

Fifth 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*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
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.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
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	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, Hon.	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.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 12, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Speaker's Statement

Mr. Speaker: I have a statement for the House. I must inform the House that Gerald Hawranik, the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, has resigned his seat in the House effective March 25, 2011, and I am therefore tabling his resignation and my letter to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council advising of the vacancy created in the House membership.

PETITIONS

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good afternoon. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On December 11th of 2009, in Winnipeg, Zdzislaw Andrzejczak was killed when the car that he was driving collided with a stolen vehicle.

The death of Mr. Andrzejczak, a husband and a father, along with too many other deaths and injuries involving stolen vehicles, was a preventable tragedy.

Many of those accused in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

Chronic car thieves pose a risk to the safety of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all court orders for car thieves are vigorously monitored and enforced.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by M. Ferguson, F. Pankiewicz, P. Pecold and many, many other Manitobans.

RCMP Rural Service

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitobans deserve to live in a safe environment and feel secure in their homes and their communities. Some regions of rural Manitoba have been hard hit by crime, including residential break and enters, property theft, vandalism and other offences that threaten people's security.

In some areas, RCMP detachments are not staffed on a 24-hour basis. Criminal elements capitalize on this, engaging in crimes at times when officers may not be readily available to respond to calls for service.

Some believe the current RCMP detachment boundaries need to be redrawn so that service delivery could be faster and more efficient.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider working with the RCMP, the federal government and the communities to develop strategies to address service challenges in rural Manitoba, such as the possibility of having response units that could be dispatched to regions affected by crime waves.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider working with stakeholders to determine if the current RCMP detachment boundaries are

designed to ensure the swiftest and most effective service delivery.

And this petition is signed by D. Roger, C. Young, G. Hunking and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations First Report

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report on the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the—

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- *September 29, 2010 (4th Session – 39th Legislature)*
- *February 28, 2011*

Matters under Consideration

- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the year ended March 31, 2009*
- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the year ended March 31, 2010*

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the September 29, 2010 meeting:

- *Mr. BOROTSIK*
- *Ms. BRICK*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Mr. GRAYDON*
- *Mr. JHA (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Hon. Mr. MACKINTOSH*
- *Hon. Ms. MCGIFFORD*

- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Mr. SARAN*
- *Hon. Mr. SWAN*
- *Mr. REID*

Your Committee elected Mr. REID as the Chairperson.

Committee Membership for the February 28, 2011 meeting:

- *Ms. BLADY*
- *Mr. BOROTSIK*
- *Ms. BRICK (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK*
- *Mr. CULLEN*
- *Mr. EICHLER*
- *Mr. GRAYDON*
- *Hon. Mr. MACKINTOSH*
- *Hon. Ms. MARCELINO*
- *Mr. MARTINDALE*
- *Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF*

Your Committee elected Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF as the Chairperson.

Officials Speaking on Record at the September 29, 2010 meeting:

- *Ken Hildahl, President & CEO*
- *Carmen Neufeld, Chair, MLCC Board of Commissioners*

Officials Speaking on Record at the February 28, 2011 meeting:

- *Ken Hildahl, President & CEO*
- *Ingrid Loewen, Chief Financial & Strategy Officer*

Report Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following report as presented:

- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the year ended March 31, 2009*

Report Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following report but did not pass it:

- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the year ended March 31, 2010*

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Crown Corporations
Second Report**

Mr. Daryl Reid (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Madam Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the—

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- November 21, 2007 (2nd Session – 39th Legislature)
- March 16, 2009 (3rd Session – 39th Legislature)
- October 12, 2010 (4th Session – 39th Legislature)
- April 4, 2011

Matters under Consideration

- *The Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007*
- *The Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008*
- *The Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009*
- *The Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010*

Committee Membership

Committee membership for the November 21, 2007 meeting:

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Mr. DEWAR

- Mr. EICHLER
- Mr. FAURSCHOU
- Mr. GRAYDON
- Mr. JHA (Vice-Chairperson)
- Ms. KORZENIOWSKI
- Ms. MARCELINO
- Mr. REID (Chairperson)
- Ms. SELBY
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER

Committee membership for the March 16, 2009 meeting:

- Ms. BLADY
- Ms. BRICK
- Mr. CULLEN
- Mr. DEWAR
- Mr. GRAYDON
- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS
- Ms. MARCELINO (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. REID (Chairperson)
- Mrs. ROWAT
- Hon. Mr. SWAN
- Mrs. TAILLIEU

Committee membership for the October 12, 2010 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. ASHTON
- Mr. BJORNSON
- Mr. BRIESE
- Mr. EICHLER
- Mr. FAURSCHOU
- Mr. JHA (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. KORZENIOWSKI
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. REID (Chairperson)
- Mr. SARAN

Committee membership for the April 4, 2011 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. ASHTON
- Ms. BLADY
- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Mr. GRAYDON
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. REID
- Mrs. ROWAT
- Mr. SARAN
- Mr. WHITEHEAD

- *Mr. WIEBE*

Your Committee elected Mr. REID as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Mr. SARAN as the Vice-Chairperson.

Officials Speaking on Record

Officials Speaking on Record at the November 21, 2007 meeting:

- *Winston Hodgins, MLC President & Chief Executive Officer*

Officials Speaking on Record at the March 16, 2009 meeting:

- *Winston Hodgins, MLC President & Chief Executive Officer*
- *Tim Valgardson, MLC Board Chairperson*

Officials Speaking on Record at the October 12, 2010 meeting:

- *Winston Hodgins, MLC President & Chief Executive Officer*
- *Tim Valgardson, MLC Board Chairperson*

Officials Speaking on Record at the April 4, 2011 meeting:

- *Winston Hodgins, MLC President & Chief Executive Officer*

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- *The Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007*
- *The Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008*
- *The Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009*

Reports Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following report but did not pass it:

- *The Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010*

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

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Second Report

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report on the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Madam Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on January 31, 2011.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 14) – The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Prescription Drug Monitoring and Miscellaneous Amendments)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'achat de médicaments sur ordonnance (contrôle de certains médicaments couverts et modifications diverses)**

Committee Membership

- *Mr. ALTEMEYER*
- *Mrs. DRIEDGER*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Hon. Ms. MARCELINO*
- *Mr. MARTINDALE*
- *Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF (Chairperson)*
- *Hon. Ms. OSWALD*
- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Mr. REID*
- *Mrs. ROWAT*
- *Mr. SARAN*

Your Committee elected Mr. ALTEMEYER as the Vice-Chairperson.

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 14)** – *The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Prescription Drug Monitoring and Miscellaneous Amendments)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'achat de médicaments sur ordonnance (contrôle de certains médicaments couverts et modifications diverses)*:

Dr. William D.B. Pope, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 14)** – *The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Prescription Drug Monitoring and Miscellaneous Amendments)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'achat de médicaments sur ordonnance (contrôle de certains médicaments couverts et modifications diverses)*:

Dr. John E. Gray, Canadian Medical Protective Association

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 14)** – *The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Prescription Drug Monitoring and Miscellaneous Amendments)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'achat de médicaments sur ordonnance (contrôle de certains médicaments couverts et modifications diverses)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that the report be—report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Social and
Economic Development
Third Report**

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Third Report on the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Madam Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the—

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on March 17th, 2011 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 6)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail*
- **Bill (No. 11)** – *The Planning Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire*

Committee Membership

- Mr. ALTEMEYER (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. BRIESE
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Hon. Ms. HOWARD
- Hon. Mr. LEMIEUX
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Hon. Ms. MCGIFFORD
- Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF (Chairperson)
- Ms. ROWAT
- Mr. SARAN
- Mrs. TAILLIEU

Substitutions received during committee proceedings:

- Hon. Ms. MARCELINO for Mr. MARTINDALE

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 6)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail*:

Alex Forrest, United Firefighters of Winnipeg

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 6)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 11) – The Planning Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* (13:40)

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs First Report

Ms. Marilyn Brick (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Madam Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following—

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings:

Your Committee met on the following occasions:

- October 8, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building
- March 1, 2011 at 1:00 p.m. in Room 255 (partly in camera)

Matters under Consideration:

- Recommendation for the re-appointment of the Ombudsman
- Recommendation for the appointment of the Children's Advocate

Committee Membership:

Committee membership for the October 8, 2010 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. BLAIKIE
- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRAUN (Vice-Chair)
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS

- Mrs. MITCHELSON
- Mr. SARAN
- Mrs. TAILLIEU
- Mr. REID (Chair)
- Hon. Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WIEBE

Committee membership for the March 1, 2011 meeting:

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRICK
- Mr. CULLEN
- Mr. DEWAR
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Hon. Ms. HOWARD
- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. SCHULER
- Ms. SELBY
- Hon. Mr. SWAN

At the March 1, 2010 meeting, your Committee elected Ms. BRICK as the Chairperson and Mr. DEWAR as the Vice-Chairperson.

Motions agreed to at the October 8, 2010 Standing Committee meeting:

- THAT the sub-committee of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs be struck to manage the process of hiring a new Children's Advocate, under the terms and conditions as follows:

(a) the subcommittee may only report back to the committee with a recommendation that has received a general level of acceptance by all members;

(b) the subcommittee consist of four government members, two official opposition members and one independent member;

(c) the subcommittee have the authority to call their own meetings, the ability to meet in camera, and be able to undertake duties it deems necessary in order to fulfil its responsibilities in the hiring process;

(d) the subcommittee appoint an expert advisory panel of three members to assist in the hiring process and ultimately provide the subcommittee with a prioritized list of candidates;

(e) the subcommittee establish the terms of reference for the expert advisory panel, and that Legislative Assembly staff may be authorized by the Chair to

attend all meetings of the subcommittee and the expert advisory panel.

Agreements reached at the March 1, 2011 Standing Committee meeting:

- It was unanimously agreed to allow Hon. Mr. GERRARD to attend the in camera proceedings.
- It was unanimously agreed to permit the Legislative Assembly Human Resources Office staff to attend the in camera proceedings.
- It was unanimously agreed for Susan Scott to immediately advise the Lieutenant Governor in Council of the recommendation. (in camera)
- It was unanimously agreed that if the recommended candidate does not accept the offer, the sub-committee would meet again to consider further options. (in camera)

Motions agreed to at the March 1, 2010 Standing Committee meeting:

- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Ms. Irene Hamilton be re-appointed for a second term of six years as the Ombudsman, commencing April 1, 2011.
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs now meet in camera.
- THAT the report and recommendations of the Sub-Committee be received. (in camera)
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Ms. Darlene MacDonald be appointed as the Children's Advocate. (in camera)
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs authorizes the Chairperson to advise the Speaker of the appointment of the Children's Advocate once the offer has been accepted, and to ask the Speaker to inform all MLAs in writing of this appointment as well as issue a press release prior to presentation of the committee report to the Assembly.
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs authorize the Chairperson to ask the Speaker to inform all MLAs in writing of the reappointment of the Ombudsman prior to the presentation of the committee report to the Assembly.

Sub-Committee Report

At the March 1, 2011 meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, the Sub-Committee presented its report.

Sub-Committee Meetings:

Your Sub-Committee met on the following occasions:

- October 8, 2010 at 10:28 a.m.
- November 18, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.
- January 20, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.

All meetings were held in camera in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Sub-Committee Membership:

Sub-Committee membership for the October 8, 2010 meeting:

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRAUN
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS
- Mrs. MITCHELSON
- Hon. Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WIEBE

At the October 8, 2010 meeting, your Sub-Committee elected Ms. BRAUN as the Chairperson and Mr. WIEBE as the Vice-Chairperson.

Sub-Committee membership for the November 18, 2010 meeting:

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRAUN (Chair)
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Hon. Ms. HOWARD
- Mrs. MITCHELSON
- Hon. Mr. STRUTHERS
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chair)

Sub-Committee membership for the January 20, 2011 meeting:

- Ms. BRAUN (Chair)
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Hon. Ms. HOWARD
- Mrs. MITCHELSON
- Mrs. ROWAT
- Hon. Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chair)

Staff present for all Sub-Committee and Panel meetings:

- Susan Scott, Director, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services
- Judy Wegner, Manager, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services
- Monique Grenier, Clerk Assistant/Committee Clerk

Sub-Committee Agreements:

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on January 20, 2011:

- It was agreed to accept the report and recommendations of the Expert Advisory Panel.
- It was agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that Darlene MacDonald be appointed as the Children's Advocate.

Expert Advisory Panel Activities:

As agreed to by the Sub-Committee, the following individuals served as members of the Expert Advisory Panel:

- Don Potter
- Debra Woodgate
- David Barnard

The Expert Advisory Panel met on the following occasions:

- November 4, 2010
- November 9, 2010
- November 23, 2010
- December 1, 2010
- December 13, 2010
- December 14, 2010
- December 15, 2010
- January 4, 2011
- January 7, 2011
- January 10, 2011

All meetings were held in camera on the 10th Floor of the Woodsworth Building (1035 – 405 Broadway).

The Expert Advisory Panel considered applications for the position of the Children's Advocate as follows:

- Sixty-eight applications were received for the position.
- Three individuals were interviewed for the position on January 4, 2011.

Ms. Brick: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I'm pleased to table the Annual Report of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission for the year ending March 31st, 2011. Copies of the report have been placed on members' desks.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Manitobans have been working tirelessly to prepare for flooding this spring. Our government has committed \$50 million in provincial money for flood fighting this year, including a purchase of well over \$20 million in new equipment which has been strategically deployed around the province. We have also purchased a third Amphibex and positioned an emergency medical helicopter in Manitoba for the duration of the flood.

We're now into the flood period in many areas of the province. As members of the Assembly are aware, ice jamming took place late last week and over the weekend caused flooding in the Breezy Point Road and Petersfield areas, resulting in some evacuations in St. Andrews and St. Clements. The ice is now moving into the Netley-Libau Marsh area, and water levels in the affected areas north of Winnipeg are declining.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) and I, along with the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick), the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), were in East St. Paul on Sunday and met with municipal leaders from East and West St. Paul, St. Andrews, St. Clements and Selkirk. We made the commitment for more permanent flood protection in the north Red River area.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) has also written to the Prime Minister on the need for federal cost sharing for permanent flood protection and flood-fighting equipment. We're seeking confirmation from the federal government on recent comments from a local MP that permanent dikes will now be eligible under Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements.

The Premier and the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux) were also in St. Adolphe on Saturday shortly after the first operation of the floodway gates. The floodway remains in operation and will be operated to protect Winnipeg while maintaining natural levels upstream.

Today the Province worked closely with local officials in Riverton to address an ice jam that developed on the Icelandic River. The Amphibex had been pre-positioned nearby and was deployed to release this ice jam at approximately 10:30 this morning. Water levels are now dropping as a result of this successful operation.

The Province is also closely monitoring the situation at Morris and will be closing Highway 75 there in the ring dike on the north side of the community in the coming days, although likely not today. The Premier and the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) were also in Morris and Emerson yesterday, meeting and discussing the situation with local leaders.

We are also expecting to see some precautionary evacuations in the Peguis First Nation today. In addition, 15 people from Sioux Valley and 10 people from Roseau River have been evacuated.

Relatively cool weather to the west has delayed runoff in the Assiniboine River basin. The city of Brandon is now prepared for record flows, and an enhancement of over 70 kilometres of dikes along the Assiniboine River is now complete.

Assessment of the risk of coincident flood crests in Winnipeg is ongoing. Partial ring-dike closures are already under way or complete at Emerson, Noyes, St. Jean Baptiste, Gretna, St. Adolphe, Ste. Agathe and at Brunkild.

I'd like to take this opportunity to extend a thanks to the municipal and provincial flood fighters as well as the hundreds of volunteers that have come out every day helping to sandbag and protect properties in Winnipeg and elsewhere around the province. I'd also like to encourage everyone to lend a hand in these efforts in any way they can over the next few days and weeks.

Finally, I'd like to express condolences on behalf of members of the Legislature to the family of Mr. Raymond Stott, who was tragically drowned last week near Niverville. Our thoughts are with the family in this difficult time.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I rise today to put a few words on the record in response to the ministerial statement regarding the 2011 spring flood. We certainly appreciate the minister's update on this rapidly evolving situation.

As we saw this morning with the declaration of the state of emergency in Riverton due to the threat caused by ice jamming, flood-related issues can unfold very suddenly. We are pleased to hear that that situation has been addressed so quickly and that the water is again moving freely at the bridge at Provincial Road 239–329, pardon me.

That is why preparedness is so important, particularly this year, as we face the potential for serious flooding in several regions of the province at the same time. For weeks we have seen individual homeowners and officials from various levels—be they provincial, federal, municipal or civic or from the First Nations communities—diligently getting ready for this spring's flood. Sandbags have been readied, temporary dikes have and continue to be built, and the closing of community ring dikes has begun in some areas. Volunteers have answered the call for help across the province, and their ongoing efforts are greatly appreciated.

There will be disruptions to people and to commerce as this flood unfolds. We have already seen the evacuations of some residents in the RM of St. Andrews, in the Petersfield area and at the Dauphin River First Nation. We hope these disruptions are short-lived, as we know they can be very challenging for those affected.

On behalf of our caucus, I would also like to extend our deepest sympathies to the Stott family for the untimely passing of Raymond Stott, who accidentally drowned last week in a flood-related accident in the RM of De Salaberry. It is a sobering reminder of how powerful flood waters can be, and we think of the Stotts at this difficult time.

We look forward to regular flood updates from the minister. The timely sharing of information will be essential as this flood fight continues. The members of our caucus thank all the workers and volunteers who are working so hard to protect the people and properties in this difficult time.

* (13:50)

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by extending condolences to the family of Raymond Stott and his friends, and it is something that all of us need to be cognizant of, the power and the dangers of flood waters.

I also want to extend thanks to all those who have been helping in one way or another, working at the community level, at the provincial level or volunteering. It is a spring event, but this event, one of the largest floods that we've had—that we are anticipating and certainly one that we need to be well prepared for.

As I have been around in various parts of the province, I've participated in a number of meetings, preparation for the flood in Morris, for example, concerns about flooding near Strathclair. I've been with others, many other Manitobans, helping in sandbagging and talking with individuals and meeting with individuals in various communities from Riverton and Peguis and Lake St. Martin and Roseau River and along the Assiniboine River, keeping track of what's happening and ready to make sure that all the communities in our province are attended to and receive the help with the concerns that they need. Thank you.

Speaker's Statement

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the table so that I may introduce to you the new Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Rick Yarish.

Mr. Yarish has a Master of Arts Degree in History. Prior to accepting the position as Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Yarish was employed with the Committees Branch of the Clerk's office since 2000 as a Clerk Assistant, Clerk of Committees.

And on behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you to your new role.

And also I am pleased to inform the House that Mr. Blake Dunn, who is looking very dapper, has been appointed Sergeant-at-Arms. Mr. Dunn served as Acting Sergeant-at-Arms since November 2008 and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms from 2001 to 2008.

Prior to this, Mr. Dunn was a gallery attendant from 1998 to 2001.

On behalf of the House, I welcome you in your new role.

And also I am pleased to inform the House that Mr. Ray Gislason has been appointed Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms. Mr. Gislason served as Acting Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms since November of 2008. Prior to this, Mr. Gislason served as gallery attendant since April 2002.

We also welcome Mr. Gislason to his new role.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: And 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, we have Joan and Nick Yarish and Jackie Carey, who are the parents and spouse of the Deputy Clerk, Rick Yarish.

And also, in the Speaker's Gallery, we have Mr. Al Miller who is from Winnipeg. And also I'd like to introduce to the loge on my right, Ms. Becky Barrett, who is the former member for Wellington.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Budget Projections Government Accountability

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, firstly I would just like to say it's good to be back in this Chamber. It's a special place for all of us who have the privilege of working here as members of this Assembly, and I want to just congratulate Rick Yarish and the other table officers and staff of the Assembly for the new roles that they have assumed and for the good work that they do to serve all of us who are elected officials here.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to extend my congratulations and thanks to those thousands of Manitobans from all walks of life who have come forward to assist in fighting the rising flood waters that are being confronted by communities across the province of Manitoba today.

Mr. Speaker, I will have more discussion, further reports, more debate on the issue of flooding in Manitoba.

With the budget, though, coming later this afternoon, I'd just like to ask the Premier: Against the

backdrop of 11 budgets that have missed their projections on the spending side by a total of \$1.8 billion in missed projections over the past period of the budgets that have come in under his watch, and with the budgets becoming less and less accurate with every passing year, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier how he can assure Manitobans today that they'll be able to evaluate today's budget against the backdrop of such inaccurate budgets of the past.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): First of all, I'd like to extend my condolences to the Raymond Stott family. To the volunteers that are helping out in the flood and also to the Jeff Stoughton rink for winning the World Curling Championship, we congratulate them on that.

Now, on the question of budget projections, the variance has been in the order of 2 per cent. There's been 10 balanced budgets. The Manitoba government has consistently kept Manitobans in the top three for the cost of living while investing in important front-line services such as health care, education, services to children and families, and all of this has been done in such a way that we have shown that the cost of providing services to Manitoba is among the most affordable in the country with the fourth best per capita cost in the country.

Mr. McFadyen: As inaccurate as this government has been on the spending side, the story's even worse on the revenue side. Over the course of this government's life, they have missed the revenue projections by a total of \$2.3 billion, Mr. Speaker, over the past 11 budgets, and those projections are getting more and more inaccurate as time has gone along. In addition to that, today's third-quarter report came out and it showed an increase in debt last year of \$2 billion, even as they're trying to claim that they ran a deficit of \$500 million.

Manitobans understand that there's a disconnect between what they say in their budgets and what actually happens in terms of the finances of Manitobans.

I want to ask the Premier: Will he apologize for presenting such inaccurate information in the past, and will he assure Manitobans that as of today's budget, they plan on presenting fair, accurate and true information about the finances of Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is inaccurate on budgeting as he is on the bipole. He's so out of touch with reality he didn't notice in the third-quarter report that we meet-beat our last-year projection by \$78 million—\$78 million less expenditure on the deficit than was originally forecast.

The member knows that. If he wanted to be competent, he would identify that number for the Legislature and apologize for misleading us.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it was only a couple of weeks ago that this Premier issued a news release announcing a special warrant because they were spending beyond their legislated mandate. They're issuing special warrants because they can't properly project expenditures.

They've, in the past, announced that the Hydro tower was going to be \$75 million; it came in at over \$350 million, Mr. Speaker. A year ago this Premier said the stadium was going to be \$115 million; they're now saying \$190 million. In November he said bipole was going to be \$2.2 billion. Last week they said, oops, we missed it by a billion. It's going to be \$3.2 billion, and the internal numbers are even higher than that.

It's like watching *Star Wars* to find out the true state of space travel; it may be entertaining but is it accurate. Is this a real budget today or is it a *Star Wars* budget designed to entertain Manitobans without having any bearing on the real financial picture?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to people that like to transport themselves through outer space, the member opposite has once again misled the Legislature on the cost of the bipole. The price of the bipole is now \$1.1 billion, an increase of 16 per cent over the last three years. The member opposite knows that. The member opposite is the only one that doesn't want to build converter stations in Manitoba. He wants to shut down the future development of Keeyask and Conawapa, put Hydro back in mothballs.

And when it comes to the budget, Mr. Speaker, let's not forget that it was the member opposite and his colleagues that wanted to cut half a billion dollars out of front-line services just nine months ago in this Legislature.

* (14:00)

Flooding and Ice Jams Mitigation Strategies

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): And with respect to the rising waters throughout the province, we were very saddened to read about the untimely death of Raymond Stott last Wednesday, again, as has been said by other members, really a testament to the danger of and the power of high waters and the impact that they can have on individual lives.

Mr. Speaker, we have watched with some concern the situation that has evolved in Petersfield, and we understand and have learned today that there's sandbagging going on in the town of Souris in order to protect the water treatment plant there.

Can the Premier just provide an update on these situations for the House today and provide some indication as to how he expects these situations to evolve in the days and the weeks ahead.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): As the member knows, there has been now upwards of \$50 million of additional resources put into protecting Manitobans. This has resulted in additional equipment which can be rapidly deployed, including tiger dams, Aqua Dams, steamers and other technologies, including Hesco barriers, which are all available to be put in place rapidly depending on the circumstances. There's three Amphibexes in the province now.

The member will have heard from the statement from the Minister for Emergency Measures that the one Amphibex was deployed in Riverton this morning to break up the ice and to allow the water to lower there. We've seen the water lower around Selkirk. We're very fortunate that we made the decision to buy out 63 properties in Breezy Point. They would have been wiped out with the ice impacts this spring.

So there have been many measures that have been taken over the last decade, a billion dollars worth of measures that have been taken to protect Manitobans. And I only have to remind the members

opposite that they voted against every one of those measures.

Highway 75 Flooding Closures

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, and we certainly note a long tradition of past premiers, including premiers Filmon and Doer, of not taking a partisan approach when it comes to dealing with flooding in the province, and I think as members have co-operated well—and I thank the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for the briefing provided to opposition leaders last week. It's important that information be brought forward and reports be made in a timely way.

We note, Mr. Speaker, from reports, including the report to the House today by the member for Thompson, the prospect of a closure of Highway 75 again this year with the rising waters south of Winnipeg. I wonder if the Premier can just indicate how long he anticipates that highway will be closed and what is the state of planning to try to avoid future closures of this vital highway, a highway that's critical for our economy, for tourism, as well as for emergency services.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Again, the member will know that we were in Morris yesterday, met with the mayor, inspected the situation there. It is possible that the road will close today at the earliest, perhaps tomorrow, but very soon.

The major threat to the town of Morris right now is the high winds which could create problems for the roadway being usable and passable by all the traffic that goes through that area. It's an area under which engineering studies are presently occurring to look at the best long-term solution for that area because of the Morris River going through the community.

The question is how can we protect the bridge and have access to the town at the same time as ensuring that the water from the Morris River doesn't overrun the bridge and take out its capacity to provide services for all the important commercial as well as local traffic that goes through that area. The reality is that study is going on, and there will be a very clear set of recommendations that are made on the best alternatives to address a long-term solution in Morris, Manitoba.

Flooding and Ice Jams Winnipeg Water Levels

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to thank the Premier for that response.

Just looking forward a couple of weeks, we are in an unusual situation, obviously, with the amount of water flowing, both up the Red River and from the west down the Assiniboine and through other tributaries that make their way into the Red River. One of the scenarios that has been contemplated is a simultaneous crest of both the Red and the Assiniboine rivers in Winnipeg, a matter which will be of concern to all Winnipeg residents.

I wonder if the Premier can just provide the current assessment of the likelihood of that crest. What sorts of water levels might be expected in that situation in Winnipeg and what steps can and are being taken today to prepare for that event?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Again, Mr. Speaker, we have—and our forecasters have projected the possibility of a coincident crest of the Assiniboine River with the Red River in Winnipeg. That possibility is within the one-in-10 upper deciles forecast.

It would be—create some serious stress for the city. The City is well aware of this. They have been taking measures in terms of sandbagging to protect properties outside of the primary dikes. The floodway has been partially opened right now. It's being operated within the state of nature with respect to the people south of Winnipeg.

The Assiniboine Valley has not really broken up yet. The Shellmouth Dam has been lowered and is providing some relief at this stage of the game for waters flowing through the Assiniboine River, and there's been 70 kilometres of diking provided along the Assiniboine River in the order of about \$15 million of work that will create permanent protection for the people in the Assiniboine Valley.

So we will have to see how the melt proceeds, the rapidity with which it occurs and whether there's any additional precipitation and then, of course, the timing of when the crest will come through the Assiniboine River and how that will square up with the timing of the crest coming up through the Red River. And when those—as those events come closer, our forecasters will keep us well apprised of these matters.

Highway 23 Bridge Maintenance Schedule

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, the people of Morris are always concerned in the spring high-water events. They're quite used to dealing with it, but in light of the fact that Highway 75 may be closing in the next couple of days I'd like to ask a question in regard to the bridge just east.

Last year I requested, through Freedom of Information, a maintenance schedule for all bridges crossing the Red and Assiniboine rivers, this after the Pierre Delorme Bridge fell down at St. Adolphe. I was denied the information, saying it was not in the interest of public safety.

Can the minister confirm that work recently done on the bridge east of Morris on Highway 23 is indeed scheduled maintenance?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, I want to assure the member opposite that we have done significant due diligence with all our bridge structures throughout the province. I think it's important to put on the record that what happened to the Pierre Delorme Bridge was in a flood that was a very significant hydraulic level at that time.

And I do want to put on the record, by the way, the fact that we did the work, the \$12 million. I want to commend the former minister of Transportation who represents the area for being in on that initiative. And I can't say enough about the engineers, the contractors, that have returned the Pierre Delorme Bridge to full operation. In fact, it's not only been returned to operation; it's been renewed for many decades to come.

So I think the member opposite would, I'm sure, want to acknowledge that as we go into this flood season, which is already at a level that is trending towards higher than 2009, that we've moved, and I want to assure the member that we have, throughout the province, been working both in terms of bridge maintenance and on the capital side.

We have a record capital budget and we put very significant resources into all of our bridge structures, not just for flood reasons but for general maintenance—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, the work being done on the bridge on Highway 23 involves sloped

stabilization riverbank excavation and rock rip-rap blankets, actually 19,000 tonnes of stone rip-rap.

Can the minister report on the prior and existing condition of this bridge, as it is the only exit from the town of Morris when Highway 75 is closed and that is about to happen in the next day or two.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I think it's important, if we're talking about Highway 75, to recognize what is happening, what is going to happen, over the next number of days.

First of all, we do have a flood that is already trending towards a higher level than 2009. I point out that the Interstate, I-29 in the US, has had closures already. It's not unusual to have closures in the Morris area. That's one of the reasons, by the way, that we have identified as a high priority the hydraulic assessment and engineering work to ensure that we can reduce the number of days in which Highway 75 is closed. In fact, I personally attended last year the open house in which we outlined the two major alternatives, the one being raising of the bridge, the second being a relocation of the Morris River.

If there had been simple solutions before, we would have done it, but we are working diligently on Highway 75 and our goal is to bring it to full interstate standards to reduce the number of days in which it's closed during a flood.

*(14:10)

Mrs. Taillieu: When Highway 75 is closed, the only exit out of Morris is the east exit, which means going over the bridge on Highway 23. Work on this bridge began only at the beginning of March, this at a time when high water had already been predicted months earlier. This has always been a very vulnerable bridge and the lifeline for the town of Morris in high-water events when the highway closes.

I just want to ask the minister why it took so long for the work to start, and is the work complete now, and can he assure us that the bridge is safe?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I will offer the member a full briefing with staff, with MIT. I know she's had the opportunity to have a briefing on general flood circumstances. I did make that offer. I know she did take the initiative to contact myself and my office.

And I want to stress one thing here. We have a very significant program in terms of bridge maintenance. We've increasingly put resources onto

the capital side, not just the fact we have a record capital program, but we have a record expenditures in terms of bridge renewal.

But we did identify, in fact, going back several months ago, the need to fully inspect and ensure with the predicted trend which saw even higher levels than 2009 to ensure that we had not just the standard maintenance, but you can call it, you know, a double due diligence, if you like.

And I can tell you, our—I'm really proud of our MIT staff. I'm really proud of all—everyone. Water Stewardship is a key part of that, not just in terms of the work we're doing in Morris, the Gardenton dike. Throughout the province you've seen them out there, in some cases working 24-7.

I hope the member will support their efforts because, you know what? It wasn't at the last minute. They moved diligently and we are doing our darndest to be ready for this flood.

Assiniboine River Flood Forecast

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, the upper reaches of the Assiniboine River and its tributaries remain under a blanket of snow and ice at the present time. However, there's still a great deal of water that will be making its way down the Assiniboine in the days and weeks ahead.

I want to ask the Minister of Water Stewardship whether she can indicate whether the flood forecast for the western part of the province has been updated and whether the current situation in the potential flooding for the downstream area of the Shellmouth Dam has been updated and whether residents have been informed.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Shellmouth Dam has been operating at maximum for several months now. We know that the drawdown is larger than it's ever been before; I believe it's 29 feet. The inflow into Shellmouth over the last three days increased from 400 to 1,200 cfs. We know that we're able to release from Shellmouth Dam up to 1,600 without affecting the banks, without affecting the overflow.

We have kept the Assiniboine Valley producers and others in the area aware of our plans. They are a part of the committee for the Shellmouth Reservoir, and we'll continue to inform individuals not only

throughout the Shellmouth area, but throughout all of Manitoba.

Fishing Lake Water Levels

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister whether she can tell the House whether water from the Fishing lakes area—Fishing Lake area, through the newly excavated channel and through the chain links below that, will be making its way into the Assiniboine reservoir above the Shellmouth Dam this spring and what impact this will have on downstream residents.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, we negotiated a groundbreaking agreement with the Government of Saskatchewan, and I want to thank them for their co-operation and understanding of the high water levels we're experiencing. We know they, too, are experiencing them. Part of that agreement is that they would not flow water from Fishing Lake when it would negatively affect the peaks in Manitoba. We've received confirmation today that they will not be flowing water from Fishing Lake during this high-water time in Manitoba.

And I thank the member for the question because it allows me to put on the record our gratitude and our partnership with the people of Saskatchewan. We will work together.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish this co-operation that the minister speaks about would also be extended to the residents of the Strathclair area and with regard to the Thomas Lake area and also the Sandy Lake area. Maybe she could take some leadership in that regard as well.

We know that the government of Manitoba has entered into an agreement with Saskatchewan to release water from Fishing Lake. Mr. Speaker, as with the Langenburg drain and the Smith Creek drain, there's always the chance of uncontrolled flooding.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate whether she has reached an agreement on compensation levels by the Saskatchewan government for landowners in Manitoba who will suffer as a result of the water from Saskatchewan?

Ms. Melnick: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, this is a good question because it allows me to report to the House that for the first time ever an agreement through the Fishing Lake agreement has been reached where Saskatchewan will, in fact, be part of the compensation for waters flowing from Saskatchewan. It's the first time I believe in the history of Canada that one geographic region has promised and agreed to compensate another.

We're making process—we are making progress, Mr. Speaker, and I really advise members opposite to be part of solutions here and to work with Manitobans around this difficult spring, because we want to protect individuals, communities, everyone in our province, and we're aware of the difficulties that are being experienced in other jurisdictions and are helping out where we can there too.

Shoal Lake Water Levels

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, last fall in this House I asked the government to outline its short- and long-term plans with respect to Shoal Lake flooding. The issue continues to be on top of mind in the Interlake. This past spring, the outlook issued by the Province in late March stated that record-high levels are likely on the Shoal lakes even with average weather conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Water Stewardship to inform this House of the government's plans to mitigate the problems associated with Shoal Lake water levels?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to meet with the leadership of the entire Shoal lakes area including mayors and reeves from the area just on March 11, and it was agreed at that time that the study that had been prepared for that area was a reasonable study, and the mayors and reeves had let us know—*[interjection]* The mayors and reeves have let us know that they prefer an option of constructing a water path for the outlet that would relieve the area in the Shoal lakes area, but they are aware that there are concerns around Lake Manitoba and the people of Lake Manitoba.

So, again, we want to make sure that we're working with—working on a resolution that will be acceptable to all members. We have been meeting—the department has also been meeting with the group and I'll explain further in my next question.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear from concerned citizens who need immediate answers about how this government plans to address the Shoal Lake flooding. Not only have those citizens suffered huge financial losses, they also have been stripped of their ability to use their land and to provide for their farm families. Some have had to leave the area altogether. Shame on this government for their slow movement on this file.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask the minister of watershed again, will she tell those affected farmers and families in the Shoal Lake flooding when they can expect meaningful action from this government?

Ms. Melnick: Well, Mr. Speaker, meaningful action is working with the community and compensating where it's agreed.

In 2007, almost \$26 million in financial support was provided to the producers of the Shoal lakes area. This is through various farm assistance programs, and I thank the ministers of MAFRI for that.

In November, we announced details of \$9.8 million for a home and business flood mitigation program. We are actively encouraging the residents from the Shoal lakes to apply for that program and I understand that some have.

This is very different, Mr. Speaker, from times of high waters in the past, where members opposite slashed the budget for water resources by 43 per cent. We on this side of the House take very seriously high water levels. We know water is flowing through the hatchery drain right now.

We are looking for a long-term, permanent solution in partnership with the leadership and people of the area.

* (14:20)

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, last November the Premier acknowledged that the importance of an outlet to help control and release the water from Devils Lake. We have a similar situation right here in Manitoba with the Shoal Lake flooding. There is serious concerns water could break out from these lakes and cause problems even in a larger area than is already affected.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier, what's the difference between the two circumstances? Is it just he doesn't care about the people in the Interlake? We need leadership from all Manitobans and we need it

today. Will the Premier stand up and tell us [*inaudible*] for the Shoal lakes?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the member for the question and—I thank the member for the question. We've had very constructive recommendations made to us, not only through our local MLA for the Interlake, but also one of the reeves in particular.

At the hatchery drain, we've invested over \$100,000 in opening up the hatchery drain to provide additional relief out of the Shoal lakes. This is a practical recommendation made by one of the local reeves, Reeve Sigfusson. We've followed up on that. The resources have been put in place. This allows immediate work and relief to be provided to the Shoal Lake area, and then we will take a look at what longer term solutions are also available to us.

Mr. Speaker, we're acting on the concerns of the local folks. I'm glad the member has given us the opportunity to inform him of that.

Assiniboine River Diversion Flood-Control Gate Operation

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, the water control structures on the Assiniboine River at Portage la Prairie are critical to this province's flood control measures.

I would like to ask the minister responsible for the flood control gates on the Assiniboine River as to their operational status at the present time.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, in 2009 we experienced very high waters. We had the Portage Diversion operating at capacity, 25,000 cfs for I believe it was a record 25 or 28 days. We saw then there was wear and tear on the Portage Diversion. We repaired the damages that were done from that high water flow for that length of time.

This year, learning on—acting on what we've learned in the past, we've been proactive. We've made sure that the diversion is fully functional. We have an Amphibex machine stationed at the mouth of the diversion in case we need to put it into action to relieve the ice floes, the ice jams that may form there.

We're on top of it, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to be so.

Mr. Faurshou: Mr. Speaker, the minister completely missed the mark in regards to the question I posed. There are two completely different structures: one on the river and one on the diversion. I spoke about the one on the river.

Mr. Speaker, the gates on the Assiniboine River Diversion were not operational until recently, due to the over-winter ice buildup which, in turn, caused an electrical failure in the hydraulic oil heating system that ultimately led to malfunction of the gates themselves. The—in regards to the—this, the bridge over the Assiniboine River had to be closed while this situation was alleviated, a very, very serious matter.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible indicate as to what plans this government has to repair and upgrade these very important flood control gates and also to address the numerous deficiencies that this government already knows about.

Ms. Melnick: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we are proactive on all areas around the Portage Diversion. If an issue occurs, we make sure that we take care of it as quickly as possible. We're very aware of the concerns around this ring, and the member opposite is right to ask to make sure that we are watching all the angles here.

If the member would like a technical briefing on the operation of the Portage Diversion, we'd be happy to provide it. I know my colleague has also offered it to other members across the way. All they have to do is return the—return our request to see if they'd like a briefing, and we'll be happy to provide it.

Mr. Faurshou: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the minister attempting to show that she at least knows where the Assiniboine River is and the diversion, but we speak specifically of the control structure on the river. It has nothing to do with the diversion channel or the work that the minister refers to.

The control structure is over 40 years old and has not seen major refit in all those years, Mr. Speaker. Last winter, because of the age and failure of this government to completely—to recognize the deficiencies that are at the control structure and to address them, this is not being proactive as the minister is stating. This government continues to be reactive.

When will this minister respond and repair the deficiencies that her department has made her aware of?

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member from Portage I'm very aware of where the Assiniboine River is, unlike other members—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable minister has the floor.

Ms. Melnick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unlike members of the House who just deal with their own little area of this province, we see all of Manitoba. We deal with water flows from Saskatchewan, from Ontario, from the States, from within this province. We don't break it and divvy it up and act sarcastically about the situation and how it has to be tended to.

We're on top of the job, Mr. Speaker. We cut and broke more ice than ever before. We've built dikes all along the Assiniboine. We're working with communities in the northern part of Manitoba who may also experience high water.

We deal with all of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. Again, members opposite should broaden their view and be part of the fight against this flood.

Employment and Wages Government Priority

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, another year passes and we'll shortly have another NDP budget. Sadly, too many Manitobans born and raised in our province continue to leave because they're unable to make a living staying here in the province they love, and opportunity continues to dwindle for Manitobans. This government has yet again demonstrated that it's their policy to put a squeeze on middle-class families trying to make ends meet while denying opportunities to young Manitobans like Dr. Samir Sinha, featured in the *Free Press* this morning.

Mr. Speaker, why is the First Minister sending the message to the rest of Canada that there's little opportunity for Manitobans?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I should correct the record. We've had record growth in the population in this province, the highest growth in the last 40 years in terms of population. Manitobans of all ages are staying here and people are coming back to Manitoba, and we're a very welcoming province. We're very glad to have them from among 137 countries around the world.

That has included many people with excellent professional skills, including doctors. We're very pleased to have them here.

Anybody that takes their training anywhere in the world as a doctor or any other profession who decides to settle in Manitoba can get 60 per cent of their tuition back over the first six years, in the case of a doctor up to 10 years if they decide to make Manitoba their home. That's just one of the many things we do to attract people here. We've got 405 more doctors, Mr. Speaker, and over 128 more specialists in this province today than we had a decade ago.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may boast, but everyday Manitobans living paycheque to paycheque are still struggling. Manitoba has the lowest weekly earnings in Canada outside of Québec and the Maritimes. Is the Premier proud of that? A TD Bank report says that Manitoba shares the dubious distinction with Prince Edward Island of losing proportionately the most residents on a yearly basis. Is the Premier proud of that?

Mr. Speaker, maybe the Premier can tell Manitobans that he's most proud of the fact that Manitobans are leaving in record numbers for places like Saskatchewan where workers can earn, on average, \$3,200 a year more than in Manitoba.

* (14:30)

Mr. Selinger: This is precious commentary coming from the member that opposes the minimum wage being increased in Manitoba. And he's just following in the footsteps of the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) opposing the minimum wage, and that does nothing to lift people out of poverty, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is there's more people living in Manitoba, 100,000 more people living in Manitoba today than there was a decade ago, the equivalent of two new Brandons being created in this province, and wages have been growing faster than the Canadian average. Poverty among single-parent families has gone down 47 per cent.

The overall poverty rate has gone down in Manitoba, and you'll see measures in this budget coming this afternoon that once again strengthen the base of equality and prosperity for all Manitobans.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier may deny it, but the fact is Manitobans are leaving in droves for

places like Saskatchewan because they're tired of this NDP's minimum wage economy.

As the TD Bank report says, and I quote: "Even though Manitoba's unemployment rate has been . . . lower than that of the rest of the nation since the 1990s, this has not proved sufficient to offset the structural pull from higher incomes in neighbouring provinces."

Last weekend the Finance Minister bragged about the minimum wage big-box jobs coming to Manitoba. Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are saying loud and clear that they've had enough of the NDP's Walmart economic policy.

Why is the NDP proud about squandering opportunities and about the fact that so many Manitobans still have to live paycheque to paycheque and struggle to survive?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, along with the members of the opposition, have just voted last year against a budget which created 29,000 additional jobs in Manitoba. This was a budget that protected front-line services, made a major investment in infrastructure which generated jobs, well-paying jobs all over this province, and the members opposite opposed it every step of the way.

They went farther. They tried to slash that budget and generate more unemployment in this province. Now the member is concerned about growing wages. Wages have been growing faster than the Canadian average. Productivity among the workforce has been growing at over 9 per cent, double the Canadian average.

Manitobans' incomes a decade ago were about \$43,000 for a family. They're now \$63,000 for a family. Manitoba's prosperity for an average family has increased by over 50 per cent in this province, and the members opposite have done everything they can to drag us back to the '90s.

We'll move Manitoba forward; they'll oppose it.

Police Services Hiring of Additional Officers

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, we all know that public safety is of vital importance to all Manitobans. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes and their communities. This government has done tremendous work, made concrete investments in public safety throughout the province. We also know that this government

supports police officers and their difficult and all too often dangerous job that they do every day on our behalf.

Can the Minister of Justice please inform the House what was announced yesterday in regards to new police officers for Manitoba communities?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for The Pas for the question and also for everything he does to keep his community safe.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stood shoulder to shoulder with Assistant Commissioner Robinson of the RCMP, with Chief McCaskill of the Winnipeg Police Service and also Chief Atkinson of the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police, to announce 66 more police officers to fight crime to protect Manitobans, to make us all safer in our communities.

This investment in policing will provide communities with more resources to prevent crime and to ensure that those who commit crimes are brought to justice. With this new investment, Manitoba will have invested an additional 255 police officers since 1999, and by directing this commitment of federal funds, 30 more officers will be added for a total of 285 more officers to keep us safe in our communities.

I was very pleased to be out in Selkirk yesterday with the MLA for Selkirk and also in Ste. Anne yesterday with the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) talking to those communities about the wise investments they will make with these additional police officers keeping their communities safe.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Arborg Ice Dawgs

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand and recognize the Arborg Ice Dawgs for their win over the Norway House Stars to capture the Junior B League championship.

The Ice Dawgs went to beat the Northstars 7-4 in game 5 of the best-of-seven series to take the KJHL championship. Arborg will now represent Manitoba at the Keystone Cup at Sherwood Park, Alberta. The five-game round robin event, consisting of teams from Ontario and western Canada, will take place October 14th to the 17th.

Ice Dawgs' captain, Bryant Gudmundson, led the team to victory along with other noteworthy players. The team's goaltender, Nick Anderson of Teulon, who is now in his final year with the team, has been exceptional throughout the season. Jeff English was the leading scorer for the Ice Dawgs during the playoffs, while Jordan Anderson led the team in goals during the regular season and forward Brady Nichol had an outstanding year with the team.

The team's general managers, Jerry Maryniuk and Ron Rogowsky, and coaches Jim Werbicki, Jon Finnson and Scott Bobbee also deserve accolades for their role in the team's triumph.

This is the first championship title for the Arborg Ice Dawgs, who are now in their fifth year of operation. The team credits its success to its fans and corporate sponsors who have continuously stood by the team. Though years of flooding have caused hardship in the area, fans continue to come out in record numbers to support the team—900 people who were in Arborg to see the Ice Dawgs win the provincial championship on April the 7th.

Even as the teams prepare to leave for Alberta, Ice Dawg fans continue to stand by their team as they attempt to fundraise \$25,000 towards the Keystone Cup. This is a tall order for a small community team as the Arborg Ice Dawgs look to fans to sponsor an Ice Dawg in order to meet their financial need.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the entire Arborg Ice Dawgs organization for becoming the 2010 KJHL champions. I am sure the team will represent our province well in Alberta this week, as I wish them the very best of luck as they play for the Keystone Cup.

William Osborne

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, there's a man in Cross Lake whose work I would like to bring the attention of this House. He works with people of all ages, but especially with youth, and he's bringing justice and education issues to the forefront in his community. His name is William Osborne.

A few years ago, education director at Cross Lake First Nation, Rebecca Ross, asked William if he would reach out and get to the bottom of what was causing the youth to stop participating in school. Together, they opened the Circle of Life Centre, a place for everyone. They wanted to create a space for working on arts and crafts, school work and a place

where they would feel welcome, be at home and do things at their own pace, at their own time.

But William stresses the Circle of Life Centre is not only a building but a place in the heart for every person. Today they hold sharing circles in the evenings and teach people how to heal and learn their traditional ways. The teachings that William gives focus on how to find balance and harmony in today's world and gives them the guidance they are hungry for. Most importantly, he doesn't treat them as troubled people but as the individuals that they are. He doesn't make judgments. We all make mistakes, and, when we do, it is to be our own choice to take the steps to get back to where we need to be.

William helps people and youth get to that point. He gives them the respect that they need to move forward, work hard in school and participate in the community. In addition to helping so many people on a personal level, William is also an advocate. He is a voice that speaks out for improvements in our justice system. He works to bring together organizations to work in the interests of community, justice and healing.

William has sacrificed so much for the purpose of his work with these young people, and I know he does it for the right reasons because he sees the importance of enabling our youth.

Thank you, William, for your strength, courage and respect. Keep up the good work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Riverdale Health Centre 50th Anniversary

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): As the MLA for the Minnedosa constituency, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Riverdale Health Centre on its 50th anniversary. The health centre has been a cornerstone of the community since it opened in Rivers in 1961.

The health centre has evolved to meet the needs of the community over the past five decades, but one thing that has never changed is the wonderful staff and volunteers.

* (14:40)

I'd like to pay tribute to all of the tremendous health-care professionals who have worked at the Riverdale Health Centre. Their commitment to their patients has been unyielding as they have lived their lives through their joys and sorrows with them.

I'd like to pay tribute to Bill Sibbald, the one surviving member of the original board of the hospital, and to Mrs. Jessie Bell, who was the first president of the hospital auxiliary. I'm sure they are both thrilled at the way the health centre continues to thrive.

Another dedicated group of people is the Riverdale District Health Auxiliary whose tireless volunteer and fundraising efforts have contributed immeasurably to the health centre we know today. Without their efforts we wouldn't have seen the opening of the rehabilitation unit in 2005. That unit provides services not only to people from Rivers and the surrounding communities, but also from throughout southwestern Manitoba and Winnipeg. It is home to an excellent team of occupational therapists, physiotherapists, physicians, nurses and rehabilitation aides. I know that the care people receive here and throughout the Riverdale Health Centre is second to none.

So does the Health Action Committee, which has run a successful campaign raising over \$500,000 for renovations for the health centre—that's something we're all waiting anxiously to hear more about from the provincial government.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Riverdale Health Centre and the fifth anniversary of the rehab unit, an open house is being held in Rivers on April 14th. It will be an opportunity for staff, patients and community members and volunteers to commemorate their involvement with the centre during what is sure to be a wonderful afternoon.

Congratulations again to everyone at the Riverdale Health Centre and the community of Rivers, and I wish you another 50 years of outstanding service to our community. Thank you.

Education Week

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, April the 11th to 15th marks the celebration of Education Week in Manitoba. Having spent many years as an educator, I know the—how important it is to celebrate Manitoba's school communities, students, parents, teachers, specialists, administrators and trustees.

The theme of this year's Education Week is "Our Classrooms Are the World." It acknowledges the world of arts and academics, challenges and achievements, and a world in which our children celebrate the diversity that has made Manitoba such a strong and vibrant province.

As we all know, education is one of the keys to providing children and youth with the tools they need to go out in the world and succeed. It gives them not only the confidence necessary to be dynamic and innovative leaders, but also the skills they need to make their dreams a reality.

Not only during Education Week, but throughout the year, let's take part in the wide range of activities our school communities offer. Attend a school concert or play, cheer for a local team at a school sporting event, read the school division newsletter or attend a school board meeting. The aim is to get all people, not just parents, more involved and engaged in their communities through their local schools.

We recognize the importance of creating conditions for our children and youth to succeed. This is why our government has focused on investing in our public education system. We know that Manitoba's school system is an important priority, a valuable investment in our children and youth, but also an investment in our communities and economy.

I hope you will all join me in acknowledging Education Week as we celebrate the many achievements and accomplishments of our schools, students, parents, educators and the many others who contribute to our vibrant school communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

National Victims of Crime Awareness Week

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, this week, April 10th to the 16th, is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, which recognizes the victims of crime and those individuals and organizations who work on behalf of victims. The theme of the week this year is "Many Voices, Many Paths."

Mr. Speaker, too many Manitobans are victimized by crime according to a 2009 general social survey on victimization by Statistics Canada. Manitoba has the highest rate of violent and household crime in the entire country. For every 1,000 people living in our province, 175 of them reported being a victim of a violent crime. The number of Manitobans per 1,000 who have been victimized by violent crime has risen from 114 per capita in 1999 to 175 in 2009. In short, there's been a 65 per cent increase in violent crime under the watch of this NDP government.

This NDP government has worked hard to protect the rights of criminals but not of victims. The

NDP Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) has cancelled warrants for criminals who have evaded the law, sending a message that if you run from the law the NDP are willing to wipe your record clean. He's also allowed convicted car thieves to receive MPI benefits after they've caused harm to other law-abiding Manitobans, sending the message that those who break the law will benefit under the law. And he has for years paid criminals with serious outstanding warrants taxpayer-funded welfare and other benefits, sending the message to criminals that it's not important to follow your court orders and, in fact, the NDP government will pay you to ignore those court orders.

Mr. Speaker, while this soft-on-crime NDP government has been sending all the wrong messages, I'm glad to say that there are many organizations in Manitoba who support victims of crime, and those include organizations like MOVA, the Manitoba Organization for Victim Assistance, to name just one. Manitobans deserve to feel safe in their home and their communities; Manitoba Progressive Conservatives stand side by side with them, dedicated to building a province that stands up for victims, not stands up for criminals.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we might have a brief recess to just make sure everyone in the gallery is seated, and members are seated for the Budget Address.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We're going to take—all—do all—there are—

Is there agreement of the House? [*Agreed*]

So all our guests that are in the gallery, if you do not have a budget pass, I'm sorry, but you will have to leave. The budget is a special pass with marked—with stamped on budget. So we'll give a chance for the people that—if you do not have a budget pass, I'll give you the opportunity to leave. And the ones with budget pass, please stay and we'll take a recess for—we'll recess for five minutes.

The House recessed at 2:47 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:58 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I've already called orders of the day.

BUDGET ADDRESS

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable First Minister (Mr. Selinger), that this House approves in general the budgetary policies of this government.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable First Minister, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Ms. Wowchuk: Oh, my speech—[inaudible] Another motion. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present Budget 2011, which builds on Manitoba's momentum by focusing on the priorities of Manitoba families.

During this winter we began preparations to address the serious challenges of spring flooding, and Manitobans have come together to face this immense challenge. This past weekend has tested our preparedness, and we will continue to work with all communities and all partners to develop long-term solutions as the situation evolves.

* (15:00)

When I introduced last year's budget, our province was threatened by the worst global economic downturn since the Second World War. And we had a choice to make. We could have absorbed the effects of the global recession all at once, with major cuts to health care, education, public safety and at the risk of derailing economic recovery. Although some voices urged us to travel down this path, we chose a different way. We rejected the calls to cut public services and we refused to let thousands of Manitobans lose their jobs. Instead, Mr. Speaker, we chose to put families first by protecting jobs and protecting services.

Now a year later and thanks to the hard work and the spirit of Manitobans, our province's strong, steady recovery from the economic downturn is well under way. Mr. Speaker, over the past year, Manitoba has had the lowest unemployment rates in any of the provinces in this country.

Over the past decade, Manitoba has developed a balanced and responsible approach to taxation. It includes a combination of reducing taxes and implementing tax credits. Mr. Speaker, for the 12th

consecutive year, we will not increase major business or personal taxes.

The effects of our stimulus program went beyond the public sector. In fact, Manitobans' private firms accounted for creation of four out of five jobs since the onset of the recession. We have achieved all this while protecting and enhancing the priorities Manitoba families: health care, infrastructure, education, water quality and public safety. It is this—it was this focus that allowed us to achieve what *Maclean's* magazine refers to as the Manitoba miracle. Last year we introduced the plan and the plan is working.

Budget 2011 builds on these positive results and continues to put families first. Manitobans tell us they are optimistic about the future and we share their optimism. Perhaps the best reason is for Manitoba's population—that Manitoba's population is growing and getting younger. This is a major positive change since October, 1999. Manitoba's population has grown by more than a hundred thousand people.

More young people than ever before are choosing to build their future here in Manitoba. They want the best possible health care available when they need it, and an excellent education and training opportunities to ensure the success of their children. They want strong—they want a strong, dynamic economy where entrepreneurs with new ideas create rewarding jobs. They want us to protect our water and natural heritage so future generations can enjoy them as we enjoy them today. They want and they deserve to know that they are safe in their homes and in their communities. They want a high quality of life with good roads, world-class amenities and modern recreational opportunities, and they want lower taxes and a cost of living that remains strong—that remains among the most affordable in Canada.

These are the priorities of Manitoba families, Mr. Speaker, and Budget 2011 delivers on those priorities. Manitoba's economic recovery is steady and over our five-year plan—and our five-year plan is delivering positive results.

Manitoba's future is bright, we—but we will not be complacent. The global economy is recovering but remains fragile. Our largest international trading partner, the United States, faces major challenges of its own. Now is not the time to risk everything we've built together. Our plan is working and there is still more to do.

Like the federal government and other provincial governments, we chose to run a deficit to deal with the global recession. Our priority was to protect jobs and front-line services. Our decade of balanced budgets put Manitoba in a strong place to address the economic downturn. In the first year of our five-year plan, we took measured actions to manage government spending, reduce debt and restore budgetary balance. Despite ongoing economic challenges, we are on track to return to surplus by Budget 2014. This will help us keep Manitoba as one of the most affordable places in the country to live, work and raise a family.

Budget 2011 continues to invest in new infrastructure projects that will support employment and enhance our quality of life. A total of \$1.8 billion is dedicated to infrastructure and capital assets renewal this year. The Len Evans Centre of Trade and Technology in Brandon opened last fall. Work is under way on the expansion of the University College of the North in The Pas, and construction will soon begin on the new campus in Thompson.

Since 1999 we have made significant investments in Manitoba's hospitals and personal care homes. Budget 2011 continues to invest in health-care facilities, including the first-in-Canada mental-health crisis stabilization centre; a hospital expansion in Ste. Anne; new and expanding EMS services in Flin Flon, Pine Falls, Oakbank, Springfield, La Broquerie, Stonewall and Vita; a new youth crisis response centre in Thompson and a groundbreaking later this year for a new hospital in Selkirk.

After just two years we have added close to 700 social and affordable housing units towards our five-year goal of 1,500. Affordable housing remains an important part of our infrastructure plan this year. We are continuing to support home ownership in older neighbourhoods and extending tax incremental financing to support residential housing developments in downtown Winnipeg.

Strong transportation links help drive economic growth. This year marks the fifth year of our \$4 billion 10-year plan commitment to renewal of our highways. We will introduce a new plan to guide our investments for the next five years. A number of projects on highways and bridges around the province will get under way this year, including more than \$520 million on roads and additional funding for municipal bridges projects. We will

continue to partner with the City of Winnipeg on their priority streets, such as Plessis Road.

A number of companies have announced new business or expansion plans at CentrePort Canada over the past year. Construction of a \$212-million expressway are well under way with new investments this year. The multiyear East Side Transportation Initiative will result in an all-season road network connecting several First Nation communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Agreements signed so far will provide an estimated \$47 million in jobs, training and economic opportunities for 12 east-side communities.

This year we will almost double funding for capital investments in water management, including drainage, dams, control structures, flood protection, culvert replacement and conservation district projects, particularly in a high needed area such as the Interlake.

Budget 2011 invests in education at all levels to support our youth. Mr. Speaker, our high school graduation rate climbed to 82.7 per cent in 2010. This builds on 10 years of success, with rates up by more than 14 per cent from 2001. To build on this success, we are increasing financial support for schools. This includes a guaranteed increase of 2.2 per cent to all school divisions. We are also expanding the successful community schools program.

We recently announced \$94.2-million investment in public school capital projects to address priorities such as planning new schools and building gymnasiums and child-care facilities. Some of the projects include a new elementary school for Amber Trail in the Seven Oaks School Division; plans for a new elementary school at Sage Creek; continued work and design for the construction of middle schools in La Broquerie and Steinbach, and high school projects in Winkler and Steinbach; the replacement of the Woodlands School; and \$3 million for projects to improve accessibility for students with disabilities.

* (15:10)

Since 1999, the Education Property Tax Credit has been increased from \$250 to \$650. Budget 2011 includes another increase, from \$650 to \$700, which will save Manitoba families an estimated \$16 million annually.

The Farmland School Tax Rebate will rise from 75 per cent to 80 per cent, providing a total of

\$35.5 million in property tax relief for thousands of Manitoba farm families.

We are working with universities and colleges to improve completion times and graduation rates, strengthening the quality of the program, making it easier for students to transfer credits between institutes and programs and make post-secondary education more accessible. Mr. Speaker, our government has increased overall funding for post-secondary education by more than 80 per cent over the past 11 years.

This year we have developed a multiyear funding arrangement for universities, which will increase operating grants by 5 per cent per year for the next three years. Manitoba tuition fees remain amongst the lowest in the country, and we are introducing a new policy to hold tuition increases to the rate of inflation at universities. As well, tuition fees will increase by \$100 per year at colleges this year. Graduates will benefit from an estimated \$26 million in rebates through the Manitoba Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate in 2011.

Budget 2011 will also increase operating grants for colleges, increase the Manitoba Bursary Fund and increase the number of graduate scholarships available at universities. We also plan to update the legislation for the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface in this upcoming year. Funding will be provided to develop a plan for the third phase of the construction of Assiniboine Community College new campus.

Over the last several years, our government has expended—expanded the technical training capacity of post-secondary institutes to better support apprentices and in turn produce a highly skilled labour force. We are adding hundreds of new seats this year, and are on target to meet our commitment to add 4,000 new apprenticeship seats.

We will also partner with the federal government and Island Lake First Nations and other interested stakeholders to develop apprenticeship training for First Nations residents to retrofit homes for improved water and sewer infrastructure. To help apprentices remain in their home community in rural and northern areas, we will create new online apprenticeship training programs.

Other opportunities to help develop the skills for jobs amongst our youth include increasing investment in adult learning centres and literacy programs, adding funds to the Bright Futures

program, enhancing job opportunities through our Youth Job Corps, adding funds to the successful Green Team program, investing in the new Manitoba mentorship—mentors program that was recommended by the Premier's Economic Advisory Council.

We will continue to enhance supports to help Manitoba innovators and entrepreneurs create good jobs and build our economy. Based on the recommendations from the Manitoba Innovation Council, we are introducing a new five-year \$30-million program to support business innovation. This will help entrepreneurs and businesses create new ideas, new products, new markets and new jobs.

We are also keeping our commitment to improve the Research and Development Tax Credit and increase funding to the Manitoba Research and Innovation Fund. A newly formed Council on International Trade will work to increase the number of Manitoba exporters, help Manitoba firms diversify, find new markets abroad and attract new investments. The council will begin their work by targeting emerging markets such as Brazil, Russia, India and China.

We are working with the private sector to explore joining the World Trade Centers Association, which will provide access to the association's global network of 323 locations in 96 countries.

We are supporting the Centre for Manufacturing Excellence, designed to support manufacturers' building to become competitive in the global market.

To streamline government services, we are transferring the Mechanical and Engineering Branch of Manitoba Labour and Immigration to the Office of the Fire Commissioner. To improve efficiency and to reduce costs we will introduce new technology to support paperless meetings of Cabinet and other committees.

Today, 360 communities representing 90 per cent of Manitoba's population have access to high-speed Internet and 66 new communities will be connected by the end of this year. This year we will also introduce a number of initiatives that will help Manitoba families and businesses get services that they want and need more quickly. These include more online services, such as expanding the online child-care registry, introducing direct deposits for maintenance support, applying for student loans and creating a financial literacy resource website.

We are also making it easier for businesses to get the information and support that they need from government. According to the most recent statistics from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, costs of complying with regulations for small businesses in Manitoba is amongst the lowest in the country.

We have already introduced a number of initiatives, such as the innovative TAXcess service. And this year we are implementing additional online business and employment services, a single-window approach for innovation funding, more BizPaL online services for Manitoba business and red-tape reduction measures for the non-profit organizations.

Manitoba families expect timely, high-quality health care close to home. They also expect their government to eliminate waste and inefficiencies in the health-in health-care administration and direct that funding to front-line care. During the last recession in the '90s, decisions were made to implement devastating cuts to front-line health care while a new level of health-care bureaucracy was created. The province saw a net loss of more than a hundred doctors and 1,500 nurses while 13 new-13 regional health authorities were created. Mr. Speaker, we stand firmly against cuts to front-line services.

We see innovation as the key to improving and sustaining our universal health-care system. Since 1999 we have reduced the number of regional health authorities from 13 to 11, improved efficiencies and eliminated administrative waste, all of which have helped the province see a net gain of more than 400 doctors and 2,500 nurses.

Over the past several years we have implemented numerous innovative strategies designed to improve services for patients while also increasing efficiency in the system. Building on this important work, more innovative initiatives will be implemented this year, including the release time for care pilot project which helps increase the time nurses can spend with patients, and expanding the successful Advanced Access initiative to help more patients get to—an appointment sooner.

* (15:20)

These efforts are paying off, saving an estimated \$50 million last year in spending, which has been reinvested in improving front-line care for patients and families. In fact, the Canadian Institute for Health Information reports that Manitoba has the

third most cost-effective in-patient care and the third lowest hospital administration costs in Canada.

Corporate spending at the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority is now below 3 per cent of its total budget, and strict guidelines for all regional health authorities will be introduced in legislation to cap corporate spending, strengthen accountability and ensure public funding is directed to front-line services.

Investing in Manitoba's green economy helps ensure a healthy environment and strong opportunities for the future.

We are introducing the Manitoba Climate Change Investment Program, which allows building owners and companies to apply for grant funding to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in their operations.

Manitoba is renewing its agreement with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, and we are maintaining our ongoing commitment to the Lake Winnipeg Action Plan to restore the health of Lake Winnipeg and the large and small marshes across the province.

We introduced the Trees for Tomorrow program as part of the Manitoba government's action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We are expanding this program and will plant an additional one million trees, bringing our total to six million trees.

Our abundance of clean energy presents an opportunity for Manitobans to benefit from affordable emission-free electrical transportation. In partnership with the industry, we will implement an electric vehicle strategy that will enable Manitoba to become an early adopter of emerging technologies.

To restore the moose population and to bring it to sustainable numbers, we are investing in the moose population restoration program.

Manitobans have raised concern about beaver dams causing flooding and damage in roads and fields. This spring, we will be introducing a project to address this concern.

Building Urban Industries for Local Development, or BUILD, in Winnipeg and Brandon Energy Efficiency Program, or BEEP, both work to lower utility bills while training workers in the construction industry. To date this work has led to lower utility bills in 6,000 Manitoba housing units.

Building on this success, we will continue to partner with these organizations to work on the rest of the provincial funding—provincially funded housing units.

Manitoba Hydro's Lower Income Energy Efficiency program has already been successful by reinsulating more than 2,200 homes across the province, saving more than a million dollars in energy building. Now Manitoba Hydro will work with the William Whyte neighbourhood to reinsulate homes in central Winnipeg.

Manitoba continues to be committed to developing renewable energy resources. The province's largest wind farm, St. Joseph, has just opened and the new hydroelectric dam in Wuskwatim will be online later this year.

As announced in Budget 2008, coal will be subject to a new emissions tax, further reducing Manitoba's carbon footprint, beginning on January 1st, 2012. A new biomass support program will use the revenue from the tax to provide grants to coal users who switch to biomass, provide targeted support to biomass producers and provide new funds for research and development.

This year the Green Energy Equipment Tax Credit for geothermal heating systems will be increased from 10 per cent to 15 per cent effective for installation after April 12th, 2011.

Our natural areas are some of the most important—our most important resources. To ensure more Manitobans visit our parks, entry will once again be free in 2011.

We are also introducing a five-year plan for exciting new capital projects—infrastructure projects—in our parks across the province, including at Birds Hill Park. Further funding is being directed to support operating costs as well as upgrading and maintaining parks.

This year, we are investing in staff and operating costs to open a new full-service, 120-site campground at Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park. We are also making investments to service and operate campgrounds at Rivers, Wellman Lake and Childs Lakes.

Other initiatives include developing cottage lots at the Black—with Black River First Nation; expanding several wildlife management areas to mark the 50th anniversary of the creation of wildlife management areas; supporting the finalization of the

UNESCO heritage park—World Heritage Site nomination and submission to Parks Canada to protect the boreal forest in partnership with First Nations; and investing in the operations on the Waabanong Anishinaabe Interpretive Centre at the Hollow Water First Nation.

Additional funds will be directed—will be made available to strengthen the capacity of the Office of Drinking Water.

We are committed to supporting farmers and producers, especially in what could be a very challenging year. Rural Economic Development Initiative funds will be maintained this year to support a wide range of projects that help rural communities seize new opportunities for economic growth. The expansion of the Food Development Centre will create a full-service facility that will help producers, processors and entrepreneurs start new businesses. We are increasing compensation from 80 to 90 per cent for wildlife damage for farmers who suffer because of wildlife. We are also working to develop a range of livestock insurance programs to support producers. Additional resources will be committed to further increase funding for production insurance, to make sure producers can deal with excess moisture or other potential hazards.

History has shown us that severe cuts to core services are reckless and would only cost more later. Mr. Speaker, we will not cut services that Manitoba families value. Budget 2011 continues to protect and strengthen those services. Budget 2011 supports our comprehensive plan to move health care forward and strengthen our health-care system. It is a top priority for us for a simple reason: it is a top priority for Manitobans.

One of the most important things we can do is support healthy families. Good nutrition is an important part of healthy living. This year we are investing in a number of programs that support good food choices, including: expanding the successful Farm to School Healthy Choice fundraising program; maintaining support for a dietary hotline; increasing funding for the Northern Healthy Food Initiative; and launching a new program that will help Manitobans identify locally grown products in stores and markets more easily.

Earlier this year, we announced new supports for chronic disease prevention, including a new tobacco reduction strategy. This year we are increasing tobacco taxes by 2 cents a cigarette, while adding

Pharmacare coverage for some smoke cessation aids to support Manitobans who want to quit.

Another way for people to stay healthy is to have timely access to a family doctor and primary health-care teams, including nurse practitioners. By 2015, every Manitoban who wants a family doctor will have a family doctor.

* (15:30)

Budget 2011 moves Manitoba forward by implementing several new initiatives, including: opening quick-care clinics where nurse practitioners will offer some common medical services; introducing a mobile primary care unit to offer routine care for northern and rural residents where they live; establishing primary care workers, where teams of health professionals deliver and co-ordinate health services with patients and families; and providing funding for physicians to implement electronic medical records to better serve their patients. Construction of three Winnipeg projects, Access St. James, Access north west and a new clinic in the Weston-Brooklands area will begin this year. Together, these initiatives will provide Manitobans with improved access to health care as well as reduce reliance on emergency rooms in hospitals.

To support increasing the number of doctors and nurses in Manitoba, we are increasing resources for the Aboriginal Medical Student Scholarship Program, providing incentives to encouraging medical students to work in under-serviced areas of the province after they graduate, and providing permanent and stable annual funding for the nurse recruitment and retention fund.

Bringing health care closer to home for families across the province is a top priority. Over the past decade, we have seen—the past decade has seen diagnostic equipment, dialysis units, cancer service and surgical services added to sites in rural and northern Manitoba. New dialysis units will be opened or—have opened or will open this year in Russell, in Gimli, in Berens River and near Peguis First Nation.

Budget 2011 provides funding for new cataracts, a new cataract surgery program in Swan River, which will complement existing sites in Brandon, Winnipeg, Portage la Prairie and Minnedosa.

Cancer treatment has been—has seen major improvements since 1999. Manitoba now has the fastest access to radiation therapy in the nation.

Radiation therapy will soon be available outside of Winnipeg for the first time when Western Manitoba Cancer Centre opens this spring in Brandon. Screening programs have been produced or expanded to help detect cancer earlier and the budget for cancer drugs has been more than doubled. We will make further investments in our cancer system to ensure quality care.

Since 1999—in—pardon me. In 1999, four MRI machines in Winnipeg performed just more than 10,600 scans. In 2010, eight MRI machines located across the province performed 56,700. This is an increase of 434 per cent in just 12 years.

We have also seen an increase in CT scans, moving from 100,400 scans in 2003 to 157,100 scans in 1999 after investments in eight additional machines, many in rural and northern communities; first time ever.

Budget 2011 provides funds for new and replacement diagnostic equipment. This year we will see a number of milestones in caring for mothers and babies, and they include: the opening of a new birthing centre in south Winnipeg; the start of construction of a new women's hospital; planning for a 10-bed hospital in Notre Dame de Lourdes which will include a birthing facility; the opening of an expanded maternity ward in St. Boniface General Hospital; and the addition—and additional funding for the neo-natal intensive care unit capacity.

Ensuring universal health care is not only accessible, but affordable is a priority. Budget 2011 continues to protect Manitobans from rising drug costs. As part of our five-year plan, Pharmacare deductibles will only rise at the rate of inflation. We will invest additional funds in the provincial drug program to ensure that 100 per cent of all eligible drug costs are covered—remain covered above the deductible. Fees are being eliminated on soft, foldable lens used in the—used for cataract surgery, and coverage will be added for pediatric insulin pumps.

Budget 2011 includes a number of initiatives for emergency services, such as dedicated pharmacists in the province's busiest emergency departments, an expanded emergency department at Grace Hospital, an expansion and redevelopment at 'Bethesnal' hospital in Steinbach's emergency unit, and plans for a new emergency department in Dauphin.

Over the past 11 years we have made a number of changes to renew our mental health system. This

year we are introducing a new strategic plan to guide our work, and we will provide additional funds for several projects, including working with the courts to establish a mental health court. We are working also—work is also beginning on the redevelopment of the River Point Centre in Winnipeg, which will provide a range of addiction and mental health services through collaboration with a number of community organizations.

Budget 2011 continues to focus on services for families, children and seniors. We are establishing a children's victim centre to support children who have been abused, and investigating in resources to address domestic violence, sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

We are also providing more support for families, including additional funding to help people with intellectual disabilities live in their community, for children with autism and to address fetal alcohol 'syndrom' disorder in Manitoba.

Manitoba leads the country in reducing poverty rates for families with children. Between 2000 and 2008 the poverty rate for families with children, in Manitoba, declined by 44 per cent, lifting 19,000 children out of poverty. But there is still more to do. We are making further investments in poverty reduction, further—by including further increases to help low-income families pay their rent, a funding increase to—of 1 per cent to social services agencies and new outreach supports for the West Central Women's Resource Centre.

Some neighbourhoods have significant need for child-care services, but schools do not have surplus space. School divisions can now apply for funding to build child-care centres on existing school property. Manitoba families need child-care spaces that provide quality care. Under the Family Choices program we are funding 2,100 new spaces, as well as additional 400 enhanced nursery spaces. Further efforts will be made to support the stability of the early childhood educator workplace.

Thousands of Manitobans are now part of the sandwich generation, taking care of both their parents and their children. Budget 2011 provides support for these dedicated, caring Manitobans. The Primary Caregiver Tax Credit is a one-of-a-kind provincial tax credit that provides recognition and financial support to individuals who serve as voluntary caregivers. To further support these

generous caregivers, we are increasing the maximum credit by 25 per cent to a maximum of \$1,275.

We are also expanding the successful SafetyAid program in south-central and southwestern Manitoba. As Manitobans grow older, some need—may need more specific, specialized care that their—than their families can provide. We are focusing and providing a wide range of long-term care services, and we recently announced a renewal of our long-term care plan. This includes a pilot project called HomeSafe that will provide medical care in the home for people with fragile health so they do not have to be admitted into the hospital.

Budget 2011 also includes additional funds for more staff at all personal care homes, a capital expansion of the Holy Family personal care home in Winnipeg, a new personal care home in Lac du Bonnet, and increased dollars for home care.

*(15:40)

All Manitobans are entitled to feel secure in their homes and communities, and we are investing in initiatives to ensure the safety of all Manitobans. Mr. Speaker, we met—we'll meet our four-year commitment to add a hundred police officer positions to the two—for a total of 255 new officers since 1999. This year we are funding 17 new officers in the city of Winnipeg and providing additional resources for RCMP in rural and northern Manitoba. We are also funding 50 per cent of the cost of hiring 50 new cadets in Winnipeg. An additional 10 prosecutors and seven support staff will also be hired this year. We are also investing in enhancing the security of correctional staff.

Construction continues on the new women's correctional facility and the expansion of the Milner Ridge Correctional facility. Budget 2011 includes an increase of provincial funding for Legal Aid, and we are also increasing resources to ensure The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act—to enforce The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, which has supported the shutdown of about 500 drug dens.

We will continue to invest in crime prevention initiatives. Budget 2011 includes funding to support the expansion of the innovative Gang Response and Suppression Program and the successful COACH project in Winnipeg School Division to help children at risk of dropping out of school. We are investing in the Gang Awareness for Parents project that helps

parents and caregivers and other adults identify the risk of—signs of gang innovation.

Manitoba provides some of the strongest support for arts and culture in Canada, and our recreational and culture opportunities enriched our quality of life. Two new libraries will be established in Manitoba this year, and we will provide funding to support these important projects. We are sustaining funding for the cultural community, including museums, concert halls, and other valuable institutes. We are also making new investments to support film and television production equity through Manitoba Film and Sound.

Budget 2000—Manitoba's five-year plan demonstrates we are able to provide services and manage government spending while returning to balance responsibly. We have already made good progress. Manitoba surpassed the target of Budget 2010 and we are ahead of our projections.

In Budget 2011, the overall expenditure is expected to rise by 2.3 per cent. The projected deficit is \$438 million and is .8 per cent of GDP, the third lowest of all provinces in Canada. The share of total revenue spent on debt-serving costs is forecast to be six cents of every dollar of revenue, down from 13 cents in 1999.

In 2011-12, \$438 million will be used for debt-related payments. Since 1999, specific initiatives have been taken to ensure sound fiscal debt management. These include addressing the unfunded pension liability and funding the employers' share of current service pensions entitlements for the first time since 1961, appropriating money for the amortization of all capital investments, which is used to pay down the cost of much needed assets, paying down general purpose debt, dedicating money from the stabilization fund to pay down the core government deficit arise from the economic downturn.

Manitoba's economic—Manitoba's economy expanded by 2.5 per cent in 2010, with employment growing at 1.9 per cent compared to Canada's 1.4 per cent increase. Manitoba's economy continues to grow steadily, including a low unemployment rate; a strong labour force; a high retail—a retail sales increase of 5.5 per cent since 2010, the third highest among provinces; housing starts increase of 41.1 per cent, highest—higher than the national average; the most consistent growth in private capital investment; an increase in total capital investment

spending in 2010, ahead of the national average; the second strongest growth in private capital investment amongst the provinces over the five years.

Since 1999, we have cut taxes to benefit Manitoba families and businesses while maintaining front-line services. Mr. Speaker, for the 12th consecutive year, we will not increase major business or personal tax. Rather, we are reducing them by \$65 million this year.

In fact, income tax reductions will remove 5,600 Manitobans from the tax roll in 2011 and about 22,000 Manitobans by 2014. The basic personal amount, the spouse amount and the eligible dependant amount will be increased by \$1,000 over the next four years, including an increase of \$250 this year. This is the first full year where small companies will pay no provincial income tax, as we were the first province in Canada to eliminate the small business income tax.

This, in addition to the elimination of the general corporation capital tax, helps create a healthy business climate and a strong job market. Access to capital remains an ongoing concern for local businesses. To provide support to smaller financial institutes, which are better positioned to best serve local needs, we are introducing a provincial capital tax exemption for small banks.

Tax credits help Manitoba families save money and make our province more—a more attractive investment option for businesses. The maximum Education Property Tax Credit for seniors will increase to \$1,100 over three years. This year, the maximum credit will increase from \$800 to \$950. We are continuing to provide the Manitoba Fitness Tax Credit for youth up to the age of 24.

In order to foster enriched extracurricular activities for children, a new tax credit will be introduced and will apply to organized and supervised art and cultural activities taking place in Manitoba and outside the regular school program. Families can earn a credit of up to \$54 per child, totalling an additional \$3 million a year in income tax savings. When combined, changes to the personal exemption, the property tax credit, and a new credit for children's activities, a family of four will save \$212 this year and \$374 annually by 2014.

To promote innovation and entrepreneurship in the non-profit sector, we will be introducing the Neighbourhoods Alive! Tax Credit. This new tax credit will support partnerships between businesses,

charitable community-based organizations to create jobs for people facing barriers in employment. We are introducing the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit, a 15 per cent income tax credit for Manitoba printers who contract with publishers anywhere in Canada to print books authored by Canadians.

* (15:50)

TD Economics recently reported that Manitoba households are the least vulnerable in the country to negative economic events, such as house price corrections, income disruption and increased interest rates. In fact, they noted that Manitoba is the only jurisdiction in the country where households are less at risk than in 2006.

Manitoba Hydro rates continue to be the lowest in North America, keeping electrical costs low for Manitoba families and Manitoba businesses. We continue to support links between the public sector, the private sector and the non-profit—and not-for-profit organizations and communities themselves to build a stronger province.

This year our government will spend the equivalent of one point of the provincial sales tax on municipal infrastructure and public transit. This is an investment we believe should grow every year with the success of Manitoba's economy. Therefore, our government will enhance the Building Manitoba Fund by changing the legislation—the legislated annual revenue-sharing formula to the equivalent of one point of provincial sales tax. This will ensure more predictable funding and greater future revenue growth for grants for municipalities. At the same time, we are enhancing accountability and transparency, so Manitobans will know that revenues are being invested in infrastructure across the province.

The successful Neighbourhoods Alive! program will be expanded into five new communities in Winnipeg. Brandon, the Wheat City of Canada, is Manitoba's second largest city, and we work with the community to build opportunities through projects such as the Strand Theatre. This year we are also providing funding to support the Brandon Regeneration Strategy, which is developing a long-term vision for the community's downtown renewal. We are also introducing a new four-year capital infrastructure program for municipality—municipal recreational opportunities, including projects in Brandon.

To support flood protection efforts, municipalities will no longer have to pay sales tax on flood protection equipment. Mr. Speaker, while some fight against strong minimum wages, Manitoba families can count on us to fight for strong minimum wage. I want this House to know that minimum wage will increase this year.

We are providing funding for a worker advocate centre in Brandon that will serve rural and northern Manitoba and help workers access service and benefits they need.

The Manitoba Mineral Exploration Assistance Program provides supports to companies and individuals undertaking mining exploration, and we are investing additional \$500,000 this year to support a wide range of research, including search for rare earth elements.

This year we will provide additional funding to the Métis Economic Development Fund, which will be used to invest in Métis-owned businesses and spur economic development in Métis communities.

We are focusing on the needs of training—the training of older Manitoba workers, and this year we are—who have suffered because of the downturn in the economy, and this year we are allocating additional funding for training support for unemployed workers between the age of 55 and 60.

Mr. Speaker, we have had great results in reducing work place injury. Workers are safer, and time lost to injury rates has been reduced by more than 40 per cent since 2000. This means that more than 10,000 fewer workers sustained workplace injuries that keep them—that actually keep them from going to work—workplace injuries serious enough to lose time to work. We've almost doubled the number of workplace safety and health officers since 1999.

Newcomers to Manitoba do well, find work and stay in Manitoba to make it their permanent home. Manitoba welcomed a record of 15,805 immigrants between January 2010 and 2011. We will continue to work with the business community and other leaders to push for the removal of the cap on the Provincial Nominee Program to ensure that we get the continued—have the continued recruitment.

As another step in the development of our innovation settlement strategy, we are implementing a made-in-Manitoba solution for co-ordinating case management for refugees to determine their needs and support them as they begin their new lives here.

As I draw to a close, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize a few people in the gallery, and these are the students from Providence College and their instructor who have joined us today. Why do I want to recognize these students? Because these students are the future of our province and these students took the time to come to two budget consultations. I know it must have been intimidating: came to the first meeting to figure out what you were doing; then they came to the second meeting and made a presentation. I would hope that the instructors and students in other parts of the province would look at this and encourage students to take part in this process. So I thank them for taking this opportunity to hear—to have us hear them, and I want to tell them that one of the recommendations that they made has been implemented. I sincerely do encourage people that are here to encourage other people to get involved and help shape the future of Manitoba.

Manitoba's five-year economic plan continues to bring steady growth and positive results through sound financial management. Our economy is among the strongest in Canada. Our communities are thriving and Manitobans are optimistic about where we're going. Changing direction now would only risk what we have built together. Manitobans have told us what we want and we are listening. They do not want reckless cuts, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you of that. The budget will create exciting opportunities, new jobs and steady growth. And we will lead the way to a better future by investing in families, in education, in innovation, in economic development, in affordability, in clean energy, and in safe communities.

Mr. Speaker, this budget keeps Manitoba on the right track. This budget keeps us moving forward, and this budget reflects what Manitobans have said they want from their government. Thank you.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for

Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* (16:00)

Messages

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I have two messages from His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor as well as the budget documents which I would like to table.

Mr. Speaker: Could you please stand for the reading of the messages.

The Lieutenant-Governor transmits through the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the Province for Capital Expenditures and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

And the second message: The Lieutenant-Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the Province for the fiscal year ending 31st day of March, 2012, and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. Selby), that this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Government House Leader, seconded by the honourable Minister for Advanced Education that the motion do now adjourn.

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

The House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 12, 2011

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