

First Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	PC
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	PC
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 1, 2012

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.

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 17—The Non-Smokers Health Protection
Amendment Act**

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I'm pleased to move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), that Bill 17, The Non-Smokers Health Protection Amendment Act, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Rondeau: This bill continues our efforts to reduce the use of tobacco in Manitoba by introducing legislation that would ban the supply of tobacco products in pharmacies and health-care facilities as well as prohibit the sale of tobacco products from vending machines.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill 15—The Fortified Buildings Amendment Act

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief), that Bill 15, The Fortified Buildings Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les bâtiments fortifiés, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: This bill will create new additional sanctions for people who threaten the safety of our

police officers, firefighters and other first responders by setting traps to shield their unlawful operations. This bill will amend The Fortified Buildings Act to make it an offence to set a trap designed to harm a person on a property or to knowingly allow such a trap to remain on property that a person owns or occupies. The bill also provides authority for law enforcement officials to obtain warrants to search properties for such traps.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will support our efforts to take on those who threaten our communities, and, also, to protect our first responders.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

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

**Bill 207—The Child and Family Services
Amendment Act**

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I move, seconded by the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat), that Bill 207, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Bill 207 amends The Child and Family Services Act to require that any decision to move a child when there are no child protection concerns contain a written reason from the Child and Family Services agency for the decision, including reference to the impact on the child, the appropriateness of the move in accordance with the child's stage of development, and the degree of attachment to the caregiver.

I would hope that all members of the House would support this bill, Mr. Speaker.

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

No further bills?

PETITIONS

Cellular Phone Service in Southeastern Manitoba

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

And these are the backgrounds to this petition:

During early October 2011, plans—parts of southeastern Manitoba were hard hit by wildfires. Thanks to the swift action of provincial and municipal officials, including 27 different fire departments and countless volunteers, no lives were lost and property damage was limited.

However, the fight against the wildfires reinforced the shortcomings with the communications system in the region, specifically the gaps in cellular phone service.

These gaps made it difficult to co-ordinate firefighting efforts and to notify people that they had to be evacuated. The situation also would have made it difficult for people to call for immediate medical assistance if it had been required.

Local governments, businesses, industries and area residents have for years sought a solution to this very serious communications challenge.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the appropriate provincial government departments to consider working with all stakeholders to develop a strategy to swiftly address the serious challenges posed by the limited cellular phone service in southeastern Manitoba in order to ensure that people and property can be better protected in the future.

And this petition has been signed by L. Friesen, W. Friesen and J. Maynard and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Further—any further petitions?

* (13:40)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I want to draw the attention of honourable members to our public gallery where we have with us today from the Kildonan-East Collegiate 44 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Cat Miller and Ms. Jen Krantz—or Jantz, pardon me. This group is located in the constituency for the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

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

And also in the public gallery, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members where we have today from the MS Society of Canada, the Manitoba Division, Wendy O'Malley, president; Darell Hominuk, director of client services and government relations; Elizabeth Glaseman, manager of marketing, communication and special projects; Lizelle Mendozza, MS ambassador; Rick Keep, MS ambassador; and Kathy Blight, MS ambassador, who are guests of the honourable Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald).

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

And also in the public gallery, we have the former member for Portage la Prairie, Mr. David Faurshou, with us.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Budget Withdrawal Request

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, with the budget brought in two weeks ago by this Premier, he is ushering in the largest tax increase in a quarter century on the people of Manitoba. You have to go back to the dark days of the Howard Pawley 1987 government to find a tax increase this large on Manitoba families.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is wrong because it is a setback for Manitoba families. It's wrong because it breaks this Premier's promise made to Manitoba families only seven months ago.

I want to ask the Premier in advance of the budget vote: Will he reconsider this budget, the largest tax increase in a quarter century, at a time when Manitobans can least afford to pay it?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the largest decline in taxes have occurred under this government, of \$1.2 billion.

And even in these difficult times of rebalancing, in January, we announced further tax reductions for families and individuals. The personal deduction was increased by \$250. The spousal deduction was increased by \$250. The dependants deduction was increased by \$250. The education property tax credit for senior citizens has been increased by \$225 to \$1,025 over the last two budgets.

At the same time as we protected those services that matter to Manitobans—health care, education, infrastructure, services to families—we've tried to balance in an appropriate way while keeping Manitoba affordable.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, this government inherited a budget surplus. They inherited a Fiscal Stabilization Fund that was in the hundreds of millions of dollars. They inherited an economy that was growing at greater than 2.5 per cent. Today we're running record deficits. We have record tax increases, and Manitoba has moved from the middle of the pack on taxes to the second highest taxed people in Canada, behind only the people of Québec.

I want to ask the Premier, who is moving Manitoba backward in terms of the tax burden, why, on the 1st of May, May Day, he would increase the gas tax. On Canada Day, July 1st, he's going to mar that holiday by increasing taxes on women, on seniors, on Manitoba families from across the spectrum.

I want to ask the Premier: Will he reconsider this terrible budget, this budget that is founded on broken promises?

Mr. Selinger: The member should know that the budget we inherited was balanced with the revenues from selling off the telephone system. And that's how they balanced the budget. They privatized a Crown corporation after saying that they wouldn't touch it.

And the reality is that we have reduced taxes by \$1.2 billion over the last 12 years. And in this budget, we reduced taxes again for individuals, spouses, dependants; increased the tax credit for senior citizens; put further support into the Research and Development Tax Credit so the economy can grow.

And that's our objective: grow the economy, have a low rate of unemployment, educate our young people, provide health care for Manitobans. Those are our objectives: to fund those things that matter and keep Manitoba life affordable.

Government Record on Election Promises

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, with this budget, this Premier has taken a province that was running surpluses and turned it into a province that's running deficits. He took a province with more than \$500 million in the rainy day account and he's added more than \$2 billion in new debt this year alone.

He took a province that was middle of the pack in terms of taxes and has turned it into the second highest taxed province in Canada. But perhaps worst of all, this Premier said seven months ago, and I quote: Our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have future prosperity without any tax increases, and we'll deliver on that.

Mr. Speaker, will he acknowledge today his word to Manitobans means nothing?

Mr. Selinger: I will acknowledge that we're following through on the five-year plan, and we're working back towards a balanced set of books while protecting those services that matter to Manitobans. Every government in the country is following the same path more or less. We're trying to do that by minimizing job loss.

As a matter of fact, during the recession, we generated an additional 29,000 jobs in the province at a time when the private sector had stopped spending money and creating jobs. The private sector is coming back very forcefully in Manitoba. We are protecting front-line services. We're doing it while keeping Manitoba in the top three for affordability in this country.

Yes, the gas tax went up, but for every dollar we raise in the gas tax, we're investing \$2 in bridges and roads as we repair the infrastructure coming out of the flood.

It's a balanced budget. It's a budget for all Manitobans. I hope the members opposite will support it when they ask for their new roads and bridges.

Provincial Debt Projected Increase

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the NDP broke their promise and increased taxes in order to help pay for their spending addiction.

But there is another way that this NDP government is fueling this spending problem, Mr. Speaker. They are increasing the debt. Projected debt is expected to reach record levels of \$27.6 billion, an increase in 10 per cent over the last year's budget and double what it was when the NDP government first came into power. This is the equivalent of \$22,390 for every man, woman and child in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, when will the NDP government get their spending addiction under control and stop

passing on their burden onto hard-working Manitobans?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, we see it again. One day members opposite come in talking about debt levels and deficits, and then probably later in this same question period they'll start putting pressure on to spend more money. They've been—that's the pattern they've adopted.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what else we inherited from the government before us. We inherited 13 cents on the dollar going towards financing the debt that they racked up when they were in government, 13 cents; today, Budget 2012, 6.2 cents. I'll take our result over yours any day.

Servicing Costs

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, spending is up 3.1 per cent from last year's budget alone, despite what this NDP government claims in their NDP math calculator. Now Manitobans are being hit with tax increases and added debt burden on future generations.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at the cost of servicing the debt: \$857 million, the equivalent of the fourth-largest government department, up \$51 million or 6 per cent from last year. Interest rates are at historically low levels. The cost to service the debt should be going down, not up.

When will this NDP government get its spending addiction under control and stop passing on the future—to future generations, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) started talking about what we inherited from the previous government. You know what? We've—I've already pointed out—as I've already pointed out, we've inherited from that government 13 cents on the dollar to pay for the debt that they increased. We're spending 6.2 cents, a much better deal than what the member of the opposition wants us to go back to.

I'll tell you what else we inherited. We inherited from that government two sets of books—two sets of books—on how to report to Manitobans on the debt and deficit levels, Mr. Speaker. We inherited from that government no plan—no plan—to pay for unfunded pension liabilities, no plan to pay down their debt in the first place.

* (13:50)

We've put together a plan—we put together a plan that's reasonable and, Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to making sure that plan works on behalf of Manitobans.

Debt-to-GDP Ratio

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, net debt is projected to be \$16.32 billion, up \$1.5 billion from last year alone. The net debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to be 27.4 per cent, up every year for the last five years, and this is a very dangerous trend in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that this NDP government has an out-of-control spending addiction and they are relying on Manitobans to pay for it. Manitobans are paying for it now by the way of their tax increases and future generations will be forced to pay for it later because of the NDP debt burden.

When will this NDP government get their act together? When will they get some help for their spending addiction and stop burdening Manitobans with their spending problem, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Struthers: I'm really glad that my friend opposite started to talk about a trend, Mr. Speaker, because the trend was, in 1999, 32 per cent—32 per cent—when it comes to debt-to-GDP; we're well below that now. We're well below the 33 per cent that the Canadian government net-debt-to-GDP that they're dealing with. That's a positive trend which this government continues.

And I want to reassure members opposite that this government intends to keep that trend moving downwards rather than the upward trend we inherited from you.

Flooding Compensation Freedom of Information Request by Media

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, ensuring transparency and accountability when it comes to the management of the 2011 flood is essential.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* filed two freedom of information requests related to the flood compensation covering the period March 1st, 2011, to March 26th, 2012. The response they received from this NDP government was that it would take a whopping 62,723 hours to fulfill the request and it would cost the *Free Press* a staggering \$1,881,699. This response is simply ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): What is this government trying to hide?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say I'm very proud of our hard-working staff at EMO, and when they received a pretty general application of freedom of information, I must admit they [*inaudible*] sure every possible letter and email would be provided of that period of time. They did the calculations; they came up with the hours and the potential cost.

But as is the case with freedom of information requests generally, I indicated publicly, we're certainly more than prepared to provide the kind of information the *Free Press* was looking for, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we've had further conversations with the *Free Press* today and we will indeed be providing any and all of that information.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't a matter of hiding things; it was my staff at EMO wanting to provide absolutely everything, but I think we can focus it a bit more than \$1.8 million.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, for this NDP government to claim that it would take 62,723 hours to fulfill two freedom of information requests is simply preposterous. That translates into more than 32 person-years of work to comply with the request, which is the equivalent of an entire career for one person.

The government is obviously setting up roadblocks to make access to certain information about the flood impossible to access, let alone making it very difficult for the *Free Press* and also for average citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier again: What is the government trying to hide?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know the member's pretty well repeated his first question. I won't repeat in detail my response to his first question.

I will say I want to stress that we've had 30,000 claims this year—in the last year. That compares, by the way, of 1997, Mr. Speaker, with probably less than 10,000 claims. So the Flood of the Century, we now had triple the number of claims.

Our staff are still working diligently, whether it's the staff in EMO dealing with DFA claims or MASC dealing with the many other claims. There's special claims that are out there, Mr. Speaker, and that is an

ongoing effort. I just had the opportunity, by the way, to visit many of the staff in Portage, and I can tell you, you have people coming from all across the province that are part of that effort. So I don't want to be critical of the staff. They got to—a freedom of information request; they responded.

But I've also indicated very clearly on the public record, I'll repeat for the member again, we got nothing to hide. We have more—we're more than willing to provide whatever information the *Free Press* is requesting and, by the way, since yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I think we made some significant progress, in fact, provided some of the information already.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, \$1,881,699, an astonishing cost to satisfy two freedom of information requests. In spite of the minister's claims, this appears to be a cost deliberately designed to prevent this newspaper from acquiring the requested information. Transparency and accountability are paramount when it comes to managing the province's finances, and especially when it comes to managing disasters like the 2011 flood.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier again: How can his government justify throwing up these types of roadblocks to the flow of information around the flood? What are they trying to hide?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, we're not hiding anything. We're providing information. Since yesterday, we've further refined it. It's unfortunate it got to that point, and I do think, if the member was to check, he'll find that significant progress has been made in providing that information to the *Free Press*.

It's not a question of the *Free Press*, quite frankly—any media outlet, any member with the public. We had a very extensive flood last year. We're very proud of the staff that have dealt with that. We're committed. We're at \$600 million already in terms of flood compensation and other flood costs and payout, Mr. Speaker.

Our No. 1 task is most definitely to deal with the flood itself and the many claimants, the many of the 30,000 claimants who still have outstanding claims. But notwithstanding that, we're more than prepared to share the information.

I think the intent of the staff was probably to share absolutely everything. I think the *Free Press* wants to know what's relevant to their inquiry, and I think we're going to be able to provide that. We've got nothing to hide.

**Strand Theatre Project (Brandon)
Funding Concerns**

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, there are media reports that the Premier has fact-tracked—fast-tracked funding to support the Strand Theatre project in Brandon.

Can the Premier confirm this is the case today, that he has personally fast-tracked taxpayer funding for the Strand project in Brandon?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): That is not the case.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've been getting calls from constituents in Brandon, and they're confused about the role of the NDP government and the member from Brandon East in this project. They know that a family member of the member from Brandon East is directly involved in the proposed project, and there are now media reports that the Premier is fast-tracking this project to receive taxpayer money.

My constituents are concerned about the process and transparency of this government and want to know if this project is being fast-tracked, because—is it a good project or had—has good connections?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I believe I just answered that question. There is no money being fast-tracked on this project.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, I know that the citizens of Brandon support projects that are supported by solid, proper business plans. The people who live in Brandon and the Westman area have donated millions of dollars to projects that they are passionate about and in which they believe.

Can the Premier tell us if he is comfortable with the business plan for the Strand project? Is there a business plan? Is it available to the public?

Can we be assured that any approval for this project has been fair and transparent, or has it just been fast-tracked because some people have special access to the Premier?

Mr. Selinger: The member from Brandon West has closely followed the text that was prepared for him in this question. In spite of my first two answers—he didn't hear their first two answers. The project is not being fast-tracked, and I hope he will listen to those answers when considering further questions on this.

Any project that comes forward is considered on its merits. I understand this project is also before the federal government for consideration, Mr. Speaker.

**Assistant Deputy Minister
Minister's Directives on Email**

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): The Minister of Immigration says she didn't direct her ADM to send a letter asking agencies funded by taxpayers to release staff to attend an NDP political rally at the Legislature.

* (14:00)

Mr. Speaker, a very direct question: If she didn't direct her ADM, who did?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism): It's really unfortunate that this is continuing.

You know, I'm talking to a lot of groups in the province of Manitoba. People are very concerned about what is going on with immigration. That is where the people of Manitoba are focusing. And, honestly, Mr. Speaker, we had hoped that members opposite would stand with us and would stand with other Manitobans and stand up for Manitoba and stand up for the future economy of this province, stand with the more than a hundred thousand newcomers who have honoured us here by choosing to come and stay.

This is the issue of the day, Mr. Speaker, is how we continue to build this province. The door is open for them to come over and work with us to maintain the best—

Mr. Speaker: Okay, order, please. Order, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The issue of the day is ministerial responsibility and accountability. And, Mr. Speaker, the minister did not even come close to answering the very direct question.

My question to her is: Did she direct the ADM, and if she didn't, who did?

Ms. Melnick: The responsibility of a minister is to deal with the issues of the day. In this case, it is maintaining the best immigration model in the country.

And I'll remind members opposite that it was the MLA from then Seine River, Rosemary Vodrey, who signed the Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement, and she said, Manitoba now has the flexibility to provide services that reflect local needs and ensure new immigrants connect more effectively with provincial services, such as training, education and other services that help newcomers adapt to their home.

This is about newcomers adapting to this incredible province of Manitoba. Why won't they stand up for Manitoba?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

I'm having some difficulty hearing the questions and the answers during question period here, and I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members. Please, we have members of the public who are with us today in the gallery and we have members of the public who are watching us, and I would ask all honourable members just to keep the level in the Chamber down a bit, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: This, again, is about ministerial accountability. This is about credibility—credibility—of a minister who has made a mess of every single portfolio that she's had responsibility for.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask again the minister to come clean, to stand up, to take responsibility, and answer a simple yes or no.

Did she direct, politically, her assistant deputy minister to send out that directive?

Ms. Melnick: You know, Mr. Speaker, of the hundred thousand newcomers, 25,000 have chosen to move beyond the Perimeter and they've settled in a lot of the communities that members opposite are going to pretend to represent.

And the real question here, Mr. Speaker, is: When those newcomers go to their MLAs and say, are you standing up for Manitoba; are you standing with us to protect the best model in this country? The answer they're going to have to say is, no, we chose not to stand with you; we chose not to stand with the community; we chose not to stand up for Manitoba.

That's the real question, and that's the real answer.

Assistant Deputy Minister Request for Standing Committee

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, that answer's not even remotely near to the question.

The question is: Did she or didn't she? It's a simple yes-or-no question. This Minister of Immigration either directed her ADM to send that email or the civil service has become so entrenched with NDP politics it just wasn't even necessary.

I think both are possible here, Mr. Speaker. Either way it's a very serious issue, and she won't come clean on this.

Will this government call a committee and call the Minister of Immigration, the member for Riel, and the ADM, Ben Rempel, to come to that committee and answer some questions on this very serious issue?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism): Mr. Speaker, 15 years ago a unique agreement was signed in the country of Canada between the then-Tory government of Manitoba and the Liberal government that sat in Ottawa.

And one of the comments that was made that day by the federal government was this, by the—by Lucienne Robillard: These agreements demonstrate a mutual commitment toward continued co-operation between federal and provincial governments to improve the immigration system. Manitoba has specific needs and we will work to address them, Mr. Speaker.

This government has remained true to the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I want to draw to the attention of all honourable members in the loge to my right, where we have Mr. Doug Martindale, the former member for Burrows.

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I know there are some of my colleagues in here today that perhaps want to have a conversation with each other, and may I suggest to you that you might want to use the open loge on either side of the Chamber here and—perhaps even in the hallway if you wish to have a more private conversation, which I would appreciate to allow the functioning of this House to proceed.

Mrs. Taillieu: The kind of answers that we're seeing from this minister today are the same kinds of answers we saw when she was the Minister of Family Services during the Phoenix Sinclair issue.

This Minister of Immigration said at first she saw nothing wrong with this email being sent around and the AGM doing her political work. Mr. Speaker,

this just speaks to the arrogance of this minister and this government. Then she denied anything to do with it. She's been engaging the NDP's civil service in her political building-bidding.

If she's doing that, Mr. Speaker, that is an issue. If she denies responsibility for running her department, that's an issue.

I'm going to ask again. Since she won't provide any answers here, a yes-or-no simple answer to the question if she sent the email and who did she direct to send it, then let's have a committee.

Will this government call a committee? Call the minister, call the ADM, and let's get some answers to this very serious issue.

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I'll go back to my comment about Lucienne Robillard. Her last statement was: Manitoba has specific immigration needs, and we will work to address them.

This government has remained true to that agreement. This government has remained true to that commitment. Since 1999, we have had more than a hundred thousand newcomers come to this province. We contract with over 200 not-for-profits and institutional organizations. Everyone agrees, even the Council of the Federation, other premiers in other jurisdictions agree this is the best model. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

The real question is: Why won't they stand with the rest of Manitoba for this incredible province as we build this economy?

Mrs. Taillieu: The real question is: Why has this minister so arrogantly corrupted the civil service to do the NDP bidding, Mr. Speaker?

* (14:10)

There is an arrogance here when the minister and this government believes the civil service are here for their personal political bidding. An email was sent to civil servants encouraging them to leave their jobs to attend an NDP political rally. Ben Rempel's name was on that email, but, Mr. Speaker, what we want to know is: Who directed him? Was it the minister by way of a phone call? Was it minister's staff that she directed to phone by way of a phone call? Was it the Premier (Mr. Selinger) who went to Ben Rempel and asked him to send the email?

Will this government agree to set a date and a time for a committee and call the Minister of Immigration, the member for Riel, and call her

ADM, Mr. Ben Rempel, to come to that committee? And let's have some answers here, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Are we ready to proceed now? Okay.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, a democratic debate in this Chamber that had been non-partisan could hardly be called an NDP rally when all the members of the opposition and five federal parliamentary members were attending that particular meeting. And all individuals were invited to participate in a meeting that would discuss all angles, and it's regrettable that a non-partisan issue has been made partisan.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that we're very close to going right into Estimates where the members can question the minister as long as they want, as many questions as they want. And I say to members opposite, if you want to do that, then let's get on with the business of the House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

First Nations Communities Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba today there are 1,400 homes without clean running water. On November the 1st of last year, in response to my petition and my question in the Legislature, the Premier said he was willing to do more than the normal mandate to ensure that things will be done to hook up these homes and to ensure that northern Manitobans will get their access to sewer and water.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier today: What dollar amount in the recent budget does he allocate to make sure that there's clean running water to homes in northern Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): The member knows full well that we've launched training programs for the people of the First Nations in the Island Lake area to be able to do the work required to hook them up to sewer and water.

The member knows full well that this issue is not unique to Manitoba; it's in other communities as well throughout the federation where First Nations have

not received proper infrastructure. We are committed to ensuring that that infrastructure goes forward.

The biggest commitment in the budget was an additional \$90 million for the east-side road so those communities can have access to goods and services at a reasonable price. With the winter roads not being able to be kept open as long as they have been historically, the cost of getting goods and services in there to do these kinds of projects has risen very dramatically.

So we have made a very significant investment on the east side, all the way up to the Island Lake area, connecting it up with Norway House, and we want to ensure that those citizens have access to goods and services the same way as every other Manitoban has, and we are also prepared to do the additional training required.

So then in answer to the member's question, check out how much money we're putting into infrastructure for the east side of Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, today, this morning on CBC, it was revealed that Shamattawa community does not have access to clean running water at the moment and instead, when they get any water, it is dark green water and clearly not clean. The community of Shamattawa is facing a crisis. The school is closed; kids can't go to school. People can't wash up or take a shower because there's no clean running water.

I ask the Premier: What action has he taken today to make sure that there is help and action delivered immediately to the community of Shamattawa?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the community of Shamattawa is a very isolated community and it has required additional support. We've provided support there in a variety of ways, including dealing with youth issues like suicide, but we know full well that community deserves extra investment in things like sewer and water as well as more modern electricity service in that community. It is a community that's isolated. It does have special needs.

Our Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), on behalf of the government, has been there and worked with them many times, as well as our Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross). We want to work with them.

We want the federal government to do their job too and provide the proper investments in infrastructure, which are their responsibility to do that with those First Nations. We will do everything we can to help that project occur, but we want the federal government to do their job as well.

And I remind the member, when he sat around the federal Cabinet table, he had the opportunity to invest in services in those communities and he did nothing.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the federal government was ready then to partner with the Province, but the Province wasn't ready to retrofit homes as they did in Ontario under the leadership of Bob Rae. The Premier should be ashamed that in 12 years he has not taken the leadership as Bob Rae did in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, representatives of MKO and I will be travelling with Bob Rae to St. Theresa Point on May the 11th to have a look at the community there and to visit with people and to make sure that there's really an exposure of the lack of action by this Province.

In a recession in Ontario, Bob Rae committed over \$48 million to retrofit homes in First Nations communities in Ontario.

I ask the Premier: How many homes will be retrofitted as a result of his action this year? Where in the budget is the line showing he'll be retrofitting homes in northern Manitoba to make sure that those 1,400 homes are connected to clean running water?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, two places in the budget. There's money in the budget for training and support for people to have the skills to fix up their own homes. Also in the budget, under MIT, there's money for the roads and the services to help put people up there. You will also notice that we provide money for airstrips in northern Manitoba. We will do all of those things.

The federal government said they would advance more resources to hook up sewer and water in the Island Lake areas. We will also work with them on the community of Shamattawa.

We are willing to do our share, as much as any other Province in the country, but the federal government has to do their job with respect to Aboriginal and northern affairs at the federal level in investing in those critical pieces of infrastructure.

We will go beyond our remit to provide them support to do that.

And I'm very glad that he's going up there with the minister of Bob Rae when—as the leader of the federal Liberal Party. Maybe he can explain to him why he didn't do anything when he was a member of the federal Cabinet.

Merchants Hotel Purchase and Redevelopment

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Housing and Community Development please tell the House about an exciting recent announcement made regarding ongoing community-led revitalization in the North End?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Yesterday was a very proud day for many northenders as well as the province of Manitoba. We were joined by representatives of government, by elders and community organizations where we announced that the Merchants Hotel is now under new management.

The new management will add vibrancy to the community that hasn't been seen before at the Merchants Hotel. Community-led groups will identify how they want to see the hotel be used to support the community. There is many, many good ideas; one of them is affordable housing, there's also employment ideas and education as well as commercial development.

I truly believe, as the years to come, we will see that the Merchants Hotel will continually live up to its name and the slogan as the Pride of the North End.

Flooding (Shoal Lakes) Buyout Program

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Respect to the flooding on the Shoal lakes, or shall I correct the record and say Shoal lake now that it is just one.

Less than a year ago, the previous minister of Agriculture committed to a buyout program for those affected by the serious flooding. There are roughly just 80 producers affected by the flooding. To date, there has only been 10 to 15 buyout offers presented to those producers. Mr. Speaker, the deadline to participate in the voluntary buyout program is fast approaching and many still are waiting for their information.

Can the ministers tell this House when these flood victims will be getting their packages?

* (14:20)

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): In response to the question of MLA from Lakeside, I want to assure the residents in the Shoal lake district that we are very concerned of the circumstances.

We put forward our intentions to work with them and we will continue to work with them as the need arises, and fortunately Mother Nature has been relatively supportive this year for us, and we can move forward to a positive outcome to address the issues that have been brought forward.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, with the deadline fast approaching, we need to move very quickly and get that information out to those producers. In fact, the buyouts have to be fair and they have to be handled quickly and efficiently.

Those residents not yet flooded but—need to know the long-term plans regarding the Shoal lake flooding. Is there going to be a drain built? Will the roads be rebuilt, or this government to offer them a package as well, if no further action will be taken? The RMs need to know their government's long-term plans and the taxpayers need to know what the long-term plans are as well. They've waited long enough. Mr. Speaker, families that provide the safest and best food in the world need some answers, and their neighbours need answers.

What are the government's plans for the Shoal lakes, short and long term?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Yes, Mr. Speaker, as you may not be aware, as of March 31st, 2012, almost \$4 million has been paid out to some of the affected people in the area.

As an—as a reeve in an RM, which is not a fair comparison, but I can relate to the flooding situations I personally experienced as a reeve in the RM, and I want to assure the people in the Shoal lake district, as an MLA in agriculture perspective portfolio, I will work with the people of Shoal lake on behalf of the government of the day and we will be true to our wishes and promises, as we committed in our proposal.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Speech and Hearing Awareness Month

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): May is Speech and Hearing Awareness Month. It is estimated that approximately one out of every 10 Canadians suffer from speech or hearing disorder. Throughout the month, thousands of professionals working with treatment in hearing, language and speech disorders come together to raise awareness for this very important cause.

Communication skills are often taken for granted in Manitoba and in Canada even though millions of Canadians live with a hearing disorder that hinders their ability to communicate with others.

Taking this time this month to talk about hearing disorders with your family, booking a hearing test or doing activities such as reading together will help garner awareness. Through discussions and activities like this, Manitobans can identify the onset of these disorders and possibly help one another get the treatment they need.

Throughout the month of May, professionals involved in various aspects of speech, language and hearing will encourage early detection and prevention of disorders linked to hearing and speech. Early detection is important because 50 per cent of babies born with hearing loss have no high risk factors. Therefore, it is important to screen and identify all babies.

Early detection is one of the key messages communicated through Speech and Hearing Awareness Month. Approximately, one—sorry, approximately three in 1,000 newborns born in Manitoba have an educationally significant hearing loss.

Without early detection, children are more likely to develop poor speech and language skills and struggle in school, just to name a few. Unfortunately, in Manitoba there is currently no universal hearing screening program. So it is important this May to spread the word on the importance of early detection.

A universal newborn screening—hearing screening program would expand access to ensure all parents are given the option of having their newborn's hearing tested before being discharged from the hospital. Screening newborns for hearing loss should be made available to parents who would like to have their babies screened.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists and the Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association for their commitment to raise awareness of speech, hearing and language disorders in Manitoba and Canada.

These organizations work hard to optimize the hearing and language potential of Canadians and Manitobans, and I am certain the events planned all over Canada this month will raise awareness for the wonderful work they do on a daily basis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the House of the work done by some amazing Manitobans in the fight against multiple sclerosis and to acknowledge Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month, which is held every year in May.

The goal of MS Awareness Month is to increase awareness about multiple sclerosis, to inform the public about the important work of the MS Society of Canada, and to engage new and existing supporters in the efforts to end MS.

Mr. Speaker, MS is a complex disease, and Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world. It is the most common neurological disease affecting young adults. Currently, an estimated 2,700 Manitobans live with MS, and every day three more Canadians are diagnosed.

However, Mr. Speaker, those sobering statistics do not mean that those living with MS and those who work to find a cure live without hope. Research has advanced MS treatment in the past, and we share the optimism that many MS patients and their families have about CCSVI and liberation therapy. We know patients, families and doctors want answers, which is why our government has offered significant funding to support clinical trials to help to get those answers.

Every spring, thousands of Manitobans take part in the Manitoba Lotteries MS Walk. The MS Walk is the largest annual pledge-based fundraiser for the MS Society of Canada, involving over 60,000 participants and volunteers in more than 160 communities across the country. Brandon's walk was held on April 29th; Winnipeg's will be held on May 6th and begin at the University of Manitoba's Max Bell Centre. Walks will also be held in Flin Flon, Riding Mountain National Park, The Pas,

Thompson, Lac du Bonnet, Portage la Prairie, Morden and Steinbach on May 27th.

Mr. Speaker, I commend all Manitobans who have or will be taking part in this year's Manitoba Lotteries MS Walk in support of Manitobans with MS and in search for a cure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Jack Wheeler

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour Mr. Jack Wheeler, a deserving recipient of two prestigious awards.

After decades of giving his time to numerous causes in the Treherne and Rathwell area, Jack Wheeler was recently recognized at the 2012 Volunteer Manitoba awards. Mr. Wheeler was a double winner, receiving the Lieutenant-Governor's Make a Difference Community Award as well as the Lieutenant-Governor's Vice-Regal Award.

Mr. Wheeler, who is 95 years young, has made his mark on this community where he was raised. Born on the family farm, Jack was a local boy. He attended school, farmed and later retired to the town of Treherne.

His volunteerism in the community is reflected in the many facets of his life. While growing up, Jack was active in the Treherne Junior Seed Club as a member, and transferring to the Crop Improvement Club when he began farming. Mr. Wheeler contributed many hours helping to promote, organize and facilitate the 100-year continuous Treherne Agricultural Fair. An avid gardener, he has been declared the longest continuous exhibitor at the fair. In 2004, Jack was inducted into the Treherne Hall of Fame as part of a community recognition ceremony for outstanding contribution to the community.

An advocate of education, Jack also served as a school board trustee for several years. He is currently in the process of finalizing two memorial scholarships for the Treherne Collegiate through a substantial donation to the local foundation.

Jack has garnered a repertoire of impressive achievements. He remains active in the community and continually maintains an interest in all that is happening locally. He often pens his opinions and support to various projects in the local newspaper and be count—can be found in attendance at meetings discussing issues relevant to his community.

His dedication to the community has been evident over many decades, making him an ideal candidate for both the Lieutenant-Governor Make a Difference award as well as the Lieutenant-Governor's Vice-Regal Award.

In Jack's own words, volunteering isn't always about money; it's about putting in time.

Mr. Speaker, I've known Mr. Wheeler for many years, having done business with him in the past and seeing him remain active in many community events in—around Treherne. And it is my honour today to recognize the accomplishment of a dedicated Manitoban, Mr. Jack Wheeler.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Flin Flon-Creighton SPCA Awards

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge two very special Flin Flon area residents, Georgina Peake, a volunteer at the Hapnot Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, and Jade, a Siberian Husky owned by Deb Lussier. Both are heroes in their own right and were honoured recently by the Flin Flon-Creighton area Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals at their recent annual meeting on April 17th.

* (14:30)

Peake was awarded their volunteer of the year award for her work with birds and animals that take refuge at Hapnot Lake Sanctuary. For the past 25 years, she had been protecting ducks, geese, seagulls, pigeons, ravens by feeding and caring for them. It was said of her SPCA board member Sherry Barnett that Peake is very protective of the wildlife under her care and treats them much like a mother looking after her children.

Affectionately known as the duck lady, Peake has supported the SPCA through the years by knitting and sewing blankets for homeless cats and dogs. She is well regarded in the Flin Flon area as a dedicated and passionate defender of all animals that come under her care.

A here—a hero of the furrier variety has also honoured the SPCA annual meeting when Jade, a Siberian husky, won the pet hero award. Two summers ago, Jade saved Lussier's son from a stray dog in a family's backyard. The stray had attacked her son, luckily only biting through her pant. Jade challenged the other dog and managed to hold it off until Lussier could pull the girl to safety.

Mr. Speaker, those two award winners demonstrate how people and other canine friends can rise to the challenge and protect those whom they love and care for. I admire the good work that the SPCA engages in ensuring the well-being of animals of all types, and look forward to their new shelter in Flin Flon. The facility will become the newest animal shelter north of Brandon when it opens this fall. Congratulations to Georgina Peake and Jade for the heroism.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Doug Connery

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to remember a well-respected member of the Portage la Prairie community, Mr. Doug Connery. Even in his short time with us, Mr. Connery lived the full life as a local vegetable farmer, as director of Peak of the Market and an engaged community member.

Doug's passion for agriculture was first cultivated on his family farm, the notably Connery Riverdale Farms, where he took over the operations at a very early age. Mr. Connery's expertise in agriculture was quickly recognized by the farming community when he was awarded the title of Young Farmer of the Year in 1990 for Manitoba. Doug was also president of the Vegetable Growers' Association of Manitoba for many years.

While Doug was very dedicated to his work in farming, he lived a very full and balanced life with interests in overseas travel and spending time with his family. Travel was also something he liked to help facilitate—for many years students on exchanges through his involvement with the Portage Rotary Club.

Doug also enjoyed cottage life at Delta Beach. This was the setting for Doug's work in promoting the health of Manitoba lakes as president of the Manitoba Delta Beach Association.

Doug also contributed at the national scale, serving as president of the Canadian Horticultural Council. While there, he negotiated the Temporary Foreign Worker Program that continues today.

Whether as farmer and business person or member of the growers' boards or his volunteer involvement in numerous community groups, Doug's achievements speaks volumes about his talent and devotion.

On a personal note, I remember Doug best as a very strong individual who was never shy about expressing his opinions. While he was—while he will be enormously missed by his many family, friends and by the entire Portage community, I am certain, however, that his memory will live on through his innovative work and the many people that he touched.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE

(Eighth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), and the proposed motion of the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Paul, who has 25 minutes remaining.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I—the last time I left off making some comments on the budget was last month. This has to go down as one of the longest speeches in the history of the Legislature; it spans two entire months.

When I left off with my comments last month, in April, I mentioned that we had an era of 10, 12 years where the NDP took unbelievable amount of glee spending money that had been saved, that had been accumulated, opportunities that presented themselves. They took all of those opportunities, they took all that cash and spent it, and if there's one thing that makes a socialist happy, it's unfettered, unlimited cash to spend.

What's unfortunate about that, Mr. Speaker—and in the time I have, I would like to present to this House a case that this wasn't something that happened quickly; it wasn't something that happened overnight. But it, in fact, was from the moment of being elected, this NDP government moved us into a dangerous position of being terribly in debt and putting us into a position where if interest rates were to increase, even 1 or 2 per cents, could be catastrophic to the budget of Manitoba.

We saw that even when there was flooding in the province, that the province of Manitoba had difficulty with its budget because of the added burden.

This budget—this NDP government and this province is running such a razor-thin budget, Mr. Speaker, that there can be no opportunity and no chance for error. No opportunity, no chance for anything outside of what's budgeted for or they get themselves into the kind of catastrophic budgeting that happened last year, where \$1.2 billion were added to the deficit. They have built-in no room for contingencies, no room for any kind of movement when issues come up like flooding.

And, if we go back in time, we look at 1999-2000, the entire mortgage—and I think we should be very clear about the terminology we use—the entire mortgage on the province of Manitoba was \$13.459 billion. And then every year thereafter—you go to 2000-2001, there was an increase to the mortgage of 3.45 per cent. It went up to \$13 billion, 924. And then every year ensuing—2001-2002, 4.6 point—4.62 per cent increase; 2002-2003, there was a 0.39 per cent increase to the mortgage—to the debt. By 2003-2004, there was an additional 3.2 per cent; 2004-2005, a 3.26 per cent increase—and this is always from the year previous. By 2005-2006, they had gotten to the point where they added a 5.4 per cent increase to the budget; 2006-2007, 1.61 per cent increase to the mortgage. By 2007-2008—again, this is when you do this razor-thin budgeting—the NDP added to the debt—added to the mortgage, 9.58 per cent compared to the year previous. And then, Mr. Speaker, there was no looking back; 2008-2009, 6.4 per cent; 2009-2010, 8.69 per cent; 2010-2011, a 10—a whopping 10.64 per cent increase to the debt until we get where we are today, a projected 2011-2012, 7.43 per cent. The debt went from \$13.459 billion up to \$25.161 billion. That is more than doubling the mortgage on the province of Manitoba. That is catastrophic to this province; we cannot, every 10 years, double our mortgage.

And usually what happens is a mortgage is set, it then is amortized over a certain amount of years and payments are made, whether they be larger payments or small payments, but the interest is paid and then some of the principal. Mr. Speaker, we are not paying down the principal. We are barely making the interest payments, and yet the debt continues to grow.

Since 1999, we have seen more than—more than—a doubling of the mortgage on this province. A mortgage that the NDP members won't necessarily have to pay for; it's going to be the children and the grandchildren of members of this Chamber. You

cannot—you cannot continue to increase the mortgage at this rate, Mr. Speaker.

And, I read, again, 2010-2011, an increase to the mortgage of 10.64 per cent. They went from a \$21.16-billion mortgage to a \$23.42-billion mortgage. These increases are absolutely out of control. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that this is unsustainable. We know that the NDP government knows that this is unsustainable, and yet, year after year after year, we have seen these massive increases to the mortgage on this province.

* (14:40)

And what is so disquieting, what is so frustrating, is then we see members, like the member for—from Kildonan. The grise éminence of the NDP, one of their big hitters—we saw that today when the NDP gets into such difficulty, such trouble, he's the pinch-hitter for caucus. When everything's in carnage and in shambles, he's the one who has to get up and has to try and bail them out.

And what was his argument? What was his entire budget speech about? It was about that individuals that immigrated in 1949 and 1950 and 1951-52, that they were fleeing—they were fleeing a right-wing government, the Austro-Hungarian empire in Europe. He can't even get his facts straight. The Austro-Hungarian empire came to an end in 1918. He hasn't even got his dates straight. He hasn't even got his facts straight. That is one of the key, one of the pillars of the NDP caucus, of the NDP government. His idea of giving a throne speech is going on about some fictitious, false immigration that took place that he hasn't got a clue what he's talking about. Something that an administration, a government that fell in 1918, that's why there was immigration in 1949. And I'd like to point out to the member that people were fleeing a left-wing, Stalinist government. That's why they were leaving Europe. It was because of Stalin and his cohorts, because of the communist governments in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, and the list goes on and on. That's why they were leaving.

But this is the kind of garbage that we have members opposite putting on the record. And yet, when they—and these are all numbers that come out of their budget books. They should be looking at the mortgage that is being foisted on this province. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how often one can point out to this House—my first speech was in 2000, and in each speech going forward—each speech, the former member for Springfield, the current member

for St. Paul, and all other members of the opposition benches, those that are currently here and those that used to serve here, we got up one after the other and we warned that you cannot—you cannot—keep increasing the mortgage on this province. And I repeat again, some of the highlight years: 2001-2002, a 4.62 per cent to the mortgage; 2005-2006, a 5.4 per cent increase to the mortgage; '07-08, 9.58 per cent increase to the mortgage. And that's only to the year previous. That's not to when they got into government. That's just from the year previous.

And then we get into 2007 all the way to 2013. The numbers—nine and a half per cent, six and a half per cent, eight and a half per cent, 10 and a half per cent, seven and a half per cent. That's unsustainable. And that members sit in their seats and clap for speeches that talk about the kind of garbage that we had from the member from Kildonan about immigration coming from countries that collapsed in 1918, and that's why they came in 1949—that's the best you have to offer? Does nobody look at the numbers, the kind of mortgage that we are foisting? There's not even a levelling off of the increase that we're having on the mortgage that's going to be foisted on future generations.

What I just can't understand, and I think the public is starting to see, is that there is no plan, that there is nothing there, there is no discussion. There doesn't seem to be any debate on levelling off the increase of the debt of this province and trying to figure out some kind of a repayment plan.

Instead what we have is an enormous tax grab, the likes of which we haven't seen from the dark, nasty, ugly Howard Pawley days. We haven't seen those kinds of tax increases—in fact, we haven't seen those kinds of deficits since the Howard Pawley dark, nasty, evil days. We are back to the Howard Pawley days of—I'd like to say the dirty—the dirty '80s. That's exactly what's happening here. We are seeing that kind of tax and add-on to the mortgage that we saw back in the Howard Pawley days.

The NDP were thrown out en masse because of that, and you would have thought that sitting in opposition they would have figured out that maybe they shouldn't come back and foist the kind of reckless spending and the kind of reckless growth in the mortgage of this province. But they seem to have learned nothing, because they are right back into it. In fact, the last four years have seen such a substantial growth in the mortgage that to even

curtail it now would take unbelievable amount of courage.

And, instead, what do they do? They go to the taxpayers, they hit them—fact, today being May the 1st—May Day of all days—we've seen one of the largest tax—gas tax increases in the history of this province. And the tax increases are only going to further come at Manitobans. And when Manitobans wake up one day, they're going to realize how severe these tax increases are.

And the members opposite are all going to be getting up later on today and each and every one of them is going to vote for a substantial—for a major tax increase on their constituents—tax increases that they ran against when they ran in the last election.

The member—the individual who ran against me in St. Paul ran on a commitment that they would not raise taxes, and each one of these MLAs opposite, Mr. Speaker—each and every one of them got elected because they made a promise that they would not raise taxes. And what's the first thing they did? The first opportunity they got, they're going to get up and they're going to vote for tax increases, the likes we haven't seen since the dirty '80s, since we had Howard Pawley in government. We have not seen those kinds of taxes before. And in—and what are they going to do? Each and every one of them is going to penalize their constituents—is going to penalize the working men and women who struggle to make ends meet. Each one of them is going to get up today and vote for a gas tax that they never ran on.

I would ask any one of them to get up on a point of order, maybe the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), maybe the member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun), I—certainly not the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). Perhaps others would like to get up on a point of order and say, no, that they didn't make a commitment—no tax increases—because they certainly didn't run on a commitment.

In no brochure and in no speech and in no debate was there ever a mention of a tax on gas increase; not once. The member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), did he run on a tax increase on gasoline? No he didn't. In fact, he ran on a no tax increase; none whatsoever.

And yet they sit there and they're going to vote for this tax increase, Mr. Speaker, although it was something that was never raised in the last election. One of the biggest tax grabs this province has ever

seen and it was never once committed to. They never got a mandate to raise taxes like this; never once.

And in fact, members opposite who talk about all kinds of stuff are going to be the same ones who are going to increase taxes on volunteers by 50 per cent. That's their idea of volunteerism—on getting volunteers involved. And it—and goes on and on and on.

And I ask our reincarnation, the new member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) who used to be the former member for Elmwood. Did he run on raising taxes? Was that in his brochure? Did he have in his brochure, and we will commit to raising gas taxes in the province of Manitoba. No, it was nowhere to be found in his brochure. Did he mention it at the door once, the member for Elmwood? No, never once.

What about the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau)? Did he run on raising gas taxes? Not once. It wasn't in his brochure either.

The list goes on and on; nine-plus tax increases and yet not one of them ran on it, Mr. Speaker. And it's unfortunate that the public was misled; it's unfortunate with all of those tax increases. It's unfortunate, with everything that the NDP has done, that the mortgage on Manitobans continues to go up. It gets bigger and bigger and bigger and the only reason why this province can still sustain it is because of low interest rates.

And woe us—and the day will come—woe us as a province when interest rates go up, we are not going to be able to sustain this large of a mortgage. It is unsustainable; it is going to be a crisis for this province when interest rates go up.

Mr. Speaker, I could never vote for this budget. I could never put my name to this budget, especially because I also ran that we wouldn't raise taxes and I wouldn't vote for a tax-grab budget and that includes all 37 members of the opposition—all 37 members of the NDP who ran on a platform that they would not raise taxes and now are going to get up today and they're going to vote for nine tax increases, one of which that kicked in today.

*(14:50)

Manitobans woke up and found out that they are now going to pay even more for the gasoline, even though there was no commitment to it—fact the NDP ran on the promise not to raise taxes. Shame on them when they get up and vote. They should do the right thing and they should vote against a budget, just like

we will on this side. We are going to do the right thing. We're going to stand by what we said in the election. Our yes will be our yes and our no will be our no, unlike members opposite who don't have the 'forwithall' to stand by their convictions. They ran on a tax freeze; they should have stayed on that. Instead, what are they going to do? They're going to vote for it. Unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, but we will stand with our word. Thank you for this opportunity.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to speak to the budget, and I want to first welcome you back to the House.

I certainly will be—have a more charitable view of the budget than the previous member who has spoken, and, you know, I'm prepared to accept some of his criticisms of the budget, but I think he should be a little bit more fair and at least present the other side. And the other side is that for each bit of debt that he talks about, there's an asset that's backing up that debt, and I notice that he doesn't—and none of the members really talk about the value of the assets.

You know, when we spend millions of dollars on a stadium, the money just doesn't disappear. There's a stadium there, you know, to back it up. When we build a hydro plant, there's a hydro plant there to back it up. The money just doesn't, like, just disappear without assets. So you should be a little bit fairer in your criticisms.

Now I, you know, read the budget and I looked at page 6 and we talked about—the Finance Minister talked about the potential for a east-west power grid. And you know, I listened to most of the Conservative speakers here in the budget debate, and I don't think a single member has even referenced the subject of an east-west power grid. And certainly their Premier Filmon, in days gone by, made an attempt to build an east-west power grid, as has other premiers in this province, and it's a dream that's sort of eluded us over the years. And I think that, you know, by focusing on it in the—on the budget speech, I think that it bodes well for the future because we have potential here to develop this dream.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Back in the 1800s, we had John A. Macdonald as the prime minister and the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, had a dream and a vision of a united Canada, and he was able to build a railway across the country, east to west, not north-south, to unite the—unite Canada. And in a way,

an east-west power grid today would be our version of that national railway.

Now, we're not without allies in this fight, Mr. Acting Speaker, because as early as July 3rd of 2007, the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, endorsed the plan. In fact, he announced a \$586-million payment to Ontario, which, by the way, was part of the \$1.5 billion Canada ecoTrust fund, and this money was, I am told, supposed to be put towards an east-west power grid.

And, in fact, we have the—we have Steven Fletcher, who is a Conservative member, a Member of Parliament for Manitoba—in fact, he's a minister in the federal government—and he and I have talked about the east-west power grid. As a matter of fact, I made a speech on it a year or so ago, and he came over to talk to me about it at that time and wanted to get together to further discuss it.

And it came to—into focus when I saw Conservative members of Parliament last week sitting here in the—on the loges and wondering—you know, they're here to complain about a program, an immigration program that, incidentally, was started by a Conservative provincial government, but has been very popular in Manitoba and has got results. And they've come here to support the federal government's takeover of a very successful program.

And, in fact, what we should be asking them is where are they, where were they, where are they going to be in this whole issue of an east-west power grid.

And so I would suggest, Mr. Acting Speaker, that perhaps the members in this House, the Conservative members in this House, might even entertain, might even suggest, might even propose to the House Leader, a all-party resolution in this Chamber—that we pass an all-party resolution in support of an east-west power grid.

I note that the National Assembly in Québec is only too quick to pass all-party resolutions when there is a need for development in the province of Québec.

I know that the—former Premier Filmon was only too quick to propose an all-party resolution on the issue of Meech Lake and we've had other all-party resolutions in this House over the years. And I think it's an appropriate time, given that the government has recognized a need for an east-west power grid and has actually dealt with the issue on page 6 of the budget.

And we know we have federal support from Steven Fletcher in Manitoba. Then, I guess, what we want to do is we want to ask the Conservative caucus here: Where are they on that issue? Where do they stand on that issue and what—and would they support an all-party resolution on that issue?

And, in terms of Steven Fletcher, the question is whether he can get his caucus members together to support that initiative as well, because I notice that the Conservative caucus in Saskatchewan were a little slow on the draw when the issue of the takeover of the potash corporation happened a year ago. But at the end of the day, they did get onside with Brad Wall and they were able to stop the federal government and get the federal government involved in turning around that takeover of the potash corporation.

So I use that as an example of something that we can do if we work together for a common cause. So I would want to know where these members stand on the issue. I'd like to know whether Steven Fletcher will have the support of Shelly Glover, Joy Smith, Candace Hoepfner, James Bezan, all of whom were here a week ago, and the other members of the Conservative caucus who are not very visible on this issue and have not spoken out and not taken a position on this issue at all.

So there's a very powerful arguments for an east-west power grid, and that is that Ontario has a number of gas-fired plants—or coal-fired plants that it was scheduled to take out of service as early as two years from now in 2014. And the amount of megawatts that these plants use is in the neighbourhood of 6,500 megawatts.

Now, just by way of comparison, you should know that Manitoba's hydro capacity when fully developed will be roughly 10,000 megawatts. We have, at this point, developed 50 per cent of that capacity—so 5,000 megawatts.

So we have potential just in Ontario alone to replace 6,500 megawatts of coal-fired generation. If we look to Saskatchewan we find the same problem. Saskatchewan is trying to get out of its coal-fired plants and, you know, up until a year ago, it was looking at the nuclear option—as was Ontario, I might add.

And the federal Throne Speech—I believe it was last year—made reference to, I believe, 90 per cent clean energy commitment with—by 2020, which would be 12 years from now.

So if they were going to do that, if they were to meet those goals they would have to have—I believe it is between eight and 12 nuclear plants built in the next eight years. We know that's not possible. So we have a, you know, a demand for the energy. We just don't have a way of getting the electricity to the markets. So we have to get together and make the argument to the federal government and get the federal government onside.

Now how they would fund the project is something that we would have to work out, but certainly there are funding options and funding models available. Certainly, the Obama administration, United States, embarked on a plan to produce clean energy in the United States. So there's a lot of initiative in the United States in this area. There's initiative in Canada, but so far this east-west power grid idea has not been developed.

* (15:00)

And I will tell you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that it's not gone unnoticed in the province of Québec, because, in fact, a Bloc Québécois MP has suggested an east-west power grid, but guess what? Their east-west power grid would be from Québec to Ontario. So if we sit on our hands and let this opportunity pass, what we may find—we'll find an east-west power grid all right, but it's going to be an east-west power grid from Québec to Ontario.

We've looked at providing power to Ontario and Saskatchewan, but we also have to look at the possibilities of extending the grid into British Columbia. Once the project is under way, at that point we'll be able to look at the potential for even further extension of it, and that will in fact allow us to develop our hydro potential in Manitoba and allow us to produce even more power and develop more plants.

So this is the type of vision that we want to look at. There's also security issues here. The more routes we have for bringing power to market is very positive in terms of the issues I—such as weather, where we've had ice storms and so on in Québec that have frozen, you know, shut down the province.

And—10 minutes more? Anyway, Mr. Acting Speaker, I wanted to also make some comments on some other points here on the—in the budget.

In terms of my own community, we have some developments that are happening now. If you drive down Henderson Highway, you'll see that the old Kelvin Community site, at least in the next month,

will be redeveloped. And I want to say that the Province is putting in 50 per cent of the funding; it's matching funds with the City to redevelopment—redevelop the site. And, basically, an Elmwood Community Recreation Review had taken place over the last few months and there was a number of recommendations. And they include a new entry plaza, basketball courts and nets, skate spot, walking paths, pleasure and skill skating rinks, skating rink improvements, landscaping improvements, and possible renovations to the existing dressing room. And this is only the beginning, because there's talk of even a second phase of this project.

In terms, Mr. Acting Speaker, of the Disraeli Bridge, you will notice that all four lanes are staying open as promised. There was an exception this weekend for a day while they were pouring concrete on the new side. The bridges will be completed in October of 2012, and there'll be some further construction over the next year for a final 2013 completion. So I wanted to assure my constituents that the construction of the Disraeli is on schedule as planned.

And I wanted to also make some more comments, depending on how much time is available.

We have a first in Canada in the—Manitoba is the only province—still the only province to eliminate the small business tax. And I think that when we hear a business complain about the government, I think the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) come back to them that they really have the—we are the only province that has eliminated the small business tax is a very compelling argument and sort of leaves them a little short in their criticisms. That is certainly something that you would not expect—or that certainly they wouldn't expect from an NDP government to do. And being the first in Canada and even the—and now still the only one is certainly interesting.

The free—the issue of the free cancer drugs is another first in Canada. And I would say to you that this is something that just makes a lot of good sense, Mr. Acting Speaker, to provide cancer drugs to people. And that is something else that other provinces have not come to grips with.

Now, I—there is a current issue, Mr. Acting Speaker, in that the City is looking to provide \$7 million in corporate welfare for a water park. And I know that it's been observed that one very good use of that \$7 million would be to split it up and use it within the various communities of the city to

improve our community infrastructure and our playgrounds in our area. It doesn't make sense to me that a profit making—a for-profit company would need to take one of the best sites in the city to develop a water site and then—a water park, and then get—hit the taxpayers for a \$7-million subsidy. I mean, you know, build your water park, but, you know, you could do that without public subsidy, especially, when our local communities are in great need of recreation facilities, which, by the way, don't produce revenue. They're not designed to produce revenues.

So the—another issue, Mr. Acting Speaker, that I noticed that the Conservatives did not take a position on, and I expected that they would be—they would be very encouraged about, and that is a reduction of the RHAs from, actually, now 11 to five, but 13 to five. You know, where have the Conservatives been on this issue? I mean, here we actually do some restructuring and reduce some jobs in the government and where are they? They're usually leading the charge on these types of issues.

And, you know, it was a Conservative government of Gary Filmon who brought in the RHAs in the first place. They brought in 13 RHAs. And, by the way, this was another one of these ideas that—you know, I think it came from Australia or New Zealand at the time, and different parties of different stripes across the country adopted the RHA approach. But, Mr. Acting Speaker, the whole idea here was to leverage the hospital system to allow for central purchasing of computers and supplies and so on, and allow for greater efficiencies in the system. But at the end of the day, I thought we were going to have a withering away of some of the bureaucracy. That when we brought in the RHAs, we were going to actually replace some of the bureaucracies within the hospital system or within the Health Department. But, no, that's not what happened.

When the Conservatives brought in this—they talk about bureaucracy, but it is the biggest bunch of bureaucrats around. They bring in a big bureaucracy, load it all up, and then didn't replace anybody underneath. And then—so we inherited this system. We inherited the system, and they sit around and criticize it. Now we reduce it. We reduced it from 13 to 11, and where were they? Did they say great job? No, they just criticized some more. Now we reduce it to five. You know, five is less than 11; we're getting smaller. So where are you?

Like, let's hear some positive comments about why this is a good idea. You're the ones that want to get rid of the bureaucracy. What about the mergers of the MLCC and Lotteries? You'd think they'd be out there saying how good that idea would be, that it was a great idea, and we should do more of it. We haven't heard a peep from them. It's as if they got on the budget, got into a couple of paragraphs and stopped. You know, there's more pages to it than, you know, one. They should read further.

They—when the Conservatives had—they talk about debts and deficits. Now there's a—you know, here's an example. And, you know, they were hit with record deficits—\$860 million back in Clayton's—Clayton Manness' day—back in the early '80s, and it was hard for them to deal with it. But, you know, how did they deal with it? Well, what do they do? They hired Connie Curran. They brought in an American consultant; they paid her \$4 million to fire nurses. Now, you know that the demographics of the country are aging and that you're going to need more nurses. Like, and you had to pay \$4 million to a consultant to tell you to cut health care, cut nurses when you know the population is aging. I mean, does that make any sense at all?

Well, then, when that didn't work so well, what else did they do? They went and they decided to sell the MTS. That's another example of their, you know, balancing the budget. Well, let me see, we have a budget deficit, what are we going to do? Well, let's fire a thousand nurses. Let's cut the health-care system. Oh, and let's sell the telephone system. So how do they—how do these geniuses—these business geniuses—sell the telephone system? First of all, they hired some of their buddies to come out and give an assessment. And they valued the thing at \$13 a share, which, by the way, you know, it trades for around \$40 a share these days. They valued it at \$13 a share, and then they went and they gave their shareholders a subsidy of—I think it was \$6—so they subsidized even half of the \$13 and then when the thing sold like hotcakes and was oversubscribed, they say, well, what a great success we are. Right? We sold a product for—a \$100 product, we sold it for \$50; what a success.

*(15:10)

And, then, they went and took that money and they used it for the rainy day fund to try to get themselves past the next election, but fortunately the public saw through it and they didn't get past the next

election, and there they are; they're here, where they've been since 1999.

Anyway, thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker, and—just have to keep the whip happy here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): The Chair now recognizes the honourable member for—oh, sorry—the Acting Government House Leader on House business.

House Business

Hon. Andrew Swan (Acting Government House Leader) On House business, I'm rising to table the Estimates order agreed to by the government and opposition House leaders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): We thank the honourable member for that.

Mr. Swan: Notwithstanding this order, I'd ask that you canvass this House to see if there's leave to make an amendment so that the departmental Estimates for Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation be considered in room 254 on May 2nd.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Leave has been requested. Does leave—on a canvass the House, is there leave that the departmental Estimates for Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation be considered in room 254 on May the 2nd? Is there leave?

Leave has been so granted. Thank you.

Mr. Swan: Thank you. On further House business, I'd like to confirm it's still our intention to have the private members' resolution, moved by the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) and Manitoba volunteers, which was introduced last week, to be considered next Tuesday morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): For the notification of the House, the private members' resolution, moved by the member for Burrows on Manitoba volunteers, which was introduced last week, will be considered next Tuesday.

* * *

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Now, resuming with presentations on the budget and budget amendment, the Chair recognizes the honourable member for Riding Mountain.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Acting Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in the House as the MLA for Riding Mountain, to put a few words on the record with regard to the budget and,

specifically, to the challenges that the constituents of Riding Mountain have with this budget.

I think what Manitobans, and especially my constituents within Riding Mountain, have seen, is that it's been identified and it's been confirmed that the NDP do have a spending problem.

This year, the Finance Minister is spending—or planning to spend, \$504 million more than the core government will get in revenue, and, Mr. Acting Speaker, this is very concerning because it adds salt to the wound.

Instead of focusing on restraining spending, Budget 2012 increases taxes on Manitobans by \$184 million per year, and we've seen a lot of hardships occur in rural Manitoba over the last eight or nine years that I've been an MLA.

We've seen the BSE; we've seen a decline in hog production; we have seen small communities become smaller because of red tape and regulation, and we continue to see that trend continue with this government. There doesn't seem to be any interest in ensuring that our communities prosper and grow. There seems to be more of an interest in lining their pockets and taking care of their friends.

We warned Greg Selinger that he was hiding—sorry.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Order. It's customary to refer to honourable members by their title of their constituency.

Mrs. Rowat: Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

We warned that this Premier (Mr. Selinger) was massaging the books, and that he was actually hiding over \$600 million of deficit from Manitobans during the election. We shared that with our constituents, and very, very, very concerned Manitobans were raising this issue and wanted to know how this government was going to pay for that. And then, when the government came out and said that they're going to balance their budgets by 2014, that raised a lot of red flags for a lot of Manitobans.

How can you—can you balance a budget by 2014 without raising taxes or making cuts, Mr. Deputy Speaker? So, what do we see today? Less than six months from the election, we see this government bringing in taxes and the highest amount of taxes since Howard Pawley's term in government.

The PST is being expanded to more services and insurance premiums, which will cost Manitobans 95.5 million more dollars this year. We saw the PST expanded to lawyers and accountant fees and, you know what, that was a direct hit to a lot of service organizations: women's shelters, non-profits who actually then have to pay PST on services that they needed to continue to provide, you know, supports for families at risk.

Now, we see this government gouging those types of organizations even further, Mr. Acting Speaker, by increasing the gas tax by 2.5 per cent. Today's May Day, so today Manitobans, when they go to the pumps, they'll see that there's an increase in tax on families, and it's taking another \$44.5 million out of Manitoba's wallets.

You know, Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm a firm believer in that hard-working Manitobans should decide how they want their money spent, and I believe that when you would ask—I'm sure if you would ask a gentleman or a woman at the gas station whether they were happy seeing the increase in Manitoba's gas tax, I would say you would likely not find somebody favourable to this increase.

As a rural member, I find it, you know, rather interesting that this is one of the taxes that the government would increase. So many services and so many businesses rely on transportation to do business, even our schools.

Our school buses have to travel great distances to get children to school, and especially with the quality of roads in some of the areas in my constituency, some individuals are having to travel an extra 30 kilometres to get their children to school. So, by having an increase in taxes—tax on gas is going to—nowhere be able to meet the infrastructure challenges that so many communities in so many regions of this province are seeing a significant deficit.

During the election, I heard from an—from most of the 25 municipalities—if not all of them—with the No. 1 issue that they had was infrastructure deficit, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I don't believe that I've seen anything from this government to speak about it—a plan or a strategy to address that. We've seen a gas tax, but we have—to raise money. This government is saying it's for the benefit of infrastructure. Well, we've seen a reduction in the infrastructure budget, so I would say to this government that, put your money where your mouth is, and actually demonstrate that you have a commitment to

Manitoba's concerns with regard to infrastructure, and address that.

We saw the NDP sit idly by, Mr. Acting Speaker, while the Brandon University strike inflicted a measurable stress on the students in Brandon last fall, and they could have prevented this from becoming the longest faculty strike in Manitoba's history. But they sided with their labour friends ahead of students and families, and I walked with the families and talked with the families. And a significant number of these families live in my communities within Riding Mountain, and they're very disappointed in how poorly this government handled that situation.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, my son is graduating this year, and out of his class, I think there were seven or eight kids that were actually thinking of going to Brandon University, had registered or were going through the process of registering, and they are all—three of the seven are now going to Regina. They're going to the University of Saskatchewan. They don't even want to come to school in Manitoba, and that says a lot to me as a legislator. And it's shameful that this government, actually, has caused that type of significant decision-making by families who don't want to live through another strike and put their children's education in jeopardy. So I believe this government has failed Manitoba families again, in not providing quality education for Manitoba youth within rural Manitoba.

*(15:20)

With regard to agriculture producers and industry stakeholders, they continue to lose faith, Mr. Acting Speaker, in this NDP government. The budget contained little in the way of positive new initiatives for this sector.

And I believe that with regard to rural development within this government they've actually taken away a tool that was very important to a lot of rural communities, the Community Works Loan Program. This was a program that actually assisted small businesses to start. Often small businesses in rural Manitoba start out of their homes or out of a small main street front walk-up. And, Mr. Acting Speaker, when you take away that type of loan program or that type of support, you actually take away an opportunity for an individual to start a business.

And to put salt on the wound again, Mr. Acting Speaker, the government is actually asking for their—

for the money back from the municipalities. And it's not significant, you know, in a lot of ways, but it, you know, it's probably more in that they have the nerve to ask for that money back. Again, it's another hit and, again, a grab from this government to try to balance its books on rural Manitoba.

The Community Works Loan Program could help a business start, maybe a pedicure-manicure business in a small community. Oh, but then again, there's more red tape, Mr. Acting Speaker, because now the PST is going to expand to that type of a business and that type of service in a community. And, you know, the member for St. James (Ms. Crothers) said, oh, 1 per cent of the population of the world can only afford pedicures and manicures. Well, that's a bunch of crock. You know, this was more about creating more red tape for Manitoba business owners or potential business owners, to actually go out and start making an honest living, and creating opportunities for communities and for young people to work in these areas. So I'm extremely disappointed to see this government take that stand.

It was interesting to learn that Manitoba remains the child poverty capital of Canada, Mr. Acting Speaker, and a title our province has sadly held for the last five years, and despite the NDP trying to tell us there are 43,000 children in Manitoba living in poverty. So when you start increasing taxes, that works against Manitoba families and Manitoba families who are struggling to make a living and struggling to raise their families. You—this is a government that has actually turned its back on so many Manitoba families.

I'm very concerned, Mr. Acting Speaker, with how this government failed to actually listen to Manitobans when they were at the doors, and that was only—short six months ago. And they should have realized that Manitobans were looking for some leadership, looking for support, looking for a way to make our province stronger.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, it appears that this budget presented by this government shows their arrogance and disconnect with Manitobans. So I cannot support this budget, but I will support the amendments put forward by our deputy—or by our leader—and encourage government side to support what we believe are important amendments that address the shortcomings of this budget.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Recognizing the honourable Premier.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): As always, budgets are about choices and Budget 2012 is finding responsible ways to reduce spending, which means more money going into our schools and hospitals.

Budget 2012 is focused on what matters most to Manitoba families. We have protected front-line services and supported businesses, while making responsible choices and keeping an affordable, high quality of life for Manitobans.

We have invested in education and training, we'll rebuild roads and communities, help entrepreneurs develop new products and services through our innovation fund and process, and welcome more skilled immigrants than ever before here in the province of Manitoba.

As a result, our economy has steadily created thousands of good jobs. Our population is growing and getting younger. As a matter of fact, I believe the average age of our population now in Manitoba is 37 years old.

In recent years, however, Manitoba has faced a number of challenges. In the fall of 2008, a global financial crisis sent shockwaves throughout the economy, all around the world. Jobs were lost and many families saw their savings disappear. Some called for reckless, deep cuts to key services. Others said we should do the exact opposite. In fact, Mr. Acting Speaker, each and every one of them stood up in this House and voted exactly for that plan, of reckless cuts in the budget. They were unanimous. They demanded that we gut the services Manitoba families valued. And, to be fair, they were only being consistent.

Every single year since 1999 they have made their priorities clear. The members opposite are in it for people at the top, and out of touch with the values and priorities of Manitoba families. They have been consistently negative with no positive solutions to contribute.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we faced a choice. While some called for reckless, deep cuts to services, we chose a different path. We took action and we put families first. Our balanced approach protected jobs and the services families depend on most. Manitoba did better than most during the crisis, exceeding the national average for economic growth by more than a percentage point, each and every single year.

Over the last five years, we have led the country in economic growth. In short, our balanced approach worked. In fact, *Maclean's* magazine called this success the Manitoba miracle. Manitobans know that this resiliency and optimism, in the face of challenges, is not a miracle. It is just the way we do things in Manitoba. We look out for each other, we build for the future. As a government, we reject both reckless cuts and irresponsible spending.

This past year has been challenging. Still we have a growing province, with a growing 'population' and a growing economy. Over the last year we have led the country in economic growth, and we're creating jobs. Over the last 24 months, the private sector has added 19,300 new workers, the third best among the provinces. Governments around the world continue to confront the need to contain spending while providing important services. In lean times, families and businesses find ways to ensure they have money for the things they need.

Our government is also doing its part to reduce spending, while ensuring the needs of Manitobans are met. Budget 2012 will build and open new health-care facilities, and invest in new equipment. QuickCare clinics will be opened, same- or next-day medical appointments and primary health-care networks will help take pressure off our emergency rooms. Budget 2012, we'll train and hire more doctors, nurses, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and health technologists to provide quality front-line health care.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Budget 2012 makes targeted investments to support Manitoba families. In 2008, we promised families we would fund 6,500 child-care spaces and strengthen our child-care system. Mr. Speaker, at the end of this year, we will have delivered on that commitment.

A total of 54 child-care centres are being built or expanded. As well, we will continue to support better training and wages for child-care workers. And to each of these things the members opposite will say no. They will also say no to 8,000 child-care spaces and 35 new child-care centres that have been put in place. They also said no to 7,000 training spaces for youth, and they also said no to 4,000 new apprenticeships here in Manitoba.

* (15:30)

Our government has spent the last decade rebuilding our universities, after they were neglected

so badly in the 1990s. Since 1999, enrolment is up 40 per cent. University operating funds are up 90 per cent. And over the last decade we've seen our \$800 million in new capital investments in post-secondary institutions, new learning centres for students, new student centres, new housing, new facilities that make our universities a drawing card for people all over the world.

We have the new Richardson science and environment complex at the University of Winnipeg. We have the new Health Studies Building at Brandon University and le pavillon de science à l'Université St. Boniface. We've got the new engineering building. We have Project Domino, which has generated the new lab—the art lab at the University of Manitoba. We see the new student facilities going up at the University of Manitoba. We see rehab of the architecture building at the University of Manitoba.

So we're rebuilding our post-secondary system in Manitoba after members opposite did their very best to destroy it through their neglect. And the members opposite has opposed us every step of the way on all of these projects, voting against it, saying no, every single step of the way.

We are providing additional funds for our colleges and remain committed to supporting future college expansion. Strong and predictable funding to our universities will ensure academic excellence, affordability for students, more timely completion rates and better recognition of educational experience between institutions.

Manitobans want and deserve to feel safe in their homes and neighbourhoods. Under our budget, Winnipeggers will see more police officers walking the beat downtown, as well as in the neighbourhoods across the city. Young people at risk will have more opportunities to avoid a life of crime. Prosecutions will move through the system faster, and the province will work with Ottawa to make gang recruitment a crime, among other measures. And I note in Ottawa this week there's been a private member's bill brought forward on that idea that we consistently advocated for, that gang recruitment should be a crime.

We have provided funding to the City of Winnipeg to hire 20 new firefighters this year, and are also providing funding to four new firefighter paramedics in Brandon, unprecedented commitment to those front-line services that protect people's lives.

Our five-year plan is based on stimulating the economy, in the short-term protecting services and setting out a schedule to return to surplus by Budget 2014.

Today, our province is climbing successfully out of the downturn. Manitobans are seeing positive results. Over the past year we have led the country with the lowest unemployment rate of any province. Public services are strong. Our plan is working, but the go-global economy remains fragile. Now is not the time to put at risk our positive momentum. That's why this year we are sticking to the plan.

Budget 2011 builds on Manitoba's success with a balanced approach that puts families first. Our budget puts money back into the pockets of Manitoba families. With tax cuts delivered since 1999, we'll save Manitobans over \$1.2 billion every single year. They will see our commitment to follow through on increasing the basic personal exemption by \$250 a year, and that will also apply to spouses and dependents, three-lifting of the ceiling for personal deductions—real tax cuts that make a difference to Manitoba families, Mr. Speaker.

They will see an increase in the seniors' maximum property tax credit by \$75 this year as well as \$150 last year, lifting it to the highest it's ever been in Manitoba: \$1,025, Mr. Speaker. And they will see legislation that will guarantee Manitoba families will pay the lowest combined bills in the country for electricity, home heating, and auto insurance because we own the Crown corporations here in Manitoba and we know they can deliver good value to Manitobans by staying in public ownership.

They will see a hold on tuition fees and Pharmacare deductible increases to the rate of inflation, and they will see improvements to student aid. All of this will be done in the interests of keeping Manitobans' life affordable here in the province.

We also invest in health care, so that every Manitoban who wants a family doctor will have one by 2015. Doctors will work in teams, with nurse practitioners, with nurses, with front-line providers of dietetic services, for example, with mental health workers, with other people that—social workers that will outreach to the community. When doctors work in teams, they can provide more services to Manitobans, and that's what we're going to do through our community health clinics, QuickCare clinics, and refurbishing our hospitals throughout the province of Manitoba.

We will invest in health care as we go forward, but we will also invest in education and training so that we ensure that Manitoba's young people come out of this recession better equipped to enter the labour market.

We also continue to build hydroelectricity in Manitoba, our green and renewable source of clean energy; 98 per cent of the energy provided to Manitobans comes from hydroelectricity. We won't do what the members opposite would like to do: find backdoor ways to privatize Manitoba Hydro, find ways to stall it and tie it up in mothballs, find ways to delay projects, find ways to damage the reputation of Manitoba Hydro with our foreign customers, our—by requiring it to destroy boreal forest. These are things we will not do because we recognize that the long-term future of Manitoba depends on a clean, green, reliable, affordable source of energy. That's what we'll do with Manitoba Hydro.

And as we move forward on projects like bipole, transmission, Keeyask and Conawapa generating facilities, we will grow our power exports, create jobs and expand business opportunities inside of Manitoba with our green energy fund, which we just announced late last week; \$30 million which will help Manitoba businesses find ways that they can provide goods and services to Manitoba Hydro and grow their own jobs in the private sector here in Manitoba.

I was very pleased to be at CG, Crompton Greaves, where we announced this project. They, themselves, are looking to expand their footprint in Manitoba. They build some of the best transformers in the world for Manitoba Hydro, and then, based on the success they have there, they can sell those transformers to other places around the world. That's what we want: good jobs in Manitoba, clean jobs in Manitoba and exportable goods that can move around the world. And that is why we are creating our energy opportunities office and the fund that I mentioned of \$30 million, to help Manitoba businesses take advantage of the economic opportunities arising from these investments.

We will also work at the national level to promote the east-west grid. This is something that's been on the books, talked about since the time of Sterling Lyon, back in the late '70s and the early 1980s. And you know what? That's something that we're going to work towards. We are starting to see more interest on that to the provinces to the west of us, to the provinces to the east of us. National energy

security is something that we can do together as a country if we wish to do so. Manitoba will play a role in that and we will promote that wherever we go across this great country.

We also said we would promote more opportunities for apprenticeships in Manitoba and this budget delivered on that. The early-level apprenticeships have been increased. Tax credits have been increased by 50 per cent from \$2,000 to \$3,000. The late-level apprenticeships have been doubled from \$2,500 to \$5,000. Employers now have the incentives they need to hire apprentices in Manitoba. That project is worth—those tax breaks are worth millions of dollars to Manitoba employers. Members opposite will vote against that like they have every other time and they'll miss that opportunity to be involved with us when we make apprenticeships more available all throughout the province.

And apprentices can start—when they become fully trained, they can then start small businesses. So we will work with them as well to be able to start up small businesses throughout rural and northern Manitoba as well as in our cities, because these skills are in high demand and when people start small businesses, they can make a very good living providing those services as plumbers, electricians, carpenters, millwrights and other professions—professional tradespeople in the province of Manitoba.

We are also continuing to invest in our schools, Mr. Speaker, as well as gyms and in the shops in our schools, because people can get the training in high school that'll allow them to enter into an apprenticeship. They can do some of the early work that will prepare them for that and they can even start down that apprenticeship road in high school.

I was in high schools in the Interlake where they're already teaching young people welding. I was in high schools in north Winnipeg, Sisler High School, where they teach young people the value of working on computers, and some of those high school students are already earning \$20 an hour as they graduate from high school and enter the labour market with a good set of skills. I've seen students at Tech Voc High School become professional photographers right out of high school because they learned those skills right there, and we've worked with them through what we call the Technical Vocational Initiative to provide them equipment that will allow them to do the professional development

they need, to allow them to develop the skills they need. That equipment right now is in the high schools. That was never there before, and it allows young people those opportunities to bridge the gap between school and work as rapidly as possible, earn a living, stay in Manitoba and provide the goods and services that we need.

* (15:40)

We're also investing in better infrastructure in this budget, Mr. Speaker, \$589 million for roads and bridges at the provincial level, and we're fixing up those services—those facilities, all across the province.

We're also 50 per cent investing in transit throughout Manitoba. The operating deficit on transit is covered 50 per cent by the provinces, a program the members opposite cut in the 1990s. They cut that transit support program and they left public transportation in limbo throughout that entire decade; we have returned that and that's why we're seeing very significant investments in public transportation.

Selkirk, for example, has a new bus system that it started up out there—never existed before until we came into government and provided that support. Then the city council in Selkirk took the lead, developed that service, and they're now providing it to the residents and citizens of Selkirk—making a big difference.

We're going to pave up to 5,000 kilometres of roadways in this province this year—pave or resurface or improve. Those investments are going to be very significant.

We're going to rebuild up to 80 bridges that were damaged in the flood, and we're get going on that in this budget year, Mr. Speaker, and members opposite will vote against that as well.

We're going to invest \$262 million of money, the equivalent of 1 per cent of the provincial sales tax will be transferred to municipalities, an unprecedented level of resources for capital at the municipal level in the province of Manitoba. That is in this budget, and members opposite will vote against that.

In addition, we will provide over a hundred million dollars for the operating support for municipalities in Manitoba. And the member that used to be the president of the Manitoba Association of Municipalities knows that that's an unprecedented level of support never seen before in the province of

Manitoba, and he should be voting for this budget, Mr. Speaker. He should be voting for this budget.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, budgets are about choices, and Budget 2012 is finding responsible ways to reduce spending while investing in the economy, investing in infrastructure, investing in education, investing in health care closer to where people live. We've done that. We will continue to do that as we move forward in our plan to move back into balance by 2014.

At the same time, we're paying down debt, Mr. Speaker. We're paying down the pension liability and we're doing it in a responsible way. Initiatives that were never done before under the members opposite are being done by this government as we move out of recession and grow the Manitoba economy in a way that has never been grown before. The last five years we've had the best average growth in our economy throughout the country, a record to be proud of, a record to vote for, a budget to be proud of and a budget to vote for, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the budget amendment put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

My colleagues have already covered most of the budget numbers and broken taxation promises, but there are a couple of areas I would like to touch on.

The first being the Premier's promise to the people of Manitoba that he wouldn't raise taxes and that the NDP were on track to balance the budget by 2014. There are only two ways that this government, this Premier can reach that goal: one being to actually raise taxes and user fees which we have already seen; and the second action is to harness the province with more debt and—which we have seen every year since this NDP formed government.

They can create a so-called balanced budget by simply adding to the provincial debt, and I expect that's probably what they're going to do and that's dishonest.

You know, I was very involved with the flooding around Lake Manitoba this past year and quite a bit of my constituency was involved in the flood zone. And I remember a meeting at Langruth with the former minister of Agriculture—now Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers)—was at where a lady named Joanne Egilson asked for programs to be

simple and seamless. The former minister of Ag said there will be one simple form to fill out, in essence, one-stop shopping. And then he made the program so complicated, set up so many roadblocks, put so many restrictions in place the people in the Lake Manitoba man-made flood zone, you have—will have very little hope in the way of—any way of having their claims dealt with.

In Brandon recently, and I'll move quickly here, the Minister for Local Government said budgeting is tough. He asked municipalities, who were asking for more infrastructure funding, what they were willing to give up. Would they give up daycares, would they give up hospitals, would they give up MRIs? The minister was playing a guilt game with these municipalities. Let's look at that threat. What would you give up for better infrastructure? Well, I would give up the enhanced identity cards that no one used that cost \$17 million. I would give up the Spirited Energy campaign; cost another three or four million dollars and nobody bought on that one. I would give up the west-side bipole for the east-side route; I'd save \$1.5 billion there. I'd give up Bonnie Korzeniowski; that would save another \$200,000. I'd give up the removal of nitrogen from wastewater in Winnipeg that scientists say isn't necessary, another \$350 million. So I asked the Minister for Local Government—when he says, what would I give up? Those are the things I'd give up. That's the money I would take to enhance infrastructure in this province. Even simple, small things such as the annual mailing of the MPI rebates—it costs \$100,000 to do that. Why not just reduce the insurance and save that \$100,000?

In Neepawa—are we done? It sounds like it is time—I've reached my limit on time here, so I'd like to thank you very much.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you giving me this opportunity to speak on the Budget 2012. I'd also like to thank the Finance Minister for putting in a balanced budget that affects not just the people of the south, but of the north, east and west.

But through all the talks on the budget from both sides of the House, have to say I'm a little confused. But I have to say thanks from the member from Burrows, and thanks from the, actually, member from Emerson, for bringing up that this budget is about standing up for Manitoba.

And when I saw the federal storm troopers walk in, led by the one in jeans, I was 'agoss' by how we all had the opportunity to stand up for Manitoba, and

yet that opportunity obviously went away. The honourable members on both sides realize how important immigration is to this great province. And if we don't take opportunities like that to stand up, Big Brother is going to control everything and pretty soon you might see Ottawa move to Calgary. So it's—I think it's very important that we take this very seriously—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

The honourable member for Morris, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that the member that is speaking is speaking about an issue that has been taken under advisement by yourself. He has spoken about this already in his last speech, and I'm not even sure if he hasn't spoken to this budget already, Mr. Speaker. So I've just—I remember him speaking about this, and I'm just wondering if he's spoken to the budget already. And the topic that he's on is something that I believe has been taken under advisement.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that what is happening here is there's some debate taking place on the floor, which, I think, has been the topic of two matters of privilege, several points of order, and I think that the member—what he's saying here is encroaching into an area that is under advisement. So I'm just—I'd like to, first of all, know if this member has spoken to the budget already or to the amendment, and then if it's not an area that he's encroaching into that is under advisement.

* (15:50)

I think that we all know in this Chamber that, when we speak to the amendment, we're supposed to be on topic to the amendment of the budget. And that amendment, Mr. Speaker, has a number of points in it. I think that anybody here could take any number of those points and speak on the—that—those points in the amendment because that is the topic that we're speaking to today.

I do not believe that this member is on any of those topics. So he is not relevant to the topic because that—what we are debating right here is the budget amendment, and there are several things in that budget amendment which he could speak to. You know, the amendment has I think—gee, it looks like about 15 different articles that he could be

speaking to. But he isn't speaking to those, Mr. Speaker. So I just think that there's some relevance here. He's not speaking to the point, and certainly if he's going to continue to speak, he should speaking to the budget amendment and not to a matter that is under advisement.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I think I'd like to—could suggest to the member that there's pretty good communication between House leaders and that could easily be discussed, as to who spoke and who hasn't spoken. I believe the member has not spoken, firstly.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, it's not a point of order with respect to the member's speech.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, during the course of question period, at least half of the questions of members opposite were relating to immigration. The very issue that the member is referencing was referenced three or four times, in addition to questions about previous ministerial responsibilities which, in fact, were out of order. But we've—we—out of courtesy we didn't raise those points of order, in order to allow question period to proceed.

So I suggest there's no point of order here, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me to be another example of members opposite not being able to accept the fact that the issue of immigration has now become partisan, and they're not doing that well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. With respect to the point of order raised by the honourable Opposition House Leader—and I thank all honourable members for their advice to this matter—there were three points, I believe, that were raised in the point of order, and I want to address each one of them, if you'll bear with me for a moment.

The first one was with respect to whether or not the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen) has spoken on the budget during the budget debate process. I wish to advise the House that, having checked with the records of the table officers, that the member for Flin Flon has not spoken to the budget to this point.

Also, with respect to the—whether or not the member that had the floor was speaking to the amendment. I know that there is a well-established practice in this Assembly, where the speakers current and past have allowed a fair amount of latitude with respect to comments being made by all members of

the Assembly, regardless of which side of the House they sit on. And that so members, in a general way, add their comments not only with respect to the amendment that is currently before the Assembly but generally with respect to the budget items or the motion put forward by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers). So we allow a fair amount of latitude in that regard as well.

With respect to the comments that made—that were also a matter of the point of order by the Opposition House Leader, there's a fair amount of latitude also that is given with respect to the comments that were made, and my advice that's been provided to me has indicated that while there are comments that I would obviously caution all honourable members that may have the floor because there are certain matters that have been taken under advisement by the Speaker that members are not to speak directly to those items until the Chair has had an opportunity to rule on those matters.

So I caution all honourable members, and I do note that the member may have generally made comments with respect to the matter of privilege and the points of order under advisement, but I will caution all honourable members not to add comment until the Chair has ruled on those matters.

So, with respect to the honourable member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), we thank you for the advice on these matters, but I must rule that there is no point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, to continue your remarks.

Mr. Petterson: I'm going to change the tone of my speech from stand up for Manitoba to the truth will set you free.

And what I want to talk about is—I've been confused standing here listening to one of my members, the member from Emerson, talking about cellphone service in his area. And I, too, have that same problem, but then I remember that not that long ago the cell service throughout Manitoba used to be all the same. We all used to be able to have our phones and whatever, but now, since it's been privatized, we obviously don't have the service we have now.

So I'm just wondering, maybe the honourable member from Emerson would like to come on over

to our side and get the service that he needs to provide.

But in conclusion—in conclusion—I'd just like to thank everybody for listening to me, the member from Flin Flon. Thank you.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): It is, indeed, an honour and a privilege to have the opportunity today to stand up and—in favour of the amendment brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). I think this is a great amendment, and I hope that members opposite will support it once the vote is called for, Mr. Speaker.

When Manitobans think of this budget, they need to think of only one thing: that this NDP government broke their promise to Manitobans when they promised not to raise taxes. And they did this to fuel their spending addiction, and now Manitobans are being forced to pay for it, Mr. Speaker. It's as simple as that and it's extremely unfortunate.

In the last election, on a desperate attempt for this—on this government's part and this Premier's (Mr. Selinger) part to hold on to government, Mr. Speaker, they made a promise to Manitobans, which now we see in this budget they haven't kept. The Premier said during a CJOB debate, and I quote: Our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have future prosperity without any tax increase—increases, and we will deliver on that, he said. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, in a Fact Check that was also sent out during the election on September 2nd of 2011, this NDP government, in another desperate attempt to just remind Manitobans that they were not going to increase taxes, they said, and I quote: Today's release of the 2010-2011 Public Accounts shows that the NDP's five-year economic plan is on track to return the budget to balance by 2014 while protecting jobs and services without raising taxes. End quote.

Well, at the first available opportunity this NDP government had, what did they do? They turn around—they turned around, they broke their promise and they raised taxes by some \$184 million, nine different taxes, Mr. Speaker, on the backs of Manitobans. They broke their promise, and that's what the Manitobans and members of this Chamber will remember when we think of this budget that was brought forward by this NDP government. They will remember and be reminded that the Premier, that all members opposite in this House, all members of the government broke their promise to Manitobans.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about some of the taxes that they are increasing. There's a tax on women. There's a tax—the PST will now apply to services being offered and delivered primarily to women, and let's look at what those taxes are. We look in the government's book on C6 under sales tax measures, it says, the following personal services will be taxable effective July 1st, 2012: spa treatments; nonmedical skin and nail services such as pedicures, manicures and facials; hair services, including haircuts, hair styling, hair removal and augmentation; tattooing and piercing. And, also, it will apply to haircuts over \$50.

* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker, many of these services that are delivered here in Manitoban—in Manitoba—many of these services are primarily services that women use. And so it's a direct tax not only on women consumers, but it's also—has a negative impact on those who deliver the services, because if you look at many of the businesses who deliver these services in our great province, many people who rely on the money that they get and the incomes they get from owning these businesses, primarily they're women who own these businesses and primarily they're women who deliver the services, and so—it's also has a negative impact on them. And I have spoken to some of them in the community, as I'm sure members opposite have also spoken to them as well, and what they will find and what they will hear from those small business owners in Manitoba is that adding this PST to these services has a negative impact on their business. It adds unnecessary red tape to what they have to do and file a PST now—for PST in Manitoba. So it has a negative impact on those business owners, primarily women, in Manitoba.

Another tax on seniors, Mr. Speaker, the dividend tax credit reduction from 11 to 8 per cent is effectively a tax increase to Manitobans by some 4 per cent. And primarily what we find is that seniors purchase dividend-yielding stocks for their income—for their steady source of income and what's happened here is that, unfortunately, this ends up being a direct tax on seniors.

Let me just talk a little bit about how this works, Mr. Speaker. The way in which dividends from eligible corporations are calculated is intended to recognize taxes that are already paid by the issuing company, so the gross up adds 44 per cent to income. Then the credit is applied. So let's look at, for

example, a \$100 dividend paid by the company results in a \$144 of gross income to the dividend-yielding stockholder, in this case—in many cases, it's a senior. So that is a—that is \$44—extra dollars of pure air. It's not real income to the senior, but it boosts the gross income and so the—it jumpstarts the Old Age Security clawback, which begins at \$69,562. For those already in the clawback territory, the gross up accelerates the amount clawed back, which is 15 cents on every dollar of gross income.

So, Mr. Speaker, now this NDP government, who is fully aware of the Old Age Security call—clawback rules, proposes in this budget to further tax people already injured by that gross up. And who are those people? They're seniors; it is unfortunate that this is a direct tax on seniors and it hurts them the most in our province.

Mr. Speaker, this also contain in this budget is a tax on volunteers. The fees for Child Abuse Registry track—check have gone up, and a number of the people—and I know my husband and others who volunteer at the community center, who are volunteer coaches of various soccer teams, hockey teams, basketball, all the—volleyball—all of the sports that are played out at the community center—we rely on volunteer coaches to run these teams and each and every one of those coaches has to go out and file for a Child Abuse Registry check. Now, that's fine, but the NDP is taking advantage of that by adding a further fee to this, and so those volunteers who are volunteering their time, effort and energy in this case—all they see is an increase in tax. So it's—again, it's a tax on volunteers.

Let's look at insurance, Mr. Speaker. Owners of property, casualty and group life insurance products—this will kick in July 1st and will be applied to existing insurance policies, and it—that's outrageous for so many reasons. But, you know, in many cases if it applies to existing policies, those policy holders have already entered into an agreement to purchase those insurance policies. So now the insurance companies, after July 1st, will have to go back to those policy holders and say, oops. Well, you know what? What happened was the government has put in this tax that applies to your insurance policy that you've already purchased and entered into, but now we got to come back and collect the taxes that start July 1st for this year.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's ridiculous. You know, it—we don't believe that this should be extended to these

products at all. That's what we're hearing from policy holders, from consumers out there. This added tax is a burden on Manitoba families, and they should reverse their decision here and not break their promise to Manitoba families.

At the very least they should look at—if they had properly done their homework and if they had consulted with members in the industry, what they would have realized is that it would be very difficult for the insurance companies to implement this as of July 1st. It doesn't give them a lot of time to get the programs in place to be able to collect the PST on the policies. So at the very yeast—least, I believe what they were looking for is this government to push it back to January 1st of 2013. So—but had they properly—again, had they properly done their homework then and listened to the insurance companies and the brokers, Mr. Speaker, and to consumers, then they would have realized that it would be very difficult to deliver on this.

But, also, Mr. Speaker, while they're doing that, they should make sure that it does not apply to existing policies. I think it's unfair to go back to people who have already purchased, entered into an agreement to purchase their policy to then have to go back to those people. I think it's unfair.

Mr. Speaker, today is May Day. May Day for most other people in Canada, but what is today in Manitoba? It is known as the gas tax hike day in Manitoba, again, extremely unfortunate. The price at the pump will go up today 2.5 cents per litre, and the government projects that this will raise an extra \$48.6 million. But we know from stakeholders in the community that this projection is likely low, that the taxes that they collect on this tax hike in—during tax—gas tax hike day will be a lot more than that.

And so, Mr. Speaker, they believe that the government will raise a lot more in terms of revenues off this. And we wonder if that's just a hidden way that this government is going to collect more in tax revenues to maybe make the situation, the fiscal situation in our province look better. But we'll wait and see. We'll wait and see what happens, but we are sort of hearing from people in the community, stakeholders in the community that they think that the revenue estimate here from the gas tax hike is somewhat low.

Mr. Speaker, another tax increase, another broken promise by this NDP government. The corporation capital taxes are up 1 per cent on financial institutions. The expectation on that is an

increase in revenues of \$17.4 million, again, another broken promise and it only hurts Manitobans.

The tobacco tax also up, and that was retroactive, you know, back to April 17th, Mr. Speaker. Also another—an increase in \$10 million expected for this NDP government to feed their spending addiction.

So, again, these broken promises all add up to at least about \$184 million of tax increases directly to consumers, to Manitobans who went out to the polls last year, some seven months ago. They voted for each and every one of us in this Chamber, but members opposite promised, made that promise not to raise taxes to all of those people. So I challenge them all to go back to their constituencies and explain to all of their constituents, Mr. Speaker, why they broke their promise to Manitobans.

*(16:10)

But not only did the NDP try and increase their revenues by way of a tax hike and breaking their promise, Mr. Speaker, they also raised fees by some \$114 million. But—and so—and—of course it's difficult for Manitobans to see which fees are going up because they're not listed in the budget the way they should be. And that's why I introduced Bill No. 211—Bill 211, The Increased Transparency and Accountability Act, which calls on the government to include in the budget books a schedule that breaks out all user fee increases and tax base expansions. So it would be done by way of a schedule in the back of the book; all fees from all government departments and reporting entities show what those fees are, what they were last year, what they are this year, so Manitobans can easily turn to that page and see what kind of fees are going to be affecting them directly.

But what happened, Mr. Speaker, was another issue—and I know that there was a document that went out to the media—in the media lockup, but not to the third-party lockup. And though—that—in some cases, you know, we know that it was—and I know that I have gotten up on a matter of privilege with this, so I won't go on there. But, suffice it to say, that there was some unfairness that transpired as a result of that and I think it's unfortunate, because the only people that really are hurt by all this are the hard-working Manitobans who are forced to pay the increases in the fees. So, again, it's extremely unfortunate.

So what are some of these fees that we don't know about, Mr. Speaker? Things like park fees—

park fees are actually in the budget. They do mention park fees in the budget. But the birth, death, marriage fees—there is—you know, they're not mentioned anywhere there. They're mentioned in this other document that I won't discuss, but—and I know eventually you'll come back with a ruling on that—but there is an increase in the fees that amount to almost \$114 million, which comes directly out of the pockets of Manitobans to feed this NDP's spending addiction.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's difficult to talk about the budget without speaking about the deficit. Of course, we know that the NDP, based on their third-quarter report that came out not so long ago, that the NDP is projecting for this year a \$1.12-billion deficit. It's the highest in the history of this province, brought in by this NDP government. And the NDP, what did they do? Well, they tried to blame it on the flood and they tried to blame it on the federal government in the cuts in the transfer payments. Well, where are the cuts in the transfer payments? They don't exist. There's the—continue to get unprecedented revenues from the federal government, and yet—but, you know, if they can find a way to blame the feds, they'll do it. They did it earlier in question period. They'll do it again and again and again. And that's their way out of this.

They also blame it on the flood. Well, Mr. Speaker, the expenditures on the flood didn't even equal a third of what this deficit is. The real problem with this deficit is that it goes back to the root of the problem within this NDP government, is that they've got a spending addiction. You look at the expenditures over the last number of years in this province; the core government expenditures are up significantly and that's why this deficit is where it is.

But let's look at this budget. Of course, the NDP, even though they're running a—potentially a \$1.12-billion deficit for this year, Mr. Speaker, they're projecting a \$504-million core budget deficit for next year, or a \$460-million summary budget deficit. And yet, they still claim to be on track, somehow, to balance their budget by 2014. And, of course, they made that promise to all Manitobans that they wouldn't raise their taxes to do that and that's exactly what they're doing. So it's unfortunate that hard-working Manitobans are the ones that are forced to pay for this NDP's spending addiction.

So, Mr. Speaker, where are we at? We've talked about the deficit; we've talked about the tax hikes; we've talked about the fee hikes. Well, what about

that other source of, not really revenue, but the NDP needs to find—they'll leave no stone left unturned, until they find every last dime in this province. And when they can't find money there, then they borrow it. And what happens when they do that is they add to the debt of the problem.

So let's look at the debt. Total debt is now at \$27.6 billion in this budget, Mr. Speaker, a new record. This is an increase of \$2.5 billion over that of—over the budget of 2011, which was \$25.1 billion, an increase of 10 per cent to the debt of the Province in one year. Total debt of the Province is now double that of the debt when the NDP first came to power, where it sat at \$13.5 billion. Net debt has also increased to \$16.32 billion, up \$1.5 billion from Budget 2011. The NDP debt-to-GDP ratio is also on the rise and is—has been for the last five years. This is a dangerous trend in our Province, and one that must be watched very closely. This now stands at 27.4 per cent, up from 21.6 per cent in 2007 and 2008 and up every year since then.

The cost to service the debt is \$857 million, up \$51 million, or 6 per cent, from last year alone, Mr. Speaker. It's equivalent to the fourth largest government department. Back when the original, uncut balanced budget legislation was brought into the Province, there was a 30-year debt reduction plan and debt retirement strategy that was implemented. Had this NDP government stuck to that, we would have been halfway towards paying down the debt, retiring the debt, in our province. Instead, what have they done? They've doubled it, and that is out—unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about their five-year economic plan. The NDP hasn't even stuck to their own plan. The 2010 plan called for limiting core government spending to 1.9 per cent per year. Including the—excluding the flood costs, core government spending growth will average 3.6 per cent per year in the first three years of this so-called five-year economic plan. They couldn't stick to their plan. They have no credibility going forward. How can we believe anything that they say?

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans also pay the highest income taxes outside of Québec, the second highest in the country. Let's go to—get this—for example, a two-income-earner family of four earning \$60,000 a year, let's see what they pay. Of course, this is all indicated in the—in a section of the budget called *The Manitoba Advantage*. Well, I would suggest that there's an amendment to be made there, for sure, that,

you know, it's the Manitoba disadvantage. But let's look at, in the budget book, where it says a two-earner family of four earning \$60,000 a year. What are they paying in Manitoba? Provincial income tax, the line right here in the minister's own budget, \$3,046. What are they pay—what are they paying in Saskatchewan? Four hundred and eighty-three dollars; we're up almost—well, several—several—hundred per cent.

An Honourable Member: Lots.

Mrs. Stefanson: That's a lot. That's a lot, I—you know. But—and again, Mr. Speaker, we're the second highest in Canada and it's unfortunate.

So all of these things indicate that we have a government that loves to spend. Some would even say they're addicted to spending, Mr. Speaker, but let's look at the other side of the equation. I mean, often people I've spoken to don't mind paying taxes as long as they're fair, and we're actually getting something for the money that we're spending, that we're handing over to this NDP government. Well, I ask you: Did the NDP fix health care after they promised to fix it in 1999? The answer is—

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mrs. Stefanson: No, Mr. Speaker. And here we are today, 12 years later, billions of dollars later, and no fix to the health-care system. I believe they almost made a—they also made a promise to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. Did they fix that?

* (16:20)

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mrs. Stefanson: No. Well, I ask you: Has the NDP government fixed the child welfare system, Mr. Speaker? They have spent billions of dollars more creating a new system that is clearly in chaos, and even more children are falling through the cracks.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you, has the NDP government fixed the revolving door of the justice system? No, they created it and made it worse over the last 12 years. Repeat offenders back on the street before we know it, committing crimes again because this NDP government is not able to grasp control of the justice system.

I ask you, are the blue-green algal blooms in Lake Winnipeg gone? No, of course they're not,

Mr. Speaker. Scientists say that millions of dollars was wasted on forcing the City of Winnipeg to remove nitrogen from the waste-water facilities. Has anything changed?

Mr. Speaker, kids continue to swim in E. coli-infested beaches because, rather than doing the practical thing and listen to the scientists on this government, this government felt they knew better and would waste everyone's money on their nitrogen adventure. The government should listen to science and base their decision on science, not on getting a headline to suit their political agenda.

The clean water act, remember that? Sounded great at the time, but have we seen the results? No.

I ask you, are our children improving in the national results in our education system? No. In fact, they're almost dead last, Mr. Speaker. The NDP claims that they put more money into education. It doesn't matter. We can pay the highest per capita in Canada, which we do, but what are we getting for it? Our kids are continuing to get worse in our education systems.

Remember the forced amalgamation of a school boards fiasco, back in 2001-02? Mr. Speaker, it was supposed to save us \$10 million. In the end, how much did it—it ended up costing \$10 million. So, now the NDP is talking about amalgamating several RHAs outside the city of Winnipeg, claiming that that is saving them money. Well, do you believe it? No. I don't believe it either, Sir. And I'll tell you, I believe that there will be a—I'll believe those savings will be there when I actually see them.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has brought forward an amendment. We should all be supporting it. In that amendment, it talks about our five-point plan.

It talks about our five-point plan and, after listening to hard-working Manitobans during prebudget consultation meetings that we held in Manitoba, we outlined a five-point alternative plan to the NDP that will help control spending. They may want to listen to this, Mr. Speaker, and help create jobs in Manitoba by improving Manitoba's business climate without raising cost to Manitoba families.

Mr. Speaker, it—the first point, it's a commitment to honesty and transparency in the budget. While we

see first-hand, after this budget was tabled, we see why that is needed.

Mr. Speaker, the second was a commitment to eliminating red tape, and the third was to commit to a program spending review. The fourth is a review to Hydro's capital program and the first—the fifth is to immediately join the New West Partnership.

This is the alternative plan that we, on this side of the House, have brought forward for Manitobans in our promise. We know that Manitobans are tired of the tax-and-spend days of the NDP government and they're tired of their broken promises, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that the NDP government listens, that the NDP listens to Manitobans, and that they don't take their election victory for granted.

We have put forward a plan that will help put our province back on track. This plan was brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition, the way of the amendment here today, and all of us on this side are committed to doing what is in the best interest of all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, hopefully, the NDP government will listen and see that this budget amendment should be supported by all members of the House.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, what I—what we see in this budget is nothing more than a bunch of tax increases that the NDP promised—in a desperate attempt to hold onto government during the last election—they promised not to raise those taxes. And the first available opportunity that they had, what did they do? They raised taxes and they broke their promise to Manitobans.

So I encourage members, every single member on that side of the House to go back to their constituencies, to talk to their constituents, to send out maybe a mailer in their constituency to let them know what they promised during the last election and what they actually did to Manitobans. Because I will tell you that those Manitobans, they may not be aware of this NDP government's broken promise, Mr. Speaker, but we on this side will make sure that every Manitoban understands what this NDP government is all about. They're about broken promises and doing anything it takes to get elected into government to support their spending addiction.

So I encourage all members of this House to support this amendment and to ensure that we are doing everything we can to help Manitoba taxpayers

in this province, to help all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. This is an amendment that should be supported.

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

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): And my friend across the way forgot to ask one question, Mr. Speaker: Is the Conservative Party of Manitoba still out of touch with Manitobans?

Mr. Speaker, I was absolutely honoured to present this budget to the House on behalf of 1.2 million Manitobans. I understand, and I think we all understand in this House that we are a subset of Manitobans who get the privilege of being in this House and representing Manitobans. I think we all understand that.

I also understand that not everybody gets to present a budget as Finance Minister and, Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to do that. I was particularly thrilled, and thank you very much for introducing my mom and my son before the budget speech. I even—I'm even appreciative of my friends across the way who I heard, through my television screen, say, just like his old man. Thank you very much. I'm really thrilled that members of my family and friends could join us here today—on that day, on April 17th, to see a budget presented in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very appreciative, and I want to thank those Manitobans who came out to our prebudget consultations and gave us advice, which I hope was at least partly reflected in the effort that we put forward. I do want to thank folks in departments, particularly Finance, for the work they've done to get us to this point. And I do want to pay particular attention to those folks in my front office, Monique and Anush and Chloe, Amelia, for the work they did that day to make sure that we served, as best we could, the folks of Manitoba who were here to participate that day.

Mr. Speaker, I also was very thrilled to work my grandfather into the speech, Stan Paul, partly because I really liked the guy, partly because he was part of that generation that Tom Brokaw referred to as the greatest generation ever, a generation that lived through a depression and learned the principles of fiscal responsibility, a generation that knew what economic instability was all about, a generation that lived through World War II and found the courage to take on the battles that we, as society, need to take on. That generation taught following generations a lot of lessons. First and foremost, amongst that, is to

have the courage to stand up for what matters most for Manitobans. I would submit to this House, I would submit to Manitobans that Budget 2012 does take those lessons of the greatest generation ever, my grandfather's generation, and puts them to work.

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker, it's my submission that Budget 2012 is a balanced approach. It does recognize fiscal responsibility and it protects health services, education, services for kids, makes investments in infrastructure, roads and bridges and other forms of infrastructure such as cell service and high-speed Internet.

I think it's a forward-looking approach. I think it protects what matters most about—for Manitobans and, Mr. Speaker, as my friend across from Tuxedo said on budget day, it's just about numbers.

Well, I understand it's about numbers, and there were a lot of numbers in this, but it's more than that. It's about the priorities of Manitobans. It's about making those tough decisions, fiscally responsible decisions, so that we can protect those front-line services such as health care and education.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 32(6), I am interrupting the proceedings of the House to put the questions necessary to dispose of the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), in quotations, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, end of quotations, and all amendments to that a motion—to that motion.

The question now before the House is the proposed amendment moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance:

THAT this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Do members wish to have the amendment reread?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: We'll read the amendment.

On the proposed motion of the Leader of the Official Opposition in amendment to the proposed motion of the Minister of Finance, and

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

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

- (a) breaking the Premier's promise not to increase taxes; and
- (b) imposing \$184 million in new taxes on hard-pressed Manitoba families, who are also facing higher hydro costs and property taxes, increased child-care fees and a range of other hidden taxes; and
- (c) driving gas prices higher at a time when gas prices in Manitoba have already increased 12 per cent so far this year, further increasing the burden on Manitoba families, while cutting spending on Manitoba's crumbling infrastructure; and
- (d) failing to take action to build safe communities as Manitoba has become the violent crime capital of Canada with Winnipeg's murder rate reaching an all-time high in 2011; and
- (e) failing to recognize the importance of agriculture, food production and rural communities; and
- (f) failing to take action to protect Manitobans from future floods and failing to adequately compensate families for past damages; and
- (g) failing Manitoba students who scored among the lowest in Canada on national and international reading, math and science tests; and
- (h) creating an even bigger sinkhole of debt, now at \$27.6 billion and rising, which as a result will force Manitoba families to pay higher taxes in the years ahead; and
- (i) failing to encourage greater trade opportunities with Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan and by refusing to join the New West Partnership; and
- (j) failing to take under review a program-of program spending across all government services; and

- (k) failing to tackle the—and the red tape burden that is hurting businesses and private investment in Manitoba; and
- (l) failing to comply with recommendations of the Public Utilities Board to carry out an independent review of Manitoba Hydro's capital program; and
- (m) mismanaging \$35 billion in federal transfer payments received since 2000; and
- (n) failing to offer a plan to encourage private investment to create opportunity and wealth so Manitobans can feel hope that our province will one day emerge from a hole of debt and dependency and see a brighter future.

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

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, signify it by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the Nays have it.

Formal Vote

Mrs. Taillieu: We'll have a recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Order, please. The question before the House now is the proposed amendment moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers):

THAT this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Taillieu, Wishart.

Nays

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Pettersen, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wight.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 20, Nays 33.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move to the main motion.

The question before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance:

THAT this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the Ayes have it.

* (16:50)

Formal Vote

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Order, please.

The question before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers):

THAT this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Pettersen, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wight.

Nays

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Taillieu, Wishart.

Madam Clerk: Yeas 33, Nays 20.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if you might call it 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock?
[Agreed]

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 1, 2012

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Merchants Hotel	
Bill 17–The Non-Smokers Health Protection Amendment Act		Wight; Irvin-Ross	640
Rondeau	631	Flooding (Shoal Lakes)	
Bill 15–The Fortified Buildings Amendment Act		Eichler; Kostyshyn	640
Swan	631	Members' Statements	
Bill 207–The Child and Family Services Amendment Act		Speech and Hearing Awareness Month	
Mitchelson	631	Rowat	641
Petitions		Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month	
Cellular Phone Service in Southeastern Manitoba		Blady	641
Graydon	631	Jack Wheeler	
Oral Questions		Pedersen	642
Budget		Flin Flon-Creighton SPCA Awards	
McFadyen; Selinger	632	Pettersen	642
Provincial Debt		Doug Connery	
Stefanson; Struthers	633	Wishart	643
Flooding Compensation			
Briese; Ashton	634	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Strand Theatre Project (Brandon)		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Helwer; Selinger	636	Budget Debate	
Assistant Deputy Minister		(Eighth Day of Debate)	
Mitchelson; Melnick	636	Schuler	643
Taillieu; Melnick	637	Maloway	646
Taillieu; Chomiak	638	Rowat	650
First Nations Communities		Selinger	652
Gerrard; Selinger	638	Briese	656
		Pettersen	656
		Stefanson	658
		Struthers	663

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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