the meetings would be held based on where the anticipated lines are and they made those decisions.

The members opposite tried to change that. I will leave that in the hands of Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to focus on the issues that the member opposite says are not important. He said the issues of health care, roads, social services, agriculture, rural depopulation and First Nations are not important issues to run an election on. Let Manitoba Hydro do their job and we will continue to focus on our plan to take us into the future.

### Balanced Budget Legislation Government Adherence

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister yesterday tabled a budget which is contrary to existing law; it is illegal. It is extraordinary that a government would amend the balanced budget legislation that they have just passed not that long ago, and they now can't even follow the law which they brought in only a short time ago. The Minister of Finance should be ashamed of herself for breaking the law so blatantly in this fashion.

I ask the Minister of Finance, who should amend her budget to comply with the law, will she?

\* (14:20)

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** The budget complies with the existing law, and the dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Winnipeg said the following: The problem with balanced budget legislation is while it works very well when the economy is growing and finances are well, but when the economy is contracting the role of government is really to come in to play—and to play that role of stimulating the economy.

Currently in Canada, monetary policy low interest rates have been in place for, you know, close to a year, and we really haven't got the bang for the buck on the low interest rates that we have in the past, and so really, the role of government is then to step in and try and find areas where they can support the economy as they grow through this cycle.

If we had balanced budget legislation that doesn't allow the government to do that, well, then we've really tied the hands of government officials. The job of the government is really to come up with a responsible budget. This is a fairly responsible budget—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, in short, the Premier is saying he's acknowledging he's breaking the law.

In my question yesterday, my follow-up, the Premier said that the expenditures on the H1N1 flu and the flood last year were one-time expenditures which won't be repeated. If that's true, after removing these one-time expenditures, the budget deficit from the year just ending of over half a billion dollars

really represents a structural deficit of no more than 300 to 400 billion dollars—million dollars, and, with good management, really should probably be about 200 million.

And yet the budget yesterday shows a whopping structural deficit of more than \$500 million over the next two years. What happened?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, this budget—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. A question's been asked and we need to be able to hear the answer. Order.

**Mr. Selinger:** This budget contrasts with the role the member played when he was in the federal Liberal government. When he was in the federal Liberal government, the '95-96 budget cut health care, social services, legal aid, day-care funding 39 percent. That was their solution to balancing the budget when he was a Member of Parliament and a Cabinet minister.

We're taking a different approach. We're investing in priority services. We're stimulating the economy and creating 29,000 jobs. We're managing to put the money in priority services while holding other departments flat or lower, and we're doing this in a responsible way that will return to balance over the next five years while keeping Manitoba one of the most affordable places to live. I wish he would've done that when he was in Ottawa.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, in Ottawa in the '90s, we dealt with a tough situation, but we never broke the law. We never broke—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I'll remind members, when a speaker is standing, members should be seated, and that the speaker should be heard in silence. Order.

The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, at 2 o'clock yesterday, the Premier was saying that the major reason for the cost overruns in the budget that just ended was the H1N1 flu and the flood. At 3 o'clock, the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) presented a budget with a structural deficit of more than \$500 million. Manitobans want to know what happened between 2 o'clock yesterday and 3 o'clock yesterday.

How did this budget so balloon? I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance what happened. Won't she go after her Premier and tell him that he goofed?

**Mr. Selinger:** Between 2 o'clock and 3 o'clock, the Minister of Finance presented a five-year plan to move Manitoba forward. That's what's happened, and you weren't listening to the speech.

We don't want to go back to the dark days when the member was in Ottawa whacking transfers to the provinces by 39 percent, when he cut health care, when he cut social services, when he cut day care, when he cut legal aid, when he cut environment and culture and heritage programs.

We want to invest in key services: health care, education, infrastructure, justice, services to family and children. We've got priorities. We want to stimulate the economy at a time when private investment is down: 29,000 jobs, \$1.8 billion, better schools, better hospitals, better roads, safer water and sewage treatment, and we want to do that in a fiscally prudent way.

#### **Women's Hospital Project Status**

**Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale):** Mr. Speaker, in the 1990s the redevelopment of the Health Sciences Centre was put on hold during an economic downturn, and I'm proud that our government followed through on completing that project.

Could the Minister of Health inform the House of the status with the Women's Hospital and how that might be affected by this year's budget?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** I'm very pleased to inform the House that today I was able to attend an event—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Ms. Oswald:** It must be very difficult for you to hear about more good news in health care, Mr. Speaker.

I was able to attend the demolition of the Weston bakery to make way for our commitment to rebuild the Women's Hospital, Mr. Speaker. Not only did we undertake the largest consultation in Manitoba history concerning a health-care facility and learn, of course, that the No. 1 priorities of women and their families would be to have increased privacy, to have better proximity to children in neonatal.

We also learned, of course, about the importance of preserving the integrity of the building using materials, reclaiming them for the new construction, so it'll be green and it'll be great for women.

#### **Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Rural Driver Testing Service Cuts**

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Speaker, rural communities right across this province have had their driver testing programs either completely eliminated or cut in half. On the western side of the province, a hundred miles away from Dauphin, 120 miles away from Brandon, are communities who have had their driver testing cut in half. The communities of Roblin, Russell and Birtle will no longer have driver testing every second week. They will have it once a month. People who are doing the testing have to drive out from Brandon, which means the testing can't start before 10:30 and they have to leave by 2:30 in the afternoon, allowing them to test 3 or 4 students at most.

Mr. Speaker, driver testing programs have 30 students in them. I want to ask the minister who is responsible for driver testing, how the needs of these communities are to be met when driver testing has been so radically cut in these areas?

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act):** I thank the member for Russell for the question. One thing he should know is that MPI offers knowledge testing in terms of getting a beginner's licence is integral part of the high school driver education program. That is not going to change. That's offered in 90 communities across the province today. It'll be offered in 90 communities across the province tomorrow.

The member should also know that there will continue to be service provided to his community and to others. There is a schedule being prepared that will now take into account the number of people actually requesting those tests in each community.

There will still be service in his community. There will also be services in nearby communities, and the schedule will be set up in such a way that no one will have to wait more than a couple of weeks to go and get their testing done. We are making sure MPI works efficiently but also serves all citizens of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

##### **Neil Bardal**

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade):** It is with sadness that I rise to recognize the late Neil Bardal, a

prominent Winnipeg funeral director, pillar of Manitoba's Icelandic community, philanthropist and friend, and inspiration to many, including myself, Mr. Speaker.

In February, Mr. Bardal lost his battle with cancer at the age of 69, leaving behind his many friends and family to mourn. A third-generation funeral director, Neil was well known as a proprietor of Neil Bardal Inc. and for his advisory of cremation to give grieving families additional options. In 2008, his vision was realized at the expansion and completion of a new funeral home, Garden of Memories and a crematorium, a legacy that will surely live on. Families using his services always described him as warm, gracious and compassionate and a source of comfort and strength during their difficult time.

Neil was unstoppable—an unstoppable positive force in his community, working tirelessly in support of the circle of life for the Riverview Health Foundation and for the New Iceland Heritage Museum. He also volunteered in many organizations, and that resulted in him serving his time as president of the Icelandic National League of North America and in the Winnipeg Rotary Club.

\* (14:30)

Among his highest achievements, Neil served as honorary consul general of Iceland in Manitoba and was awarded the Knights Cross of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon in 2000 and the Order of Manitoba in 2006. His drive and creativity recently led him to complete a final accomplishment, a spy and espionage novel co-authored with a Gimli writer.

A few days prior to his passing, Neil spoke about the importance of finding one's passion in life and having the courage to fulfil what one was meant to be. Mr. Speaker, these are words that we could all learn from and Neil's zest for life was contagious and his ambition will be sorely missed. Manitoba has lost a great man and I invite all members to honour his memory with me.

*Icelandic spoken.*

### **Translation**

*Thank you for all, my friend.*

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

### **Olympic Flame Torch Relay**

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** On January the 7th, I was pleased to take part in the Winkler Olympics flame torch relay celebration.

As many of us know, the Olympic flame started in its journey in Greece, the birthplace of the Olympic Games, and from there it has made its way across Canada. To have the Olympic Games come to Canada is a true honour, and it has been great to see that Canadians from coast to coast, including people from Manitoba, were excited about hosting the games.

This winter, Winkler and Morden were part of the longest domestic torch relay in Olympic history as the torch travelled over 45,000 kilometres through Canada before it reached Vancouver. In total, 12,000 torch bearers were chosen to carry the flame across Canada over the course of 106 days.

Each ray of the Olympic flame is a symbol for human life and together the rays signify humanity. The Olympic flame also symbolizes the principles of peace, brotherhood and friendship.

During the Olympic torch relay, hundreds of people lined the streets of Winkler and Morden to catch a glimpse of the Olympic flame. Thirty-five individuals were chosen to carry the flame along the streets of Winkler to the Winkler Arena where approximately 3,000 people awaited the flame. Winkler's own Karen Doell, a former Olympic softball athlete, was chosen to light the Olympic cauldron during this celebration. Guests were treated to a variety of performances and activities as they awaited the torch's arrival.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to see that the excitement generated during the Olympic torch relay was sustained throughout the Olympic Games. The world was treated to 16 days of incredible athleticism and watched as national heroes arose.

Canadian athletes have trained extremely hard to make it to the Olympic Games, and their efforts have paid off as they have performed extremely well over the course of the Olympic Games. Canadian athletes have not only won the first gold medal on Canadian soil, but they have also won the most gold medals by any team in the Winter Olympic history with 14 gold medals. Their efforts have made us proud to be a Canadian and they have represented this country admirably.

Manitoba's athletes, in particular, have competed extraordinarily well during the games and have proven once again to be strong medal contenders.

I would like to congratulate all of the athletes of the Vancouver Olympic Games on their outstanding performances and accomplishments. Thank you.

*Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

**Roger Joseph Carriere Sr.**

**Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon):** Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking today about my friend and fellow resident of Cranberry Portage, the late Roger Joseph Carriere Sr., who sadly passed away on February the 10th.

Roger lived a full and remarkable life. Through his many personal and physical strengths, Roger earned the respect of the community. He learned hunting, trapping and canoeing at an early age and credited his elders for that knowledge. Roger was a talented storyteller, snowshoer, hunter and fisherman and was famous for his legendary canoe skills.

He once came in second in a day-long marathon canoe race competing single-handedly against two-person teams. Roger won numerous canoe races, most notably leading Team Manitoba to victory in 1967 in the centennial canoe race which covered the 3,300 miles from Rocky Mountain House to Montréal in 104 days.

His physical abilities were astounding. He once leg wrestled the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and beat the entire team.

Trapping was in Roger's blood. He still holds the record for the most King Trapper title at the Trappers' Festival in The Pas. His work was highly admired and, as friend and mentor to many local trappers, he generously shared his skills and knowledge.

Roger won many awards. He received the Queen's Jubilee Medal in 2002, and in 2009 the Cranberry Portage Spring Festival committee awarded him the Lifetime Commitment Award to Honouring Nature and The North.

Roger was a dedicated CN employee for 43 years. He was an educator of young minds. He appeared on *Sesame Street* as a wise elder teaching youngsters survival skills. Even after Roger suffered a stroke on the trapline in 2004, his goose and moose calling remained incomparable.

His daughter Bev remembers fondly a sunny afternoon picking blueberries with her dad. Roger saw a flock of geese overhead and called them. The birds instinctively flew towards him.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am sad that we have lost this famous northern icon, a man who bridged the world of the fur trade and today's nine-to-five world. His spirit will surely live on. Thank you.

**19 Portage Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps**

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the 19 Portage Royal Cadet Army—pardon me. I'd like to start—Mr. Acting Speaker?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran):** Okay.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran):** The honourable member for Portage la Prairie have to start it again. Thank you. Does he have to start it again? Does he have leave to start it again? [*Agreed*]

**Mr. Faurshou:** Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the 19 Portage Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps, which was established in December of 1909. The 100th anniversary of this cadet corps makes it the oldest continuously active cadet corps in all of western Canada.

Under the leadership of Captain Terry Henry and the dedication of long-term volunteers, such as Supply Officer Gloria Hooper, cadets develop leadership skills and a sense of active citizenship. Since 1997, both Captain Henry and Supply Officer Hooper have generated interests in the Canadian Armed Forces and equipped the youth of Portage la Prairie with the necessary skills to contribute to society and become tomorrow's leaders.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

Mr. Speaker, while the numbers vary from year to year, the cadet corps has always been active and an integral part of Portage la Prairie's community and youth activities. On October 3rd, 33 members of the 19 Portage Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps joined the 25 Crusaders Sea Cadet Corps of Winnipeg, marched in the streets of Portage la Prairie after been given the Freedom of the City



through proclamation presented to them by His Worship Mayor Ken Brennan.

While the cadet corps gets a portion of its funding from the military, the cadets are involved in many community fundraising initiatives. Its community fundraising efforts, spearheaded by its dedicated support committee, go towards field trips, summer camps and supporting the corps' band program. I would like to congratulate the community for its most generous support, without which the cadet corps would not have achieved this milestone.

On December 20th, 1909, the corps was officially incorporated. One hundred years later, to the day, on December 20th, 2009, I, along with many other community members, the young men and women of the cadet corps, all celebrated with a five-course mess dinner to honour members past, present and all who have participated over the century through this tradition.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to extend, on behalf of all members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, a heartfelt congratulations to the 19 Portage Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps for achieving this landmark.

#### **Budget Expenditure Management**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, from 2000 to 2009, for 10 consecutive years, the NDP government presented budgets which show—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there an issue here?

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Is there an issue here? The order here is I have the rotation today, followed the rotation, and at the end we have two more that was carried over yesterday for the NDP. So, right now, this is No. 5 and it goes to the member for River Heights and then No. 6 and 7 will go the NDP, a carryover of yesterday. So I hope that clarifies it.

The honourable minister for River Heights, I give you the opportunity to start over because you were interrupted.

\* (14:40)

**Mr. Gerrard:** From 2000 to 2009, for 10 consecutive years, the NDP government presented budgets which showed how much taxpayer money would be spent in the upcoming fiscal year. Every year, for 10 years, the NDP government has spent

more money than they indicated in their budget that they were going to spend. For 10 years, the NDP could not keep to their budgeted spending plan.

Each year they spent more and more and more until they reached more than \$400-million overexpenditure in the present fiscal year. Cumulatively, over 10 years, the overexpenditure added up to about \$1.7 billion. Certainly some of this overexpenditure might be for emergencies, and was, but even granting such emergencies, the NDP mismanaged spending so badly that they overspent by more than a billion dollars. Knowing this, it is very easy to explain why the government has got itself into such a major deficit this year after such a poor record of fiscal management.

Now, dealing with difficult economic times, of course, is not easy. And when I was in Ottawa in the 1990s, we had to deal with a huge deficit left by the Mulroney Conservatives. It was not easy, but it was done, and Manitobans should recognize that the last 10 bountiful years, when there were big increases in equalization payments and health-care payments from the Government of Canada to the government of Manitoba, that these were made possible by the budgetary decisions of the mid-1990s.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Finance Minister should remember the lessons of the past and be thankful rather than critical of the Canadian budget in the mid-1990s.

#### **Cadet League of Canada**

**Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of one of Canada's most valuable resources, the Cadet Leagues of Canada. The Manitoba Branch of the Army Cadet League of Canada had its annual general meeting earlier this month, and I was once again awed by the spirit and commitment of its members.

The Army Cadet League of Canada is a civilian non-profit organization that supports the army cadets. The League is the supervisory sponsor for 450 cadet corps across Canada. With the aid of each branch office, the League provides financial, accommodation and transportation support for programs and services not covered by the Department of National Defence to more than 21,000 army cadets across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the cadets are a valuable, critical component of our society. They train our youth to become the leaders of tomorrow, imbuing them with love and appreciation for Canada and its people.

Yet, in celebrating the cadets themselves, we must not forget the many volunteers supporting this wonderful organization. Dozens of individuals dedicate their time and effort to the Army Cadet League of Canada, raising funds, recruiting and promoting interest in the cadets' activity.

In their AGM, President Sandy Will of the Manitoba Branch of the Army Cadet League of Canada honoured three of these volunteers with the Volunteer Service Medal. Representatives from nine cadet corps were present at the AGM, including Cross Lake, Flin Flon, Portage la Prairie—100-year-old corps—the 12th Manitoba Dragoons of Virden, the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, Fort Garry Horse, Royal Winnipeg Rifles, the Winnipeg Grenadiers, and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Cadet Corps from Winnipeg.

AGM guests were especially honoured when the Colonel Commandant of Army Cadets in Canada, Major-General (Retired) Robert Meating, appeared as the guest speaker at the meeting. The winner of last year's Manitoba's Outstanding Army Cadet award, Cadet Chief Warrant Officer Dallas Buhr, was also a presenter at the AGM.

I wish the Manitoba Branch of the Army Cadet League of Canada the best in their operations, and invite all members of this House to support the cadets and the cadet leagues of Canada in their activities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Win Gardner Place**

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Mr. Speaker, it was a great occasion when we celebrated the grand opening of the new North End Wellness Centre named Win Gardner Place, after the late Win Gardner.

In the mid-1990s, I rose in the House to express disappointment, on behalf of the community, at the closure of the north YM-YWCA. After 10 years of dedicated efforts that saw partnerships between our government, local organizations, the federal government, private donors and the City of Winnipeg, this invaluable community centre is open again.

Planning for Win Gardner Place included extensive consultations with North End residents, collaboration among the partner organizations and guidance from the Aboriginal community. By

combining recreational, social and health programming to meet the diverse needs of North End Winnipeg, this outstanding 25,000-square-foot, \$5.5-million facility goes beyond the traditional concept of a recreational centre.

Programming by four of the five partner organizations: the YMCA-YWCA, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, SPLASH Child Care and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, aims to become—aims to welcome people of all ages, eliminates financial barriers to participation, encourage healthy lifestyles and daily physical activity and provide high-quality child care.

The fifth partner organization, the North End Community Renewal Corporation, played a major role in bringing this dream to reality and continues to support community partners initiatives to create and implement a North End wellness strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this centre already has 1,500 members and hosts 300 children and youth a day and a seniors exercise program. It represents the strength, capacity and pride of the North End.

It would not have been possible without the generous contributions of many donors led by the provincial and federal governments. I would like to recognize the important fundraising and support offered by the son of Win Gardner, Mr. John Loewen, who was instrumental throughout the process.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

#### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

##### **House Business**

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader):** For the information of the House, I believe that the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) is going to be giving his comments with respect to the budget speech and then the House will resolve into Committee of Supply to consider the resolution respecting the Interim Supply bill. The attempt is to continue consideration of Interim Supply until Friday, March the 26th, at which point the sessional order requires the Speaker to take certain actions to conclude consideration of Interim Supply.

So, Mr. Speaker, not sure what—whether I should keep standing until the Leader of the Opposition comes forward and perhaps just say how much I'm looking forward to his remarks or something. Because you know, we're always interested in the

process of democracy and how things unfold in the Chamber here.

And we look forward, of course, to Interim Supply because I learned only a short while ago that I would be one of the ministers who would be—being questioned by the opposition. So I hope they're looking forward to what I might have to say as much as I'm looking forward to what the Leader of the Official Opposition might have to say, because I know that we all treasure each other's comments in this House, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]*

I'm glad that the honourable members enjoy what I'm—my improvisations on the matter, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that we might be able to have the kind of budget debate and questions and answers on Interim Supply that Manitobans will—can take some pride in.

I know—I'm sure our honourable members share my view that it's sometimes unfortunate that the galleries are full for question period, which is not always, shall we say, a highlight in terms of civil democratic exchange, and yet when the House—you know, after—when we settle into procedures that follow question period, we often have—are better at listening to each other. Not always, but—and we have an opportunity to go back and forth on the issues of the day and we certainly have many things before us, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm wondering, you know, Mr. Speaker, whether the House leader on the other side might have occasion to leave the Chamber and see if we can't generate some activity in the right places so that—I'm not used to having to talk out the clock for the sake of the, you know—although I do remember—I could tell a story, Mr. Speaker, but, no—about a debate that carried on into the small hours of the evening. But I perhaps wanted—would like to tell that story for the benefit of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) because I think he was part of the government at that time, and he's not here, so I'll pass on that.

\* (14:50)

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. All members know that the presence or absence of members should not be mentioned in the House, just a reminder to all members.

The honourable Government House Leader still has the floor, if he wishes.

**Mr. Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want to refer to the presence or absence of anybody in the House, and I certainly wouldn't want to do it in a way that might have, you know, further delayed things. And I certainly didn't do it intentionally because I'm well aware of the rules, but, in any event, as I was saying, I would hope that in the days to come that we have a very important—all budgets are important, although having been—having participated in many budget debates over the years, not in this place but in other places—

**An Honourable Member:** How many?

**Mr. Blaikie:** How many, somebody says.

**An Honourable Member:** That's a good question.

**Mr. Blaikie:** Yes, there's a—you know, perhaps I should take some time to just name them off individually—it's with great relief, Mr. Speaker—I wouldn't want to refer to the presence or absence of the Leader of the Opposition, but I believe that we might now be able to proceed to orders of the day.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, for the information of the House, I believe that the Leader of the Official Opposition is going to be giving his comments with respect to the budget speech and then the House will resolve into Committee of Supply to consider the resolution respecting the Interim Supply bill.

The intent is to continue consideration of Interim Supply until Friday, March 26, at which point the sessional order requires the Speaker to take certain actions to conclude consideration of Interim Supply. That's for the information of all members of the House.

### **BUDGET DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)**

**Mr. Speaker:** So now we will—we'll go to resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) for accommodating me today in the lead up to this speech on the budget tabled yesterday.

The budget that we were looking for and hoping for yesterday would have been one that laid out a

plan to take Manitoba forward and to remove us from the very significant financial problems and challenges that we currently find ourselves in.

Mr. Speaker, we are beyond disappointed, to put it mildly, to have seen the budget tabled yesterday, a budget which for half a decade proposes to run deficit after deficit, including the current fiscal year of 2009-2010.

This NDP government proposes to run, this year, a deficit of \$555 million; 2010, the budget introduced yesterday, another deficit of \$545 million; 2011, the year after next, another planned NDP deficit of \$448 million; 2012, year four of this plan to drive this province into the ditch, \$345 million projected deficit by this government, all choices made by this NDP government; 2013, at the end of half a decade of mismanagement, they propose to run a deficit of \$146 million, for a total of \$2.039-billion worth of deficits over the half decade that we now find ourselves in.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a dramatic departure from the policies of successive governments in Manitoba. We recall the incredible problems and challenges that were left by the Pawley NDP government of the 1980s which resulted in record levels of debt in a context of rising interest rates which resulted in the debt-servicing line of the government becoming the third-largest department of government. That's what happens after years of NDP mismanagement, is that you find yourself in a situation where you're under pressure in terms of your ability to deliver social services, you find yourself in a situation where your economy becomes stagnant, where investment and workers and people begin to leave the province.

Mr. Speaker, after working to put this province back on track, we found ourselves in 1998 in a position of rising revenues, strong economic growth, the beginning of the restoration of transfer payments from Ottawa and the launch of a period of growth across Canada and globally. And our great disappointment is that this government, while it was at the reins, while it was holding the reins for that period of time, failed to take advantage of the unprecedented opportunity they had to prepare Manitoba for difficult times, which inevitably would come.

Through the course of history, economies have gone up and down. Economies are cyclical things, and every 10 or 15 years the economy goes into a

downturn. It was predictable. It was foreseeable and it should have been planned for by this government.

But rather than do what other provinces did across the country, rather than taking the approach that was taken in provinces like B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan, all of which were governed by different parties at different times along the way—there was an NDP government in Saskatchewan for some of that time, which took a different approach. There was a Conservative government in Alberta through that time, a Liberal government in British Columbia. The one thing they all agreed on, setting aside partisanship, was the prudence of taking the benefit of those years of growth and applying it toward reducing the debt of those provinces, so that when the inevitable downturn came, they would be ready, they would be able to withstand it and they'd be able to support their citizens through those challenging times.

And that's what happened elsewhere in the West, Mr. Speaker, and to our disappointment it didn't happen here in Manitoba. Instead, the government took a different approach. It added more than \$7 billion to Manitoba's total debt, between 1999 and this most recent budget. With this most recent budget, that debt number is accelerating at a rate that is absolutely unsustainable. So to add \$7.5 billion to the total debt, and that—add another \$2.3 billion in a single budget, which is what they did yesterday, is sending Manitoba very dramatically in the wrong direction.

Mr. Speaker, the budget tabled yesterday does not even make a pretence to believe in balanced budgets. We were concerned and alarmed by the Finance Minister's statement yesterday that deficits are okay. This is indicative of an attitude that we've seen in this government over many years.

Mr. Speaker, this is not in any way aligned with the views of Manitobans or Canadians in any part of the country. Nobody in this country who is a reasonable person would say that deficits are okay. They might say that deficits have arisen because of significant problems, crises and other issues, but they would never say a deficit is okay. They would always say, we need to find a way to work our way out of this deficit because deficits are wrong, deficits are short-sighted, deficits are bad for Manitoba, and they're bad for every other province and every country in the world.

And one of the reasons Canada has been praised internationally, for its ability to deal with the current

global downturn, was the fact that governments in Canada and at the federal level tackled their fiscal situation and put their—the country into a more sustainable and more solid financial position. Unfortunately, Manitoba bucked the trend in that regard, went the opposite direction of federal and provincial governments and put our province further and further into the glue.

Mr. Speaker, we used, yesterday, the analogy of a sinkhole, the veneer of fiscal responsibility which collapses over time because all along the way this Finance Minister was chipping away at the financial health of our province by adding to our debt and failing to make the decisions that were necessary to protect front-line services, while at the same time preparing ourselves for a downturn that everybody knew was coming.

\* (15:00)

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a great concern about this budget and the half decade of deficits that this NDP government proposes to take us to. And that concern is really grounded in the lessons of history which have shown that when debt gets too high and interest rates start to rise, that front-line social programs are put under pressure and are sometimes compromised.

That is what is happening in countries around the world today who are dealing with a crisis in terms of their debt levels and are having to deal with that crisis to avoid default and financial calamity by making hard decisions such as cutting programs.

That's not where we want to go; that's not where we will go; that is not the approach that we support, Mr. Speaker. We support an approach that protects front-line health care, that supports our hardworking doctors, nurses, teachers and other public servants and that ensures that the decisions that we make today are not compromising our ability to pay the salaries of those professionals tomorrow, next year and in the decades to come. And that is why we oppose this budget and why we stand for the front lines of health care, of policing, of social services and of very many other areas because we don't want decisions today to compromise the ability in the future for governments to support them.

Mr. Speaker, if this government had its priorities right, they would've addressed the gross waste and mismanagement that Manitobans today, on open-line shows, letters to the editor and comments on the street, are making. The bloated bureaucracy in the

health authorities, grown by the tens of millions of dollars to the point where they won't even release a telephone book for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority because they're afraid that Manitobans might find out how many bureaucrats are working in the health authority and not delivering care to Manitobans; drawing resources away from front lines into a bureaucracy that doesn't add one bit of value or do one bit of caring for people who are in need of better health care in the province of Manitoba.

The level of transparency is zero. They renamed hallways in hospitals in order to say that they had gotten rid of hallway medicine, Mr. Speaker. Every Manitoban who has visited family members or friends or others or themselves, personally, who have been in hospitals recently, know that there are patients in hospitals, they know about that broken promise, and they know about this government's abysmal failures in the area of health care.

So, for all of the self-righteous crowing from the members opposite about their commitment to health care, patients line corridors, people die in waiting rooms, people can't get access to diagnostic services. Manitobans in record numbers today don't have access to family physicians; 1,500 doctors have left the province over the last 10 years. We have a revolving door of physicians coming and going, and the front-line professionals that we talked to today say that in spite of the budget increases that morale has never been lower in Manitoba's health-care system than it is today. It is a shameful indictment on their mismanagement of Manitoba's health-care system, Mr. Speaker, and it's something that they're going to pay for in the months and the years ahead.

You don't just solve problems in health care by backing up the Brinks truck, building up the bureaucracy, centralizing control over the system and taking away the freedom on the part of our health-care professionals to make the choices they think are right in order to best serve the patients that they're entrusted to care for, Mr. Speaker, and that is exactly what they've done. They've centralized, they have consolidated power, they've built up the bureaucracy, they've demoralized the front lines.

There's a better way for health care, Mr. Speaker, and it's a better way to protect our front lines and serve Manitobans.

And that, Mr. Speaker, brings us to another point about this budget. Lots of talk about spending, lots of talk about money. Not a single mention of outcomes,

which is such an NDP way of doing things. No commitment to improve the health of Manitobans. No commitment to increase access to family physicians. No commitment to ensure that people are seen in emergency rooms and are not left to wait 34 hours without being able to see a physician in an emergency room. Nothing about outcomes. In the typical NDP way, it's all about spend, spend, spend. It's the wrong way to go. Manitobans don't support it and it's wrong for our province.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many other areas within this budget that we have significant concerns about. We have seen in this budget the plan to draw down the Fiscal Stabilization Fund in order to pay down a portion of the new debt that this government is planning. It's not a plan to pay down the debt of Manitoba; it's a shell game. They're going to transfer money out of that fund and borrow on the financial markets in order to fund their spending problem and then use the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to pay a fraction of that new borrowing.

Well, there's another way you could describe this budget. It's not just a sinkhole, Mr. Speaker; it's the no-banker-left-behind budget because the only winners are the Toronto bankers who are going to be lending money to this province in order to finance their out-of-control spending habits.

Now, we have many other concerns, but I want to echo just some of the comments that have been made by Manitobans in connection with this budget. One comment that I think captured very well the concern about this budget was made by Dan Overall from the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce who said that we had a blip in the economy and they broke the bank, Mr. Speaker. What a comment about this appalling budget. Dave Angus said they're wandering in the dark when it comes to productivity and there's nothing in this budget that addresses the issues of Manitoba's uncompetitive economic position. We had a student representative who talked about growing debt. We had university leaders talking about program cuts. We had a seniors' advocate, Moira Horgan-Jones, say, and I quote: There is nothing in this budget for seniors. And we're concerned when you have advocates for seniors in Manitoba making that statement.

But one thing that may have escaped the attention of many Manitobans is that actually there is something in this budget relevant to seniors and that's an increase in their Pharmacare deductibles—shame, Mr. Speaker. They're going to increase costs

of drugs for Manitoba seniors in this budget to pay for their spending habits. It is worse than nothing for seniors. It's a step back for Manitoba seniors, many of whom are on fixed incomes, many of whom have seen their pensions battered over the last two years, many of whom lost money on Crocus. They're now seeing their hydro bills go up. They're seeing their hydro bills go up. They're seeing their drug and medication costs go up as a result of this budget. Water bills are rising in part because of their defiance of the scientific advice on the health of Lake Winnipeg. Manitoba seniors cannot afford this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, there are other concerns as well. Evelyn Jacks said that this Province is not competitive in terms of taxes. We had a comment from a child-care worker who said there's not much for child care in this budget, no new funding for operating grants. We have a comment from Manitobans from across the spectrum who are across—who are concerned about this budget.

Mr. Speaker, we have said that it's not good enough to simply criticize, but to offer solutions. And we offered this government solutions on how to start to manage this major spending problem that they have, one of which would have saved \$640 million over the course of several years, and that was the decision advocated by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) in his leadership campaign which is to run the next hydro transmission line down the east side of Lake Winnipeg to provide opportunities for east-side communities, many of whom are among the most impoverished communities in our province, who want the east-side transmission line, which is why they stopped consulting with them because they don't want to hear from east-side communities who want the transmission line. They also don't want to hear from west-side communities who are worried about the transmission line. They're on the wrong side of history on this major decision. The member for Minto tried to reopen it, and the way they thanked him was to knock on his door and yank him from the leadership race. That's not the way to go.

For all of the Hydro minister's and the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) accusations and misleading statements about our—the approach that we would take to save Manitoba Hydro, we note, Mr. Speaker, that was the position of their own Attorney General just six months ago. And so, if they want to direct those sorts of comments, they need to direct those comments to the member from Minto as well and all of those

First Nations leaders who lined up to support his position on that issue.

\* (15:10)

Mr. Speaker, we—I think that Manitobans have suspected for some time that this government didn't have very much time for rural Manitoba. We have suspected it because they've closed—is it now—how many emergency rooms is it?

**An Honourable Member:** 17.

**Mr. McFadyen:** There's 17—I have trouble keeping up because there's a new one almost every week—17 emergency rooms closed in rural Manitoba, a failure to follow through on needed projects for seniors such as personal care homes in communities around the province like Morden and communities represented by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) and others from around our province.

Mr. Speaker, there have been decisions that have put red tape in front of our rural families in a whole bunch of areas, driving up the cost of producing food in this province of Manitoba, making them less competitive compared to our neighbours in Saskatchewan, the United States, Alberta and other places, and making life difficult for those citizens.

But, Mr. Speaker, the concern and the speculation about the NDP lack of support for rural Manitoba turned into absolute certainty with yesterday's budget. There's no longer any room for speculation because—

**An Honourable Member:** What did they say about agriculture?

**Mr. McFadyen:** What did they say? The member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has posed an important question: What did the NDP say in yesterday's budget about agriculture?

**Some Honourable Members:** Nothing. Zero.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Absolutely zero, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely nothing, zero, and to think that the author of this budget is a former Agriculture minister. How soon she forgets. How soon she forgets her constituents.

The day before the budget came down, we saw a quote from the member for Dauphin, the current Agriculture Minister, saying that he thought that this was going to be a good budget for agriculture. What a shock he must have been in for, Mr. Speaker, when he heard the speech: not a single mention of agriculture. The way they've sidelined the member

for Dauphin is regrettable for him, but, more importantly, it's regrettable for rural Manitoba, for agriculture and for the farm families of Manitoba who were looking for somebody in this government to be in their corner rather than working against them.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker, just like every other NDP government, who—we were disappointed when we saw no reference to agriculture in the budget. We were disappointed, but that—we went from disappointment to shock when we saw the details, shock and disillusionment when we saw the details of the budget, where—no mention in the budget, but in the fine print, when you get out your magnifying glass, what you find in this budget is a new tax on Manitoba producers, a tax on unused quota for people engaged in poultry, in dairy, in egg production and in a variety of other activities that feed Manitobans. And so this is something we were surprised and shocked to find in the fine print.

So there's a new tax for producers in the budget, and a cut. At the same time as they're asking them to pay more, they're saying to them, we're going to give you less support in this budget. We're going to cut the Department of Agriculture. We're going to weaken the safety net and we're going to make you even less competitive than those producers in Saskatchewan, the United States and Alberta, who you have to compete with, day in and day out, in global and North American markets. It's wrong. It's a slap in the face to agriculture. They deserve better, Mr. Speaker.

Now Mr. Speaker, this is—when you consider the role agriculture has played in the building of this province, when you consider the fact that almost 10 percent of jobs are dependent in one way or another in Manitoba on agriculture and the job losses that we've seen over the last couple of years, it's inexcusable that we see this—these punitive measures being brought in for producers in places like Dauphin, Swan River, the Interlake and the rest of rural Manitoba.

Now, we have lots of other concerns. I'm limited, unfortunately, to about 30 minutes today. I know members opposite were hoping for more, Mr. Speaker, but we know that, as in every other budget, there are always individual initiatives that all—that we can support. There are individual—and this budget's no different—there are individual initiatives in this budget that we have called for in the past and that we see at least an announcement in relation to.

Now, we're not going to get excited about these announcements too quickly, because we know they have a history over the last 10 years of announcing lots of things that they never follow through on. Hallway medicine is one of them, projects all over the province that took—that they've never delivered on. *[interjection]* Protecting the balanced budget is—and so we don't want to get too excited about some of these promises at this stage, because it's just paper; it's just words, and we have to look at the credibility of the people who put those words to paper.

But, Mr. Speaker, if they actually do follow through, there are some initiatives that we have called for and that we would support—support for fertility treatments, a focus on sports, supporting our film industry. There are roads and highways initiatives that we've seen announced that we want to see completed. We see a variety of other projects within this budget that, if they actually happen, if they actually happen—and we're not holding our breath, let me make that clear—but if they happen, there'll be some good things here for Manitoba.

So I want to just acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that on an individual basis, there are initiatives within this budget that are supportable initiatives, but we are learning, as are all Manitobans, not to count our chickens until they're hatched. We're waiting to see some of these chickens hatched as we go forward.

Mr. Speaker, I've outlined some of the concerns we have about some of the things that are actually in the budget. We also have some significant concerns about things that aren't in the budget. The most important of all is a strategy to—and a vision for the future of Manitoba.

I mean, how can you deliver a budget with deficits of this size and not talk about the future for—of energy development in Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro? How can you completely omit transportation, trucking? How can you completely omit Manitoba's central place in Canada? What about CentrePort and our future as a trading province? What about other visionary pieces of policy? What about tax competitiveness? What about reducing red tape? What about investing in high priorities such as making our universities and colleges among the best in western Canada, which they're nowhere close to being today, thanks to 10 years under this NDP government.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that one of the keys to growing Manitoba out of the sinkhole that this

government has currently got us in is investing in education and ensuring excellence in our schools, ensuring our kids have the knowledge and the understanding of mathematics, language arts, sciences and all of the other areas that are important to building the future of our province. No mention of learning within our schools; lots of talk about spending, but no focus on learning, results, outcomes and all of the other things that Manitoba parents would hope for, for their own children. And so this is—these are regrettable omissions from this budget.

We've also seen our universities and colleges fall behind others like them in the rest of Canada, and we think that a government that is interested in growing our economy and providing a spirit of optimism in Manitoba would want to strive to ensure that our universities and colleges make it into the top 10, even in western Canada, as a starting goal, Mr. Speaker. Let's see if we can do even better. Let's set some goals in this budget. Let's say that we want to have the best research and medical university in western Canada within five or 10 years. These are reasonable, achievable goals. Let's say that we have a goal of ensuring that we have the best trained and the most diverse work force in Canada 10 years from now, and let's set out some measures to work toward that goal.

Now, we don't always reach those goals, Mr. Speaker, but if you don't start with goals, you don't know where even to begin with policy decisions in budgets like this. So why not strive to have the most innovative health-care system that supports our front lines and boosts their morale? Why not have an approach that our public education system is going to produce the best results in math and science in the country? Why not strive to have universities that are among the best in western Canada? Why not strive to recapture that sense of optimism that existed here in prior years—the Chicago of the North, the Gateway to the West, make this the centre of activity for entrepreneurs, for artists, for others who want to come to this province and make this a centre of vital growth and creativity.?

\* (15:20)

None of it was there, Mr. Speaker, and so what we've got is dreary news about a half decade of deficits. What we have is—are cuts to Agriculture, to Conservation. For a government that pays lip-service to the environment, they're cutting the Conservation Department. In fact, I noted the Conservation Minister, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie),



was candid enough to say that he didn't enjoy the budget—was what he said in the paper this morning. Whether that—now, whether that lack of enjoyment will translate into a vote against this budget remains to be seen, but we can always hope that he'll put his vote where his quote is, and come through and vote against a budget that even the member for Elmwood didn't enjoy.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we do need a sense of hope about what kind of a province we're going to have five years from now and 10 years from now. And we need a clearer vision about what it is that we want for our province five or 10 years from now. We want to be a province that is innovative, that's dynamic, that's fair, that captures some of the great potential that exists within our diverse communities, that captures the potential of our First Nations people and encourages people to finish school and get an education, which we see happening in some cases, but still not enough. We want to see a vision that harnesses the energy of people from diverse places who came to Manitoba because they thought this was going to be a place of opportunity, not a place of dreary half-decade deficits—people who have come here from the Philippines, people who have come here from India, people who are coming from places like across Europe, such as Germany, the U.K. and other countries, people who are coming from Africa.

And, on that point, I want to just say that I had the very distinct pleasure last week of attending a citizenship ceremony, incidentally, presided over by Mr. Gilleshammer at Maples Collegiate, Mr. Speaker, and it was a ceremony that saw the swearing in of many new Canadians, and I was absolutely amazed at the diverse backgrounds of the people who were there. There were people from Israel; there were people from Africa, the Philippines, India and many great places from around the world, all of whom made a conscious choice to come here to Manitoba, Canada, and that's something we should all feel absolutely great about and that's something we should be supporting.

Serge Kaptegain, who is—happens to be my French teacher, was one of the individuals who received his Canadian citizenship last week, and the pride that he felt was very evident, and his family was there to support him, and I was just incredibly honoured to have been there as well. And what we saw, Mr. Speaker, were people who really just saw the great, untapped potential of this province and this country.

And this budget let them down, Mr. Speaker. It didn't do what budgets are supposed to do, which is to rekindle within people a sense, in spite of current challenges, that there's a plan to lead us toward a better future.

And that may be the biggest failure, Mr. Speaker, of this budget. It's a failure for all Manitobans, a failure to plan over the last 10 years for difficult times, a failure to deliver a vision and a strategy and a plan to lead us out of our current challenges, and a failure that current and future Manitobans are going to pay for.

For all of those reasons, Mr. Speaker, we cannot support this budget in spite of some individual initiatives that are positive ones, that the broad direction is the wrong one for Manitoba. The discarding of any commitment to balanced budgets, which has been the hallmark of successive governments, from Mr. Filmon to Mr. Doer, is out the window. That is the wrong direction for our province.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would just say that I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

*THAT the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House" and substituting:*

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

- (a) forcing Manitoba families to pay higher hydro rates, higher water bills and a range of other hidden taxes in order to pay for three wasteful NDP pet projects which are:
  - i. forcing Manitoba Hydro, against its advice, to build Bipole III on the west-side route, costing Manitobans an extra \$640 million and damaging the environment; and
  - ii. forcing the City of Winnipeg to remove nitrogen from its waste water, a decision that is expected to cost ratepayers an additional \$350 million, and which respected scientists say could be harmful to the health of Lake Winnipeg; and
  - iii. forcing unwanted enhanced driver's licences on Manitobans, costing \$14 million; and

- (b) creating a sinkhole of debt, now \$23.4 billion and rising. As a result, Manitoba families will be forced to work longer hours at lower pay to pay off this bill in the years ahead; and
- (c) scrapping balanced budget laws in order to allow the NDP to accrue massive deficits totalling \$2.039 billion over the next half decade, putting social programs such as health care and education at risk; and
- (d) failing to preserve front-line health-care services with innovative service delivery emphasizing preventative care and reducing bloated bureaucracy; and
- (e) failing to recognize the importance of agriculture in rural communities to our economy; and
- (f) failing to offer a plan to encourage private investment to create opportunity and wealth so Manitobans can feel hope that we'll one day emerge from the hole of debt and dependency and see a brighter future.

As a consequence, the government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, the amendment is in order.

It's been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

*THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "House" and substituting:*

therefore—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

—therefore regrets that this budget fails to address the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) forcing Manitoba families to pay higher hydro rates, higher water bills and a range of other hidden taxes in order to pay for three wasteful NDP pet projects which are:
  - i. forcing Manitoba Hydro against its advice to build Bipole III on the west-side route costing Manitobans an extra \$640 million and damaging the environment, and
  - ii. forcing the City of Winnipeg to remove nitrogen from its waste water, a decision

that is expected to cost ratepayers an additional \$350 million, and which respected scientists say would be harmful to the health of Lake Winnipeg, and

- iii. forcing unwanted enhanced driver's licences on Manitobans, costing \$14 million; and
- (b) creating a sinkhole of debt, now at \$23.4 billion and rising. As a result, Manitoba families will be forced to work longer hours at lower pay to pay off this bill in the years ahead; and
- (c) scrapping balanced budget legislation—budget—scrapping balanced budget laws in order to allow the NDP to accrue massive deficits totally \$2.039 billion over the next half decade, putting social programs such as health care and education at risk; and
- (d) failing to preserve front-line health-care services with innovative service delivery emphasizing preventative care and reducing bloated bureaucracy; and
- (e) failing to recognize the importance of agriculture and rural communities to our economy; and
- (f) failing to offer a plan to encourage private investment to create opportunity and wealth so Manitobans can feel hope that we will one day emerge from the hole of debt and dependency and see a brighter future.

As a consequence, the government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** I move, seconded by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), that debate be adjourned.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Now we will, as previously announced, we will now move to Interim Supply procedure, and the House will now resolve into Committee of Supply to consider the resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

\* (15:30)

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY****Interim Supply**

**Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We have before us for our consideration two resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

The first resolution respecting operating expenditures for Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding a \$5,057,635,680, being 48 percent of the total amount to be voted as set forth in Part A (Operating Expenditure) of the Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2011.

Does the Minister of Finance have any comments?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** Madam Chairperson, the Interim Supply bill—act—2010 provides the interim spending and committed authority for the 2010-11 fiscal year pending approval of the 2010 appropriation act.

As you have said, Madam Chairperson, the amount in this bill is \$5,057,635,680 and this authority represents 48 percent of the total sums to be voted, \$10,536,741,000, as set out in Part B of the Estimates for operating expenditures for the 2010-11 estimate year.

The amount of capital investment authorized requirements is \$597,897,000. This authority represents 75 percent of the total sums to be voted, \$797,196,000 as set out in Part B of the Estimates for capital expenditure in the 2010-11 Estimates of expenditure.

Authority of 2.5 million is being provided for the development or acquisition of inventory primarily for the development of cottage lots in 2010-11 and authority for \$15 million is being provided for remediation work in 2010-11 which will reduce the long-term liabilities previously accrued for environmental liabilities.

Madam Chairperson, the amount of future commitments—committed authorities—included in this Interim Supply bill is \$350 million. This authority provides for the commitment of Part A and Part B expenditures to ensure completion of the projects or fulfilling of contracts initiated but not completed in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011.

**Madam Chairperson:** Does the official opposition Finance critic have any comments?

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Regrettably, I do have some comments to put on the record today and, unfortunately, we're in a situation right now where here's a government, yet again, coming back to Manitobans and asking for more money to spend and—now, we do recognize that there are basic operations of governments that need to continue and, of course, you know, we know that that's what the Interim Supply bill is for.

But we do find it ironic that, of course, the budget was tabled yesterday in this House, that where we saw a 5.2 percent increase in spending in this province and, you know, for next year, Madam Chairperson, and, you know, the next day here we are, the government coming forward and the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) coming forward and requiring, once again, that—asking, once again, to spend more money in Manitoba, some \$5-plus billion what they're asking to be able to spend on the core operating budget and some almost \$600 million to spend in capital expenditures.

And, you know, we question the expenditures of this government, the priorities of this government. We see that over the past decade or so where the former minister of Finance, the now Premier of the province, had an opportunity at that time to set money aside in the very good times that were realized in Manitoba at that time, over the last decade, but he chose not to. And so, of course, now we're in a situation, Madam Chairperson, of having to do the unfortunate thing and that is, in these tough times, you know, the programs are going to be affected and the services are going to be affected, the delivery of services to Manitobans as a result of their poor fiscal management over the last decade.

And that, of course, was our now Premier, the former minister of Finance, who was the architect of this—of our budget and of our budget process over the last decade, and now we see that he has taken over the reins as Premier of our province and is continuing to spend and increase expenditures at unprecedented levels in our province, Madam Chairperson.

And so I think it's unfortunate that here we are today debating this unfortunate request of the Minister of Finance of having to come forward and request yet more money to spend when I think they could have, over the last number of years, the last

decade in fact, set money aside so that these expenditures didn't have to be so high, Madam Chairperson.

And so I think it's, again, unfortunate—and not to—not that I want to get into a budget debate, this is not the time for a budget debate but, certainly, we do recognize that with the precedent that's been set in this province with the increase in expenditures over the years, orchestrated again by the Premier (Mr. Selinger), and now—and I do recognize that the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) is new to her role and this is her first budget and I welcome her to that. And I know that she has inherited, you know, a rather horrible mess from her predecessor, the now Premier of the province, and so I don't entirely blame her for this. I mean, certainly it was the Premier who orchestrated all this for—in past budgets over the last decade, and he is really the person that had a choice over the last number of years, the last decade of being able to set money aside for the tough times.

We saw unprecedented increases in revenues in this province, unprecedented increases in transfer payments from the federal government during these times and the Minister of Finance at the time, the now Premier of our province who is at the helm here, Madam Chairperson, is now, unfortunately, you know, in a predicament where he is having to make tough decisions because he didn't make those decisions back when he should've made them to set money aside for the tough times.

\*(15:40)

And, you know, what he chose to do is, rather than set money aside, was to spend it, and we now see, and the government has made the announcement, that their priorities really, Madam Chairperson—the priority for this government is deficits for the next number of years, and increasing expenditures double the rate of growth that we see for next year. This is unsustainable for the future of our province, and the people that are going to be stuck with paying this at the end of the day are going to be our children and our grandchildren, who are going to be forced to pay for this government's spending problem. So I think it's unfortunate that decisions that could have been made several years ago, the prudent fiscal decisions that should have been made several years ago, have not been made. The increasing expenditures over the years—and now we're looking at increases for next year, some 5.2 percent for next year, we see that that is the legacy of this government.

But we also see, of course, Madam Chairperson, is that—what we also see is that the government's priorities are really in the areas of—if we look at Manitoba Hydro, for example, their priority is to waste some \$640-plus million on a west-side bipole line. Now, we don't—we recognize the need for a third bipole and we recognize that and we support it, but the prudent fiscal management and the prudent decision that would be made with respect to this would be to choose a route that would be \$640 million less, and we do know that the east-side route—and we know during the leadership debate, of course, that this issue came up and the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) had said at the time that he would've considered, actually, reconsidering this decision, and, you know, we commended him at the time for making that decision. Unfortunately, he was yanked out of the race by the backroom boys in that party, and I think it's unfortunate because I think he had a wonderful decision there, that he was at least going to consider changing that decision, and we believe that that would be—and it's still not too late, by the way, that the government can change its direction. They don't have to continue to waste money year after year after year.

And this is a lot of money that we're talking about here, if we include also the decision for nitrogen removal from Winnipeg's waste-water treatment facility, some \$350 million, if we include the graduated driver's licensing, some \$14 million, all of this adds up to over a billion dollars in waste and mismanagement.

If we want to talk about health-care bureaucracy—we want to talk about the bureaucracy in health care, how much administrative costs have increased in the bloated bureaucracy of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. You know, these are decisions that have been made by the former Finance minister, by the now Premier of this province, by the current Finance Minister, and I think what's unfortunate is that we've got a legacy of increasing now deficits. We're back in the area of the NDP deficit running. We're now in an area of increase—unprecedented increases in debt, and what's unfortunate is almost a \$10-billion increase in debt since this government came into power in 1999, \$10-billion increase. And imagine how much money is being spent and we know, you know, based on the budget estimates and past budgets how much money has been spent on servicing that debt, Madam Chairperson, and now that is going to increase yet

again, and that's not even taking into consideration where interest rates are going to go, and the Bank of Canada has already been talking about increasing rates. And we're at unprecedented lows in terms of the rates, and this was the time where the government should have been—should have gotten its fiscal house in order for the last 10 years. But, unfortunately, they chose not to and here we are today with a government that's—is now asking, once again, for more money, unfortunately.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I think we're almost prepared to go to the next step there, Madam Chairperson.

**Madam Chairperson:** Is the committee ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Madam Chairperson:** Shall the resolution pass?

**Resolution agreed to.**

The second resolution respecting capital expenditures for Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$597,897,000, being 75 percent of the total amount to be voted as set out in Part B (Capital Investment) of the Estimates be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2011.

Is the committee ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Madam Chairperson:** Shall the resolution pass?

**Resolution agreed to.**

That concludes the business currently before us.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

## IN SESSION

### Committee Report

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (Chairperson):** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted two resolutions respecting Interim Supply.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), that the report of the committee be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

\* \* \*

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister responsible for Housing,

THAT there be a grant to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Services for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011, out of the Consolidation Fund, the sum of \$5,057,635,680, being 44 percent of the total amount to be voted for as set out in Part B, Operating Expenditure, and \$597,897,000, being 75 percent of the total amount to be voted as set out in Part B of Capital expenditure for the Estimates laid before the House at the present session of the Legislature. *[interjection]* Mr. Speaker, I want to correct. I said that the—I said 44 percent; it should be 48 percent.

\*(15:50)

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross),

THAT there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011, out of the Consolidated Fund, the sums of 5 billion—5 billion, that's what I said—5 billion with a "b," okay—5 billion with a "b," \$57,635,680 being 48 percent of the total amount to be voted as set out in Part A, Operating Expenditure, and \$597,897,000, being 75 percent of the total amount to be voted as set out in Part B, Capital Investment, of the Estimates laid before the House at the present session of the Legislature.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable—order, please. The honourable member for Inkster.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** This is not a debatable motion, this one—but I—order. Okay, so it's not a debatable motion.

So is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 11—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2010

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister responsible for Local Government, that Bill 11, The

Interim Appropriation Act, 2010, be now read for the first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

*Motion agreed to.*

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill 11—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2010

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), that Bill 11, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2010, be now read a second time and be referred to a Committee of the Whole.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, I do want to add a few comments in regards to Bill 11. It's an interesting bill that we have before us. It's a bill that demands a considerable amount of money. One could question why it is the government feels it has to require 48 percent of its funding at this point in time to be passed. It's a great deal of money and maybe one could anticipate a longer than maybe usual session in order to try to work out some of the outstanding issues that there are going to be here over the next period of time.

One could speculate that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is getting cold feet and wanting to call an election in order to be able to ask for a budget amount of this. Who knows why? All I know is it's \$5 billion. And you have to ask yourself just how much is \$5 billion? Well, Mr. Speaker, that's—this money here, if we approve this money, what we're saying is no matter what happens, this government's got permission to spend \$150 every second. Every second this government's going to spend \$150, tax dollars. That's a whole lot of money, and then when we do pass this budget, you can anticipate that the Manitoba government is going to be spending in excess of \$340 every second. That's a great deal of money.

And, in fact, Mr. Speaker, if you take a look at it, when Gary Filmon was the premier of this province, we spent just over \$6 billion. Ten years later, we're spending in excess of \$10 billion. One has to question in terms of where it is this government is taking the province of Manitoba when it comes to government expenditures. In fact, one of the questions that I always find interesting to ask my constituents—and I sent out a few thousand questionnaires; got a few hundred of them back—and

one of the questions I had asked is: Has the quality of health care improved since 1999?

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure, you—well, some might be a bit surprised. Well over 50 percent of Manitobans do not believe health care is any better today than it was in 1999. Yet, look at the billions of dollars extra that this government has been able to squander away in terms of health-care expenditures. And there's no surprise. It doesn't surprise me. When you take a look at the cost of Winnipeg Regional Health and just how much money this government has put into that bureaucracy, you're going into the hundreds of millions of dollars. In fact, there's a little bit of irony here.

\* (16:00)

On the Logan and Main Street, you have the empire of Winnipeg Regional Health being built. I believe the cost of that was 30, 40 million dollars. We really don't know. All we know is there would have no doubt been an overrun because it's something in which this government has built, Mr. Speaker—but millions, and tens of millions of dollars, in order to house some health-care bureaucrats that didn't exist 10 years ago.

A few blocks further west—well, a number of blocks further west, but on Logan Avenue, we have a community medical clinic that has been closed down, and this government has been absolutely totally silent on the issue, Mr. Speaker.

On one end of Logan Avenue we have millions, tens of millions of dollars being invested in terms of pencil pushers, individuals feeding a bureaucracy. At the other end of Logan Avenue we have a health-care community clinic, a community clinic that has been servicing hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals for 40-plus years, Mr. Speaker, and this government does absolutely nothing in terms of defending the services that are needed in those Brooklands and Weston area. I find that the government's priorities are indeed all mixed up.

If you take a look at the budget—you know, the Leader of the Liberal Party posed a question today in regards to—that this budget is in fact an illegal budget—*[interjection]* And the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) says, no, it's not, from her seat.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, there is an obligation, a legal obligation of this government to have balanced budgets going forward. And the reason why they're changing the legislation yet again

is in order so that they can actually have this budget be legal.

If they don't make the changes to the balanced budget legislation it will be an illegal budget. So if, in fact, Mr. Speaker, we have a vote on this budget before we deal with the balanced budget legislation, the government is going to be voting on a budget that violates the balanced budget legislation.

If I'm wrong the Minister of Finance should make it very clear. Show me a legal document that says that passing this budget will not make it illegal against the balanced budget legislation. The Minister of Finance is breaking the law, Mr. Speaker, by presenting and expecting her colleagues to vote in favour of this budget. What you're doing is you're saying that we are going to have a deficit for the next four, five, six years. That's what you're saying if this budget passes, is it not? Of course, it is. That's what the minister is saying.

What does the balanced budget legislation say, Mr. Speaker? It does not allow you to have five years consecutive deficit situation. That's what the balanced budget legislation says. So, if you pass the budget—if you and the—and your caucus colleagues pass this budget we'll have an illegal budget, unless, of course, you muster the force and the brain trust of within that New Democratic caucus and beyond and somehow are able to pass the legislation for balanced budget legislation before you actually pass the budget.

Well, and maybe that's ultimately what you're trying to achieve by asking for 48 percent of your budget today so then you can take your time in terms of passing. If you think about it, we give you this 48 percent of your budget requirements today, that means your budget doesn't technically have to pass until September. There's no need to pass the budget until September, Mr. Speaker. So it's another way in which they can get around, I guess, from breaking their own laws of balanced budget legislations. It's going to be interesting to see in terms of what actually takes place.

Mr. Speaker, I have argued for years, virtually since I was first elected back in 1988, that from an economic point of view, in terms of budgets in general, I am very much a Keynesist theorist in the sense that I do believe during difficult times there is an obligation on government to stimulate the economy and spend. I do believe that, but another part of that is to be able to—during good times you

should be putting money to the side. You should be spending the money that you have in the best way that you can, you know, ensure or maximize efficiencies throughout the government, and that's what should have been happening, Mr. Speaker.

I don't believe that that has happened with this government. I do believe that Manitoba, in good part because of neglect of this government, is in for some potentially difficult times in the years ahead, and this budget is doing very little in terms of minimizing that difficulty, Mr. Speaker. And I genuinely believe that because, if the government wanted to be able to spend smarter, it should be looking at issues that would ultimately have an impact three or four years from now.

And let me give you a couple of examples. Let's say, for the sake of argument, the government saw some wisdom in recognizing that Manitoba does have a problem with diabetes and, if it was to invest money in terms of fighting diabetes and the growth in that whole area, Mr. Speaker, in the short term it might cost us a little bit of money, but in the long term we are going to save millions of dollars.

Same thing could be said about fetal alcohol syndrome. You know, for years I've been telling the government that they need to do more in terms of the whole education component of FASD. In fact, we've introduced legislation, a private member's bill dealing with FASD and having labelling, and that some of the simple things that could, in fact, be done if the government would start acting on more of the ideas that are coming from opposition members and more ideas that are coming from different stakeholders and interest groups, Mr. Speaker, that you would see that there are many things that government can do that would, in essence, allow them to save money going forward into the future. But, for whatever reasons, they have chosen to ignore that.

What the government has clearly demonstrated over the years is that it does know how to spend money. It can spend money, and I suspect, second to no other administration in North America, Mr. Speaker. I really do believe that.

What they haven't been able to demonstrate is that they can spend that money wisely, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, Manitoba has lost a great deal of its own economic independence in terms of—as a provincial entity because we are relying more and more on what's happening in Ottawa and Ottawa's

generosity than we ever have. We're talking in terms of just sheer percentages. The amount of money that we rely on Ottawa is so much into the billions of dollars today, one should be concerned. You know, when you take a look at the percentages of increase in personal income tax compared to personal income tax, let's say, and your PST, and you compare that to the percentages of the increases, where's that shortfall coming from?

Well, the answer is federal transfer payments. It's federal transfer payments that has kept this government alive. It's federal transfer payments that has been able to make this government look and appear as if it's doing a relatively good job, Mr. Speaker.

You know, anyone can be the premier of a province if you're being inundated with cash every year, if you're provided more cash every year than you had the previous year, Mr. Speaker. The real challenge in being in government is when the economy maybe isn't doing as well, and maybe revenues look like they might be coming down. That's when we need to see strong leadership coming from the government of the day.

So here is the first budget where we've—here is—*[interjection]* Done? Here is the first budget in which has now come along in the last decade which has some challenges to it, and what have we seen the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) do? Her first political budget is to break the balanced budget legislation—the law—and then, at some point in time in the future, we will see that legislation come before us so that we can actually amend it so that they will not be in violation of the law.

\* (16:10)

I thought it was interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the government tried to look generous by saying, well, the ministers are going to take a 20 percent cut. Well, I think that there's many, including myself, that would ultimately argue that, had they not taken the 20 percent cut, that they could have been taken to court because they would have been in violation of the law which would have mandated that they had to take a 20 percent cut. They didn't do it because they were trying to sympathize with Manitobans; they were doing it because they were forced to and they didn't want to be embarrassed.

With those few words, I realize we're under time constraints, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to say—thank you.

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

The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill 11, The Interim Appropriation Act, for concurrence and third reading.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please take the chair.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

#### Bill 11—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2010

**Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick):** Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order. We will now be considering Bill 11, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2010.

Does the honourable Minister of Finance have an opening statement?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** Madam Chairperson, I will take just a few moments to make a few comments on this bill and indicate that, although the member opposite talked about this not being a normal process, in fact, we—when there is a budget, you have to do interim supply in order to be able to pay all of the civil servants, in order to be able to go on after March 31st. We do have to either work through a special warrant or do interim supply, and that's why we are taking these steps, so that we can indeed continue on with the operations of government, in order to have people continue on with the work they do. We are also putting in the authority for capital investments through this motion and putting in place the necessary steps that government can operate.

So there are various sections to the bill. Section 2.1 of the bill authorizes the money that I mentioned earlier, the \$5,057,635,680, and this is 48 percent of the money that we have—that is in the budget, and this is—Madam Chairperson, in the second part of the bill includes the capital amount of 597 thousand 897 thousand dollars. Again, this represents 75 percent of the total amount to be voted in Part B.

Section 2.3 simply affirms that money expended under the authority of this act must be duly accounted for in the appropriate departments, in the event that there is a shift of responsibility during the fiscal year.

Section 3 is the authority for \$2.5 million of—is being provided for the development or acquisition of inventory, primarily for the development of the



cottage lots, Madam Chairperson, and these lots will be sold and the titles transferred to the new owners.

Section 5 authorizes \$15 million dollars to—and that is being provided for remedial work in 2010 which will reduce the long-term liability previously accrued from environmental liabilities. And section 5 provides authority for up to \$350 million to make commitments beyond the 2010-11 fiscal year, to ensure the completions of projects and fulfilment of contracts initiated but not completed prior to March 31st, 2011.

As I said, this—these appropriations are required in order that our civil servants can continue on with the work that they do so well for us in this government and ensures that cash can flow, whether it be for purchasing of—or letting contracts go or purchasing of equipment and—in other areas, so I'm—that's the purpose of this bill.

It's a normal process that we do this, and I would invite questions from the committee.

**Madam Chairperson:** Does the official opposition Finance critic have a statement?

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** I think we're ready just to get into questions, in the interest of time.

**Madam Chairperson:** The floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I think, just before I do ask—get into the questions, I think it is important to note, as well, that I know that the minister says that this is sort of a routine proceeding, that that's what we're here for, is rather routine, but I think it's important to note that had the budget been introduced earlier and had the opportunity to be passed in the normal process prior to the end of March 31st, then we wouldn't be in this situation as well. And I think it's important to note that she did have the opportunity to bring in a budget earlier if she wanted to, but she chose not to, so—and that is entirely in her area, in her jurisdiction.

So, having noted that, I would like to get into asking some questions, and it should be noted—I know that in the Budget Address the minister did mention that ministerial salaries would be reduced by some 20 percent or, I believe the figure is \$9,000, and I'm just wondering why that would not show up in the budget books, why that reduction in salaries has not been reflected in the budget books.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** In fact, it does show up in the budget books as a reduction, and I will have to find

the section where it does show up and indicate to the member where that is located. But there is a subclause in one section that takes this—the amounts for the ministerial salary and the reduction for MLAs out of the estimates.

And I—let's see, if you look at page 5, you will see Less: Members' Salary Adjustments, \$264,000. That's where it shows up.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Just wondering why then it would show up—like, in the individual departments, when you look at the expenditures, the estimate of expenditures, under ministerial salaries it shows up at 46,000, which is the same as last year.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** And as I have said, if the member will look at schedule 2, which is in the budget, it's—there is a line that shows the amount of money. As you look at all of—at the summary expenditure estimates, where each department is outlined as to the amount of core government, consolidated impacts and summary, under Justice and Other Expenditures, that is where you will see that there is a reduction for legislative—there is a reduction of \$264,000 says less salary adjustments, and that's where it shows up.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yeah, just in the estimate of expenditures and revenues, just, for example, if we looked at the Department of Conservation, I just opened it up arbitrarily to this one and it does suggest that the minister's salary for the '09-10 and '10-11 years is—stays the same at \$46,000. Why would that not be reduced there? And that's on page 50 if you wanted to refer to that. Why would that not be reduced by \$9,000 there?

\* (16:20)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Because it has been reconciled for all departments under one line where it indicates under Justice and other expenditures and that it states clearly: Less members' salary adjustments, and there's the number there.

So, rather than putting it in each department, it comes in this line.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, I just think it's odd because, as I know my colleagues are going to be going through and looking for that salary reduction as they're going through their Estimates process, and certainly within here, I think it's a little bit confusing that—I mean, I guess the minister is talking about two sets of books here and, you know, in this book it certainly says that there is no reduction of salary

estimated for next year. And I think that that doesn't accurately reflect, then, what the minister is talking about.

So, if she could indicate again where the numbers are that she's talking about, and if she would actually refer to page 50 of the estimates of expenditures and refer to that \$46,000—what will be, I guess, the salary for next year then? If it's—is it \$46,000 as it is indicated in the estimates of expenditures? *[interjection]* Fifty.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The member opposite talks about two sets of books. There was a time when there was different sets of books. We've moved to summary budget, and this is at the recommendation of the Auditor General. And that's why everything is in one set of books.

With regard to the member's salary, although it is printed as \$46,000, we announced in the budget speech yesterday that ministers will have a 20 percent reduction—not a 20-cent one, like I made a mistake yesterday, but a 20 percent reduction and all of that is brought together in another part of the budget. There is—and it falls under summary—in the summary details of the budget. There's budget—Manitoba Budget 2010, and there are all of the pages for the budget, and under the Summary Budget 2010, all of it is brought together and then we have the details of all of the expenditures for each department and that's—*[interjection]*

What page? When you go to summary budget, page 5—page 5 on summary budget. Summary Budget 2010, you go into it, and go to page 5 under Summary Budget.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I guess I would just ask: What is the actual estimate for the expenditure for the minister's salary on an individual basis? Is the salary being reduced to—if it's \$9,000 or the 20 percent, is it reduced to \$37,000 then? Is that what the salary would be and is that what is projected for next year?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** If you take the salary at \$46,000 for the ministerial salary, you subtract 20 percent from that. Subtract 20 percent from that, then that will be the reduction in the ministerial salary.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, you know, and I—if that is the case, then, that is not accurately reflected in the budget documents, and that is of grave concern to me because when we are looking through this, we assume that the numbers are accurate and when you've got one book saying one thing and you've got

the next book saying another thing, like, that is a serious—that's two sets of books, Madam Chairperson.

And I think that that is of grave concern to Manitobans, and when we can't—when we've got—when we're working off of two sets of books here, how are we able to do our job in this Manitoba Legislature? How are we able to do our jobs if we're—if we don't know which numbers are being accurately reflected in which books, and we're working off of different sets of numbers? How are we best able to do our job if that's what we're faced with here? I asked the minister that.

Why is it that that \$37,000—if that's a 20 percent reduction, I don't have my calculator right here, right now, but she did indicate that it will be a \$9,000 reduction and from the—so that would bring it down to \$37,000. Why, in the estimate of expenditures, is it still at 46,000 for next year and not accurately reflected at 37,000 for the minister's salary?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** All of this is tabled in one book. This is the budget that's tabled. It is the call—it's called Manitoba moving forward budget and budget papers 2010. This is the budget and budget papers and they are all included here. The summary budget is included and the Estimates of the department are included. Departments set their budgets a long time ahead of time.

Madam Chairperson, we made a decision that we were going to reduce the ministers' salary. We were going to take a voluntary reduction of 20 percent and, being frugal, we thought it was—we would not reprint all of the Estimates to change that number. We could address it in the summary budget on page 5 that I have pointed out.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, and, you know, I guess it's something that they decided to do at a back of a paper napkin one night when they were out talking about what they're going to do—is maybe suddenly take a—and it just begs the question then, Madam Chairperson, if that number is different, what other numbers in these books are not accurately reflected in all of the books here? And, you know, again, I think it's a serious predicament for all of the members in this Manitoba Legislature to be able to do and properly do their job if we don't know. I mean, I happen to come across this and see that number but you know, how many other numbers are not consistent in these books? Maybe the minister could answer that question.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Chairperson, I would stand and defend the numbers that are in this budget paper at any time and I've indicated to the member opposite that, in the summary expenditure Estimates, it's—we have indicated in the Estimates, what the reduction is. We stated in the budget speech and it's outlined in the budget document that there is a 20—there is a voluntary 20 percent reduction in ministers' salaries for the—

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, I thank the minister and I guess we'll just—I mean, we'll have to move on to some other questions here. But, again, I think it's very important that the numbers are not accurately reflected here in—you know, these are in the Estimates books that are before us that we need to rely on to appropriately be able to do our job and, you know, I—so I do question that and I am very gravely concerned about that.

I'm wondering if the minister has also budgeted for any salary increases with respect to the civil service or if that—if those numbers are reflected in here with respect to any changes to do with salaries with the civil service?.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Chairperson, we have not budgeted for increases in salaries.

\* (16:30)

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Okay, and I guess I would like to just ask now—would like to ask, in this budget, there is a 5.2 percent increase in spending, and we know that the projections that this government has set out for itself based on advice from others in the industry and, et cetera, from experts in the industry, was a 5—or a 2.5 percent increase in GDP growth, and I'm wondering if the minister could explain how she believes that that is, that that percentage increase of expenditures is appropriate. It's almost double what the GDP growth is expected to be next year, and I think that is very concerning to Manitobans. I'm wondering how she can justify a double increase in expenditure over what is expected from the growth.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Chairperson, if we look at what we budgeted last year and then what we were required to spend to deliver on services that were needed in Manitoba and what we are spending this year, our expenditure to print is about a 1 percent increase.

The member talks about a 5 percent increase. That is an increase over last year's print, but in effect, there has been other expenditures that have been

made and this is based on what we spent and what we anticipate spending this year, and it's a 1 percent increase.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** I'll be a second here.

Madam Chairperson, I just have a few questions for the Minister of Conservation if I could, and I want to welcome him to his portfolio and the opportunity that I'll have of being his critic in regards to this particular area. And, of course, one of the things that I noticed about the budget is that there's, and I think that the priorities of education, health, justice, those areas, are commendable from our side of the House as well. It's just that we have grave concerns about how some of the numbers are arrived at for some of the other portfolios and other areas, given the fact that there's a 5.4 percent—or an over 5 percent increase in spending in the budget, and the fact that in Conservation there's a 5.4 percent cut in that particular area.

And so I just wanted to ask the minister what his feelings are in regards to how he's going to be able to manage his department with that kind of a cut in it.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation):** Well, Madam Chair, first of all, I also want to welcome the member for Arthur-Virden to his new post as critic of the Minister of Conservation and hope that we can have a constructive relationship over the course of our respective responsibilities.

The reduction in the budget of the—in the Conservation budget is something that was undertaken with a view to looking for efficiencies. Looking for ways to reduce spending—something that the official opposition often encourages us to do—in fact was doing this afternoon, on a regular basis in question period. So we're looking for efficiencies. Looking for ways that we could reduce spending without impacting on the overall importance and effectiveness of the things that the department is charged with doing is a responsibility that I took seriously and that my officials did, and I think if you look at the reductions that are in the Estimates, you'll find that none of them are drastic and that the overall importance of the environment to this government has been maintained.

**Mr. Maguire:** Madam Chair, I acknowledge that there'll be some smaller cutbacks in some of those areas that led up to 5.4 percent. I guess my concern was that with an overall increase in the budget spending from other departments of, you know, over

5 percent, 5.8 percent I think it is, and the increase in the spending of the government overall in this particular year, if the minister wasn't concerned—and I'm, as I said earlier, quite satisfied with some of the increases in things like health and education; other governments have done that. I know the previous government to this one did it in much tougher economic times back in the '90s trying to maintain spending in health care and those areas—but when you've got a 5.8 percent increase in spending, does the minister, you know, I would have thought maybe—as department as important as Conservation would have been a—you know, at least be enabled to keep its—and maintain its budget at a level pace comparatively to the other critic responsibility I have in Water Stewardship, which doesn't, you know—has been able to hold the line there, and so I guess I just bring it to the minister's attention and I wanted to know what his thoughts were.

If it would have been—of course, it would have been much easier if he had have been able to convince his colleagues to be able to keep it at a—or if the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) had have asked you, more information, I'm sure, in regards to being able to keep the Conservation budget at an even keel instead of this 5.4 percent cut. Some 7 million dollars cut out of this department concerns me, and I just wondered if the minister could respond to that.

**Mr. Blaikie:** Right, sorry, Madam Chair, I think the honourable member makes the point that this is part—you can't look at the Estimates of the Department of Conservation apart from the overall strategy of the government, and the strategy of the government was not only to hold the line but to make the necessary increases in certain departments which we thought were consistent with the priorities that Manitobans were making clear to us in the pre-budget hearings.

And—but I—you know, it's also the case, I think, that Manitobans put a high priority on the environment and high priority on the things that the Department of Conservation does, and that's why we were very careful, in the reductions that we did make, to make sure that the overall effectiveness of the department and the things that we know Manitobans are particularly concerned about were not impacted. And I'm certainly satisfied that the impact of the cuts, although they are cuts, are not something that is going to have any long-term or, for that matter, short-term consequences for the actual environment in Manitoba, which is what we're all

concerned about. And I welcome the honourable member's concern in that regard and, you know, I wonder if there's any particular cuts or reductions that he's concerned about because if there are some, I'd like to know exactly what they are.

**Mr. Maguire:** Madam Chair, I understand that Conservation was just one of the nine departments that were cut back in this funding process that the government, the NDP, has gone through in this budget. You know, I just—as an aside, I note with interest if the minister could expand on the quote that he was giving today about how he really doesn't like this budget either. I think the quote in the *Free Press* today was that the—he said he didn't enjoy—if I could put a quote around it—seeing his department's budget cut. And, of course, we've been just talking about that and about the—how, you know, the emphasis was on some of the other departments. Was that an accurate comment from the minister?

**Mr. Blaikie:** Sorry, Madam Chair. I'm just so eager to just dialogue with the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, I just—you know, jumping right in there. Well, I think it goes—I think it's kind of obvious that—I don't know of any minister that would enjoy having to reduce expenditures in their own department, so I was just being, you know, dead honest about it. I would have much preferred, you know, that we were in a fiscal situation where we could have had a 5 percent increase, and there are other things that we'd like to be doing. But, you know, in the real world, you can't always do everything that you want to do or that the opposition wants you to do, and we found ourselves in that situation.

So, yes, in the sense that I would have rather have had a budget that either held—you know, had no decreases or, for that matter, had increases. In that sense, what I said to the media was that, no, I didn't enjoy that. I would have much preferred to have been in a overall fiscal situation. If we hadn't had the global recession, we hadn't had all the things that have happened that have impacted on the revenues of the Manitoba government, then I, you know—but this is the only world that we live in, Madam Chair, and it's in that world that I had to do some things that I didn't enjoy, which was not fill some positions that were vacant and shave some money off here and shave some money off there, but make sure in the overall that we—that the department continued to do the job that Manitobans expect it to do.

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Maguire:** Madam Chair, I just want to remind the minister that, in the real world, his government did have a 5 percent–5.8 percent increase in spending this year, so I just, you know, that's all I'm making the reference to is—it's about an 11 percent decrease from the government's average spending, is a 5.8 percent increase his department's down.

And I understand that they're, you know, have a—their report card on Conservation hasn't been as good as it may have been expected—some of the public may have inspected in regards to some of these issues over the last 10 years. And I know some of my former colleagues were getting some B-pluses and Bs in some of these areas and so I guess I raise concern.

When the minister asked me about specific areas, I would bring one to his attention in this area, and I think it's pretty important. It's probably one of the most important things in his whole department and the biggest cut that he's had in this whole thing. About, in fact—about 50 percent of his cuts comes under the heading of "Environmental Stewardship." And, you know, to cut \$3 million out of a \$7-million overall cut out of that particular segment, it's a 21.4 percent, according to the budget Estimates book here, cut in environmental stewardship in his whole, you know, in that area, as opposed to his overall 5.4 percent cut in the department. And, you know, what kind of concerns does that raise?

And if I could ask the minister sort of the rhetorical question that he asked me: What are the major areas in environmental stewardship where those cuts will be that significant?

**Mr. Blaikie:** Well, Madam Chair, I'm glad to hear the concerns of the honourable member with respect to those cuts. And I don't have the details in front of me of exactly what they mean in each and every case, but if the member would like, I could certainly arrange to get him some more detail on exactly—on that particular cut that he mentions and his concern about it.

And I must say, I am glad to see that the opposition is or appears to be concerned about environmental stewardship because a lot of the things that—what we do in Environmental Stewardship is enforce regulations and laws with respect to protecting Manitoba's environment, our water and our air, et cetera, that the honourable member's party has had occasion to not always support. Shall we put it that way? Trying to be gentle

here that we're in, you know, a more—in the kind of atmosphere that we're in.

So, I mean, if the honourable member—if this, you know, represents some kind of conversion on the part of the honourable member and his colleagues to wanting us to spend more money on the environment, then that's something that we shall surely keep in mind because I would agree that, as the honourable member pointed out, I would like to have had a—more resources. There are more things that we could be doing.

But we doing an awful lot, and I have in front of me, you know, all the money that we've—the money that this government has spent on all kinds of environmental projects, and we have a great many more to go, which are planned for next year. So in terms of projects, things that actually, you know, whether it's lagoon upgrades in the Whiteshell or water infrastructure, parks, all kinds of things are happening that I would recommend to the honourable member that he take note of in the context of his overall concern about the 5 percent reduction.

**Mr. Maguire:** In the process of amicability, that's why I was referring to the report cards earlier. And we can go back a little bit in history on that. When I was environment critic, when I was first elected, back in 1999, I can assure the minister that I watched the dismantling of the—of sustainable development advisory board by his government and some of his predecessors he may not be aware of, and a number of those areas. And I think, you know, even perhaps that's probably, pardon me, why some of the report cards weren't as quite as good as they were under—why some of the report cards weren't quite as good as some of the previous ones from the previous government.

But I noticed as well here that in one area under Environmental Stewardship, that there's a \$600,000 cut to Green Manitoba Eco Solutions.

Can he just refer to what sections will be cut out of that, out of Green Manitoba Eco Solutions?

**Mr. Blaikie:** I'm afraid I'm going to have to say to the honourable member that I'm going to have to—I'll get back to him with the details of what that—of that cut and I welcome his concern about it, but I'm not in a position to outline—to give him the kind of information that I think he's looking for at the moment. But I'll make sure he gets it.

**Mr. Maguire:** Well, there are a lot of other programs, East Side Planning Initiative and others that fall under the Environmental Stewardship area and, you know, I'm pleased to see a number of the dollars there, particularly on the International Institute of Sustainable Development have been—tried to keep pace with—

**Mr. Blaikie:** Well, I'm just having a hard time hearing the honourable member 'cause we're not standing up shouting at each other, and that means that it's harder to hear people if there's a lot of conversation in the House. And the honourable member has a kind of a low and distinguished voice, and sometimes it's hard to pick up what he's saying.

**Madam Chairperson:** I will take this opportunity to remind all members that we do have a loge. If you wish to have private conversations, I would suggest you take advantage of the loge so that members who are debating have the opportunity to hear the questions and answers as they're put to each other.

**Mr. Maguire:** I'll try to speak a little louder for the minister as well. I have a cold and so I'm perhaps a little softer on him than normally.

But I just wanted to say that International Institute of Sustainable Development has maintained—it looks like pretty close to the financing that they've had before. And, you know, our share of that—and I guess there's other questions around some of the other packages that will be there—I'm quite—I don't need an answer right now, but we'll get into it in Estimates at a later date anyway in regards to some of the greater detail on some of these issues, and so I appreciate that with the minister.

Administration—and, you know, my colleague brought up the fact that there's a—you know, the salaries are maintained the same in some of this area and I won't get into that today with the minister today, but it's just that—maybe it's different for his other colleagues; it looks like he's staying the same here.

But anyway, I wanted to look at the clean environment. You know, you've got the stability, I guess, in some of the areas that are very small, which is, I think, a good thing in regards to some of the environmental needs that we have in the province.

Some of the new park facilities I applaud to have some of those put in place. I think there are other fee increases and hikes in some of those areas that provide more revenue out of those areas that the

minister will have an opportunity to answer questions on later as well.

And I just wonder if today he can provide me with any kind of reasons why they've gone with increased camping fees and increased disposal fees in a number of those areas for the campsites that we presently have this year, even though it's free to still get into the park.

**Mr. Blaikie:** Well, the member makes a good point. It is free to get into the park. And when you take into account the—I think it's about \$2.5 million that Manitobans are saving though the free entry into the park and that's 400-and-some thousand dollars that are being raised through the camping fees, you've still got a kind of a \$2-million benefit there to Manitobans who are using the parks.

So we're a long way from, you know, recovering, although it's not our goal to recover, but we're a long way from recovering, in any sense, the investment that we're making in the parks and particularly, you know, I'm thinking of the incredible investment that we've had to make in the recent past and will still—and we'll have to make in the recent future in order to meet the concerns that the honourable member's former colleague—or the former environment critic raised with respect to lagoons in the Whiteshell. It's not—it's not inexpensive to deal with some of the problems that have been raised. But we have had major new investments at Falcon Lake and at West Hawk and the Big Whiteshell and improvements to lagoons, existing lagoons, older lagoons in the Whiteshell.

\* (16:50)

I had an opportunity, the member might want to know, to actually do a tour of the lagoons. It was a very exciting day. And I'm glad that I had occasion to do it before the thaw, shall we say. But I did make a point of actually going to many of the lagoons that had been raised as concerns and having an on-site briefing, shall we say, as to what some of the problems had been in the past and what remedial measures were being taken to make sure that some of the things that have happened in the past wouldn't be happening again this summer.

And I also had a chance to look at the site that the department is looking at for a major new lagoon in the Whiteshell for truck haul, and in that respect, the member mentioned the hauling fee or the tipping fee, and this is something that's not going to come into place right away. That will only come into place

when we're able to put up the right kind of entrance gates and whatnot so that we can keep track of who's coming in and out.

But, you know, the overall goal is to create the capacity, but at the same time, to do things like the new showers where people aren't going to put as much water, waste water, into the system. So we need to create capacity, but we also need to be taking steps to limit input at the same time, and that's the sort of two-track that we're on here.

**Mr. Maguire:** One last question, Madam Chair, before I turn it over to my colleague, and that is: Something I noticed in yesterday's budget was something that was omitted in yesterday's budget, and that is the government has indicated that they want to force the City of Winnipeg to take nitrates out of their waste-water treatment plants, but it was completely negated in yesterday's budget.

Has the minister changed his mind in regards to the \$350 million offloading on the City of Winnipeg that they're going to continue to force them to do to take nitrates out of the water?

**Mr. Blaikie:** I'm sure the member will know that this matter was referred one more time to the Clean Environment Commission and that, you know, we expect a report very soon on that.

But I would certainly ask—I would ask the member to read those reports that have already been made on this particular subject, and to not take at face value some of the things that are being said about the cost of nitrogen removal, because I think if you, you know—whatever the debate about nitrogen might be—I've made it my business, I think, to know as much about this as I can.

And it seems to me that the big piece of the money is about ammonia removal, and the real debate is about how the City is going to remove ammonia, whether they're going to do it in a state-of-the-art way through biological nutrient reduction or whether they're going to continue to do it in an older way through the application of chemicals, et cetera. And if you do that, if you do ammonia right, then what's left over? What you have to spend in order to do nitrogen is not the figure that the honourable member quoted. It's much smaller. It's a much—it's just a little bit tacked on the end, so to speak, of the overall cost of taking ammonia out of Winnipeg's waste water.

So to some—I think it would be more useful, in terms of the public, if we had a debate that was actually about that, rather than pretending that all the money that is slated to be spent on ammonia and nitrogen is being caricatured as money that's being spent on nitrogen alone. Regardless of what one thinks about the debate about nitrogen, whether or not, you know, it's worth doing or whether or not—even if some of the scientists are right here or there—whether or not there's larger reasons for taking the nitrogen out, all of that is irrelevant to my point that I'm trying to make here this afternoon, Madam Chair, which is that the larger expense is about the removal of ammonia from waste water.

And this is some—by BNR, by biological nutrient reduction, and this is done in cities all across western Canada, and I don't know why Winnipeg has to be dragged kicking and screaming into the 21st century. Why can't we have a state-of-the-art? We're bragging about the state-of-the-art of our water; why can't we do state-of-the-art when it comes to treating our sewage?

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable member for Carman? No, sorry, Emerson—excuse me—the honourable member for Emerson.

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Yesterday's budget—I was shocked when the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), the former minister of Agriculture, went through the whole budget, the total budget speech, and never mentioned the word "agriculture" once. There were matters that she referred to in agriculture, but the word "agriculture" was never used in the budget. It's a pretty significant oversight for the Finance Minister to be using, as she was the former minister of Agriculture.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance: the fact that they have a 5.8 percent increase in spending and a 4 percent reduction, or 4.2 percent reduction in spending in agriculture, and the fact that the federal government has increased their contribution to agriculture by 4 percent, if she can explain that, why she would have cut the 4 percent?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Chairperson, I would encourage the member opposite to read through the budget and look at the various places that the agriculture industry is mentioned. If we look at it, we've talked about farmers, we've talked about cattle producers, we talked about working with farmers in water protection areas, we've talked about the

Agri-Opportunities fund. We've talked about a number of areas of priorities. We've said we will invest in areas that involve food safety, environment and agriculture innovation, looking for ways to build capacity in rural Manitoba. We said that we are going to make—there will be new investments in the Food Development Centre in Portage la Prairie, which is a very important facility as far as value-added and creating new markets for our producers.

So, if you look at this budget and this budget's speech, the member can say, you know, you didn't say the word agriculture, but it talks about farmers, it talks about cattle producers, it talks about financial support for farmers, it talks about value-added, it talks about Agri-Innovation, it talks about Agri-Food Innovation. All of those things are related to agriculture.

It talks about the farmers of the Interlake and, you know, those farmers in the Interlake—and the member opposite has talked about this many times, he's talked about how hard farmers in the Interlake have been hit. And I can say to the member opposite that there will be—this government has made a commitment to help those producers and we will help those producers move forward to be—ensure that they can get their crops in the ground this year. We were in the Interlake recently and we will stand by them.

So you may not have the actual word "agriculture," but I think full well, members—the public knows that when you are talking about helping farmers work on the variety of these areas, farmers know that we're talking about agriculture.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you for that informative speech. The question was clear that you hadn't mentioned the word "agriculture." I did say that you

did make references to it, but you hadn't used the word and I felt that that was a significant oversight on your part as you were the former minister of Agriculture and the word shouldn't have stuck on your lips. It should have come out of there quite freely. However, I do know that you were running into a little bit of problem halfway through there and you could have used something.

But, at any rate, let's go to the 2 percent tax on the quota.

**An Honourable Member:** Oh, oh, the mike's not on.

**Madam Chairperson:** Could you just repeat the last part of your question, please? [*interjection*]

Just one moment, please. We're having trouble hearing you. I think we're not necessarily picking up on your mike. Just one more time, please.

**Mr. Graydon:** The 2 percent tax on quota, is that on surplus quota or is that on all quota?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** We could get further clarification from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) when he is able to provide that information for you but, Madam Chair, this is a tax on quota as it is transferring.

\* (17:00)

**Madam Chairperson:** Committee consideration of Bill 11 will continue tomorrow when Committee of the Whole resumes consideration.

The time being 5 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

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



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Wednesday, March 24, 2010

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