

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*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
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HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
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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

Wednesday, April 20, 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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 23—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 23, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Howard: It's my pleasure to introduce this legislation today based on consensus recommendations from the Labour Management Review Committee. This bill will enable employers and employees to come to agreements to permit for flexible time arrangements to allow employees better work-life balance and employers better efficiency. Of course, as always, the rights of employees will be protected in this regard by the Employment Standards who will have the ability to cancel those agreements if it's found that employees have not entered into them willingly.

This bill also clarifies the just cause provision for termination, which is a standard that is used throughout the country, and, as well, this will also make it easier for more employers to take advantage of flexible time arrangements. Thank you very much.

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

PETITIONS

Mount Agassiz Ski Area

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

For several decades, the Mount Agassiz ski area, home to the highest vertical between Thunder Bay and the Rocky Mountains, was a popular skiing and snowboarding destination for Manitobans and visitors alike.

The operations of Mount Agassiz ski area were very important to the local economy, not only creating jobs, but also generating sales of goods and services at area businesses.

In addition, a thriving rural economy generates tax revenue that helps pay for core provincial government services and infrastructure which benefits all Manitobans.

Although the ski facility closed in 2000, there remains strong interest in seeing it reopened, and Parks Canada has committed to conducting a feasibility study with respect to the Agassiz site and future opportunities in the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government to consider outlining to Parks Canada the importance that a viable recreational facility in the Mount Agassiz area would play in a local and provincial economies.

To request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider working with all stakeholders, including Parks Canada, to help develop a plan for a viable, multi-season recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area.

And this petition is signed by P. Robert, K. Durston, S. Asham 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.

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

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

The background to the 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 all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by R. Taraschuk, M. Fedon, W. Fedon and thousands of other Manitobans.

Convicted Auto Thieves—Denial of MPI Benefits

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

In Manitoba, a car thief convicted of stealing a vehicle involved in a car accident is eligible to receive compensation and assistance for personal injury from Manitoba Public Insurance.

Too many Manitoba families have had their lives tragically altered by motor vehicle accidents involving car thieves and stolen vehicles.

It is an injustice to victims, their families and law-abiding Manitobans that MPI premiums are used to benefit car thieves involved in those accidents.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Justice deny all MPI benefits to a person for injuries received in an accident if he or she is convicted of stealing a motor vehicle involved in the accident.

And this petition is signed by M. Tkachyk, T. Vanassen and G. Smith and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Bipole III—Cost to Manitoba Families

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

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

This will cost each family of four in Manitoba \$11,748 more than an east-side route, which is also shorter and more reliable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to build the Bipole III transmission line on the shorter and more reliable east side of Lake Winnipeg in order to save each Manitoba family of four \$11,748.

And this is signed by N. Penner, L. Wiebe, E. Krahn and many, many others.

* (13:40)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I'd like to table the 2010 Annual Report of the Workers Compensation Board and their Five Year Plan. This includes the Report of the Fair Practices Advocate as well as the Annual Report for the Appeal Commission and Medical Review Panel.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House again today to provide an update on the flood.

We can report that the Souris River has crested and water levels are starting to drop. However, flood fighters are busy again today in Melita sandbagging to protect the sewage lift station. Yesterday we moved quickly to respond to rising water levels and to provide the community with the resources needed to protect it.

In St-Lazare, the west dike is to be raised in preparation for the crest, which is expected to reach the community in the next 48 hours. Eight homes outside of the primary dikes are being sandbagged.

I would also like to inform the House that the amount of water flowing into the Shellmouth Dam increased by 70 per cent last night, reaching inflows of 16,000 cfs. Over the next two days the outflow from the dam will be increased from 500 cfs to 4,000 cfs in order to manage the peak on the Assiniboine.

Pursuant to the Manitoba-Saskatchewan agreement, Saskatchewan has agreed not to release water from Fishing Lake until the crest has passed.

As I'm reading this statement, the orderly, precautionary transfer of 42 residents from the St. Adolphe Personal Care Home is being completed due to concerns over the potential loss of road access. St. Adolphe PCH residents will be—pardon me—will remain in the community of Grunthal until the flood threat from the Red River has passed.

Further precaution evacuations have taken place in several RMs around the province. There are currently a total of 866 evacuees, up from 763 yesterday. There are also now 32 states of local emergency in effect.

This year's flooding has forced the closure of an unprecedented number of roads in southern Manitoba, including 55 provincial roads and 500 municipal roads.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the latest flood update.

As we speak, there is a tremendous amount of work under way in communities like Melita and St-Lazare and others to deal with the rising river levels and the challenges that go with it.

In addition, officials from a broad range of government departments along with community officials are making contingency plans should further evacuations be needed. This advance planning is especially important if vulnerable individuals like the sick or the elderly need to be quickly relocated.

More than 750 people have been evacuated and close to three dozen municipalities have declared states of emergency. It's a clear indication of the wide geographical extent of this year's flooding. Road closures continue in many regions causing considerable disruption.

While much of the public attention has been focused on what's happening in southern and central Manitoba, there's equally important preparatory work under way in northern Manitoba as well.

Many of my caucus colleagues and members across the way have individuals in communities affected by this spring's flooding. We do appreciate the efforts of the provincial officials to keep us apprised of what's happening, particularly as unexpected events arise. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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: I thank the minister for the update today. I think it's—at this point there's a very considerable concern for people in Melita and the nearby places in southwestern Manitoba. I note that the Melita motel has gone largely under water and clearly the water levels there are very high from a historical perspective and there's very considerable concern. So our sympathy goes out to the people in that area who are badly affected, and thanks to all the volunteers, and, of course, this extends to the many areas of the province which are affected and the concerns along the Red River as the crest moves northward.

It's clearly an anxious time of year for many people in southern Manitoba and also a time to reflect on what has been happening and what can be done in the future to prevent the infrastructure damage and the road closures the next time around.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of the honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from the Emanuel Korean Church, we have 10 visitors under the direction of Ms. Cindy Park. This group is in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Education (Ms. Allan).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Pre-Budget Consultations FIPPA Request

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): In the months leading up to the budget that was tabled last week, the government spent thousands of dollars on pre-budget consultations.

I want to ask the Premier: Were the results of these consultations reflected in the budget that was tabled in this House last week on April the 12th?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the budget did reflect the priorities Manitobans identified for us. They made it quite clear they'd like us to protect front-line services, health care, education, services to families and children. They indicated they wanted to see a significant investment in infrastructure. They indicated they wanted us to follow through on the plan we put in place to fully recover the balance and maintain affordability in Manitoba.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the reason the question has been asked is that we asked under FIPPA for the results of those pre-budget consultations, and here's the reply that we received on April the 7th, which is two working days before the budget was tabled. The reply says, and I quote: ". . . the results are currently in the process of being tabulated and will be available in the near future. As such, Manitoba Finance must refuse your request at this time," and I'll table the FIPPA response that we got from the department.

I just want to ask the Premier: If they were listening to those pre-budget consultations, why is it that two working days before the budget was tabled, roughly the time the budget would have been going to the printer, they hadn't even tabulated the results of those pre-budget consultations, never mind had a chance to review them?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the budget consultations that are conducted by this government are quite different than what the former government used to do. It used to be an invitation-only event, closed doors, invitation-only. Nobody really knew how the people were selected to attend those meetings, and nobody ever knew what their outcome of the meeting was.

In our case, the minister goes out; the meetings are made available to the public. There's advertising done; anybody can attend. The minister and local

MLAs, who are often in attendance, listen carefully to what people say. There's often small groups that address issues and compile information. They often give a report back to the entire group that attends the meeting so that there's quite a bit of information available to people, including the minister and MLAs, about what the priorities are of the people that attend those meetings.

And, yes, there are questionnaires that are filled out, and Finance, after they do all the work on the budget, do make an effort to compile those all together into a comprehensive report, which, as they said in the FIPPA request, will be available very soon.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, and that—the Premier makes the point. He says that they look at the input after they've compiled the budget, Mr. Speaker, which defeats the purpose of doing the consultations in the first place. The response to our question when we asked for those results from those consultations two working days before the budget was tabled is they were in the process of tabulating those results.

It's quite clear, Mr. Speaker, they spent thousands of dollars on pre-budget consultations that they didn't listen to. They're spending hundreds of thousands more on advertising which is not accurate.

Why doesn't the Premier just admit that after 11 years they're just too tired to listen to Manitobans?

* (13:50)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite once again misleads the public about the process.

I explained it very carefully. There is open public information and advertising. Anybody can attend the meetings, unlike the members opposite who, just like their convention, have hand-picked people to come. They all meet behind closed doors; they talk about things that they never tell anybody about and then they come out and declare victory on some issue that nobody knows what they've even discussed. So that's the Tory way, secret meetings, sort of the cult approach to public policy.

Look, if the member really wants to be serious about public consultation, maybe he could tell us who he consulted before he decided to bring a motion in front of this House to cut a half a billion dollars out of the budget.

Budget Proposed Amendments

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question, the Premier is completely wrong. In fact, the motion that was brought before the House, it calls on the government to reverse their long 500-kilometre, too-long power line, saving every Manitoba family an extra \$11,748, protecting Manitoba Hydro's system reliability, reducing the impacts on the environment, lowering the long-term summary deficit and calling on the government to implement efforts to lower the deficit and control debt while protecting front-line services. That's the motion before the House today.

And I want to know whether the Premier is going to vote for that motion today or whether he's going to vote against a motion that'll save Manitoba families over \$11,000? Whose side is he on, the side of Manitoba families, Mr. Speaker, or is he on the side of those who want to raise the hydro rates for those hard-working families?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The members opposite proposed a half a billion dollars cuts in the budget. They're not prepared to tell us who they consulted on it. Maybe they just talked to themselves. Maybe they didn't even talk to each other. Maybe they just dreamed up the motion and dropped it in front of the Legislature and then tried to call a standing vote on it, a wonderful way to approach our public policy in this province.

When it comes to Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear what the agenda of the member opposite is. He wants to stop hydro from being built, doesn't want to do converter stations, doesn't want to do the bipole, doesn't want to build Keeyask, doesn't want to build Conawapa.

He wants to privatize it; that's his agenda. That's exactly what he did with the telephone system, and that's what he's intending to do with Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier doesn't seem to want to address himself to the question before the House today, which is the motion which has been brought forward to reverse their decision, save every family over \$11,000, to get the debt under control, Mr. Speaker, for the sake of future generations. He doesn't want to take a clear position on that issue. I

don't know why. He's had seven days to think about it, seven days to come up with a clear response.

Will he support the amendment, Mr. Speaker, which improves the budget that was brought forward, or will he vote to raise the hydro bills of every family in Manitoba by over \$11,000, the sort of incompetent project management that we saw on the stadium, the same stadium deal where he tried to privatize the Blue Bombers.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, not only do the members opposite not want to build Keeyask, not only do they not want to build Conawapa, not only do they not see the need for converters so that all the power currently going through Dorsey would have an alternative, they would risk melting down the Manitoba economy, which is a \$56-billion economy projected in the '11-12 budget.

They want to—we want to move Manitoba forward with a \$56-billion economy, and for the cost of the bipole—\$1.26 billion—less than a week of the Manitoba economy, they would like to cancel all the future potential in this province.

They didn't want to build the MTS Centre. They didn't want to do that. They worked against it. They didn't want to do the football stadium. They don't want to do schools. They don't want to do hospitals. They promised a hospital in Brandon for over a decade and never built it. They promised a hospital at Boundary Trails and never built it. They promised everything and then cancelled it all. They want to return us to the '90s, the dark days when unemployment was 8 per cent, when family incomes were 50 per cent less than what they are today.

We want to move Manitoba forward; they want to move it backwards.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, and, again, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is off on so many different tangents. I would just ask him to come in from the front lawn of the Legislature and answer the question before the House and indicate whether he supports the amendment to ensure that we have a budget that's not just about the next five months of political desperation for the NDP but about building the future of Manitoba so that five years from today we don't impose as much debt on our children, that 20 years from today we don't leave a legacy of debt,

rising taxes and compromised services for the next generation.

Mr. Speaker, is it all about five months of desperation or will he support the amendment and position Manitoba for growth five years from now?

Mr. Selinger: What the budget about—is about is the next five to 10 years of growing the Manitoba economy. What the budget about—is about is providing resources so young people can get educated. What the budget is about is providing resources so we can have better home care and personal care homes in this province. What the budget is about is fixing up roads and highways and investing in infrastructure in this province so the economy can grow stronger, including central projects like CentrePort Manitoba.

What this budget about—is about is the people of Manitoba, not their desperate and reckless attempt to cancel all the economic development projects in Manitoba, including hydro, including CentrePort, including investing in infrastructure, including investing in education and including investing in health care. It's very clear who will move this province forward, and it's not the members opposite. It's the people on this side of the House.

Cottage Owners Property Tax Deferral Program

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, in December of 2009, the Minister of Finance announced the Cottage Property Tax Increase Deferral Program. At the time, the minister stated that the proposed legislation would, and I quote: ease pressures from property taxes for cottage owners. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Finance update the House today on how her program is working for cottage owners in Manitoba?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this government looks at many different options. There was an issue that was raised by cottage owners with regard to the taxes, and we put in place an option that would help those people make a decision as to whether they wanted to pay their taxes immediately or whether they wanted to defer them. That decision was made and that's another option.

But, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite should also look at the other changes that we made in regard to taxes, where we have increased the property tax

credit as we had promised that we would, another \$50 this year per household, that we have increased the education property tax credit for farmers from 75 to 85 per cent. We have taken many steps and the—we should let the member—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: And given the fact that the minister said that her program would ease pressures from property taxes for cottage owners, I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, if the minister can indicate for the House today how many of the 14,000 cottage owners in Manitoba were able to benefit from her property tax deferral program.

Ms. Wowchuk: And cottages at lakes for Manitobans are very important, Mr. Speaker, and people raised an issue and we have developed an option for the people of Manitoba who own cottages. We've looked at all of those, but we've also put in place other taxes—supports for people. The member opposite will also recognize that we've put in place TIG, that will help—which helps school divisions so that they will not have to raise property tax. And all of these are options.

With regard to the cottages, the individuals will decide if they want to take advantage of this option or they don't want to, but we have lowered taxes in many areas by putting in place tax incentives, putting in place things like TIG, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:00)

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, given that the minister is unable to answer the question today, I will table for her a freedom of information response that we received from her government department, Mr. Speaker. According to the document that we received, of the 14,000 cottage owners in Manitoba, it states, and I quote: seven applications for the program were received, and of those, four applications were approved.

Mr. Speaker, a policy that benefits four out of 14,000 people, that's less than .03 per cent of the people. With success like that, who needs failure?

Ms. Wowchuk: You know, Mr. Speaker, we're a government that gives people options. We're not a government like they were. When they were in power, they had the highest property tax increases that Manitobans have had in a long time. Manitobans haven't experienced those kinds of increases because we have put in place different options. We have put in place the tax incentive grants to help keep

education tax down. We've put in place a tax credit for seniors to help their—to keep their education taxes lower. We have taken various steps to keep taxes low.

We would not have been able to do those things, Mr. Speaker; we would not have been able to look after families if we had followed their example and taken \$500 million out of the budget. We would've seen taxes on education taxes spiral as we did in the '90s.

St-Lazare Flood Mitigation Strategies

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Four out of 14,000—not a bad average, I guess, in the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to a question on flooding in my communities and, specifically, I want to talk about St-Lazare because that community is facing some real dangers. And, last week, I had apprised the minister of the fact that the fast-flowing Qu'Appelle River and the Assiniboine River peaking at the same time may cause some real problems in St-Lazare.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to the people of St-Lazare and also the staff from MIT who have been working very hard to protect that community. But there still is a worry and a danger. There still is a worry and a danger that, in fact, the waters may exceed the projections, and, in fact, the community may be flooded.

And I want to ask the Minister of Infrastructure whether or not there are plans in case the dams on the—and the dikes on the lagoons and the community are overwhelmed. Are there plans to increase those at short notice?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, I do want to thank the member for the question. I particularly want to thank you for the comments about MIT. I think we can put politics aside. But whether it's this department or whether it's the 700 staff from a variety of departments or, quite frankly, from the many municipalities who've been impacted throughout the province, I think we all owe them a great big thank you. They've been working 24/7 at protecting our communities, and I really appreciate the comment from the member opposite.

And we have, indeed, been working around the clock on the one-kilometre section of the earthen community dike. Again, it's a precautionary measure.

The member, I know, is aware of that, and I do appreciate that he did raise the concern about the Qu'Appelle River and the impact it could potentially have. Of course, you have a combination of impacts there of the Qu'Appelle River and the Assiniboine River.

What I was going to recommend, too, by the way, if there's any concerns the member has in terms of the emergency plan, the municipality does have an emergency plan. I would be more than pleased to meet with the member right after question period. I do value his input and the input from other members—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the fluctuation of the Qu'Appelle and the Assiniboine rivers are causing some real problems to property owners and homeowners in St-Lazare, and Franco Chartier's property is eroding before his eyes and the river is threatening to consume not only outbuildings in his yard but indeed his home.

Mr. Speaker, this has been an ongoing problem, and I want to ask the minister: What measures have been taken to shore up the banks of the Qu'Appelle River near his home so as his home does not get washed away by the fast-flowing waters that are coming through the Qu'Appelle River right now?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the community dike, the goal in terms of the community dike was to put in place eight feet of freeboard. Even with the anticipated crest in the next two days, it's still expected there will be four feet of freeboard.

What we've been doing, in addition to the work in terms of the community dike, as we have in the many other areas throughout the province, is also focusing on individual homes that are outside of community dikes in terms of protection. If there's any specific concerns, once again I'll undertake to meet with the minister right after—or the member—after question period as Minister responsible for EMO.

I do know, again we're dealing with this on an unprecedented geographic scale. We're seeing in the Qu'Appelle River a flood of record. Of course, at St-Lazare it's also a combination of the Qu'Appelle and the Assiniboine. So there are significant challenges, and I certainly appreciate the member raising these concerns. We'll do what we can to

protect that homeowner and other homeowners in the community of St-Lazare.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, when the minister made a statement today about increasing the outflows of the Shellmouth Dam to 4,000 cfs, there was a shudder that went through me because right now the drains, the Langenburg drain, some of the tributaries that are coming into the Assiniboine River are flowing at unprecedented levels. There are thousands of cfs being added to the river between the dam and St-Lazare, and within hours the situation in St-Lazare can change.

Mr. Speaker, right now we understand that there are sandbagging-filling machines that are sitting idle, especially the one in southwestern Manitoba, and there is no stockpiling of sandbags in St-Lazare, and I'm wondering whether the minister would disclose his plan in case the situation in St-Lazare changes within hours.

Is there a plan to stockpile some sandbags so that the community, the lagoon and some of the homes can be protected on short notice.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, the sandbag machine that I know was the subject of a question last week is being used. It was sent to Hartney. There were some concerns in that community. It was sent immediately to Hartney and has proved to be—proved its worth again, and I do want to stress that when we prepared for the flood this year we put in place upwards of \$50 million worth of investments, and I would call them investments. And whether it be what we've seen on the Assiniboine River with the dikes, where we saw the value of that over the weekend, or with the sandbag machine, we are seeing the benefit of that foresight.

I can indicate that we also have rapid deployment, whether it be the various kinds of tubes that are available, a new HESCO product that is being used. We're using a combination of that throughout the province again.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, not just in St-Lazare, but across the province, and, once again, I will undertake to meet briefly with the member right after question period to make sure that his concerns are identified with the EMO staff and that we do respond.

Thank you—I would like to thank the member for raising it.

Town of Melita Flooding and Evacuation Plans

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for his statement today as well.

We know that there's a tremendous amount of work under way in the Melita area to protect the sewer lift station, and I wish to commend all those that have been involved with that process in that community, from the department, and the local citizens.

However, the water levels had been called absolutely unprecedented in this particular situation, and so I ask the minister: Should—you know, should water breach the sewage lift station, it may be necessary to evacuate this community.

And so, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister responsible for Emergency Measures provide us with an update on the steps being taken to address this threat to the community of Melita?

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): Well, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I can answer the question, at least with respect to the lift station and the lagoons—or the lagoon, rather, as the—I've discussed this before question period with the member, and we are concerned that both the primary and the secondary cell in the lagoon has been breached by flood waters, but the ongoing concern is—and a more real concern at this moment—is the status of the lift station, and secondary sandbagging is being done around the lift station, as I understand it, to protect it in the event that water should come that far.

If, for some reason or another, the lift station was compromised, that would be a serious—a very serious matter, and I understand that consultations are going on with the Chief Medical Officer as to what should be done in that event.

* (14:10)

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, certainly in a worst-case scenario, should that station be compromised, it may be necessary, as I've said, to evacuate the entire community, and so can the minister tell us what a complete community evacuation plan would involve?

Many of the people on the ground there are wondering what kind of a complete evacuation plan would be required and where would these residents be relocated if the need so arose.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, given the evolving nature of this—and, in fact, just even the last half an hour to an hour there have been significant new developments—I'll make the same offer to the member that I did to the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). I will undertake to meet with the member after question period. I'll also make sure that the member is fully briefed on the emergency plan.

I want to stress that every municipality, including this municipality, does have an emergency plan in terms of evacuation, but at this point, it is a hypothetical situation. We're not at that point.

But as the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) did point out, we are, first of all, trying to protect that lift station and, second of all, that we have already engaged in the consultations with the Chief Medical Officer to ensure that we have a clear protocol in terms of evacuations.

There is an emergency plan that's in place, and I'll be more than happy to brief the member on all the details of that emergency plan right after question period.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you. We hope it stays hypothetical as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, with the level of 1,414 feet above sea level and while the Souris River is stabilizing in the short term, the second crest is expected very soon on this particular river on unprecedented water levels from North Dakota and Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister provide citizens of Melita and area affected by the rising Souris River with the—with an updated crest levels report and what additional contingency plans may be needed if it does continue to rise and come over those dikes in Melita.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I certainly will get the latest information. We have a situation report that is developed right at this time and we do release it to the media at 2:30, but I'll make sure the member gets a copy of that prior to our release to the media.

I do want to stress that this was an evolving situation. A state of local emergency was declared by

Melita just two days ago. We have been working around the clock, 24/7. There's been just some incredible effort that's taken place there.

And, certainly, we're aware of the situation with the potential of an evacuation. It's not at that point yet; I want to stress that. But we have all the contingencies available. And we are, again, watching those predictions well—on a regular basis.

I want to stress, by the way, with the unprecedented levels that we're seeing, most of the forecasts we've seen in the south of the province have been within the range that we have anticipated.

But I wouldn't underestimate the challenge we're dealing with in Melita. We're doing our very best, and when I say we, everybody that's involved with us. And I appreciate the member asking this question.

RM of Franklin Road Weight Restrictions

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, for the past 11 years, my predecessor and myself have brought up the Letellier Bridge here in this Chamber.

And again today, after 11 years of waiting for the Letellier Bridge, it is finally being replaced, mainly thanks to the work of Conservative MP Vic Toews. This bridge will have no weight restrictions, so in theory it should be a key route for stakeholders like the transportation, construction and agricultural sectors.

Shockingly, though, through the—thanks to the NDP government's ineptitude, the bridge cannot be used to its full capacity. None of the provincial roads leading to or from this bridge are RTAC roads, so load weights are restricted to 65 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell if the upgrades are planned for the roads backing to the new Letellier Bridge?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I was waiting for it, Mr. Speaker. I was waiting for a Tory MLA to actually say thank you to the NDP government for the investment in highway in his area. Didn't happen.

But I will put on the record, by the way, that we in this government are pleased to have partnered with the federal government, and one of the reasons we've been able to do the work on Letellier Bridge and many other areas throughout the province is

because we now have a \$363-million capital project which has *[inaudible]* four times since 1999.

So, Mr. Speaker, the real question, though, is not whether the member is going to thank this government, it's how he is going to vote, and we'll see if he votes in favour of that or, once again, votes against that increase, that historic investment in our highway system.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, it's clear that there's an amendment before the House here, and we'll certainly vote for that amendment.

Mr. Speaker, this short-sighted government believes that the second-rate roads of 600 square miles in the RM of Franklin are good enough. This government knows that the regular closure of 75 leads to necessity of alternate flood routes.

Mr. Speaker, why has this tired and desperate NDP government created a situation where an important truck route isn't going to be used to its full capacity?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, another Conservative MLA talks about Highway 75. I want to put on the record, as of this—the end of this summer, we will have invested—the NDP government of this province will have invested a hundred-million dollars on a hundred kilometres upgrading of Highway 75.

And I'll put on the record that this is a government that believes in building Manitoba for everyone. There are significant highway investments all throughout southern Manitoba, including Letellier Bridge, the Pierre Delorme Bridge, which we brought back into full operation basically 18 months after it was taken out with the flood impacts of 2009.

Mr. Speaker, we're proud of our record. This is a government that is committed to all Manitobans, including in his constituency. I just wish once that member opposite would vote for the kind of things he says he advocates. Vote for our budget and vote for that investment in highways.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, I'm more than prepared to vote for the amendment.

The hundred million that the member talks about was \$85 million that was federal money. The bridge was—50 per cent was federal money. The money that he talks about investing in Manitoba hasn't been invested in southern Manitoba at all.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) himself said this morning it could take a few years to do all the work that is needed on Highway 75. The needed work is under way on the Letellier Bridge, but upgrades are also needed to the provincial highway to bring them up to RTAC standards to carry the heavier loads.

Mr. Speaker, I again ask the minister: Will he commit to a date for road upgrades to be started and completed so that the Letellier Bridge and the rest of this important transportation route can be used to its full capacity?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, one of the hallmarks of this government is that we can work with the federal—it doesn't matter what political persuasion. We did work with the federal government. It is cost shared with the federal government. I put that on the record, but not 85, 90 per cent from the federal government. The member, again, didn't do his homework.

But, you know, I want to stress again, we undertook the challenge, and let's talk about Highway 75 for a moment. In 1999, it was an embarrassment to drive back into Manitoba if you were visiting friends and neighbours in the United States. It was an embarrassment to hit Highway 75. As of the end of this summer, a hundred-million dollars, a hundred kilometres.

We're upgrading Highway 75. That's the difference the NDP has made because we're committed to building Manitoba for everyone, every part of this province, including the member's constituency.

Antipsychotic Drugs Prescriptions to Seniors

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, a Manitoba Centre for Health Policy study released in January shocked Manitobans with its report of skyrocketing use of antipsychotic drugs for seniors in personal care homes. When confronted with this issue, the minister said it was, and I quote: The decision about the prescribing of medication is between the doctor, patient and families.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans who came to share their experiences with elder care at our forum last week said that this is not at all what's happened. Indeed, there is a pattern of use of these drugs being prescribed without patient or family consent.

In January, I demanded an end to this horrible practice, and I ask the minister now: When is she going to do her job and protect seniors?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and, of course, protecting our seniors and our loved ones, it's everybody's job, and what I can tell the member, of course, the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy report on drugs and on prescribing was also a report about policy and how policy can drive the prescribing practices of doctors.

And, in fact, the bulk of the report commends this government for the directives and policies that have been put on—in place, moving certain drugs to part 3, for example. I believe the member well knows that in Manitoba we have a no-restraint policy, pharmacological and physical restraint in personal care homes, and when decisions are made concerning that kind of process, it's done in consultation.

* (14:20)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the report also talked about Health Canada policy, and let me quote from the 2005 Health Canada report: Health Canada is advising Canadians that treatment with antipsychotic medication for behavioural disorders in elderly patients is associated with an increased risk for all-cause mortality. End of quote.

The report goes on to say that, save for Risperidone, these medications are not approved for use in elderly patients.

Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that these drugs are causing falls in personal care homes. The minister knows that these drugs can kill senior citizens.

I ask the minister: When is she going to do her job and stop the prescribing of these risky drugs without patient or family consent?

Ms. Oswald: And, again, I would reiterate what I said before, and that is that these decisions for individual patient needs are done through assessment and diagnosis with trained doctors—geriatric specialists often—to deal with the complexities of the individual patient, and while we do have a policy in place that is for little or no restraint wherever possible, pharmacological and physical, there are situations in consultation with family where some drugs may be appropriate for some situations.

This has to be monitored very carefully in an ongoing way. We know that there are initiatives in place to improve prescribing practices through policy and also through staff. Nurse practitioners on-site in two Winnipeg PCHs have seen a dramatic decline in these kinds of drugs, and we would like to see that continue.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, at a speech earlier this year, the minister described herself as the mother of Canadian health care. I wonder how a self-described mother of health care would feel if she knew that her government allowed the prescription of these dangerous drugs on her own mother without consent.

I wonder how a self-described mother of health care would feel knowing that these drugs cause falls, strokes and death in seniors being prescribed without family consent under her purview.

And, finally, I wonder when a strategy for our rapidly aging population is going to be implemented, and I ask: Will the self-described mother of health care do her job and protect seniors in Manitoba?

Ms. Oswald: Speaking of people spending too much time on the front lawn, I would say, Mr. Speaker, that there's a lot of work being done in terms of dealing with prescribing practices, whether this is through our committee in consultation with the College of Physicians and Surgeons to look over physicians' prescribing practices. This would be one way that we can deal with that.

The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy gave us some very good advice on how policy can influence prescribing. Certainly we know the relationship between doctors and patients and families in dealing with issues of restraint are very, very important, Mr. Speaker, and every day this member can get up in this House and take his shots at me, as is his will, but I would respectfully ask that he leave my dearly departed mother out of it because he's not worthy.

Child-Care Initiatives Funded Spaces Increase

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs.

Manitoba families need access to quality child care. Can the minister please inform the House on our government's most recent investments to improve child care for all Manitobans?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Mr. Speaker, in 2008, in April of that year, we announced a five-year strategy called Family Choices for Manitoba families' access to child care in this province, and we had to make some difficult decisions. We wanted to put in place a target in terms of spaces and centres, and we decided that we could push the envelope and commit to funding 6,500 more child-care spaces in Manitoba by 2013.

I'm pleased that as a result of an announcement made by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) this morning, we have, in fact, achieved 5,600 funded spaces for Manitoba families. And, in fact, we've increased the number of child-funded child-care spaces in Manitoba by 80 per cent since coming into office.

But more problematic, in April of 2008, was to determine how many new child-care centres we could deliver. We said 35; today we are at 54, Mr. Speaker.

Personal Care Home (Teulon) Project Status

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I rise today about the seniors in my area in regards to personal care homes in Teulon. We've submitted resolutions from the RM of Rockwood, the RM of Armstrong, RM of Rosser, RM of Woodlands, the Town of Stonewall, the Town of Teulon.

Many of our seniors are being relocated in other parts of the province, having to leave their family and friends behind. When can we announce—the Province announce the upgrades for the personal care home in the Teulon area?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question.

I'm pleased to inform the member that in addition to the capital upgrades and rebuilding that we've done in over a hundred facilities across Manitoba, I was pleased to be with our Premier (Mr. Selinger) to recently announce a \$216-million plan for long-term care.

Not only intended to add to our capacity of personal care homes across the province—and, certainly, we'll be working with our regional health authorities as they prioritize their capital needs for that matter—we'll also be augmenting home care, Mr. Speaker, adding in a subsidy for supported housing and bringing a brand-new program regarding rehabilitation to get our seniors back home with their

families from emergency rooms as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Order. When the Speaker is standing, members should be in their seats.

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

Everybody has it?

Following the daily prayer on April 15th of 2011, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mrs. Taillieu) rose on a matter of privilege to contend that comments made by the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) and the honourable First Minister concerning the projected costs for building Bipole III were at odds with information from Manitoba Hydro and were deliberately misleading. At the conclusion of her remarks, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader moved THAT this House find the government in contempt and that the Minister of Finance and the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro and the Premier of Manitoba be censured for first withholding information, then providing contradictory information and deliberately attempting to mislead this House by maintaining the cost of Bipole III was \$2.2 billion for at least 18 months even though they were aware of contradictory evidence about the true and escalating cost of Bipole III, and as recently as yesterday continued to bring conflicting information to this House.

The honourable Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) and the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) offered contributions to the Chair.

I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities and I thank all honourable members for their advice to the Chair on this issue.

* (14:30)

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity, and second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privilege of the House had been breached, in order to warrant putting the matter to the House.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mrs. Taillieu) asserted that she was raising the issue at the earliest available opportunity, and I accept the word of the honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

Regarding the second condition, Manitoba precedents and the procedural authorities provide guidance on the issue of deliberately misleading the House, as this type of issue has been raised many times in this House. The ruling of previous Manitoba Speakers have been very clear and consistent. Speakers Walding, Phillips, Rocan and Dacquay have all ruled that in order to find allegations of deliberately—of deliberate misleading the House as prima facie means proving that the member purposely intended to mislead the House by making statements with the knowledge that these statements would mislead. Therefore, a burden of proof exists that goes beyond speculation, conjecture, but involves providing absolute proof, including a statement of intent by the member involved, that the stated goal is to intentionally mislead the House, as it is possible members may inadvertently mislead the House by unknowingly putting incorrect information on the record.

As I advised the House on April 16th of 2007, providing information that may show the facts are at variance is not the same as providing proof of intent to mislead. Speaker Dacquay also ruled that without a member admitting in the House that he or she had the stated goal of misleading the House when putting remarks on the record, it is virtually impossible to prove that a member had deliberately intended to mislead the House.

Joseph Maingot advises on page 223 of the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* that a dispute between two members about questions of facts said in debate does not constitute a valid question of privilege because it is a matter of debate. He goes on to state, on page 241 of the same edition, that to allege that a member has misled the House is a matter of order rather than privilege, and to allege that a member has deliberately misled the House is also a matter of order. However, deliberately misleading statements may be treated as contempt.

In raising the matter of privilege, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader made reference to a February 1st, 2002, ruling by House of Commons speaker—Speaker Milliken, where it was referenced that the House was left with two versions of events and, in order to clear the air, the Speaker allowed the

motion to refer the matter to committee to be brought forward.

It is worth noting that when a Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs reported its findings in that case to the House in its 50th report, the committee provided important commentary on the issue of misleading the House. The committee noted that the minister in question, Mr. Eggleton, had made a mistake, but that it had been done without any intent to confuse or to mislead. The committee reiterated that, when it is alleged that a member is in contempt for deliberately misleading the House, the statement must be, in fact, have been misleading and it must be established what the member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made, that it was incorrect and that in making the statement the member intended to mislead the House.

The committee went on to state: Intent is always a difficult element to establish in the absence of an admission or a confession. It is necessary to carefully review the context surrounding the incident involved, and to attempt to draw inferences based on the nature of the circumstances. Any findings must, however, be grounded in facts and to have an evidentiary basis. Parliamentary committees charged with examining questions of privilege must exercise caution and act responsibly in drawing conclusions. They must guard against allowing partisanship to colour their judgment. The power to punish for contempt must not be exercised lightly; in the words of Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand: it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made that it was incorrect and in making it the Member intended to mislead the House.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader also quoted from the recent March 9th, 2011 ruling by Speaker Milliken regarding comments made by the Minister of International Cooperation by citing the words: Indeed, these Members have argued that the material available shows that contradictory information has been provided. As a result they argue, this demonstrates that the Minister has deliberately misled the House and as such, a prima facie case of privilege exists. End quote.

Her quoting of the words of the ruling are technically correct, but I would like to advise the honourable Official Opposition House Leader that what she was citing was in the earlier section of the ruling, where Speaker Milliken was reiterating all the

various arguments put on the record by members offering contributions to the Chair, particularly the comments of the member for Scarborough-Guildwood. She was not citing a portion of the ruling where Speaker Milliken was giving his findings to the House on the issue of whether a prima facie case exists. I would note for the record that further on in his ruling, Speaker Milliken did state that he found there was sufficient doubt and confusion in that particular case to warrant a finding of prima facie privilege. However, in that situation, Minister Oda did admit she gave incorrect information to Parliament.

I would note, in the current case raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mrs. Taillieu), there has been no statements provided or made by the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) or by the honourable First Minister to indicate a purposeful intent to mislead the house. Nor am I satisfied there is sufficient doubt and confusion to justify finding a prima facie case of privilege or that an action of contempt occurred.

Therefore, I would rule there is no prima facie case of privilege. I would note that it is possible for incorrect information to be put on the record, and would therefore encourage all members, if they inadvertently provide incorrect information, to advise the House accordingly, and to correct the error as soon as possible, as it is important for members in the House to be apprised of factually correct information.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

P.W. Enns Business Awards

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, on April the 14th, 2011, the Winkler and District Chamber hosted the P.W. Enns Business Awards and Gala Event that acknowledged the excellence of three businesses and their leaders. Hi-Way Groceteria Limited, Pfahl's Drugs Limited and Convey-All Industries were awarded for their business success and contributions to the community.

John Neufeld received a business award—rather a Business Achievement Award in the category of less than 10 employees. The Hi-Way Groceteria Limited is a popular place to shop for groceries and fuel in Winkler because of their superior customer service. The dedication of Mr. Neufeld, his daughter, Calleen, and their team of five full-time employees and up to 15 part-time employees make Hi-Way a very welcoming place. In

addition, Hi-Way has continuously grown since opening to include services for Greyhound, Purolator, FedEx, UPS, Western Union and U-Haul.

* (14:40)

Sig Pfahl and the employees at Pfahl's Drugs Limited have provided excellent customer service for the past 24 years. Mr. Pfahl received the Business Achievement Award in the category of ten or more employees. Starting with six employees in 1987, Mr. Pfahl has expanded to two stores with over 20 employees. Pfahl's Drugs has sponsored a summer barbecue in support of CancerCare for the past several years, and Mr. Pfahl has also personally given back to the community as a member of the fire-Winkler Fire Department and his church's Elder Board.

Bob Toews and Convey-All Industries was the recipient of the Business Excellence Award. Convey-All Industries is one of North America's industry leaders in the custom manufacturing of conveyor systems for farm and industrial uses. Convey-All was the first Canadian company to manufacture agriculture tube conveyors and has continued to revolutionize the industry with their new commercial seed tender. Convey-All owns and operates several local companies and has diversified into oil and gas products and outdoor wood furnaces. A supporter of community development and employer of just under 200, Convey-All has made an exceptional contribution to business and economic growth in Winkler and the surrounding area.

The Lieutenant-Governor, His Honour Philip S. Lee, headed a long list of distinguished guests who attended the awards and gala event. All of the attendees thoroughly enjoyed the guest speaker, Robert Herjavec of the Herjavec Group and *Dragon's Den* fame, who spoke about the importance of considering failure as the opening of new paths and new opportunities on the road to success in business.

Mr. Speaker, an important message that is relevant to all people in all walks of life. Thank you.

Interlake Firefighters' Events

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, this past March I had the opportunity to spend some time with firefighters from the Interlake. The first event was the gala event of the year in Arborg, the Firefighters Ball, attended by nearly 300 people. This annual event gives residents throughout the Interlake the chance to come together to support the local

firefighters and, just like previous years, the event was a huge success.

The next occasion was the completion of the Arborg Bifrost Fire Emergency Training Site Enhancement project. The Province's \$15,000 investment from the Community Places program ensures that the Arborg fire hall is now better able to accommodate firefighter training and community events. This commitment to firefighter training in the Interlake will surely help to improve the safety of residents in Arborg and its surrounding communities.

The Community Places program investment is just the latest example of how our province continues to be a leader in supporting our firefighters. Manitoba also leads the way by being the only jurisdiction in Canada to provide free training to firefighters throughout the province through our office of the Fire Commissioner.

Our government was also the first in the country to pass presumptive cancer coverage to all firefighters in 2002. Originally, five cancers were included under the legislation. However, we have since ensured that volunteer firefighters are also covered. We have also added five more cancers to the original list. Currently, legislation is pending and, if passed, would add another four to the list, including breast cancer. This government's leadership ultimately paved the way for seven more jurisdictions throughout Canada to introduce their own presumptive cancer coverage, thereby improving the lives of countless firefighters throughout the country.

These efforts and many more have made Manitoba a national leader when it comes to taking care of firefighters. These measures are but some of the ways we can show them how much we appreciate their hard work and the sacrifices they make for each of us—for us, each and every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chabot Implements Company Ltd.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, on March the 2nd, the Canadian Association of Family Enterprise in Manitoba named Chabot Implements Company Limited the 2011 Manitoba Family Enterprise of the Year.

Chabot co-owners, Bernie and Gilles Chabot, will now represent Manitoba at the Canadian Family Enterprise of the Year Achievement Awards to take place on May 25th in Vancouver.

For over 75 years, Chabot Implements Company Limited has provided farmers in Manitoba with service of all types of farm equipment.

It all started at the Chabot farm in St. Eustache, Manitoba, and now three generations later, the company has expanded to Steinbach, Portage la Prairie and Neepawa.

Mr. Speaker, since 1983, the Canadian Association of Family Enterprise Manitoba Chapter has recognized significant achievements made by Canadian family enterprise.

They recognize that family businesses play a vital role in Manitoba's economy and are no less important to Canada's economy. In fact, Gilles Chabot said, the most important aspect of the award is that it recognizes the company's emphasis on family.

For the Family Enterprise of the Year Award, every nomination must meet eligibility requirements and undergo a rigorous judging process to become a finalist. Chabot Implements beat out Landau Ford Lincoln Sales Limited and the Dufresne company Group TDG for this—let me say that again, the Dufresne Group TDG for this year's award.

I want to wish all the best to Chabot Implements as they go forward to represent Manitoba at the National Family Enterprise of the Year competition. I'd like to honour the family-owned and -operated business of Chabot Implements Company today for such a wonderful achievement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Robert Bud Oliver

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): I'd like, today, to recognize the contributions of Robert Bud Oliver, who was recently named the Selkirk Citizen of the Year by the Selkirk and District Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Oliver is well known to the city, as he's been active in the community for many, many years. He was first elected to city council in 1979 and served as mayor of Selkirk for 19 years. On top of his six-year stint as mayor, Bud has been also involved in many other projects in the community. He's a lifetime—or long-time member of the Selkirk Kinsmen Club and has been active on a variety of boards in many capacities. This includes having served as the president of the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities and a long-time member of the Red River Basin Commission; he still represents Selkirk

on the commission today. Presently, Bud is the chair of the board of the Selkirk Community Renewal Corporation and serves as treasurer on Selkirk's Gordon Howard Senior Centre. Bud has been recognized as an honorary life member of the Manitoba association of municipalities for the work he's done on behalf of Manitobans over the years.

Bud's dedication and commitment to the community are very evident. From my first-hand experience working with Bud over the year, I can say that he's regarded as a hard-working and well-respected member of the community.

I want to thank you for your service to the community, and congratulations on this well-deserved award. Well done, Bud.

Water Management Plans

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the present NDP government has been in power for almost 12 years, and during this period there has sadly been insufficient attention to putting in place and implementing an adequate strategy for improving water management in our province.

There are numerous examples that I could cite. These include the multi-year flooding of farmland in the Interlake region of Manitoba in the area around Arborg and Fisher Branch, which I have visited on a number of times over the last several years. The losses to farmers have been very large.

It has been known for many years that improved water management, a combination of water retention and drainage, was and is badly needed, and yet all too little has been done by this government.

In some parts of Manitoba, the failure of the provincial government to ensure provincial drains are cleaned out has meant that farmers have suffered grievous losses. In many areas of Manitoba, damage to culverts and to road infrastructure has been much more severe than it should have been had the government implemented an adequate water management strategy.

For years, I have been talking about the need to implement an adequate water management strategy for our province, and yet it hasn't been done. As an example, I've advocated strongly for extensive replication of the approach used in the South Tobacco Creek area, but it hasn't been done. The approach at South Tobacco Creek has reduced peak flows by 25 per cent, reduced farmland flooding by 75 per cent and drastically reduced infrastructure

damage, and yet the government has done virtually nothing in this respect.

I believe some of the large extent of municipal infrastructure damage this year could indeed have been reduced by effective water management, and it's time, clearly, that we have much better water management in this province than we've had recently.

House Business

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you would canvass the House to see if there is unanimous consent to transfer the sponsorship of Bill 210, The Seniors' Rights Act, from the name of the former member from Lac du Bonnet to the name of the member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement of the House to transfer the sponsorship of Bill 210, The Seniors' Rights Act, from the name of the former member for Lac du Bonnet to the member for Minnedosa? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: On House business?

Ms. Howard: Yes, on House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, would you please canvass the House to see if there's unanimous consent to transfer sponsorship of Bill 204, The Consumer Rights Day Act, from the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby) to the member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun).

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement of the House to transfer sponsorship of Bill 204, The Consumer Rights Day Act, from the Minister of Advanced Education to the member for Rossmere? *[Agreed]*

* (14:50)

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS BUDGET DEBATE (Seventh Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of

Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and it's standing in the name of the honourable member for Tuxedo who has 28 minutes remaining.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): It is, indeed, a privilege to rise today to speak to the budget amendment motion, as brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition. And I also had the privilege of seconding the motion, Mr. Speaker, so it's an honour today to stand in favour of the motion brought forward by my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to finally see a number of measures and initiatives be part of this budget, measures that we on this side of the House have been calling for, for many years now.

It is, however, Mr. Speaker, unfortunate that it took so many years to see some of these good issues come forward to the forefront in what happens to be an election year. So we question why they waited so long, but we know that it is an election year and, of course, the NDP is more concerned about winning the next election than they are about doing what's right for Manitoba. So we have an issue with that.

We've been calling on this government to increase police services for years now. On the eve of an election, they finally listened, Mr. Speaker. More police is a start to cracking down on violent crime and making our communities safer. And, again, this is something I know our—my colleague from Steinbach has been calling on this, the Leader of the Opposition and other members on this side of the House have been calling on this for many years.

But we're not impressed that the NDP sat on more than \$14 million from the federal government for policing. They had this money for three years and they just now announced how they're going to allocate it. For three years we could've had 30 more police officers on the street preventing and solving crimes, keeping people safe. But, instead, this government sat on the money until right before a provincial election. Mr. Speaker, they're desperate to buy votes, that much is very clear to members on this side of the House and, I believe, to all Manitobans.

Universities have been asking for a long-term funding plan for a number of years, and we're pleased to see the government has finally listened to

them, Mr. Speaker. We're waiting to see if colleges in the province will be the beneficiaries of the same plan.

Students, too, have said they'd like predictability in tuition fees, something we hope they receive from this budget. We need to hear still from the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby) about whether this will apply to each faculty. So we look forward to hearing from him—from her, further on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, after years of rising concerns with the NDP government about crowded schools and, as well, as about some of the deteriorating educational institutions in our province, we are pleased that they have finally listened to us and have reserved a part of the budget for schools. In particular, I know the residents of Sage Creek were pleased to finally learn they will have a school in the next few years. That is, of course, if the NDP follows through on their promises. This was yet another example of a development in this province without planning.

Other areas of Winnipeg are still waiting for news about whether a school will be built in their neighbourhood. And I can speak for my area, in southwest Winnipeg, that certainly—the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) has asked repeatedly for—on behalf of his constituents, when they will have a chance to see a new school in the Fort Whyte area.

Mr. Speaker, we've long targeted the ballooning health-care bureaucracy as an issue this government should take seriously. The proof will be in whether they instruct the WRHA to be transparent about administrative costs, instead of burying them in different parts of the budget. If the government were serious about getting the ballooning health-care bureaucracy under control, and—they would require the WRHE to be—the WRHA to be transparent about its admin costs, like all the other RHAs.

Mr. Speaker, we've long known that the ER at Grace Hospital was being worked beyond capacity. It's been a concern for years, and we have brought this to the attention of the government, and we're glad to see that finally the government is going to improve it. But we question the timing on the eve of a provincial election. Again, they've had 11 years to carry forward some of these promises and they have refused to do it, and now, in a desperate attempt to win over the public in Manitoba on the eve of an election, they are coming forward with this announcement.

Water management problems exact a considerable economic toll in individuals, communities and the larger provincial economy. With Budget 2011-12 the government has formally acknowledged that there is still more work to be done on the water management file, and we definitely agree with this, Mr. Speaker. The Progressive Conservatives have long touted the need for a comprehensive water management strategy in this province, and it is positive that the NDP government is finally listening to us on this very important matter. We hope—we can only hope that they actually plan to follow through with this plan and that it is not just another empty promise on behalf of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the budget contains additional support for drainage licensing. This is essential because there have been considerable backlogs in the processing of drainage licences under this government—hundreds of files, in fact. We strongly encourage the government to work on clearing this backlog as soon as possible because it is causing considerable difficulty for individuals and for local governments who need to move on drainage projects.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize the importance of added capital investments in water management, such as drainage, dams and control structures, and culvert replacement. This commitment is particularly timely in light of the excess moisture challenges of recent years.

Mr. Speaker, we also appreciate the government's recognition of the valuable work being done by conservation districts. They play a very critical role in managing matters like water on our landscape, and we support their ongoing efforts across the province.

Mr. Speaker, more child-care spaces and spaces for nursery school are always welcome, but I question whether or not there will be a net increase in these child-care spaces. This government has been known to be very long on announcements, long on sending out press releases, but very short on action, and so we hope that they actually do move forward with their promise in this area.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we are pleased to see the above measures to be a part of this budget, a number of issues still remain with this budget, which, should they remain unaddressed, will leave us unable to support it.

Mr. Speaker, one of the major issues we continue to see with this budget and this government is its continued support for routing the required Bipole III transmission line on the west side of the province. Manitoba Hydro had recommended building this new transmission line along the east side of Lake Winnipeg. This route is significantly shorter and thereby cheaper. It would save every Manitoba family of four \$11,748. I, for one, can think of many things I'd rather spend these \$11,748 on, instead of an unnecessary and wasteful detour. Choosing the east-side route over the west side would also allow us to achieve balanced budgets earlier.

If this government would agree to our motion and reverse the line routing, we would be able to return to a positive summary budget as early as 2013. We would also be able to offset the deficits that they have run over the last two years and the coming year by 2014. Another issue we see with this budget are the continued deficits that we see and the rising debt. As I mentioned earlier, building the bipole line will result in a smaller deficit for the Province.

Aside from this, the record of this NDP government on preventing and avoiding deficits has been abysmal, mostly because it is not a priority for this government. Since last year, their core deficit has gone up from \$451 million to 464. Deficits should be declining, not rising.

*(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, since the—furthermore, our debt has skyrocketed under this NDP government, and, since they came to office in 1999 after almost 12 years in government, the NDP has almost doubled the debt from \$13.4 billion to over \$25 billion. The rising debt is not sustainable in the long run and will cause substantial problems to our economy. Already now our debt-servicing costs exceed \$800 million. If debt servicing was a government department, it would be the fourth largest government department in our province.

Now, with the Governor of the Bank of Canada and economists and banks saying interest rates are on the rise, this will only get worse under this NDP government who continues to pile on more and more debt each year.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is the NDP doesn't have a revenue problem; they have a very serious spending problem. In the last five to six years, there was only one year where Manitoba did

not see growth in the economy, and apparently that constitutes a recession in this province.

Well, the fact of the matter is had they properly paid down the debt over the years, over the years of growth, Mr. Speaker, that one year where it was actually just flat—it wasn't even much of a decline in the economy—they would have been able to make up for this and they should have been able to make up for it. But, instead, the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) decided to jump and pounce on that opportunity to spend more and spend more—beyond their means, and it sends a very bad message to all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, a more balanced and responsible approach is vital for the growth and prosperity of our province, and we therefore urge this government to reduce its wasteful spending, to focus on protecting front-line services and to return to balanced budgets and a reduction of our debt.

Mr. Speaker, I seriously hope that this government will support this amendment to the budget of 2011, making it more balanced—making it a more balanced budget and a budget for all Manitobans, rather than just for this NDP government on the eve of an election.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge members opposite today to rise up and vote yes to saving thousands of dollars for Manitoba families. Thank you very much.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): What a privilege it is, once again, to be able to stand in the Manitoba Legislature and put some comments on the record that will, of course, be in support of this fabulous budget.

I would like to speak more on that in a moment, but before I begin, of course, I wanted to take this opportunity to offer my heartfelt thanks to the pages and the Clerks and the staff here in the Assembly, those in new posts, those in ongoing posts, and to you, Mr. Speaker, of course. Always a pleasure to see you so happy, that your handsome face is here again. We, of course, we're all witness to—*[interjection]* Well, one out of two isn't bad. We are, of course, all wishing you the best as you go forward on another journey in your life. You, of course, have been a great teacher and, indeed, a great example to all of us, and I'm glad that we'll be spending the coming weeks together, nonetheless.

Mr. Speaker, I always want to take this opportunity to say thank you to those with whom I work the most closely—those in—those staff members

in my constituency, Colleen and Sandra, who work so very hard every day to assist my constituents in Seine River with their questions, with challenges that they're having. They listen to their advice, and they do so in a very competent and compassionate manner. And I'm very, very grateful for the work that they do every day.

I'd also, Mr. Speaker, like to say thank you to the individuals that work in the front office here at the Manitoba Legislature in the office of the Minister of Health. They're extraordinary people. They're patient and kind and supportive. I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to Linda and Vivian and to Chris and to Alice, whose joke of the day is funny every day, and this is not a small thing in maintaining my health.

I want to, of course, acknowledge the hard-working people in the Department of Health who are so committed to the people of Manitoba and to making lives better, to keeping people healthy, and, indeed, when people are sick, to doing the best that they can to support them in what can sometimes be a very difficult journey.

I also want to acknowledge, although it would be impossible to do so in a way that would be better than the member for Lord Roberts (Ms. McGifford)—I'd like to say she was extraordinarily eloquent yesterday in her multitudinous tributes to people in this room and outside of this room. Her tribute to her family I found particularly moving and poetic, and woe be to the person that needs to speak after her. But I would make an attempt to say to my own family, to my husband, Sam, and to my son, Jack, thank you for the sacrifices that you make every day that allow me to come and fulfill this enormous privilege here at the Manitoba Legislature.

Lastly, I want to say thank you to the constituents of Seine River who have bestowed a great confidence on me. I take this very seriously and I work every day to earn their support and their trust. And I know that as we go forward to do some discussion on this budget that they will be very happy to hear, Mr. Speaker, that the things that concern them most in their everyday living, and in the building of their dreams, and in the struggles that they inevitably face, that this budget works very, very hard to address those things, and I'm excited to speak to them about the kinds of things that they're going to find in this budget.

What we know, of course, is that our Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) has spent hours and hours,

and days and weeks, and kilometres and kilometres consulting throughout Manitoba and listening to what really matters to the people of Manitoba, what matters to them in prosperous times, and what matters to them in times that are more challenging, and in economically difficult times. And I really commend her for that. I know that just in the Health portfolio alone that there are so many requests and so many ideas, and she listens to these ideas, every one, and also listens to ideas that come forward for every other department. And I really commend her ability to listen compassionately, to analyze, to synthesize. And I really commend her ability, in partnership with the team, of course, to come forward with such a tremendous budget in such a challenging time.

And we know that this budget is keeping us on track. It's keeping Manitoba on track and it's moving us forward, Mr. Speaker, and we know that we have a plan that is working. We've been called by *Maclean's* magazine the Manitoba miracle in terms of a number of indicators. And I really commend the work of the people in government, in the civil service that have worked so hard to develop this budget, and the people of Manitoba that work so hard every day to drive our economy and to build our economy, and we know that the approach that we have taken is a balanced approach. We know that this is a part of a plan that will help us come back into balance without sacrificing those things that mean so much to families like the ones in Seine River, the education of their children, the health of their parents, the safety of their family members.

We've seen steady growth, which is something that should be acknowledged and, sometimes, in the context of difficult economic times, can be forgotten, and we also have seen very, very positive results. We've seen outcomes, not just the discussion of ideas, Mr. Speaker, but, indeed, outcomes on those ideas.

We also know that the work that has been done over the last—well, certainly, over the last decade, but over the last couple of years has been focused on investing to keep Manitoba's economy growing while strengthening our front-lines services all the while. We know that there are some that have suggested that—dramatic cuts to come back into balance. In fact, there were even some people, not many, that suggested we should come back into balance in one year, and we did reject that suggestion, Mr. Speaker. We know that this would have had devastating, devastating impacts on our front-line services.

* (15:10)

Jobs are being created, the population is growing and, all the while, Manitoba continues to be a very affordable place to live, to work and to raise your family. And the people in the constituency of Seine River know that and, indeed, are grateful for that.

I had the privilege this morning of speaking with a worker in the constituency of Seine River, an early childhood educator, a francophone woman, lovely person working with young children who had come to Manitoba from Québec. And she was—well, she couldn't stop saying enough about how terrific it was to be in Manitoba. She embraced the fact, of course, that Manitoba was a place that embraced French language. She was delighted, of course, that our Premier (Mr. Selinger) is very heavily focused on French language services. And she really did say that, although, you know, leaving Québec City, a beautiful place in its own right, was difficult for her to do when her husband got a job in Manitoba, that she, indeed, has never regretted their decision to move and was really delighted to be a member of a thriving province and a lively community.

We know that this budget shows that we are building on our province's success by focusing, as I've said, on the things that families care about: putting money back into the pockets of Manitobans with tax cuts and credits for things like children's activities, and for seniors, and for those individuals that are caring for loved ones in home settings. Keeping university and college education affordable and of the highest quality is a subject that my constituents care very deeply about.

Major investments in infrastructure, the roads, the bridges and more money for community centres is a topic that is often talked about in the community of Seine River. And we know that as we go forward with investments from Budget 2011 that we are going to be able to continue to push forward in those kinds of developments. New schools, gyms, child-care centres—as evidenced by a very important announcement today—building the capacity in our daycares, investing in our early childhood educators, making sure that our children have the best possible start. Mr. Speaker, these are investments from which we have never retreated as a government during—even during more challenging times, and I'm so pleased that this is evident again in this budget.

We know that the people who live in Seine River are—and, indeed, all across Manitoba, care very deeply about ensuring that they are safe, and

investing in police and more prosecutors is something that the people of Seine River will be very, very happy to hear about. But always with a balanced approach, which is what this budget takes, Mr. Speaker, being, of course, tough on crime, as it is said, but tough on the causes of crime. And working so hard to invest in providing alternative choices for our young people is something that we always must speak of, in my view, when we're talking about issues of justice.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it would be natural, I think, given my role as Minister of Health, that I would spend a little bit of extra time in talking about the—what this budget means specifically for health care and how important I believe this is for Manitobans.

We're going to continue to make significant investments in our health-care system. We know that over the last decade there have been very many important investments. We inherited a health-care system that was crumbling. We know that we had very serious net losses of health-care professionals. We know that our medical school spaces had been cut, and we've continued to invest to rebuild that system. It's not work, in my view, that ever can be viewed as finished. It's one on which we must continue to invest, and that's why I'm so pleased that this budget invests so much in moving us forward with our plan to ensure that all Manitobans who want access to a family physician shall, indeed, have it. And we set ourselves an ambitious target of doing so by 2015. Stats Canada tells us that roughly 85 per cent of Manitobans now have access to a family physician, but that remaining 15 per cent, most definitely in the majority of cases, are in harder to reach areas, in rural communities, in remote communities. And this budget is going to help us use all the strategies that we can bring to bear, to offer incentives to doctors to go to these remote communities, to offer a primary care network approach where we can share responsibilities among nurse practitioners, among other allied health professionals. And we know that this is a very, very important step in the preventative side of health, Mr. Speaker, that the chances of you being a healthier person increase exponentially when you have access to good primary care.

This budget will, of course, further support our plan to fully fund medical school, Mr. Speaker, for students who agree to work in these underserved communities. We've had suggestions from people across Manitoba on the subject of free medical

school, and we looked at it very carefully, examined how it might be done and how we could achieve the best outcomes, and we believe that we have a program that will do just that.

Continuing to invest in more home care, personal care home beds, and broadening our long-term care strategy is a critically important point in developing our health-care system. We know, of course, we saw a very important report come from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy. It was a report that we sought and that gave some very clear projections about Manitoba population, about some of the nature of the kinds of care that we would need to provide for our seniors and our elders.

And we have committed to invest across the spectrum, as I said earlier today, Mr. Speaker, more capital infrastructure for developing personal care home beds and developing programs within those personal care home environments that will be appropriate for all patients, for all residents, some of whom may require more intensive support as a result of developing issues with dementia or Alzheimer's or other issues concerning challenging behaviours. We want people to be safe in these environments and we're prepared to invest to do so.

But, in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we also want to continue to invest in our home care program. Manitoba, of course, was a leader in the nation in introducing a home care program. It is a jewel in Manitoba. And while there are always areas where we can be improving—additional recruitment, of course, of professionals, by changing the formula for hours of direct care allotted to a family—we're going to be able to assist families and individuals who want to stay at home and can stay at home to, indeed, live at home in familiar surroundings where they want to be longer than they currently can, and we believe this will have a significant effect.

We also believe, Mr. Speaker, that bringing more services to rural communities—including things like dialysis in Russell, Peguis and Berens River, bringing cataract surgery to Swan River, radiation therapy to Brandon—these kinds of investments mean a great deal to Manitobans in taking away what was described to me by one patient, one marvellous woman, indeed, who described those hours as windshield time. And by taking that time away while she, I think, indeed, had battled cancer three separate times and had to travel to Winnipeg for radiation therapy from Westman, she said that the investment in the radiation therapy in Brandon would make all

the difference for someone like her and those that will follow her, and I'm so pleased that our investments over time have allowed us to do that.

*(15:20)

More funding into the health system to continue to work to reduce wait times is something that's important to all Manitobans. We have made significant progress, and I would signal, Mr. Speaker, that that did have quite a lot to do with the partnership that we had with the federal government. I think sometimes people think that we can become, you know, ideologically entrenched and not, you know, offer gratitude where gratitude is due, and what I think that the federal investment in wait times specifically can show all Canadians is when there is an additional specific and focused investment on a particular issue, we can get real results, and I commend the federal government for their investment. In fact, we would welcome a renewed focus on working to innovate and bring down wait times, but this is something that we are absolutely committed to do regardless of that.

We, of course, see in Budget 2011 a focus on even more improvement in maternal care. We'll be opening a new birth centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba's first; a new maternity ward is developing at St. Boniface; and construction on the new women's hospital will be happening imminently.

Improving emergency care is something that one can never spend enough time talking about. It's indeed on the national agenda. You cannot read the newspaper in any jurisdiction in this nation without a discussion about emergency room processes and an effort to improve. We're going to provide more funding for paramedics, new ambulance stations, pharmacists who are busy as ERs, building a new ER in Steinbach, a new ER in Dauphin and, of course, Grace Hospital, Mr. Speaker.

I heard a moment ago a member on the opposite side make mention of the Grace Hospital and perhaps question the motives of our building. I think that individual neglected to notice that all emergency rooms in Winnipeg have been renovated or rebuilt. Grace Hospital was next on the list, and we are proceeding with that in addition to an Access Centre in St. James, because we know that the more we learn about emergency care, the more we all can realize that when individuals have access to primary care, to quick care clinics, they don't need to go to emergency room for—emergency rooms for minor things, which is why building these structures

concurrently will be especially good for west Winnipeg.

It's also important, I think, to continue to work to make health care even more affordable. We know that there's a national conversation, if you will, about the sustainability of health-care funding. I think sometimes some people engage in that dialogue, you know, as code for holus-bolus privatization. And we know that we believe that we have to continue to innovate and reinvest and do what we can to lift financial burdens off of Manitobans wherever we can: covering the cost of soft, foldable lenses for cataract surgery; covering pediatric insulin pumps; working to invest in new programs like cochlear implant surgery; and working to keep Pharmacare deductible increases low by continuing to tie them to the rate of inflation. I think that's .8 this—as an increase this year. So we're going to continue to work on that side of the equation to make sure that we can keep that publicly required expenditure, or fees that have existed in the past, as low as possible and indeed eliminate them wherever possible.

We know that Manitobans also expect governments to focus on eliminating waste and working on what might be perceived as inefficient processes within our systems, and we take that very seriously because we want our investments to go to front-line care. We, of course, have taken a number of steps since 1999 to reduce issues of administrative spending. We cut the number of RHAs, Mr. Speaker, from 13 to 11. We, of course, have employed strategies like bulk buying, better procurement policies, lean management and other techniques to help make systems more efficient without compromising compassionate care for our patients.

Last year, in fact, we know that these steps saved somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$50 million, Mr. Speaker, which we reinvested right into front-line care. The Canadian Institute for Health Information, in fact, has acknowledged that Manitoba has the third lowest hospital administrative costs in Canada and the third-most cost effective in-patient hospital care.

We know, and it is publicly known, that the WRHA corporate spending is now, indeed, below 3 per cent. This session, we've signalled that we will introduce legislation to cap corporate spending. By the way, I heard a member, earlier, say that these are costs that are hidden from the public. In actual fact, these costs are printed in the public annual reports. In

print or online, I, you know, encourage members to seek that information. That information was made—or the publication of that information for RHAs was made mandatory in the aftermath of the external review of RHAs, which had some very constructive suggestions in it.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know members opposite will, perhaps, you know, make an inquiry as to whether or not we might support an amendment that they have raised.

An Honourable Member: Hear, hear.

Ms. Oswald: Not so fast. Because when we read that amendment, Mr. Speaker, it's—we see very clearly language in it that is hauntingly familiar. We know, certainly from a health context, when we see phrases like spending review process, a couple of words leap to mind—well, one name—a couple of words, and that's Connie Curran.

And it makes us all just a little anxious and perhaps we know that, in fact, there's a plan being articulated. Groundhog Day, Mr. Speaker. We see that that's exactly where they would take us, once again, to a time when a spending review process, a reign of terror by Connie Curran, was the—resulted in fewer nurses. A thousand of them fired outright, and another 500 driven out of the—573, technically—driven out of the province. We saw home care user fees, experiments with privatization, attempts to cut front-line services, that family count; all of these things were contemplated with reckless abandon. We also saw fewer medical school spaces because, apparently, the \$4-million worth of analysis done then came to the conclusion that doctors are expensive. And so, let's cut them, they thought.

We saw, of course, that there were suggestions to not build more health capital, not build new emergency rooms at Bethesda but, indeed, freeze all health capital spending, resulting, of course, in crumbling health facilities and fruit flies buzzing around the Health Sciences Centre operating rooms.

Mr. Speaker, we saw, during that time, attitudes concerning emergency medicine, attitudes concerning relationships with—working with nurses, attitudes concerning building relationships with doctors that were really, really destructive. And so, I say to the members opposite that spending review process is something that we need to really look closely at, again and again. And I think Manitobans have a right to be suspicious of such language.

I've great concerns about the future of the province in the hands of our opposition and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), who we know has said in the past that he didn't really want to put much emphasis on health care. Given the opportunity to retract or even clarify that statement, he neglected to do that.

We've heard a few times, in this House, mention being made of the fact that an amendment was brought forward last year to cut a half a billion dollars out of the budget. You may have heard that a couple of times; I'm not sure. But in actual fact, what worries me more, Mr. Speaker, is what the Leader of the Opposition said in 2008, when he said that health-care spending should increase at the rate of economic growth. And, you know, we know that members of the Business Council reject this analysis.

* (15:30)

And what would this have meant if we had stuck to that particular notion? We know that it would have resulted in, roughly, \$750 million coming out of the budget. That's way worse than the, you know, flash-in-the-pan suggestion last year for half a billion dollars, and it's just offside with what Manitoba families believe we need to do with Manitoba—Manitobans and their health care.

As I said, the Business Council doesn't advocate that. The Conservative Party of Canada—Stephen Harper doesn't think that you should balance in one year to the detriment of front-line services. A little bit of arithmetic roughly would tell us that a \$756-million cut to this year's health budget, that's not a thousand nurses; that's 9,400 nurses wiped out of the system. It's not driving doctors year after year after year out of the system; it's 2,000—over 2,000. And so I say respectfully to members opposite when they raise some suggestions about amendments and they use language like spending review process, that, yes, I do have grave concerns. And it becomes a question of trust, Mr. Speaker. It becomes a serious question of trust.

How do we go forward, Mr. Speaker, in investing in health care and investing in families, investing in our education system, investing in early childhood learning with short-sighted, reckless approaches that nobody else in Canada would support, or with a balanced approach that invests in front-line services, that listens to what families want, that continues to make sure that Manitoba moves forward? And I can tell you it's not going to be a great mystery as to how I'm going to vote. I'm going

to vote for the budget presented from this side of the House. Thank you very much.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, this budget is so self-evidently positive that I really don't need to talk about it or even to the amendment attached thereunto.

I wasn't going to speak at all, Mr. Speaker, but then I heard the member for Burrows speak the other day, and he inspired me when I heard words and phrases such as speaking truth to power and the social gospel of Tommy Douglas. And being an old Saskatchewan boy from way back, I just had to get up and say a few words.

I will be riding into the sunset, the political sunset on October the 4th or the 5th, I guess, and others will join me—the member from Burrows obviously, the member for Lord Roberts, St. Norbert and Point Douglas, our praiseworthy Speaker, who has done, by the way, wonderful things. I like his outreach programs, the innovative things he does working with the interns and so on. And I particularly enjoy being with him in the north, when we travel in the north and we talk to young people. And he is indeed a living example of what we all should be.

The children up there worship him because they've never heard more powerful words, particularly when he deals with suicide prevention, when he talks about his own nephew dying. I mean, those words are incredibly powerful, and I don't know if he realizes the impact—the positive impact he's had on our northern youth, and on myself. So I want to thank Mr. Speaker.

Other honourable members are leaving as well, riding into the sunset. The member from Pembina, the member from Brandon West, the member for Portage la Prairie, the member for Russell. I wish them all well on their retirement or career change. I should also mention the member for Lac du Bonnet, by the way, who has already ridden ahead of us into the sunset; he's at least two or three trails ahead of us.

Mr. Speaker, we all come here to this weird and wonderful place, stuffed to the rafters with egos and ideologies, full of humour and heckling, sometimes serious debate and often not. A friend phoned me the other day and asked me, when does kindergarten start for you guys? And I was a little puzzled by that;

I know what he meant though. He meant, when does the Legislature start. It wasn't a very flattering way to ask the question, I guess, but decorum is often lacking in question period, and that's unfortunate because it's only part of the story. Serious work does get done here, but the cameras don't record that.

Mr. Speaker, we all have a story to tell here, and I'd like to tell mine. I have lived and continue to live in three different worlds, but they overlap. That is Europe, my first home, in Canada and finally northern Manitoba, which really is a different world. I was born in the early—in early 1942 in Sleik-Echt, the province of Limburg, which is the southernmost province of Netherland—of the Netherlands. The capital of that place is Maastricht; I was born maybe 20 kilometres north of Maastricht. We spoke our own language. We do not considered ourselves Dutch or Hollanders; we speak a low German dialect and we're intensely proud of our language, and I'm intensely proud of that culture and language.

In my own village, our traditions go back to someone called Pepin the Great, who was the grandfather of Charlemagne. Can you believe that? And, in fact, there's still feuds about the land left by Pepin the Great in our village—the grandfather of Charlemagne who ruled in the year 800 AD. He was there, supposedly, to stop the Viking raiders that were coming north. He wasn't very successful, Mr. Speaker, because my name is Jennissen, and so, obviously, some Viking warrior left his name in our part of the world. I like to think of myself as a Viking and you can—I probably don't have to mention it. You can see it by looking at me: I'm tall and blond and so on. But, seriously, although I'm short, I do consider the member from Gimli my Viking blood brother.

My very earliest memories of Europe, Mr. Speaker, are memories of war, of fear and of pain, not the memories you want to give children. After war we played with the material lying around. I saw many casualties. Many of my friends were hurt; some of them were killed. I'll never forget, it'll always haunt me, when my cousin, a baby, was shot—her leg was shot by a sniper, almost blew the leg off. To this day I cannot remember how—why, in broad daylight—I cannot believe why, in broad daylight, a sniper—an English sniper, by the way—would shoot at a woman carrying a baby. I guess those clever German Nazis could just disguise themselves. I just can't understand it; maybe it was just some young kid who was trigger happy.

But I tell you, my views on war are different than most people's, because I lived that part of it at the end of the war. I've hated war with a visual—absolute visceral feeling. I can't even describe it, Mr. Speaker, and I admire those people who have the courage of their conviction, the Anabaptists and the Mennonites, their faith traditions who believe in pacifism, because war is wrong. It's always wrong.

Perhaps there is a just war and, if there is one just war among thousands, perhaps it was World War II when we fought Hitler. I could maybe live with that. But this is the forum where we settle our differences, with words. We do it diplomatically. We don't do it with blood and bullets and bombs. We do not scar the lives of children like they scarred our lives, Mr. Speaker, and I was lucky. I came out of it not wounded; at least, not physically wounded.

My dad was a coal miner, Mr. Speaker, as well as a farmer. I don't recall him ever sleeping. He had a night shift and he farmed during the day. I can never figure out how we ended up with nine kids in our family; he never seemed to ever go to bed. In 1952, we moved to Canada. I was 10 years old. Dad had enough of war-torn Europe and he dragged mother along, who hated every inch of it. He was 45 years old, ready to retire. He'd been in the coal mine since he was 13. His lungs were completely black. He had black lung disease. They still let him into Canada because, I guess, he brought along a lot of young women and one boy, the oldest. That was me. It took four or five days to cross from Rotterdam to Halifax, Pier 21, they herded us onto an immigrant trail and we bounced across this beautiful land.

We stopped in Winnipeg, I remember, in that old railway station. Some kid—I think he was an Aboriginal kid—gave me a bottle of Coke. It's the first Coke I'd ever seen. After the war it wasn't in Europe. Somebody gave me a comic; it was Mickey Mouse. So this was my first introduction to Canadian culture: a bottle of Coke from an Aboriginal kid and a comic book. Perhaps—it's very interesting, the symbolism of that.

We did finally get to Senlac, Saskatchewan. It was evening, sometime late in May. The farmer that my dad was going to work for picked us up. It was very rainy, stormy. We ended up in the middle of the prairie in a house that didn't have water, didn't have sewer, no vehicle. The roads were virtually impassable most of the time. I think mother wondered why we were there. Our nearest neighbour

was a mile away; the town was seven miles away. Dad worked for this farmer. I helped him.

In Canada, three more sisters were born, so altogether eight younger sisters, and I often felt, Mr. Speaker, that I was living in a girls' dormitory. So those of you who say I have no sensitivity to women, think again.

But I'm proud of my sisters, each one of them, of my eight sisters: Kathleen, a retired teacher now living in Edmonton; Mary, a home care worker, a most spiritually—intensely spiritual woman, retired and living in Edmonton; Jo, a former union organizer now living in Kelowna, BC; Trace/Theresa, probably closest to me in temperament and politics, professor at Carleton University in Ottawa, prolific researcher and writer who has co-authored with me, or is co-authoring with me, a book of short stories. I finished my half; she's still dragging her half. The book is about the immigrant experience on the Prairies—the immigrant experience of children on the Prairies. Agnes, she's an oil patch entrepreneur, possibly the furthest removed from me politically, wonderful woman nonetheless, photographer, who has co-authored with me a book on my own mother. When I found a bundle of letters from my uncle that my mother had written to her mother—my maternal grandmother—I decided to translate them, and my sister Agnes and put them into a beautiful book. It's called *Liebe Mutter*, which means Dear Mother, my mother's letter to her mother.

* (15:40)

My sister Tina, born in Canada, the first born in Canada and now in the process of retiring as a college instructor. She lives in Lantzville, Vancouver Island. Then Pauline is a legal secretary, a municipal administrator who also farms with her husband, Ray, in Evesham, Saskatchewan. And Betty is a nurse in Edmonton.

Now, all of these people, Mr. Speaker, have husbands and kids, and I don't want to get into that. My extended family is enormous; I have 65 cousins in Europe. I'm super proud of my sisters. They're all better looking than I am, they're all smarter than I am and I know for sure they're all richer than I am, and I sure don't have to go to any banks when I want a loan.

Mr. Speaker, regarding my formal education, I've always been lucky to have been instructed by some of the most inspiring and fantastic teachers and professors, starting with my first-grade teacher in

Europe, Miss Vossen. Eighty-two kids in her class, no teacher aide. Many of the students were way older than they should have been because they didn't get any schooling during the war—incredible woman.

In high school, Mrs. Tunbridge, who opened up for me the world of English literature. And I realized much later on that even though we used to joke about her and call her Congo Kate, because she used to teach in Africa, that Mrs. Tunbridge was the most important influence on my life as a teacher. I actually talk like her.

At university, I had great teachers: Father O'Donnell for Shakespeare. Great professors: Professor Pepper in organic chemistry—he wanted me to go on in organic chemistry, but I thought I was blowing up too much stuff so I didn't; in philosophy, Dr. Miller; in English, Dr. Teunissen; in history, Dr. J.D. Frye, who wanted me to go on in history; in education, Eleanor Chelsom, who wanted me to go in education, and I did. In graduate studies in Regina, Drs. Duncan Blewett, Bill Levant and Dallas Smythe were fabulous influences. They were also my thesis instructors.

I was fascinated by the writings of some of the great Jewish thinkers of that time, the early ones such as Spinoza and the later ones such as Marx, Einstein and Freud, although I must admit I found Freud a little hard going and I much preferred the writings of his disciple Carl Jung. In fact, much indebted to his thinking, particular when he dealt with the collective unconscious.

I spent seven years at the University of Saskatchewan, at both the Saskatoon and Regina campus. I picked up four degrees, several with distinction. My dad used to say to me: Gerard, you have more degrees than a thermometer, but I don't need someone to tell me what temperature it is; go and drive those fence posts. And he was right.

I met Tommy Douglas at the Saskatoon campus. I believe it was the winter of 1963. I was an instant convert. There was no one like Tommy. It does not surprise me at all that more than 40 years later, our little prairie socialist, the father of Medicare, became our most famous Canadian in the country, in a country-wide phone-in vote.

When Tommy talked about building the New Jerusalem, he energized us, he lifted us beyond ourselves. I can only describe it as a profoundly religious experience. We all became Tommy's children and we still are Tommy's children. We will

be Tommy's children until the day we die. This diminutive Baptist preacher, Mr. Speaker, took on an entire North American establishment, the all-powerful Liberal Party in Saskatchewan, and the all-powerful Liberal Party in Canada, absolutely believing they were, you know, they were entitled to be rulers forever. He took them on and he won.

But, if you look at the map in 1944, you see a sea of blue. North America is a sea of blue and there's this tiny little sliver of Saskatchewan in red. The little socialist horde that was threatening the world, I guess. It's just amazing. This wonderful man, this man of God, this man committed to helping the people, a man speaking the social gospel could be so maligned. And I remember some of that—those battles in the early '60s to keep our doctors, to bring Medicare into Saskatchewan.

With the grace of God, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of hard work, David can slay Goliath and he can do it again. The social gospel does matter. We are our sister's keeper. We are our brother's keeper. As Tommy said, we have found a better way, a more co-operative way, a way of socialism, of justice, of peace. The marketplace is not holy, only God is holy. And the CCF will win. The NDP will win in this province and in other provinces and, someday, in this country, maybe not in my lifetime or my children's lifetime, but in my grandchildren's lifetime for sure.

We're not just a political party, Mr. Speaker, at least not in my eyes, we're also a people's movement. Thus spoke Tommy with the Bible under one arm and the Regina Manifesto in his back pocket. He was a pint-size human dynamo.

And Tommy could be witty. I was there when a young Tory type—you know, we all knew him, he had more money than intellect—and he was heckling Tommy. And Tommy finally stopped and adjusted his glasses and he looked at the young man and in his best schoolmarm's voice he said, young man, sit down and warm your brain.

Once, in a rural setting, Tommy Douglas, speaking to a group of farmers—you've got to remember this guy is pretty short and these farmers are pretty husky and they couldn't see him really and they couldn't really hear him, and they said, Tommy, Tommy, get up on one of the farm machines. So Tommy, of course, did. He got up on a manure spreader and said, this is the first time ever I will be delivering a speech from a Liberal platform. Tommy was a wise man, Mr. Speaker.

When I was finishing my graduate studies in 1969 in Regina, I met my future wife, Lisa. It was love at first sight and we were married in August of 1970. We both taught in rural Saskatchewan. I taught high school English and later university English. We moved to Cranberry Portage in 1972 where I taught at Frontier Collegiate and Lisa taught at Cranberry elementary school.

We have three children, John who is married to Shannon, a beautiful young lady from Winnipeg. They live in London, England, where Shannon teaches. John is a filmmaker. Last year he won an award at the Bournemouth Film Festival in Britain, and this year he was very happy because his new film has been accepted at the Cannes film festival, coming up this month or next month.

My daughter Tracy, I would call her a political activist. She calls herself an actress. No, she calls herself an actor; I call her an actress. I guess I'm old fashioned. She's in New York. She is prepping for her Lady Macbeth role in her next Shakespearean play, which is off Broadway.

My youngest son, Andrew, and his partner, Marissa, work in Winnipeg. My son does computer stuff I don't understand anything about and Marissa is a chartered accountant.

I am proud of my children, Mr. Speaker, and my wife. My wife is a quiet woman, a spiritual woman, an introverted woman but also totally committed to Tommy's dream of building a more just society and not just for the rich.

She was 11 years old when she started working with her dad, a wounded war veteran, as a volunteer for the CCF-NDP. In our tiny, somewhat dilapidated Roman Catholic church in Cranberry Portage right now, she delivers a homily two times, sometimes three times in a month, because our young priest Paul can't always be there. She's a volunteer and organizer par excellence. If you need a funeral arrangement or a luncheon or a Salvation Army food drive or a bake sale or a wedding planned or a birthday celebrated, in Cranberry Portage you phone Lisa. She phones the Catholic women. They phone the Mennonite church ladies and then they phone the Manitoba Métis Federation women, and in two hours the job is done all the while while the guys are scratching their head and wondering what the heck happened. We leave it up to the women there, Mr. Speaker, and it gets done.

Mr. Speaker, if I were deprived of my wife, I would be like a man without oxygen.

Lisa received a plaque from the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops for her development and peace work in Central America. She was there as a silent supportive witness for peace, justice and development in Nicaragua while the Contra were attacking and other Reagan-supported bandits were terrorizing people in Nicaragua. For a whole month, I didn't know if she was alive or dead because buses were blown up on a regular basis. The harbours in Nicaragua were being mined and bombed. The United Nations condemned this action, this despicable action, and demanded that the United States pay reparations. The United States ignored it. Canada was silent.

Another time Lisa had just returned from Haiti with a faith group when the legally elected president of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed by another American-inspired coup. Many of the people that—the Haitian people, the poor Haitian people my wife had talked to, the development people, disappeared or were murdered. Again, Canada was strangely silent.

During the 1980s we organized, along with thousands of other, to bring down the racist South African regime. We organized boycotts of the apartheid regime, but at first no government in the so-called Western free world supported us. We joined people here in this province like Strini Reddy, Ahmed Randeree, also known as Doc, Dennis September and others and formed the Manitoba Coalition of Organizations against apartheid. Gradually we won support.

At the end, in the darkest days of the apartheid regime, only two nations were left to support that regime, and despite the vigorous protest of the progressives in those two nations, they still supported it to the last bitter breath. Those nations were the United States and Israel, and I'm deeply saddened that that did happen.

Mandela was freed. The ANC won the election overwhelmingly. Yes, we can speak truth to power. Eventually imperialism, in all its forms, right or left, will be defeated by the people. Fake democracy, dollar democracy, as Tommy knew so well, never works. It will always lose in the end. Justice can prevail. The social gospel, folks, is real.

* (15:50)

Mr. Speaker, the third of my overlapping worlds is the world of northern Manitoba. Truly, this is the world that has captured my soul completely. How can it not tug at your soul, this starkly beautiful land of sun and water, rocks and pine? This land that so few southern Manitobans really, truly understand. You've got to be in the bush to understand the bush, this land where the wisdom of the elders is as ancient and as deep as the bedrock. This is largely a pristine land, a land of elemental forces.

In this land live the most beautiful people in the world, and I say this honestly—because of their honesty, because they're upright and generous and neighbourly. We know that we cannot survive in that land alone. We have to rely on one another, and we need one another. Yes, sometimes there are political differences. They do not last long, and when the election's over, we all go back to being northerners again. When all is said and done, we are northerners first.

Mr. Speaker, I have no enemies in northern Manitoba—just potential friends, potential friends who haven't yet been converted to help us build the New Jerusalem envisioned by Tommy Douglas. In all humility, I give profound thanks to my constituents—the constituents of the Flin Flon riding—who elected me four consecutive times. I'm not sure if I'm worthy of that honour, but I thank them profoundly for having done so.

To my surprise and, I suppose, secret delight, if truth be told, I received a larger majority every time I ran. Actually, I couldn't believe it when the Tory numbers in the four elections dropped from 38 per cent to 25 per cent to 8 per cent to zero per cent. Mr. Speaker, that was not I—it was the northern people—it was the northern people. Tommy would have approved, though, of those figures.

Only once, Mr. Speaker, and again I'm being extremely honest here, only once did I actually question my decision for having stood for public office. It was probably my most difficult moment.

It was the night of my first election. The very popular Tory candidate from Flin Flon came to the Labour Temple to congratulate me and my wife. His wife stood beside him. Her name is Maxine—a beautiful woman, a gracious woman—as I suppose a lot of Tory women are, as well as their own women. And I looked into that woman's eyes, Mr. Speaker, I'd never seen such unspeakable pain, and I wished then that I had not won. I wished that they would have won, because I didn't think it was worth it.

My whole victory was in ashes; it was hollow. Why do I have to do pain to someone else in order for me to win? And yet that's our system. This is the ugliness of the politics we engage in, because we can't get along, and we do need a party system. I don't like it that way, Mr. Speaker. I'd rather do what they do in Nunavut and have a system where we all agree. Anyway, I've never forgotten that pain in that woman's eyes. It will always haunt me.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my many friends and supporters in Cranberry Portage, in Flin Flon and Sherridon, in Snow Lake, Granville Lake, Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake. I don't want to leave a single constituent out. I want to thank Mike Dumas, Steve Ducharme, Hilda and William Dysart, Graeme Montgomery from South Indian Lake. I want to thank you Jimmy Clipping, Stuart Yassie, Ernie and Carl Bussidor and Jimmy Thorassie from Tadoule Lake.

Thank you, Jerome Denechezhe; Sarah and Simon Samuel from Lac Brochet. Thank you, Father Darveau and Sister Carmen, Mrs. Umpherville, Isaak Lapensee in Brochet. Thank you for your help in Brochet.

It was Father Darveau, who, in 1995, at my very first trip into Brochet, said to me: Mr. Jennissen, don't bring political pamphlets; bring boxes of oranges. The kids need vitamin C here.

So that's what I did, and I kept doing that. He was a wise man.

One evening, Father Darveau was missing an altar boy for the evening mass, and he recruited me, as I am a Catholic, technically. He also said I was the oldest and the ugliest altar boy he'd ever seen, but that God would understand. I think he said it in French, but I caught it anyway, Mr. Speaker.

I thank my many friends in Pukatawagan: Chief Arlen Dumas, Joyce Bear, Ernie Hunt, Shirley Castel and Oscar Lathlin's wife, Leona, head nurse at the nursing station. Also, Matt Sinclair, the great fisherman.

Also, I'd like to thank three elders, two who are now deceased: the Dene elder, Betsy Anderson, who actually witnessed the signing of their treaty in the early 1900s; and, of course, always in my thoughts, Margaret Head, my own elder and guide, who urged me to get into politics directly. And, I also want to pay tribute to the one that's still living, Hy Colomb from Pukatawagan, who is well into his 90s, still

active in traditional pursuits, still longing for that tasty moose-blood soup.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the wonderful staff that work in this building. Many of you I know by name, but I'm not going to name you because I'll miss some. A big thank you to the many interns and pages that have worked here. Thank you, Sarah, for helping me with my member statements. I'm sorry: I'm an English teacher, and I'm bit of a comma detective, and I don't like run-on sentences and so on.

Also, I especially want to thank a few of the behind-the-scenes miracle workers, whose guidance and friendship I have treasured over the years: Kurt Penner; Clif "Curly" Evans, he's called Curly because of his locks; and especially the grey eminence of the north, the ever humble, but brilliant David Chadwick. I can't say enough about this guy who has helped me so much over the years.

And, of course, what would we be without our own constituency assistant, any one of us? Thank you so much: Shelly Jones, Tom LaPorte, Rick Butts, Jason Schreyer, Jim Thompson, Adrien Bage, Sue Woods, Pauline Martin. Thank you, my many CAs. Thank you for putting up with my random, abstract personality and my occasional prima donna tantrum.

Mr. Speaker, I once again want to thank the powerful influence that women have had on my life, and I see it everywhere. I see it in this Chamber too. The strongest voices are the voices of women here on either side. I mean, they're remarkable women, they're powerful women, intellectual women. Yes, in my political moment, I'd like to say, our women are younger and better than your women, but that's just playing silly games. We have great—we have great—and powerful voices here. And I know the time will come, and that's what Tommy would have wanted, too, that there be 25 or 30 of them sitting here, not just, you know, the handful, better than what we used to have, but still a handful. We need those voices and we need their strength.

So, once again, I want to thank my paternal grandmother, who held me as a baby when the earth shook around us, when the bombs dropped around us in that bomb shelter, not just one night, but night after night after night. She was there for me, Mr. Speaker, as, of course, was my mother and my wife as I've already mentioned, and my flesh-and-blood sisters. But also my other sisters, my many other

sisters, just to name a few of them, have been a wonderful influence, who've given me that female dimension that I needed—perhaps I missed it because I left home with all the women there—but, anyway, people like Margaret Britton, and Janet Brady, and Bernice Hay. Thank you so much, Bernice. I know you're dying in St. B right now from cancer, but I know you're going to a better place. I'll never forget you, and God go with you.

And then my Aboriginal sisters, I could never have survived without my Aboriginal sisters, Mr. Speaker. They have such depth and such strength. I can only name a few of them, people like Joyce Bear, Vangie Kuzio, Pat Strong, June Haybittle, Marlene Carriere, Janice Yakiwchuk. Their love and their strength have carried me. Sometimes that's what us poor males need. We need their strength and their power.

Mr. Speaker, let me go to the end, nearing the end, and say that I am extremely grateful for the opportunity of serving this Chamber. But, as I ride into the sunset this October, I want you to remember I'm not dead quite yet. Between now and fall we are entering the proverbial silly season, and we shouldn't really call it that because there two very serious elections coming up. And I want you to remember, we should elect those that are—that truly represent the people. Think about it. The elite, the rich, the powerful; they have their money, they have their lawyers, they have their newspapers. Have you read the *Sun* lately?

Mr. Speaker, the poor don't have that—the poor do not have that—and if we do not speak for them, if we do not speak for the marginalized and the disadvantaged and the disabled, who is going to speak for them? If not you, then who? Who will help build Tommy's New Jerusalem? I'll tell you who it won't be; it won't be that poster boy for Reaganite and Thatcherite and Tea Party-type thinking. The fellow called Kevin O'Leary, I think, his name, and he's on the *Lang and O'Leary Exchange*, he just drives me crazy. I think he does it deliberately, but I've fallen for the bait. He has those smarmy right-wing slogans, and the four of them drive me nuts: greed is good; I love money; lower taxes; less government. In my heart of hearts, and if all of us think about this carefully, we will come to the conclusion that these are the slogans of death. And, as far as I'm concerned, personally, they should be engraved in the portals of hell alongside with that other slogan: Abandon hope all ye who enter here.

We have to choose real democracy, Mr. Speaker, not dollar democracy. We have to ignore the elites because they're already well off. We have to be fair and just, but we have to put the welfare of the many ahead of the profit for a few.

Mr. Speaker, we have to fight those that would privatize and pillage the assets of the people because that's what's happening, and they will take control away from the people.

We have to stand up, Mr. Speaker, for Tommy Douglas and with Tommy Douglas, and we have to be counted.

And, Mr. Speaker, all of us can be part of building the New Jerusalem. It doesn't have to be under the banner of our own party, although, of course, we would hope that. There are people of goodwill everywhere. We have—we should have charity towards all and malice towards none. I think, maybe Abe Lincoln said that. There's room in this tent for all people.

* (16:00)

And, Mr. Speaker, I still apparently have some time left, not much. I just want to say one more thing. For me, about a year ago, or maybe two years ago, on a summer's evening when the loons were crying and there was the world's largest canvas teepee on the Portage, the old Portage Trail between the two river systems in Cranberry Portage, and we filled it full of people, all the ethnic groups that you could think of, all the Swedes and the Germans and the Danes and the Dutch and French and from those backgrounds and the Aboriginal people, and they sang together. We had the choir from Flin Flon. We had our own Aboriginal drummers. My own Aboriginal extended family was there, and we were one people; we were the northerners. And you couldn't ask for anything more holy than that. We're all in one tent. We're all one people. We were all northerners, and, yes, we're also all Manitobans and Canadians. And the loons were in the background and the sun was setting. What a beautiful archetypal Canadian picture. It was so beautiful.

The north is so beautiful. I would urge my brothers and sisters from the south to really try and understand it and realize how much more we need so that the people, particularly in the outlying regions, can have dignity and can live with water and sewer and all the amenities you live with every day and you take for granted.

We're not just all talk; we're not just all wind. We want some real things and some real change. I implore you, I appeal to your better instincts. Please, the people you represent, do the real job you need to do. Make democracy count. Help us build this new Jerusalem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): I'm not certain how you follow the member from Flin Flon after that eloquent and very articulate, well-thought-out speech. The only thing I can think of is reflecting on the opportunities that I've had to travel the beloved north with him, and the pride and respect that he shows for those communities.

But what's most important is how the people respect the member for Flin Flon. The appreciation that they have for the work that he's done over the many years representing him, the determination that he has shown in getting the issues of the north to be known, the passion and respect that he has for the country and the land and the people and how he shares it.

And I have to tell you that on one of those trips we delivered oranges together. And I will follow in his footsteps, and, as I continue to travel in the north, I will deliver oranges and fresh fruit to the people and remind everyone why they're being delivered because of the member from Flin Flon and his respect and commitment to the communities.

It's an interesting time as we're debating the budget. There's some members that are standing up and saying their last speech. I can't imagine how that must feel for some members that have been here for 20 years, the opportunity it gives them to reflect on their accomplishments and their commitments and the work that they've done to represent their constituents.

It also gives us an opportunity, the ones who are running for re-election that are staying, attempting to stay with the support of our constituents, an opportunity to reflect on their wisdom and their experiences and how we can incorporate that in—as we move forward. They may not sit in the seats that they know today after the next election on October 4th, but they will be welcomed to enter back into the House. I know that; I've seen that happen before. But the work that they've done will live on forever, not only here, but in the constituencies that they represented.

I have many fond memories of working with members on both sides of the House, travelling to Portage la Prairie and finding out the member's interest in sports cars and fast engines, travelling to The Trappers' Festival, the member from Brandon—Brandon's West.

Also, I'm sure that there were opportunities that I spent in the member from Russell's constituency, and it was a school reunion that had happened, and we were in a Quonset, and the rain came down, and I was speaking and no one could hear me, and he helped me through that experience. I've never gone to speak in a Quonset again because of that trauma. And the members on this side, with opportunities that I've had to tour the 'nurth'—North End with the member from Burrows, and sharing his interest in building a better community.

And, yes, Mr. Speaker, the time that I've spent with you. The time that I remember the most, though, is probably one of the saddest times, and that is when we were with—we were together in The Pas, and we were celebrating the life of Oscar Lathlin. And you sat beside me, and you told me not to cry, that you knew that Oscar had gone to a better place, and that every day he would be around us. And I know that that's true, whether it's here, whether it's at The Trappers' Festival, you can feel his presence. But what you showed me that day was caring, compassion, spirituality, and I thank you.

And then the member for Lord Roberts (Ms. McGifford), who I never really knew her until 2003, but this woman kept showing up at the campaign office and saying, Kerri, where are we going today? I don't do apartment blocks and I hate steps. So where are we going to go today?

And we talked this afternoon, and I think it was about three times a week she would come and help support me and really, and encourage me to keep going and show me the ropes.

And I wish all of them the very best as they move forward. I know that this is not goodbye, this is "see you." I know that we will hear from these members often and frequently and have many opportunities for them to lobby, still, for their constituents and ensure that we are meeting their needs.

I don't have any trouble standing up and speaking in support of this budget; I do it proudly. I am very excited about this budget because it continues to build on our successes and the

foundation that we've built. Whether it's actual capital projects, such as roads, and schools, health-care facilities, child-care facilities. And we're investing in the front-line services, ensuring that our non-profits continue to be strong and provide the many, many services that we depend on in our province, ensuring that we will continue to have teachers in our classrooms, nurses in our hospitals, child-care workers in our child-care facilities, and all along working to restore our balance.

Our commitment is: the next five years, we will restore the balance in our budget, and when we do that, we will not have jeopardized the priorities of the families of Manitobans. We will not have cut services. How we're going to do that is we're going to stimulate the economy, ensure that our province continues to grow, ensuring that it's still an affordable place to live. And that I am very proud of.

*(16:10)

I often hear the other side talk about, show us actions. What are the actions? And I can tell you that I can proudly look around the constituency that I represent, Fort Garry, and I can see the direct impacts of our government on the daily living of all the individuals, from the prenatal care to the seniors and everybody in-between. For example, I can look at the Lighthouses program that is offered at General Byng School, provides after-school programming for youth in our community, keeps them in activities that are structured, provides services over the summer as well for them. The many parent-child centres that are being sponsored in the community, the Pembina Curling Club, who is home to some very accomplished curlers. We have had—brought home many provincial as well as national awards in the last few years, and we continue to ensure that we invest in the ice plant, in the roof to ensure that that structure will be there for many years to come.

We can look at the Mennonite Brethren Church, where we have provided funding to help them expand their church, as well as providing supports for a skate park in the summertime.

Vincent Massey Collegiate has had the benefit of additional classrooms where children will continue to learn and prepare for their adulthood. École Crane school is another example.

I'd like to take a few minutes and talk about an incredible woman that I have the privilege of representing. Marj Harvey is her name and she probably is such a lady she would not want me to say

her age on record, but she's 80-plus. She decided that there needed to be the redevelopment of Byng Park, and so for five years she brought together the community members. She actively pursued funding from all levels of government, and this spring, or this fall, we actually cut the ribbon on the Marj Harvey park and celebrated along with everyone that commitment of community. That's one example of community in action and that's what this government supports and promotes.

The Fort Garry Legion is another phenomenal institution in our constituency. It's celebrating its 75th anniversary this year and continues to provide a place for people to come together to share stories.

The Victoria General Hospital, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, and the investments that we have recently made, not only the services that we continue to provide on a daily basis, but the Buhler cancer care centre, the emergency redevelopment that we're working on. We do this again with the community, with the Victoria General Hospital Guild, with the foundation, with private donors who've come to support our little hospital with a big heart.

When you think about Fort Garry, you can't not talk about the latest developments in the heart of Fort Garry—that would be at the University of Manitoba. We often hear about the Domino project that's happening, the students' residence that we've helped support to build. But there's a megaproject that's happening there now, and I know that there are many Manitobans that are looking forward to the grand opening of the stadium in Fort Garry. We know that we have some work to do and we're going to work with the community to address those issues, but we're going to celebrate the Blue Bombers next year, I know it.

Well, so that's a picture of Fort Garry and what our government has done for Fort Garry, but you have to ask yourself, what would it have been like if we weren't government? I'm going to do a little bit of a comparison. I can tell you that services would have been slashed, taxes increased. I have some very concrete examples, actions, as the other members talk about, actions. Well, what the Tories did in the 1990s was they reduced the property tax credit by \$75, which meant \$53 million out of the pockets of Manitoba taxpayers. What did we do with Budget 2011? Well, we increased it by \$50. So that's \$700.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Hey, that's way better. Manitobans have 16 million more dollars in their pocket. Do the math.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Oh, Mr. Speaker, I've hit a nerve. Let me hit some more. This feels really good. I've not done this before. Guess what else they did in the '90s? They froze health-care capital. Oh, well. What happened? Brandon Hospital: cancelled. What did you hear in our budget speech? Well, that we're going to invest in health-care infrastructure. Listen to this: Winnipeg, Selkirk, Ste. Anne, Flin Flon, Pine Falls, Oakbank, Springfield, Lac du Bonnet, Stonewall, Vita. Well, and I'm sure there's many, many more. Stay tuned.

Well, and then also, what happened to the health-care professionals? We've heard it time and time again. I'm sure you could tell us what happened. There was a net loss of doctors by 116, and guess what? Fired a thousand nurses and reduced—slashed the number of medical schools. One was too many. But what we're doing is we're investing and we're supporting additional resources to ensure that our health-care professionals get the support that they need.

Well, what happened to the education system? We've heard that often too—well, froze capital and cut funding to public schools. Listen to this. What is Budget 2011 going to do? Increase operating funding for all school divisions by a minimum of 2.2 per cent for a total of \$1.1 billion. Expand and build schools with an additional \$94.2 million in investment in public schools. Well, and we haven't stopped there. We continue to support our post-secondary institutions as well, as I said before, the work that we're doing at the U of M, the Red River College, but also looking at the third phase for the Assiniboine Community College.

All right, today was a big day for child care in Manitoba. The Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Mackintosh) talked about 2,100 child-care spaces expansion. What did the Tories do? Let me tell you. They reduced child care operating by 4 per cent. We increased nursery spaces by 400. What did the Tories do? Reduced it by 50 per cent—slashed it. Well, I think I've made my point.

I think I can tell you very, very adamantly that Budget 2011 is a sound, strong document that Manitobans can trust without a doubt. It has a steady

approach, continues to ensure that we have growth in our province, and I think that Manitobans will see the benefits as far as services, in their pocketbooks, and we can be very, very proud.

I'd like to put on the record some information about housing and community development. Well, we made a commitment that we were going to increase the social housing by 1,500 units. We had a program called—that had \$358 million attached to it, and we were going to make that commitment over five years. Well, I'm here today to tell you we're ahead of schedule. We now, we have closed on after two years of 700 social housing units, and these are units across the province. These are units and housing that is provided to seniors, to families, to Aboriginal people, to people with mental health and addictions, to new Canadians. And I'd like to—I like this listing of things.

* (16:20)

Listen to this—where have we built? and I have had some of the most fun in opposition ridings: in Sprague, in Grunthal. I was in La Broquerie, Riverton, The Pas, Thompson, Steinbach, Brandon, Camperville; in Winnipeg: Bell Hotel, Avenue Building, La Charette, IRCOM 2; Virden. And we also, not only are we building new, but we are investing in our stock that we have had for a number of years, and those projects are across the province as well. And what I need to tell you, that investment that we're making, we are redeveloping these units to ensure that people have safe, affordable housing. But, as we're doing that, we're using the finances to ensure that we are able to do other supports economically in the community, ensuring that we're hiring locally, we're purchasing locally. Lord Selkirk Park is a perfect example. The people that live in Lord Selkirk Park are being hired to do the renovations. And what's happening from that is they are getting hired by other contractors outside of the social enterprise. That is a huge success. The pride the individuals feel in their community is astronomical.

What else that we're doing there at Lord Selkirk Park is we're building daycares, a resource centre to ensure that we provide those necessary services. Foundations and housing is No. 1 when it comes to safety for people in their communities and feeling that sense of belonging.

What else—what we have also accomplished is Neighbourhoods Alive!. Neighbourhoods Alive! is a phenomenal success in building communities,

addressing crime and housing, looking at safety issues, looking at programming for youth and children and families and community gardens. And what we're doing there is building communities, bringing people together, mobilizing. And, by mobilizing, we're ensuring that people have a sense of belonging, that they have pride in their community and that they can stand tall, together with this budget and our commitment to reducing poverty and improving social inclusion, improving housing stocks for individuals, insuring that people have a strong—opportunities for education, our commitment to increasing graduation rates, and also our inclusive approach; our approach of including all Manitobans in whatever we do.

I have the privilege of working with many First Nations youth in south Winnipeg, and they talk to me about *Minobimaatisiwin*, which is Cree for the good life, and that's what we want for all Manitobans. Thank you.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I have proudly represented my constituency since 2007, and there has never been a better time for families in the Maples than now. This budget reflects my values, the values of my constituents and the values of Manitobans everywhere who are putting down roots in the province, and I would like to give a few examples.

The Maples is a booming and bustling community, and because of that my constituents are happy to hear that our budget is setting aside \$24 million for a new kindergarten-to-grade 8 school in the Amber Trails area of Seven Oaks School Division. Seven Oaks grew by 463 students this year, the largest increase of enrolment, by far, of any Manitoba school division. Like all new schools our government is building, Amber Trails will house a daycare centre to accommodate our many young families. Soon, there will be 1,200 single-family homes in the area, and the Amber Trails school will be open and welcoming their children in 2013.

Last month, our Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson) reported that Manitoba's population soared by 16,900 people over the last year, the province's best population growth in nearly 40 years. With all these new pupils in our constituency, the Maples can certainly take a large share of the credit.

As many speakers before me have noted, our five-year economic plan is working, generating more economic growth. Our economy generated 11,500

jobs last year, the best growth in eight years. The Maples has experienced many of the benefits of the Province's intelligent investments in infrastructure. One in particular that I would like to mention is the replacement of the athletic track of the Maples Community Centre and the rehabilitation of her soccer field. Any day, especially when the weather is nice, you can see people of all ages using the track. They congregate there to keep fit, chat with neighbours and enjoy the outdoors. It is yet another instance of our government investing in things that family care about.

Another infrastructure project that has been making a difference for The Maples is the construction of basketball courts at the Maples Community Centre. They were funded by the City and the Province through its Building Communities Initiative, each contribution \$125,000.

Basketball is enormously popular in our corner of the city and several leagues are based at the centre, from the Steve Nash Youth League for 5- to 7-year-olds and the Seniors Spring League. Parents are glad to have a basketball facility nearby where they know their kids will be safe, learn to co-operate as team members and get a healthy dose of exercise.

Manitoba has made great gains in training and attracting medical professionals. As the budget notes, we now have 400 more doctors than in 1999, and I'm proud to say that one of them is my son. Our government is working to ensure that by 2015 every Manitoban who wants a family doctor will have one.

One of the ways it is doing this is through a development being pioneered in The Maples. I am talking about the eChart system for electronic health records that was launched last month at the Kildonan Medical Centre in the Seven Oaks General Hospital. The system will enable doctors to make informed decisions more quickly and avoid costly duplications of tests, as they will have information that they need, when they need it. The *Winnipeg Free Press* has quoted one doctor as saying that where it once might take three people 20 minutes each to gather patient information, it now might take a doctor just a few minutes. The time saved means that family doctors will be able to treat more patients. This is a milestone in our health-care system.

Earlier, I alluded to The Maples as a magnet for new immigrants. My constituents are among the many pushing Ottawa to remove its cap on the number of immigrants allotted to Manitoba through the Provincial Nominee Program. I am glad that the

budget reaffirms that our determination to oppose the cap—the federal government says that the province should get only its share of the skilled workers that come through the program. I say, however, that our fair share is the number that Manitoba can attract because the workers know that we have a stable economy, a sound education system and friendly, welcoming communities.

And, speaking of immigrants, and the warm welcome we'll give them, I heartily applaud the government for opening a centralized intake service to help immigrants navigate the numerous services that we provide as a part of their introduction to Manitoba. The centre will assess their needs, review individual circumstances, discussing readiness for employment and identifying any training needs, while directing them to agencies which will best meet their needs.

As an immigrant myself, and someone who has assisted hundreds of newcomers over the years, I know how easy it is to feel overwhelmed and confused about the wide array of services that immigrants require when they first come to Canada. The new centre will put an end to that. Indeed, I hope that at immigrant centre—I hope that as immigrants continue to flock to Manitoba, our government will be able to open more such centres.

*(16:30)

It is remarkable for a budget that restrains spending to also offer tax relief to families. I would like to call attention to one that is of special interest to families in The Maples, and that is the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit. The credit acknowledges volunteers who act as primary caregiver for spouses, relatives, neighbours or friends who live at home and need assistance with tasks such as bathing, dressing, eating meals, mobility and receiving medical care. Budget 2011 raises this credit to \$1,275. This credit is not income-tested, and is fully refundable. This means that caregivers can earn this credit even if they do not owe income taxes. One caregiver can receive credits for up to three persons at a time. It is something that I will be urging families in my constituency to look into, as many are caring for other family members, as is the custom in Punjabi and Filipino cultures in particular.

The Primary Caregiver Tax Credit also compliments our government's new funding for secondary, or granny suites. This is very important to many people in my constituency. These separate suites would give elderly parents privacy and

independence, but also allow them to spend quality time with the family and receive help with the chores that have become difficult for them to accomplish on their own. The Minister for Housing and Community Development has just announced a forgivable loan for families who want to build granny suites of up to \$35,000, which would cover half the cost of construction. This is an issue that I have advocated for in the past, such as when I introduced a private member's bill in June 2010 that would encourage municipalities to lift the restrictions on granny or secondary suites. These additions allow multiple generations to contribute to a family according to their abilities. I'm very pleased to see that this government is listening to the concerns of families and that we are moving ahead on this important issue.

This is a fine budget. But it is puzzling to hear the members opposite dismiss this budget because Conservatives are usually on the side of the banks and the banks are saying good things about our budget. Scotiabank, for example, calls the projected improvement in our deficit a propitious start. BMO says, economic prospects in the province are firm, the deficit is modest as a share of GDP and the Province's debt load is manageable.

I am looking forward to seeing these projects become a reality in the years to come.

Before I conclude, I'd just like to say congratulations to my esteemed colleagues who are retiring this year, on both sides of the House. It is not easy being an MLA, and I know that all members have put a lot of dedication and energy into their role, whether in the government or opposition. Best wishes to all the retiring MLAs, and particular to my colleagues, the members from Burrows, Lord Roberts, St. Norbert, Flin Flon and Point Douglas.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

To everyone, I wish that you find new challenges in the next stage of your life and that you enjoy this time with family and friends.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It is a pleasure to speak about Budget 2011, a budget that keeps Manitoba on track, moving forward, a budget that presents a plan that's working for Manitoba families across Manitoba and, certainly, in my own constituency in the West End of Winnipeg, of Minto.

Now, I've been haunted lately by some of the images of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) as we've watched him walking, sort of lost and forlorn through downtown Winnipeg. Now usually that's the way Conservatives look when they're walking through downtown Winnipeg, but they don't usually videotape themselves. And I was certainly haunted when I heard the Leader of the Opposition tell us that there's nothing to celebrate in Manitoba.

And, you know, I've been thinking a lot about that, and I want to start off my speech by talking about some of the things that people in my own constituency of Minto are quite proud and pleased to celebrate as we go forward as a province: building, working together, strengthening in our communities. And since the last budget, I'm thinking of some of the great celebrations that I've been lucky enough to be a part of.

It was just a couple of months ago that I was joined by the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) at Sargent Park School, as we celebrated the opening of a new multi-purpose room for that growing community. Celebrating new classrooms where grade 9 students are learning graphic arts that, frankly, anybody of my vintage can only—could only have dreamt about when I was back in grade 9.

They're certainly also celebrating at Sargent Park School as a team of very, very quick and skilful athletes manage to win, not only the varsity girls, but the junior girls basketball championships for junior high. And certainly, as I'm sure you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, unlike myself, a lot of my constituents aren't exactly gifted with height but, despite that, the Sargent Park Flames always put out quick, dynamic teams, and I'm so proud of them for being able to win the provincial championship.

Now, they're celebrating at Isaac Brock School as well, just a couple of blocks away, maybe for a different reason. That's where there's a grade 5 student named Maria Aragon, who goes to school there, and Maria put a YouTube video of herself performing a Lady Gaga song, which Lady Gaga had the chance to see, tweeted out to her nine million followers, and the last number I'd heard is that 26 million people around the world have watched Maria, who is an incredible talent, perform her song. We now know that, of course, she went live on Ellen's show a couple of days after this broke. She performed live with Lady Gaga in Toronto and, truly, the sky is the limit. Maria is an amazing young

woman, but she is not unique in the West End. There is so much talent and so much capacity.

Now, they're also celebrating things like the work done by a group led by the Native Women's Transition Centre, which is opening a new facility on Ellice, which is going to provide a great way for women who've been in correctional facilities to integrate back into the community, to integrate back into their families. I am proud that the centre will be built, not despite the wishes of, but with the blessing of the surrounding community. And I want to congratulate all the proponents of that centre, as well as the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the Daniel McIntyre-St. Matthews Community Association for helping them to speak to people in my own area, to convince them that this a good thing for our community. I am very pleased that my department, the Department of Justice, will be a major partner in assisting women in properly integrating back into our society, with a goal of keeping them out of trouble with the law in future.

I can sure tell you they were celebrating at the West Central Women's Resource Centre just a couple of months ago. The resource centre started in the basement of the Justice Resource Centre on Ellice. They have now relocated out of the basement, across the street to a beautiful, refurbished facility that looks out onto John M. King School, where they run great programming helping women in the West End gain respect and gain dignity.

And, of course, I'm very pleased that the West Central Women's Resource Centre was specifically mentioned in this year's budget speech as they'll be receiving more support to run the great kinds of programming that truly we all do celebrate in the West End of Winnipeg.

* (16:40)

We certainly celebrated places like the Scandinavian club on Erin Street. We certainly celebrated places like the Irish Club and, I think, for the sixth or seventh consecutive year, I made sure I paid my respects at the Irish club on St. Patrick's Day. And if you want to talk celebrations, that is a great place to go. But places like the Scandinavian club, the Irish club, the Casa Do Minho Portuguese club; these are the type of places that have benefited from our Community Places program, which has been expanded and supported over the years. It takes the will of a group, but also the investment of the government to help them make physical investments to improve facilities like that that are so vital for

keeping people's heritage alive and for truly celebrating as communities.

Certainly, people in my end of town celebrate at churches, at the largest mosque in Winnipeg, at other places of worship, including my own family who attends First Lutheran Church on Victor Street. Many, many families celebrating the Provincial Nominee Program, as last year we welcomed a record number of people to come to Manitoba to start their new life.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we're celebrating daycares in the West End, as are people in many, many other areas of this province. In the past year, I had the chance to go to see the new St. Matthews Kids Corner Daycare being built at John M. King School. Of course, there's a very innovative program in Manitoba that helps schools with excess capacity to build daycare spaces. It's a challenge in my own region of Manitoba because most of the schools are full because of the nominee program. John M. King School is one of those places that had capacity, and I'm so proud of St. Matthews kids corner.

To be able to build new daycare spaces—daycare often in the West End means the basement of a church hall or an older community hall. It is delightful to go in and see a brand new space being built with the best practices for a—for children. And it certainly acclimatizes them to school, makes the families more familiar with the school, and it's—it does so much to ease the children into their school lives.

And even today the great announcement that the Minister for Family Services and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) were able to make: Busy Bee Daycare and Wild Strawberries daycare, which both serve families in the West End, will be receiving additional daycare spaces and assistance. And I am so proud of what this government does to assist families.

Now, you can go up and down many, many streets in Minto: Ellice, Sargent, Portage, Wall, Erin, and what do you see? You see thriving, small businesses. Some of my favourite small businesses happen to be restaurants, which oftentimes makes it necessary to not only run, but make sure you're knocking on doors not just at election time, but between election time. Not to name names, but some of my favourites are Myrna's, which is a Filipino restaurant dangerously close to my constituency office; KG Saigon, which provides some of the best Vietnamese food in town; Harmon's Café, which is an Ethiopian restaurant; Desperado, which is a

Mexican restaurant owned by a Portuguese family, which is the sort of thing we do in the West End. And I should also mention that Morden's chocolates is very proud to call its home the West End.

And all of these businesses, what do they have in common besides providing great services to West Enders and Winnipeggers in general? Well, they all pay no small business tax because our government, over the past 12 years, has taken the small business tax, which was at 8 per cent when the government of the day, the Conservatives, were in power, we've taken it down year after year after year to make Manitoba a small business tax-free zone for businesses like that, which are thriving in the West End of Winnipeg. And I'm very proud of that.

I'm very proud and happy of all the families that are celebrating accomplishments of their children, as more and more Manitobans are able to finish high school. As more and more Manitobans are able to get on to university, more and more Manitobans are going to colleges and seeking apprenticeships. And I have to tell you if you want to see celebration, go to a West End graduation. I have the chance every year to go to the two great high schools in the West End: Daniel McIntyre and Tec Voc. The Tec Voc grad takes place not at the school, but the Duckworth Centre, and it is a multimedia spectacular. And Gordon Crook, who's the principal over there, has done a tremendous job of pulling together scholarships and bursaries and the kind of recognition for our young people who are gone to—going on to exciting careers in aerospace, in manufacturing, in academics, in professions, in all kinds of different fields.

And what is so impressive at Tec Voc grad is that the young people do a little write up that they want the announcer to read as they walk across the stage as they graduate. And I can tell you almost every single one of those students talks about staying right here in Manitoba. And it wasn't the case a decade ago when the Conservatives were driving young people out of this province, and we've been able to turn that around. Daniel McIntyre Collegiate is a place where there's celebrations every single day as well, and it is a real honour to represent those people.

Of course, as I've mentioned before, we have the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the Daniel McIntyre-St. Matthews Community Association. These are two groups that receive core funding—core funding—from Neighbourhoods Alive! which, of

course, is a program which didn't exist in 1999 when the government of the day in the '90s let our troubled areas burn down. We don't do that as New Democrats. We've stepped up. We've empowered our communities, and with groups like SNA and DMSMCA, we empower our communities. We work with our neighbourhoods and you can see the change in terms of businesses, in terms of the way people are moving into the area, improving their houses. Landlords are fixing up their apartment blocks, and the community becomes so much stronger.

You know, there'll only be one more year to celebrate one of my favourite things to do in my community and, of course, that's watching the Winnipeg Blue Bombers play at Canad Inns Stadium. After this season, we will be saying goodbye to the Bombers in Minto, but I'll be quite happy to go and join with thirty or thirty-five thousand other close friends as we celebrate a brand-new stadium in the south end of Winnipeg. And certainly last year wasn't all sweetness and light for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, but I'm quite convinced that they will turn it around and we'll have at least one more year in Minto to celebrate their successes.

And those are just a couple of the things. I could go on about the investments we've made in the gymnasiums at the Isaac Brock site of Valour Community Centre. I could go on about the improvements to the Clifton site of the Valour Community Centre. I could talk about the Sargent Park, now Cindy Klassen Recreation Complex, where people celebrate wellness each and every day.

So, when the Conservative leader walks around all lost and forlorn and tells us there's nothing to celebrate, who's he speaking for? He's not speaking for the people of Minto. He's not speaking for average Manitoba families who've seen their standard of living rise over the past 12 years, for young people who are creating their future here in Manitoba. Maybe he's speaking for himself. Maybe he's speaking for his ever-shrinking caucus who are so out of touch with what Manitoba families want and need and believe; perhaps that's why he looks the way he does.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's an honour but it's a great responsibility to serve as the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General, and we know that building safe communities is a priority for Manitobans. Manitobans have the right to be safe in their homes, in their communities, on their streets, and we know that you do that by a balanced

approach to justice. It's certainly having the right laws in place. That means passing strong provincial laws, working with the federal government for strong laws. It also means enforcement and it also means preventing crime from happening in the first place. And that's why this budget is so important in terms of the investments that it makes to keep Manitobans safe.

First and foremost, of course, in this budget is a commitment for 66 more police officers, police officers in Winnipeg, in Brandon, through the RCMP, both through detachments in D Division but also in communities with policing arrangements and also police officers for municipal police forces across this province. This completes our commitment. We made a commitment in 2007 to add 100 police officers to the street. Budget 2011 completes that process. It also makes sure that the short-term federal dollars will be put to policing.

Other provinces have made other decisions of what to do with this money. Some have put it towards technology. Some have put it towards setting up units like the Public Safety Investigation Unit that we already fund in Manitoba through provincial money. But we're making sure that money goes out to communities and we will work with those communities to encourage the federal government not to make this a short-term source of funding, but a long-term and sustainable source of funding for our communities.

I should also point out that our government has created specialized units to help out police in doing their work, and, in particular, I'm thinking of the Public Safety Investigation Unit that enforces The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, which has shut down almost 500 homes and apartments across this province where unlawful and upsetting activities are taking place. We've helped communities take back their streets and take back their neighbourhoods, and it's something people in my own area are very, very grateful for.

I should also mention the civil forfeiture unit that enforces The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. That's an act which allows us to pursue property owned by those who would act unlawfully and create harm in our communities, and I'm very pleased that so far that unit has been able to have over \$1.3 million forfeited. They are continuing to work day in and day out to go after property, because we want to take on organized crime every chance we

get and we are hitting them in the pocketbook day after day after day.

* (16:50)

I should also mention the warrant enforcement squad that we'll be establishing through Budget 2011. That unit will work with the police to help them to provide more effective means to enforce warrants and make sure that those who truly are a danger to our communities are taken off the streets.

This is in addition, of course, to the support for Winnipeg's police helicopter which I do hear up in the sky many nights, and also is in addition to our support for the City of Winnipeg police cadet program. And I've seen the cadets not only in my area of town, but across the city out there. And I should add, Madam Deputy Speaker, that many of those cadets tell me that they are very interested in pursuing a permanent career in policing with the Winnipeg Police Service, and I think we could all celebrate that.

We've almost made investments in Crown attorneys, 48 Crown attorneys, a further eight this year, 47 to be added over the next five years, because we know that our investments to make our community safer can't just be about police and police-type units. It also has to support our Crown attorneys who just do such a good job day in and day out to keep our communities safe.

We've also made investments in our correctional system across Manitoba: construction undergoing at The Pas Correctional Centre, work undergoing at the Milner Ridge Correctional Centre, a new women's jail that will be coming on line in the next year, additions to the Agassiz Youth Centre, to the Brandon Correctional Centre and also work completed at the Dauphin Correctional Centre. We will be continuing to work to make sure that we have a safe environment for our correctional workers who we prize so much, and also to make sure that we meet the demands of being tough on crime in the province of Manitoba.

Now, obviously, there are many other—there's much more work to do and I'll be continuing to work with the federal government, whoever may be in power after May 2nd, to continue to push for things that are important to Manitobans. And I'll continue to push to make sure that money is restored by the federal government to the Youth Gang Prevention Fund to actually work on prevention activities. I'll be pushing the federal government, whoever it may be,

to restore the mean-spirited cuts to First Nations policing in the province of Manitoba and across the country, so we can help our First Nations to provide policing on their communities where the First Nation is ready and willing to do so. And certainly we'll be back at it to try and get the right changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act to make sure that we have ways to manage young people who are out of control in a way that gives confidence to the people of the province of Manitoba.

And certainly there are many things that we are doing on prevention, which is something that I'm afraid the official opposition simply doesn't understand. That's why we continue expanding the Lighthouses program. That's why we're continuing to expand the Turnabout program that works with youth under 12 who are too young to be charged under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Many of the provinces don't have a plan, Manitoba does. We provide services to those children and those families to try and turn them away from criminal activity. That's why I'm so pleased that, with the Department of Education, we're expanding the COACH program.

But there's more to prevention than simply the money Justice spends, and I'm so pleased every time we make investments to the Positive Parenting Program, to recreational opportunities, to our schools, to apprenticeships. These are all crime prevention measures, and I'm so proud to be part of a government that invests in the people of Manitoba and doesn't engage in the kind of short-sighted, mean cuts that we see whenever Conservatives, unfortunately, take power in this province.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So I want to finish, Mr. Speaker, by talking about a rather special Manitoban that we lost in the month of January, someone who like many others worked hard to provide a home and an opportunity for his family. My father passed away in January after a battle with COPD from far too many years of smoking and far too many years working with chemicals as a union mechanic at Trans-Canada Airlines and Air Canada.

As his illness progressed, he was less able to get around, so he became an avid follower of question period in the Legislature, and I want all members to know that he would usually call me with his review of the day's performance. And my father was very proud of me; he was very proud of my colleagues. He would sometimes make some comments that I will not put on the record today about other

members. But the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) can relax; I don't believe he ever singled you out for any comments.

But my father taught me about hard work, of the importance of family, and the need for all of us to look out for one another. These are things, Mr. Speaker, that I do take with me each and every day. So I'm proud to support this budget, and I certainly am very pleased to have had the opportunity to speak about things that are important to the people that I represent, things important to the people of Manitoba and, certainly, my family. Thank you very much.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): It's my honour to rise to speak to our most current provincial budget, and to add my comments about some of the initiatives that our provincial government is undertaken with respect to improving the level of services and programs, not only for the people of the community in which I represent, but also all of the people of Manitoba.

I listened very closely to my colleagues, and I thank them for their comments and I share their sentiments and their thoughts. I know it's a very difficult time for our Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) and the difficulties that his family has had to face in this last year, and I empathize with him. And I listened quite carefully to the service that was held for his father and, of course, the interest that his father had in watching question period. I listened to those comments and how he was—took an active role and interest in his son's activities in this Legislature and, of course, in the community in which the minister represented. And I know that it's good to see that people take that active interest, and I know that our families are all—no matter and regardless of which political party, are proud of all of us when we come to this place, because we serve a very important role in representing our communities and it—not everyone gets the opportunity to come to this place.

There's only 57 of us that get to sit in this Chamber as elected people, and, of course, it's important that we represent those views. And, of course, we put not only our own personal credibility on the line to run for these jobs and the values that we bring to this place, but it is also our family's credibility that is on the line here. And, of course, we all live our lives in this fishbowl of—we call this Manitoba Legislature and how difficult that is.

I had someone not too long ago—some of you may know John Pullen. One time I was talking to

John Pullen, and John said—we were having a good conversation—and I was complaining about something that was happening, and John looked at me in the eye and he says: Just remember, when you come to this place, you were a volunteer. Stop your complaining and get on with the job. And I take—took that to heart, and I said, well, that's good advice, and I quit my complaining and got down to what I needed to do to make the job a bit easier for the folks that I was representing and to make sure that I dealt with that problem head-on and took that challenge straight-up.

I want to talk a little bit about—because I believe my time is only a few moments here this afternoon, and perhaps I'll have more time tomorrow to add my comments, but I want to start first by recognizing the members that will be retiring out of this legislative Chamber. You have provided a significant and an enduring service to the people of Manitoba, and I want to recognize the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou), the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), the member for Beausejour who has already taken leave—

An Honourable Member: Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Reid: —Lac du Bonnet, pardon me, that has taken leave of this Legislature, the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), and the member for Lord Roberts (Ms. McGifford), yourself, Mr. Speaker, Point Douglas, the member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), and the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen).

I've had the honour and the privilege to work with each and every one of you for very many years, and I like to thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for the guidance and the support and the advice you have all given me, regardless of political stripe, the guidance and advice you have given me in my years in this legislative Chamber, and thank you for your service to the people of Manitoba.

I know I had the honour of being involved in the Teachers' Institute forum this week and talking to some of the teachers that were gathered here in this building, and I was asked the question about mentoring.

But I find that, even after the number of years that I've been in this Chamber, I'm still being mentored by my colleagues that are in this Chamber. I'm still learning something new every day, and I appreciate that opportunity to learn from the members of this Assembly.

Of course, I know the member for Flin Flon who gave his farewell speech, if we can call it that, this afternoon, obviously spoke from the heart. I've had—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 26 minutes remaining.

And the hour now being 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 20, 2011

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