

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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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
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
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
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 19, 2013

The House met at 10 a.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 morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 22—The Planning Amendment Act (Subdivision Approval)

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton), that Bill 22, The Planning Amendment Act (Subdivision Approval); Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire (approbation de lotissements), be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lemieux: This legislation is being introduced to reduce red tape related to municipal subdivision approvals. It will reduce the time required for approval of 'noncontiguous'—contentious single-lot subdivision applications. Thank you.

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

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none, we'll move on with petitions.

PETITIONS

Provincial Road 433 Improvements

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

Provincial Road 433, Cape Coppermine Road, in the rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet has seen an increase in traffic volume in recent years.

New subdivisions have generated considerable population growth, and the area has seen a significant increase in tourism due to the popularity of the Granite Hills Golf Course.

This population growth has generated an increased tax base in the rural municipality.

Cape Coppermine Road was not originally built to handle the high volume of traffic it now accommodates.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation recognize that Cape Coppermine Road can no longer adequately serve both area residents and tourists, and as such consider making improvements to the road to reflect its current use.

This petition is signed by J. Bourrier, D. Sierens, A. Duchek and hundreds of other fine Manitobans.

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

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The St. Ambroise provincial park was hard hit by the 2011 flood, resulting in the park's ongoing closure, the loss of local access to Lake Manitoba, as well as untold harm to the ecosystem and wildlife in the region.

The park's closure is having a negative impact in many areas including disruptions to the local tourism, hunting and fishing operations, diminished economic and employment opportunities and potential loss of the local store and decrease in property values.

Local residents and visitors alike want St. Ambroise provincial park to be reopened as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider repairing St. Ambroise provincial park and its access points to their pre-flood conditions so the park can be opened for the 2013 season or earlier if possible.

This petition is signed by M. Beam, P. Haddock and E. Sampson and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The reasons for this petition:

Manitoba Hydro was mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

The \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent Needs For and Alternatives To review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

And this petition is signed by R. Theroux, G. Gauthier, L. Theilmann and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Highway 217 Bridge Repair

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

And these are the reasons for the petition:

The bridge over the Red River on Highway 217 outside of St. Jean Baptiste was built in 1947 and provides a vital link for economic opportunities and community development on both sides of the river.

The Department of Infrastructure and Transportation closed the bridge after spending significant sums of money and time on rehabilitation efforts in the summer of 2012.

Individuals require numerous trips across the river each day to access schools, businesses and health-care facilities. The bridge closure causes daily undue hardships and inconvenience for residents due to time requirements and higher transportation costs.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to 'replair' or replace the existing bridge as soon as possible to allow communities on both sides of the river to return to regular activities.

And this petition has been signed by R. Saurette, R. Sorin and B. Baldwin and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions? Seeing none—

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to table the Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority 2012 Annual Report.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Heiko Blady; Shawn, Hunter, Braeden and Caleb Jacobucci, who are the family members of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

* (10:10)

And also, in the public gallery we have with us today Shirley Blakey, Mae Morgan, Bob Holliday and other members of the St. Vital Historical Society, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Education (Ms. Allan).

And also in the public gallery we have with us today from Island Lakes Community School Rebecca Kuik, Darcy Cormack, Darlene Kaskow and members of Rebecca's family and the Island Lakes Community School.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tax Increase Flood Reparations

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the PC Party proposed spending reductions of 1 per cent as an alternative to the spendP approach of raising the PST by 1 per cent. And we asked the government to take a good look within themselves rather than just look to Manitoba taxpayers yet again, as is their habit. And of course the response was that the spendP trotted out their old bogeyman strategy, you know, and said that we would devastate everybody in the province and the civil service too.

The question is, of course: Are they believable? So here's a couple of quotes from last year's budget. Here's one: We promise no tax increases. And here's another one: We will reduce spending by 1 per cent, blah blah blah.

Okay, so the spendP broke both their promises, and the PC Party says that we'll keep their promises for them, Mr. Speaker. That's the difference.

So my question for the government: In the interests of a stronger Manitoba—we believe in some foresight, Mr. Speaker—will the Premier (Mr. Selinger), who has spent 140 billion taxpayer dollars, will he tell us what percentage did he put towards flood reparations over *[inaudible]*?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Acting Premier): And we, too, have had a good look at the plan that the member put forward yesterday.

And I think it bears repeating that, when we look at the spending reductions that we were able to make last year, we did it by doing things that create more efficiency in government. We did it by merging regional health authorities. We did it by merging Crown corporations. We did it by consolidating government offices, you know, the consolidation of government offices that we heard the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) complain about yesterday in his speech.

So that's how we delivered on the promises that we made, not by gutting the services that Manitobans count on. A hundred and twenty million dollars out of this budget, on top of those reductions that I've

talked about, will mean that there will be fewer nurses at the bedside; there will be fewer teachers in the classroom. I know they don't want to share that with Manitobans. I understand why they don't want to tell Manitobans that. But that is the truth.

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

Flood Prevention Government Commitment

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Aw, aw, the poor NDP, Mr. Speaker. They're not in listening mode. They're in selling mode. They're trying to sell Manitobans on another massive tax increase, and they're desperate to use everything they can to make their case, including making use of a potential flood to do it.

Now, they are making their own mismanagement over 14 years and their own lack of foresight the reason Manitobans should pay now instead of looking within their own operations. Look, the PC Party, Mr. Speaker, you know the PC Party built the Manitoba floodway, and you know we—*[interjection]* I want the NDP to listen up. We didn't build it during a flood. We built it before the flood, and this government needs to understand that.

So I want to ask them again: Apart from the floodway, a PC project, how much money did they allocate to flood prevention between 1999 and 2013? How much money?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, you know, it's really interesting watching this member get up and talk about the floodway because we put in place a \$650-million improvement to the floodway. And when he was a Member of Parliament he actually got up in the House of Commons and suggested we put a hold on that because he didn't agree with the way it was being operated.

Mr. Speaker, since we've come into government, we've invested more than a billion dollars in flood protection. We were there in the last flood in 2011-2012 with \$1.2 billion, Mr. Speaker, for the flood-affected communities. And, as part of this budget and as part of the courage of this government, we're committed to tackling the billion dollars plus of additional mitigation. We'll see if the member opposite wants to stop that one too.

Government Preparation

Mr. Pallister: Desperate times for the NDP, Mr. Speaker, revisionist history. You know, the history

of our province could teach these members a lot. You know, we've had floods before, Mr. Speaker, dozens of them. They could have called—oh, Noah's not available, but they could have called Alf Warkentin. He'd have told them all about that.

We had four devastating floods in the 1990s. How much preparation did these people do? How much foresight did they develop? What percentage of their massive billions of dollars taken from taxpayers did they allocate for flood preparation? Was it 5 per cent? Was it 3 per cent? Was it 1 per cent?

Mr. Speaker, it was 0.18 per cent of their budget. That's not foresight.

The NDP tried us—they tried desperately to strike fear into the hearts of Manitobans based on the past, but the thing that Manitobans fear most is an NDP future. That's what they fear. Admit it.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, we are currently faced with a flood that will be higher than the 2009 flood, which was higher than the two—the 1950 flood. In 1950, 100,000 Manitobans were evacuated in the Red River valley, including here in Winnipeg. There were 10,000 homes destroyed. In 2009, because the investments, yes, the floodway but also the community ring dikes that were put in place to protect the valley, we had one home affected by seepage. We have met the challenge.

And, yes, there was a government in the 1960s, Mr. Speaker, the Roblin government, a PC government, that did that. You know what, that government had the courage to tackle the flood mitigation this government has. And by the member's own words, he doesn't get it; he's opposed to investments. He's saying to Manitobans just like he did with the floodway, he wants to stop further flood mitigation. That's the PC strategy.

Flood Prevention Government Priority

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, at 0.18 per cent of his spending, the Premier has failed to make flood mitigation the priority his NDP have tried to spin to Manitobans. The Premier yesterday stated, and I quote: One thing we've always done in Manitoba, we've never left flood victims on their own. End quote.

Well, yet, there are nearly 2,000 displaced Manitobans and almost 1,000 claims without full compensation. On top of these flood victims, personal disasters, now this uncaring government drops another 1 per cent PST on top of them, Mr. Speaker, as they try to rebuild their homes and their lives.

Will the Premier (Mr. Selinger) now acknowledge that what he says is nonsense? Why would Manitobans believe his hollow promises of flood mitigation?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, a billion dollars of flood protection, that speaks to the commitment of this government to flood protection.

The two flood reports, both of which we have accepted, what that speaks to our commitment to flood mitigation. The—more than a billion dollars' worth of projects will protect Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin, that we've undertaken already to put the technical work in place. That speaks to our commitment as a government. And I say to members opposite, people in that area—the most impacted areas—know one thing and I met with them. I met with the reeves, I met with the First Nations' representatives already this week. They know it's going to be a significant cost, and our message to the members opposite, is if they really care about flood victims, they'll support this budget because this budget going to put in place the finances for that flood mitigation.

Mr. Maguire: A callous answer from this decade of deferral, Mr. Speaker. He even indicated that the Holland Dam would be a half a billion dollars, which is half of his package right there. Displaced people two years out, unfinished claims all over Manitoba, this Premier's broken balanced budget legislation and now won't even give Manitobans a vote on his spendDP tax increases.

After neglecting flood mitigation for the last 14 years, why is he only now realizing that it should be a priority?

Mr. Ashton: As we face a significant flood in many areas of the province, it's just unbelievable that member opposite would get up and ignore the fact that this city of Winnipeg, because of the actions of this government working with the federal

government, is now protected to one-in-700-years flooding, Mr. Speaker.

* (10:20)

The Red River valley is protected, Mr. Speaker, to a one-in-hundred-year flood plus 2 feet, which means with the flood of the range we're looking at, again, instead of a hundred thousand people evacuated, we'll see minimal damage to homes.

But not only that, we did work during the last flood, and he should take a drive and talk to the people of Souris, which faced the ultimate challenge, three crests in the Souris. We were there for the people in Souris. We were there for the people in Melita, Mr. Speaker. We did an emergency outlet from Lake St. Martin in a matter of months. So for the member opposite to say that nothing's been done in flood mitigation is nothing further from the truth.

The real question is will they support us with this budget to give us the ability to do the flood mitigation for the next decade.

Mr. Speaker: We're doing pretty good so far, but I just want to caution honourable members that there are some folks here that seem to want to have a conversation. Might I encourage them to move to either of the loges to my left or my right to have that conversation, and please keep the level down a little bit so we can both hear the questions the members wish to pose and the answers that will be coming from that.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, outside of the Conservative initiative of the floodway, this government has spent 0.18 per cent of their budget on flood mitigation. He cannot get around that. It was not a priority. He's talking about reaction to a flood that happened in 2011, and yet the Premier (Mr. Selinger) states that he never left flood victims on their own.

Will he apologize to Manitobans, not only for the lack of compensation but also for the lack of foresight in mitigation over the last decade that could have helped these persons?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record for the member opposite that, outside of the investments in the 1960s, when the members were in government, nothing happened in the way of flood mitigation.

In fact, the Leader of the Opposition was part of that government—[interjection] I'm glad to see they're bringing the ghosts of Finance ministers past out—

Eric Stefanson, speaking on behalf of that government. I won't get into what their budgets looked like, especially when they sold off MTS.

But I do recall, when it comes to floods and flood victims, I'm wondering if they're going to bring Gary Filmon back to remind the people of Manitoba what the Conservatives said, because he blamed flood victims for living in a flood plain. We don't blame them for living in a flood plain. We get out and we protect them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We're wasting precious question period time here, so I'm encouraging all honourable members, please allow the questions to be posed and the answers coming from that.

Election Promises Government Record

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Don't you love Fridays?

Mr. Speaker, not only has this Premier broken his promises to thousands of flood victims, he broke his promise to over a million Manitobans to not raise taxes. His broken promises have become a theme with this NDP government, from breaking his promise to end hallway medicine, to breaking his promise to not raise taxes.

So I'd like to ask this Premier (Mr. Selinger): Is he aware of how angry Manitobans are becoming because of his broken promises?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Acting Premier): I would think that the member for Charleswood, who has a background in health care, would not want to stand up and support the plan that her leader put forward yesterday, which would decimate health care.

Let's look at the plan that they put forward. They plan to cut 1 per cent out of the health budget, over \$50 million out of the health budget. Almost 700 nurses, that's what that cut means—in one year, Mr. Speaker.

They plan to magically find \$35 million out of capital spending. We know what they did the last time they had their hands on health capital spending: They cancelled it. We know what happened the last time: We had fruit flies flying around in the ORs at Health Sciences Centre. How somebody who purports to have a concern for health care could stand with that plan is beyond me, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, it begs the question then, if they're saying that, why they put it in their own budget just a year ago.

An Honourable Member: Voted for it.

Mrs. Driedger: And voted for it. And voted for it.

Mr. Speaker, during the last election, this Premier (Mr. Selinger) told Manitobans that the very notion he would raise any taxes or raise the PST was nonsense. And many Manitobans actually believed him. I heard from a K. Sawyer this week, who is livid with this government and says they broke their promises to get elected, and now they're breaking promises once they're elected. All we have to do is look back at their last budget.

My question to this Premier: What does he say to K. Sawyer about why he broke his promise, and prove that everything he says is nonsense?

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, well, it's interesting to me that they don't want too much talk about their plan today. They wanted to put it out yesterday. They proudly put it out yesterday, their plan to cut \$120 million out of government, their plan to cut \$35 million from capital projects.

Now, when we looked at how to deal with costs in health care, we didn't take the route of firing nurses. We didn't take the route of taking away training spots for doctors and nurses. What we did is we looked at how we could get efficiency. So we reduced the number of regional health authorities. We reduced it not once, not twice, but three times, actually, Mr. Speaker, in our time in government.

So I know that it's difficult for Manitobans who are facing a tax increase. But it is also difficult when you think about the nurse not being there when you need them.

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

PST Increase Election Promise

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, during the last election, the Premier, the member for St. Boniface, gave his word that he would not raise the PST. In fact, he called the idea nonsense.

Sean from West St. Paul emailed both the Premier and I, stating, and I quote: I'm sure you're getting it from all angles right now, but I really hope you vote against this PST increase and referendum-

dodging. You might just get my first Conservative vote in return.

Sean agrees with the Premier; raising the PST is total nonsense. Why did the Premier mislead Sean in the last election?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Acting Premier): Mr. Speaker, we know that a tax increase is difficult for Manitobans. We understand that. It's a difficult decision to make for those of us who had to make that decision.

But we also know what's coming. We know from the flood forecast that we've seen, we know from the information that the Minister for Infrastructure has discussed with us, that there is a critical need in this province to protect us against the next flood. There's a critical need in this province for investments in infrastructure. So we have to choose how to pay for that.

They unveiled their choice yesterday, Mr. Speaker. They unveiled their choice, their choice to fire thousands of people this year, people that Manitobans depend on to provide health care, to provide instruction to their kids in schools, people that Manitobans depend on to protect their safety and health in the workplace. That's their plan. That's the plan they'll take to Manitobans.

This decision wasn't easy, but it's a better decision than—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Minister's time has expired.

PST Increase Impact on Families

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): And I believe that Sean would feel that this answer from this side—of this government is nonsense, Mr. Speaker. During the last election campaign, this Premier told Manitobans that the very notion that he would raise the PST was nonsense. Well, many Manitobans believed him.

Jenna Jeske from Binscarth was one of them, Mr. Speaker. Jenna Jeske and her husband Andy are a young couple in Binscarth who are working to raise money to build their first home. Now, Jenna and Andy—dream of home ownership will have to wait, as thousands of dollars in additional taxes will have to go to this dishonest government.

* (10:30)

Jenna and Andy are not the government. They can't raise revenue at the drop of a deceitful statement. No, they must make choices in how to spend their hard-earned cash and income, Mr. Speaker. The decision to become a first-time homeowner is going to be that much more difficult.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier (Mr. Selinger): What will he say to Jenna and Andy about this unforgivable broken promise, and prove that what he's—everything that he is saying is—

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Acting Premier): I think we all understand that paying more tax is going to be difficult for Manitobans, we understand that, and that's why it was a hard decision to make, Mr. Speaker.

But we also know the alternative laid out by the opposition. The alternative that they have laid out is to cut millions and millions of dollars from the services that Manitobans count on: to cut millions and millions of dollars from the Education budget, from the health-care budget, from the Justice budget; to cut the services that Manitobans depend on. That means that there won't be people on the other end of the phone when you call your health-care centre, when you need information in the middle of the night to take care of your kid. Those are the kinds of cuts that they are talking about. That is the alternative that's in front of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

PST Increase Impact on Business

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): During the last election campaign the Premier told Manitobans that the very notion that he would raise the PST was nonsense; many Manitobans believed him.

Chris Driedger, a young business man from Altona, who now finds himself paying a lot more than what he should—thousands of dollars in additional taxes for his family and the families that he supports. Chris's family is not in the government; they can't raise the revenue like the government is attempting to do. They must make choices in their business and that choice may be to move out of the province in order to make a living for his family.

My question to the Premier: What will he say to Chris Driedger about why he broke his promise, and prove that everything he says is nonsense, nothing more than road-apple rhetoric?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Acting Premier): Well, I want to thank the member for bringing his usual colourful style to the House yet again.

I would say that this is a—of course, this is a difficult decision to make. What we're faced with in this province—we know what we're faced with in this province is the need to protect Manitobans from future flooding; we need to make those investments now. We know that what we're faced with—what they spent their first opportunity to ask questions—asking questions about was investments and infrastructure. I assume that's because their constituents are asking for those investments in infrastructure also. It's a hard choice to decide how to pay for those kinds of investments. Their choice that they laid out would be to fire nurses, to fire teachers, to fire jail guards, to fire Family Services social workers; that's the choice they've laid out to Manitobans. Our choice is also difficult.

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

Minister of Family Services and Labour Resignation Request

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, child poverty in Manitoba under the NDP is out of control. There are nearly 10,000 children in care with many being apprehended because of poverty, and yet this government has refused to raise the shelter rates in yet another budget.

Yesterday I asked the Minister of Family Services if she advised the Premier to raise the shelter rates and she didn't answer.

For these and many other reasons, I ask the minister today: Will she stand up for children and for those who are poor, and resign because her Premier and Finance Minister have not supported the raising of shelter rates to help those who are poor and help children in this province?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I'm not going anywhere.

I think when we look at what the active—actions of this government has been over our time in office in terms of low-income families, families that I worked with before I was elected, we can see some of the actions that we've taken have made a real difference in those families' lives. Ending the clawback of the universal child benefit—that clawback was costing those families with children \$50 million a year. We ended that when we became

government and that has put back into the hands of a single parent with two small children over \$500 a month, Mr. Speaker. That is real help for those families.

I'm also proud to be part of a government that has raised the minimum wage every year we've been in office.

Children in Care Implementation of Recommendations

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, but the minister has not raised the shelter rates. Numerous reports, including the Auditor General's report in September, have identified critical recommendations to protect children in care that have not yet been implemented. The Phoenix Sinclair inquiry has revealed the NDP's CFS system to be mismanaged and is in a state of chaos. I—under this Minister of Family Services, children and families have been continuing to suffer.

I ask the minister: Will she do the honourable thing and resign to acknowledge her failure to implement so many critical recommendations?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): You know, we take seriously every day our commitment to children and families in this government, and we have put tremendous investments into the child welfare system to better meet those critical needs: hundreds of new front-line positions so social workers can manage their caseloads better. And in the time that we've been away from this House, I've had the opportunity to go and talk to some of those agencies, to talk to them about the things they're able to do now, that they're able to work with families who are in crisis before they get to the point of having to apprehend those children, because of those investments.

Those are the investments, Mr. Speaker, that are at risk if we were to go to the plan that I think perhaps the member for River Heights also supports, the plan to deeply cut into those services that was presented by the members of the opposition.

Minister of Family Services and Labour Resignation Request

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Manitoba Liberals support a better CFS system.

Mr. Speaker, during the last session, the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, the Winnipeg Free Press, the CBC, the Winnipeg Sun and other media outlets shocked Manitobans by revealing details about the missing

supervisory notes from CFS that were critical of—to the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry and its results. I point-blank asked the minister then what happened to the notes. She evaded the question repeatedly, and we still don't know what happened to the missing CFS supervisory notes.

I ask the Minister of Family Services: Will she do the honourable thing and resign because of her failure to be accountable and to give the public the answers we need to understand how those critical supervisory notes went missing?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Of course, we put that inquiry in place that is currently sitting, that is hearing very, very difficult testimony. I read the testimony that was offered yesterday, and it is heartbreaking to read the kind of fear that people lived with in this situation. And those are the kinds of—that's the kind of fear that child welfare workers encounter every day and work with.

This discussion that the member is engaging in now will continue to be a focus of the inquiry. As I said last session, policies are in place to make sure that records are kept. There's been a search for those notes. I understand that will continue to be a topic of discussion at the inquiry, and we'll look forward to getting the recommendations of that inquiry, and we will do our best to meet those recommendations. But we won't do them by cutting the very services that children are dependent on.

Education Teacher Recognition

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the opposition is focused in on cuts. We are focused in on building a better Manitoba for families.

And this includes investing more money in education every year since 1999 to ensure that our kids get a strong start in life. One of the greatest strengths of our education system is the dedicated professionals that work every day with our children.

Will the Minister of Education please inform the House how we've recognized some of the teach—outstanding teachers that we had this week?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): I was very pleased yesterday during Education Week that we are celebrating, because we like to celebrate what we're doing and investing in education to recognize teachers and principals across this province that are

committed to helping our young people achieve their potential. We are continuing to invest in education, in schools, in gyms, in science labs.

We opened Clearspring Middle School in Steinbach, and you know what? The MLA for Steinbach, who said he's proud of his community, didn't even bother to show up at the gold LEED school that is the envy of every school in North America. Why wasn't he there? Because he doesn't care about his community. He said he cared about his community. Why wasn't he there? Because they don't like education.

* (10:40)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. We're wasting precious time.

PST Increase Election Promise

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): During the 2011 election campaign the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said that he would not raise the PST, that the very notion of raising the PST was nonsense. Well, Mr. Speaker, many Manitobans believed him and now they know that they can't believe a word that he says.

And Sandra says, we are taxed—we are overtaxed and financially burdened with taxes. Any young educated people of this province with any amount of brains will leave here and never return. If I knew at 20 what I know at 56, I would be out of here, Mr. Speaker, as a direct result of the Premier not telling the truth two years ago—less than two years ago and raising the PST today.

Mr. Speaker, what does this government say? What does this Premier say to Sandra and the many, many others that are sending us emails and indicating that they can't believe the Premier? Will they—

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

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, what we can say to Manitobans is that this government chose to build and to invest in order to protect the families that live in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, what the opposition has said to the people of Manitoba is quite the opposite. What the opposition has said is that they would cut deeply into the services that those same Manitobans, the same people they keep reading into the record today, those

same people want us to protect those services. And you came clean yesterday all right. You told Manitobans that you were willing to fire nurses, layoff teachers. You're willing to scale back the economic development opportunities that this province has.

Mr. Speaker, we absolutely reject the narrow-minded, narrow-sighted, short-sighted approach that we see coming from members across. We reject the approach of cuts that they put on the table yesterday. We'll stand with Manitobans to build this province.

PST Increase Election Promise

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I see the nonsense is not solely with the Premier today.

Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign the—this Premier told Manitobans that the very notion he would raise the PST was nonsense. Unfortunately, many Manitobans believed him. Thomas Gilbraith is one of them. Thomas is one but of many Manitobans who now find themselves paying more, thousands of dollars in additional taxes for his family each year because of this Premier's broken promise. Thomas told me he's seriously looking at moving to Saskatchewan now because he can transfer there.

My question to the Premier: What will he say to Thomas about why he broke his promise and prove that everything he says is nonsense?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, the Province of Saskatchewan in their budget says that Manitoba is still one of the most affordable places to live in this country.

You know, we can have a debate about whether we should be investing in Manitoba or not. We can have a debate about investing in flood infrastructure, that's all fine.

Ask members opposite to at least be accurate. Mr. Speaker, what they're trying to tell Manitobans is that they can cut deeply into public services like health care and education. It's not going to make a difference.

Some Honourable Members: It's tough love.

Mr. Struthers: It's tough love, Mr. Speaker, and it's not really going to make a difference in their lives, but I'm telling you it will. I'm telling you it will when you cut nurses, when you cut teachers—

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

**PST Increase
Impact on Families**

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, the member says be accurate. I'll tell you about accurate. Accurate—inaccuracy is saying we will not raise taxes and then raising them by this amount.

Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba—Manitobans are taking note of the government's action. They're speaking up and they're angry.

Elizabeth wrote to me and she says, the PST hike means no summer vacation and less travelling in Manitoba. Also less shopping here, but we will go to North Dakota and do so whenever possible. It will hurt business and families. Michael says, as a middle-class family with kids, this is a significant pinch for back-to-back years of substantial tax hikes. We feel like we're a—working harder and getting less and we got to save a dollar somewhere, so it will increase my online shopping.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government—what do they say to people like Elizabeth and Michael and their families about why they're breaking their promise and why they won't help them save money?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, I would ask the person that they—it was brought forward just now, if they are in Minot, to take a look at flood preparation, Mr. Speaker. I remember very clearly—I remember very clearly the images coming out of Minot, North Dakota, of water up to the eavestroughs of houses. I remember—I remember those images coming out of Fargo with their downtown on fire. That's what happens when you don't prepare; that's what happens when you don't invest.

We're not going to make that mistake and we're going to invest in our province and invest in flood protection and we're going to invest in critical infrastructure. They can use that as a guise to do deep cuts into health care and deep cuts into education. They can cut their way to—through this crisis if they like. I think that is absolutely opposite of what Manitobans want.

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

**PST Increase
Flood Mitigation**

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): This government wants to create the illusion that this PST hike is all about investing in flood mitigation, but if

you look at the details of the budget, you see how very little of the budget it actually dedicated to flood mitigation in this year.

What does the four—their 14-year history of government actually show? That they spent less than 0.18 per cent of the budget on flood mitigation if you leave out the floodway reconstruction, which was heavily supported by the federal government. If you look in details even further, you'll find that they spent more on advertising during that period of time. Perhaps this flood can be stopped by lining up your spin doctors at the border and diverting the water with their talk.

Now this—during the last election, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) told Manitobans that hiking the PST was nonsense. Manitoba's—many Manitobans believed him. Susan—

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

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, that's a very good question, because I can read right now—I'm going to give the member opposite a bit of a—an advance notice of the brief on the upcoming flood situation. We're preparing again for significant flooding, but the ring dikes that were built in the Red River valley, part of that billion-dollar investment in flood protection in 2009 when we had a greater flood than 1950—it is estimated that the protection of 1,800 outlying homes, Mr. Speaker, saved a hundred million dollars in damages.

The protection of communities through ring dikes prevented \$70 million, Mr. Speaker. We have invested—and I don't know, maybe the member may want to take a tour of the floodway expansion, the \$650-million floodway expansion, or those ring dikes. He might want to come down and talk to people who were being protected in the flood. He might also want to take a stand in support of this budget because if he really cares about flood mitigation and [*inaudible*] for his constituents, he'll support a budget that will invest a further—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time is expired.

**Tax Increase
Impact on Families**

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): During the last election campaign, this Premier told Manitobans that the very notion he would raise the PST was

absolute nonsense. Mr. Speaker, many Manitobans bought it; Diane from Beausejour was one of them. Diane is but one of many Manitobans who now find themselves paying more—they have had to sell their car. Thousands of dollars in additional taxes for their family each year because of this Premier's broken promises. Diane's family is not the government. They chose not to break the law. They must make choices in how they spend their hard-earned money.

*(10:50)

My question to the Premier: What will he say to Diane's family about why he broke his promise and prove that everything he says is nonsense?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Acting Premier): The budget is about choices, and we made a difficult choice because we know the challenges are in front of us, the challenges to protect Manitobans from flooding and to put money into the critical infrastructure that we need. So they laid out their choices yesterday. They laid out the choices that they would make, the choices to fire thousands and thousands of people that Manitobans depend on. I know the members opposite. I know the Leader of the Opposition is a great admirer of the Filmon government. He says we were blessed with that government. I just didn't know he wanted to do twice the damage in half the time.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. Vital Historical Society Inc.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the St. Vital Historical Society Inc. This non-profit organization works to preserve and promote the history of the old city of St. Vital. It was established in 1994 by a small group of St. Vital citizens, passionate about their collective history. Led by Gordon and Isabelle Hancock, the group grew in size and became officially incorporated the following year.

In order to share their stories, the Society opened the St. Vital Museum in 2008. It is located in the former St. Vital police station and fire department building, a 99-year old designated site. This museum houses over 5,000 artifacts from the St. Vital area. They date as far back as the late 1800s. Archival materials include all eight Guess Who gold records donated by bassist Jim Kale, manuscripts, cartography and drawings. Some prominent artifacts

include the St. Vital Fire Brigade's original 1939 Fargo Pumper truck and a copy of the handwritten diary belonging to Victor Mager, an attendee at the execution of Thomas Scott. The museum highlights the history of notable pioneers of the second oldest settlement in Winnipeg after Seven Oaks, including Marie and Joseph St. Germain, Mary Ann and William McDowell, Abraham Guay, Peter Tod, Fredrick Hutton and, most notably, the founder of Manitoba, Louis Riel.

Also on display are decorative arts such as costumes, household furnishings, ceramics, metalwork and photography. Artifacts are displayed on a rotational basis. In order to cater to a variety of groups, the museum provides educational and research services, tours and presentations.

Mr. Speaker, it's plain to see St. Vital is fortunate to be home to people who are extremely passionate about their community and its history's preservation. Without the good work—the St. Vital Historical Society many of our stories would be lost. For their commitment, I thank all the volunteers who are involved with the St. Vital Historical Society. You are phenomenal constituents who make St. Vital one of the best parts of this great province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Elmer Hildebrand

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, when Elmer Hildebrand started Golden West Broadcasting, it was a single radio station in Altona. The cornerstone of Golden West is the community service with local staff and local news, which has been the business—has seen the business grow into a 40-station company across western Canada. An intense focus on smaller rural markets has brought news and entertainments to communities without daily newspapers or coverage from bigger cities, and Golden West has created dozens of local celebrities who have grown with the community through the magic of broadcasting.

Outside of his work with Golden West Broadcasting, Elmer was one of the original members of the broadcasting association of Manitoba, past president of Western Association of Broadcasters and a recipient of the Manitoba Broadcasters Pioneer Award. He continues to raise money and volunteer for local churches, festivals, museums and charitable organizations, arts councils and sporting groups. This commitment to community service is not only seen through Elmer's work and on

the air—of—on the air work of Golden West, but through the attitude and hard work of all his employees who are active in the community outside of their roles on their air.

Recently, Elmer was awarded the Order of Canada for his outstanding commitment to community service. A self-declared farm boy who started in a local radio station with nine employees, it's safe to say that he has accomplished a great deal. Golden West continues to hire straight off the farm and it is that connection with local listeners that much of Elmer's success can be attributed to.

On behalf of myself and all of my constituents, I would like to ask all of my colleagues to join me in celebrating Elmer's achievements, and would like to thank him for providing an extremely valuable community service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Rebecca Kuik

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge a remarkable Southdale student named Rebecca Kuik. Her efforts to raise awareness about autism in our community are remarkable. Rebecca is a grade 8 student at Island Lakes Community School who has been working hard to make sure that her classmates and community are informed about what autism is, how it affects people and the challenges that people living with autism experience.

In honour of World Autism Awareness Day on April 2nd, Rebecca organized an assembly at Island Lakes Community School that brought together students, faculty and community members. The assembly was part of a unique global initiative by Autism Speaks called Light it up Blue, which began in 2010.

All over the world, landmarks shine with blue lights to foster worldwide acknowledgement about autism and increase understanding and support for families. Through Rebecca's effort, Island Lakes Community School became one of the many worldwide locations to go blue in support of people affected by autism.

Rebecca is committed to fostering awareness and understanding of autism so that people like her sister who are affected can find their voice and, ultimately, a cure. In her own words, she is working to increase understanding about how people with autism may feel so that we can think about ways that

will make—help us be more thoughtful and supportive of them and help us make a difference each and every day.

Southdale thrives because of people like Rebecca, who are willing to go the extra mile to make their community and their world a better place. It is clear that Principal Darcy McCormack and all the staff at Island Lakes Community School have created an environment in which students such as Rebecca feel free to pursue their passions, and I am proud to share this amazing young lady's accomplishments with you here today.

Thank you.

CKLQ Radio

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I am pleased to rise today to speak about CKLQ radio. I have been very fortunate over the last couple of years to spend some time on Feedback with Bill Turner. It is a great program that they have out there, and Bill himself is involved in a group home in Brandon, one of the many that has been devastated by the cuts made by this government. They are affecting some of the most vulnerable people in Manitoba and Bill is dealing with that on a daily basis.

But on Feedback, Mr. Speaker, we were on there this morning and Manitobans are outraged. Manitobans are irate about this PST increase. They want the government to come clean and tell them the truth, but, apparently, that's not there. They can't trust the Premier (Mr. Selinger) anymore, apparently, because the things he has said are misleading. So it's very unfortunate that we're getting this feedback from Manitobans. It's really unbelievable how angry they are with this government. They are quite appalled.

You know that if this government really believes that they need an increase in the PST, then they should be able to sell it to Manitobans. They should be able to go out there and make sure that Manitobans are going to vote in favour of it. They should have a referendum, Mr. Speaker. If you can really believe in it, if they believe in it, sell it to Manitobans. Have the referendum.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Further member statements? Seeing none—

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

Mr. Speaker: To resume the adjourned debate of the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism (Ms. Melnick), who has nine minutes remaining. *[interjection]*

Leave is—leave denied?

Is there leave for the debate to remain standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Good morning, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to enter into debate on this year's budget and quite excited about this year's budget. It's a historical budget. I think it's one that many Manitobans will remember for years to come.

As my colleague from Brandon West has talked about on the radio call-in show this morning in Brandon, he was hearing from Manitobans around the province, in particular in southwestern Manitoba. And I know, certainly, it's been a topic of coffee-shop discussion this last week since the budget was introduced, and it is getting a lot of attention from Manitobans. So it is indeed a pleasure for me to talk about this budget on behalf of the great constituents of the constituency of Spruce Woods, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:00)

Clearly we've got a tax-and-spend government, NDP government, here. Clearly, Manitoba families are going to be forced into paying new taxes. Our estimate is a family of four will be paying over \$1,200 in regard just to the new 14 per cent increase in the provincial sales tax, Mr. Speaker.

Quite often when we have a budget that's presented by the government, we look for the vision in that budget; we look for a plan for the future. And we were really looking for a plan for the future of Manitoba as we move forward, and we didn't see that this year, Mr. Speaker.

And I reflect back even a couple of years ago, the NDP did provide in their budget document a plan for the future. And they actually presented a budget and said that they were going to try to balance their budget in a couple years out. And, really, we don't see that type of a vision or a statement in this particular budget about how they're going to address the deficit and the ongoing debt that we have here in Manitoba. And I think that's certainly a concern that we have.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all members of the Chamber to have a long, hard look at the actual document that was presented by the NDP. I think it's important that each and every member look at the current fiscal situation that this government is in. And it's very important, and I think it's very alarming. And I think part of that observation on the current budget—and we have to reflect on how we got to the current fiscal situation that we're in. I think that's very, very important.

I think the first thing we should recognize is this budget puts forward a \$12-billion expenditure, is what is proposed in this particular budget. And it's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, when this government came into office back in 1999, the budget at that time was half of that, in the \$6-billion range. So what the NDP have done over the last 14 years is, in essence, doubled the budget of the Province of Manitoba.

And the problem is they've doubled their expenses but they haven't been able to keep pace with the income. So, clearly, there's a spending problem over and above what they've been able to take in. And historically, over the years, we've seen record transfers from the federal government on behalf of other residents of Canada to the coffers here in Manitoba. Record transfer payments, Mr. Speaker, and I think that that is very important when we look at the history of the budget here in Manitoba over the last 14 years.

We've had pretty good economic times here in the province of Manitoba over those 14 years, as well. And we've had some opportunities to put money away, a rainy day fund, those types of activities. We probably had money to pay off the budget, but this government hasn't been able to balance the books over the last 14 years.

So, Mr. Speaker, what they've done besides increasing the size of the annual budget to \$12 billion, we've also now—this budget document shows the—at the end of this year, the NDP estimate

the total debt of the Province to be over \$30 billion. And again, \$30 billion of debt that has to—we have to pay interest on. And that's a debt that it—has accumulated over the last 14 years and certainly has risen over the 14 years, more than doubled in those 14 years. It's gone from a \$13-billion deficit in 1999 to a \$30-billion debt at this particular time.

And, clearly, Mr. Speaker, not only are we forced to service that debt, but we're going to have to pay that debt back at some point in time. And that debt is going to be saddled on not just ourselves, but our children and our grandchildren going forward. And it's quite alarming, and I hope the members opposite will take note of the budget documents that spell out those particular numbers, and it's very alarming.

And, even though the government is proposing to spend over \$12 billion this year, it still shows that they are going to be short \$518 million in terms of the revenue side. So, clearly, even with this new 14 per cent increase in the provincial sales tax, the NDP government can still not balance their budget. And even their own documents say that that 1 per cent increase in provincial sales tax will generate 278 million extra dollars to the province of Manitoba. Even with that 278 million dollars extra money coming out of the pockets of Manitobans this government still says they're going to be \$518 million short at the end of the year. Mr. Speaker, that doesn't bode very well.

And the other alarming part is there's no reference to the, in the budget, to how they're going to fix this situation down the road. Now the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has made mention in his speech that this is only a temporary 1 per cent, but if in reality when we look just how bad the situation is financial here in the province, what's next, Mr. Speaker?

Clearly, we can't trust what he says because he told us two years ago before the election there would be no increase in taxes, Mr. Speaker. And what we saw last year, which I thought was alarming, was \$184 million in new taxes. Clearly, they expanded their—the sales tax to include a lot of other very important items, and I think one that a lot of people that I'm getting feedback in is homeowners' insurance. And that's 7 per cent that's added to homeowner insurance impacts just about everybody in the province, and it's a very substantial tax that people are paying. And that particular tax on insurance products alone accounts for almost a

hundred million dollars in new revenue to the province.

So I thought last year's budget was a pretty big swipe at Manitobans and out of the pockets of Manitobans. But that really doesn't hold a candle to this particular budget, Mr. Speaker, because they found another way to tax Manitobans and even taking more money than last year out of their pockets, over \$400 million in new taxes alone over the last two years. And, again, that's on just, literally, months after the Premier told us he would not increase taxes. So Manitobans are certainly alarmed at what the Premier's had to say, and his actions certainly are different than what his spoken words reflect.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk a little bit about, you know, where we're headed here in terms of our net debt. And I think it's important figure, I know the government likes to use net debt because then the \$30 million of total debt certainly scares people. And what we've done here we've certainly increased our net debt as well, and it's a—very alarming statistics when we look at the numbers.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know we sometimes like to compare ourselves to Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan used to be the old have-not province next door. Well, certainly, times have changed and now Saskatchewan is showing great signs of growth, things are going very well there. And, now, we're the have-not cousin on this side of the country. In fact, I look now it's Newfoundland and Saskatchewan are doing very well and not looking for the Ottawa and the federal government to send them money, but Manitoba continues to look for federal transfers from our other cousins across the country.

So, when we look at what's happening in terms of our net debt it's very alarming. And I just, actually, going to quote. I know that the government side won't like the numbers that I'm going to quote from the Fraser Institute, but it's the facts that they're presenting and what's going on in Saskatchewan.

And Premier Wall over there has done a pretty good job of managing and what he's saying—what the Fraser Institute is saying, that they've cut their net debt in half. It was 11.6 not too many years ago, that was in '07-08. They've cut their net debt to 4.8 per cent of GDP in 2011 and 2012. So over the course of only four years they've cut their net debt according to—by GDP—in half.

And what we look here—and we go to the 10th ranked Province in terms of fiscal accountability. The 10th ranked Province here is the Province of Manitoba under the leadership of our Premier (Mr. Selinger), and Premier being former Finance Minister for years who was at the helm here for a number of years with the budget. Anyway, he's now ranked 10th out of the 10 in terms of fiscal management. And what the numbers say in this report, that the—and, again, we talk about net debt relative to GDP—we've actually gone from 22.8 per cent in '09 and '10, to 26 per cent in '11 and '12. So we've seen a dramatic increase there.

And not only that, Mr. Speaker, the trend is not—is going to continue even given the numbers in the provincial budget this year, net debt to DDP is going to be 28.9 per cent at the end of this term. So you compare with Saskatchewan at 4.8 per cent, we're close to the 30 per cent mark. There's a tremendous difference there and clearly there's some management issues there that we think should be addressed.

* (11:10)

And clearly—I give the government some kudos for being creative in terms of how they are raising money and new taxes and new fees in their last budget. This year they're not being very creative at all, they're simply elevating the PST 1 per cent to get some more money in their coffers, Mr. Speaker, and it's pretty alarming. So, clearly, we're going to rely on taxpayers and we're going to rely on federal transfer payments, and we're still going to be short \$518 million.

The other thing I want to talk about that some people kind of forget about from time to time is the fiscal stabilization account, which—or otherwise known as the rainy day fund. And that was always a pretty good, important fund to have in case we did have a rainy day or in the case that Manitoba—in case we had a flood. And that was a kind of a situation that we had money set aside, we could deal with forest fires, we could deal with floods, and that would be the expectation. But what's happened to the fiscal stabilization account, Mr. Speaker? Well, let's have a look.

Back in the beginning of 2012, that account was at \$527 million. The province needed some money there to help try to balance their budget and they took \$152 million out of the rainy day fund. So that left us at the beginning of this year, \$375 million left, and what they're proposing in this particular budget,

Mr. Speaker, is to help offset their expense situation, to take a \$100 million again out of the fiscal stabilization account. So, as a result, at the end of this year only \$275 million will be left in that account, and it's very—it's not a good situation to be in if we—that particular account, we should be looking forward to have saving for rainy days, and, quite frankly, it looks like they're using that account for their cash flow.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the other really important issue here when we talk about the budget, is to have a look at what the government is reporting on their third quarter. If you remember from last year's budget, the Province of Manitoba proposed to have a \$460-million deficit. That's a summary deficit; that's what they anticipated; that's what they told Manitobans their worst-case budget was going to be, \$460 million. Sure, but if we go to the third quarter report from the Department of Finance, they are now proposing last year's deficit could be \$583 million. That means they missed their mark on last year's deficit by \$123 million. So, when we're up here debating the budget and we look at the potential budget deficit this year of \$518 million, that's what the government's proposing. We don't know how far they're going to miss that mark.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the NDP have only actually met their target on their budget once out of the last 13 years. So, clearly, when you're look at it, that situation, that should scare Manitobans in great depths. So here we are, the government themselves are proposing a \$583-million deficit, and we'll see how that goes over the next—once we get the final report for the last fiscal year.

And, you know, the government gets up and they talk about how things—how good things are going in Manitoba. Well, Mr. Speaker, their own report says that they've had slower than anticipated economic growth and it's projected to result in negative variance in the retail sales tax alone, of \$55 million. So, clearly, things are not all rosy here in Manitoba, and I think the fact of the matter is when we've got a progressive government and progressive province right next door to us with opportunities abounding, we're seeing our people from—in the province of Manitoba, move to places like Saskatchewan and Alberta to find employment. And, clearly, we know the income tax rates are a lot more positive in Alberta where, clearly, you know, residents of Saskatchewan don't start paying income tax until they're about 14 to 15 thousand dollars. Here, in Manitoba, we've tinkered with that rate

where we start paying income tax, but here in Manitoba it's in that \$8,000 range. So a dramatic difference in terms of where people are paying income tax.

And the other side of it, too, is Saskatchewan government allows their people to keep more of their tax dollars in their pocket and, clearly, we think on this side of the House taxpayers know better how to spend their money than the government does. Clearly, the NDP have taken the other approach where they like to get as much money out of taxpayers' pockets as they can and believe that they can manage that money better.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I propose to you that the new \$30 billion of debt that we are saddled with is going to be very important, and it's going to be a noose around our neck for quite some time to come. I know, clearly, the budget does show that we are paying interest on the debt. We're paying interest on the debt right now to the tune of somewhere around—\$838 million is what is proposed on debt financing this year in this particular budget alone, \$838 million interest charges alone in this particular budget. That's \$838 million that can't be used for anything else. It can't be used for infrastructure. It can't be used for education. It can't be used for health care, and we know there's a lot of work that's needed in there. So 838 dollars—\$838 million on servicing the \$30 billion of debt we have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you know, we are at historically low interest rates here in the economy at this point in time, historically low interest rates. When interest rates turn around, as we know they will, that will have a significant impact on the Treasury here in Manitoba. In fact, a—only a 1 per cent increase in interest rates will mean an additional service cost of \$270 million—\$270 million—and that's only a 1 per cent in interest rates, which we know that certainly has the potential to happen. And, clearly, this is going to impact future generations and there's no turn—no sign of that turning around in this particular budget.

Now, clearly, this budget has a big bearing on Manitobans and businesses in the province of Manitoba. Clearly, the PST increase alone will have a significant impact, and I want to talk a little bit about, you know, some of the things that we're hearing from Manitobans in terms of this particular budget.

Mr. Speaker, I know we look at some of the retail side of things, and Lanny McInnes from the

Retail Council of Canada said this is just another reason for consumers to look either online or south of the border to do their shopping. There—this is certainly something we didn't need the provincial government to do. So, clearly, the red flags are going up in regard to the PST and the government's proposed increase in the PST.

Mr. Speaker, another important sector in our economy is the food and beverage and the restaurant sector, and we had a quote from Dwayne Marling of the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association. And they're, quite frankly, being faced with a triple whammy in this particular budget. We've seen the liquor increase in both beer and in spirits, a substantial increase in those just over the last month. In fact, those increases will impact the collection of revenue to the Manitoba liquor commission to the tune of \$17 million. So \$17 million will be added to the cost of alcohol in the province of Manitoba, and there'll be other costs associated with that, too, because the PST will be applicable to all those as well. And, clearly, the NDP is looking for every area where they can gain some extra tax revenue and, clearly, they went to the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission and said: Listen, folks, we need some more money here in the provincial coffers. I think it's time for you to raise the rate on alcohol taxes, and that's what they've done here.

So, Mr. Speaker, the food services have bumped their booze prices. They've also had in this budget the minimum wage has gone up, which will certainly impact the beverage and food service industry, and now they're getting the increase on the PST, a 14 per cent increase in the PST. And, as Dwayne has said, we're getting it from all sides. This didn't happen overnight. Floods aren't an unusual occurrence in the province of Manitoba. To blame one or two years of flooding on an increase in taxes seems disingenious to me, and when you've had more than a decade of financial decisions that have brought us to a net debt of \$17 billion. So, clearly, they have some concerns, and, again, question the management over there on the NDP side.

* (11:20)

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've had quite a discussion about—we've had quite a discussion with municipalities over the last couple of months in terms of some of the initiatives this government is taking. And, as you know, the NDP government here is forcing municipalities around the province to

amalgamate. They have—don't think that the provinces—or—pardon me, that the municipalities can properly manage themselves, and they're forcing them into amalgamation discussions. In fact, we're expecting there'll be some laws come forward here, change in legislation to enable them to move forward to actually force the amalgamations to happen. So we're certainly looking forward to seeing that legislation tabled.

But the municipalities are clearly pushing back on that agenda, Mr. Speaker, and we've had comments as well about this particular budget from the president of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, Doug Dobrowolski. And he says, I believe they're taking the tax room away that we've been asking for to repair municipal infrastructure.

So, clearly, Mr. Speaker, what's happening is the municipalities are now having to pay 14 per cent more on all their provincial sales tax, and that has quite a bearing on them as well. So that takes money out of their pockets for work that they want to be doing on their local infrastructure improvements. In fact, I talked to one of my municipalities, the Municipality of Killarney-Turtle Mountain. Clearly, they are disturbed with this increase in the PST, with, actually, taking money out of their pockets, and the Province isn't supplying them any additional money. So they're quite alarmed with that, and I know they've passed a resolution to that effect, and they will be passing that resolution on to the Premier (Mr. Selinger). And I'm certainly interested in the Premier's comments back to those people out in the—Killarney-Turtle Mountain.

Clearly, they're looking at an—at additional tax, if you will, Mr. Speaker, of anywhere between 40 and 50 thousand dollars, so that 14 per cent increase in PST alone will cost those ratepayers 40 to 50 thousand dollars more. And that's a substantial amount of money that can't be used for infrastructure repair or other services that that that municipality provides, and, certainly, municipalities are finding it a struggle as it is. So that will be a huge economic hit to that area where, in essence, we're double-taxing the same taxpayers in regard to this PST, so that is pretty alarming.

Clearly, when we talk about seniors in Manitoba, seniors will be hit as well. They've been hit on the heels of other fees that have been increased in the last budget, and some of the services—I talked about home insurance with some of the other services that they are provided, new tax levels there to the tune of

at least \$184 million. And this PST will certainly impact seniors, and I know the government has made a promise to seniors in Manitoba just before the last election. They made a lot of promises before the last election, and, clearly, many of those promises they're not keeping as we find out in this year's budget.

But one of those promises—they were going to try to assist seniors in their education portion of their property tax, Mr. Speaker, and that was a promise I'm sure many seniors bought into. Well, here we have the budget brought forward, they haven't done anything last year in the budget to help the seniors, this year they made a promise that, yeah, we'll go back and we'll revisit that particular promise, but we'll try to implement it just before the next election. Now that's—you know, I would think that seniors probably see right through that particular promise, because you make a promise one year and then come out two years later, say, well, we'll do that two years down the road. So there's a promise four years away.

So that, Mr. Speaker, is why we're asking questions about infrastructure around the province. Clearly, the government can make promises but they haven't been keeping those promises, and that's why we're asking the issues on behalf of our constituents when infrastructure repairs are going to be made, when they're going to fix so many other areas in health care and education. So it's certainly incumbent upon us to ask those questions of government.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk just briefly about Manitoba Hydro before I go too much further. You know, I've talked about the \$30 billion of debt already on Manitoba. But Manitoba Hydro through the NDP government are proposing—is another \$21-billion major project in terms of dams and hydro transmission lines. The problem with this is that we don't have a secure market at this point in time that we can rely on to be profitable. And that's really the thing about this; if we're going to venture down the road where we're going to spend and actually borrow \$21 billion of capital, we have to have the ability to pay that money back.

And, clearly, the Public Utilities Board has raised issues with that and for some reason Manitoba Hydro don't want to be supplying to the Public Utilities Board some of that relative information so that they can make an unbiased opinion on it. So, clearly, there's more to it than meets the eye there, but the question remains again, Mr. Speaker, and we talk about Bipole III alone. One single decision by this government could save the taxpayers of

Manitoba over a billion dollars—a billion dollars—alone, and that's very significant when we look at the provincial budget and what kind of financial distress we're in at this point in time. So that \$1 billion in savings alone makes a lot of sense to most Manitobans. And it's the old east versus west debate, and we're certainly hoping that the NDP will come to their senses and have a sober second look at that. And, hopefully, the Public Utilities Board, and through the Clean Environment Commission, we'll have some input into that and it's a very important decision going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned Liquor and Lotteries, clearly that's important for this government because they're looking for the revenue. Those two corporations turn over to the Province in excess of \$600 million a year, and we know that they're looking for all the revenue they can get. And I talked about the \$17 million that the liquor commission will be picking up as a result of some of the new taxes they applied over the last month. Clearly, we're into the online gaming now in Manitoba, and I'm sure the NDP is interested to see how that turns out because they need as much revenue from the gaming side of things as they can get their hands on.

Mr. Speaker, we've also—see the heavy-handed move of government in this budget where they're going to close down, it appears, the Manitoba Jockey Club, which will have a—certainly have an impact on Assiniboia Downs and the activities of Assiniboia Downs. The Manitoba Jockey Club has been able to keep that facility afloat, keep horseracing alive in Manitoba for the last probably close to 20 years now. And now in this budget it appears that the government wants to get their hands on the revenue that's generated at Assiniboia Downs. They don't want any cash to slip through anybody's hands and, in essence, the Finance Minister now wants his hands on that money, and, as a result of that, we believe that this could be the end of racing at Assiniboia Downs and that's a \$50-million industry that this government could potentially be shutting down. And we're getting calls and emails from people involved in that industry who are certainly concerned over this particular budget and the impacts that will have on their livelihood as well. And, clearly, there's a lot of people that work at Assiniboia Downs that will be negatively impacted there if that facility does close. So we're looking forward to see what kind of a plan the minister has for that facility going forward.

Before I close, I just want to talk a little bit about the existing legislation that the NDP are proposing to

change; it's the balanced budget debt repayment and taxpayer protection and—act. And, clearly, Mr. Speaker, the act, as it's written now, was there to protect Manitobans from governments that want to raise taxes for their own benefit, and, clearly, it's an important act. And Manitobans are letting us know that it is an important act and they don't want this government to be bullies and go in there and change that legislation for their own good. And that's the message that we're going to be leaving with Manitobans.

And I thank you very much for the opportunity to [*inaudible*] in this debate.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It's a pleasure to stand and speak about Budget 2013, and, indeed, I'll make sure there is no suspense; I will be supporting Budget 2013. I'll be supporting the work of this Finance Minister and I'll be supporting investing in the things that matter most to Manitobans.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can say I'm proud to do that on behalf of the families, the individuals who elected me to stand and represent them in this Legislature. And I'm proud to be part of a government that continues to build, that continues to invest in our province in uncertain economic times.

* (11:30)

And, certainly, Mr. Speaker, as I'll talk about in my time today, different governments across Canada are making some different decisions. Different governments in Manitoba's past have made different decisions. We're making the right decisions for Manitobans. And Budget 2013 is part of that.

And the debate, Mr. Speaker, is helpful. The debate we certainly welcome in this House and elsewhere in Manitoba because it sets apart those in the New Democratic Party, who are builders, who want to build a stronger province, and those in the Progressive Conservative Party, who at best are mothballers, who, at their worst, are cutters, are slashers. And, of course, what's left of the Liberal Party, which just doesn't really know where it's going, as we have the Leader of the Liberal Party who one day talks about—cries crocodile tears for the poor, yet the next day will say he's opposed to reasonable increases in the minimum wage for low-income Manitobans.

Now, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) articulated a very clear and a very understandable

plan. There's an argument as to how we'll continue to build our province in uncertain times.

And of course, the statement of a government and its priorities are set out in the budget; and indeed, it's a—it was an excellent budget speech. And I know my friends weren't listening. My Conservative friends were not listening when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) presented the budget. The handy part is they can actually get it, even if they don't want to read it, and it's too tough for them to read, there's lots of great little charts and graphs that really explain where Manitoba is going and why we're making the important choices that we're making.

And I know the Minister of Finance listened very closely to people from all over this province. He listened to people who aren't always on side with our government. He listened to those all across the province who said, you know, Minister of Finance, you need to make sure that your government continues to invest in infrastructure. Yes, in terms of flood protection, because we saw a major flood in 2009, a major flood in 2011 and, unfortunately, living in Manitoba, we are gearing up again for another flood in 2013.

But it's not just flood preparation, a point which has, again, has eluded the Progressive Conservatives. It's about investing in all kinds of infrastructure—in our roads and highways, in bridges, in schools and recreation centres, in important facilities and amenities across this province. And the Minister of Finance listened to people who don't always agree with what our government's doing, who called on this minister to raise the PST and allocate the money to building things that are important to Manitobans.

And he listened to people all over the province who also told him they were concerned about protecting the services that matter to them—protecting their health care services, protecting our education system, protecting our social services, ensuring public safety, protecting all the things that people in neighbourhoods like mine and yours are interested in and care deeply about, and count on their government to look after.

And Mr. Speaker, there's no question. We've been very open about this. No government looks forward to coming in and raising revenue. We don't look forward to raising the provincial sales tax. But it's something that we're doing because we're not going to cut services, we're not going to leave

Manitobans out in the cold. We're going to continue building a stronger province.

You know, we look across the country at what other provinces are doing in these challenging economic times. Of course, there's only one province in the entire country that's brought in a surplus budget this year. And that would be Darrell Dexter and New Democrats in the province of Nova Scotia.

Now, Saskatchewan tells us that they've got a surplus. Saskatchewan tells us that there is a surplus, but, of course, just as they can't tell time like the rest of Canadians, they don't present their budget papers like the rest of Canadians. And, in fact, Saskatchewan, even after themselves having to go out and raise revenues from their population, has a deficit.

And what about those poor people in Alberta? The Province of Alberta is bringing in a deficit, which is now pushing \$2 billion at the same time as they are slashing services. They are cutting things that are important to Albertans. We're not going that route, Mr. Speaker. We're protecting things for Manitobans.

Now, of course, you've heard the very capable explanation of the Minister of Finance as to why the PST hike is necessary. I'm sure that the opposition members are aware that the federal government has announced an infrastructure program. The federal government is expecting the Province of Manitoba to match their investments dollar for dollar. And we aren't going to leave that federal money, which, we think, is useful, on the table, which is why we've announced we'll be having a PST hike for 10 years in order to parallel the length of that federal infrastructure program to make sure we don't leave money on the table. *[interjection]*

And I hear some members of the Progressive Conservative caucus now chattering. If they believe the Province of Manitoba should leave federal cash on the table, they should stand up in this House and they should say so, because, Mr. Speaker, I don't think even the Progressive Conservative members would think that was a good idea. Certainly, our Minister of Finance doesn't think it's a good idea. Our government doesn't think it's a good idea, which is why we'll be investing infrastructure.

Now, different choices could be made. I suppose you could match this infrastructure program and then cut hundreds of millions of dollars out of the other services that are important to Manitobans. And, you

know, we've seen that happen. *[interjection]* And it's very interesting that the loudest member chirping on the other side is the member from River East who was the Family Services minister in the 1990s. My wife was a social worker and she had to live through the cuts that the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) imposed on the most disenfranchised people in Manitoba. So, if she doesn't think that we should be spending on services, if she doesn't think we should be investing, then let her stand in her place and tell us that. We'll be interested to hear what the member for River East has to say.

Now, we have said we will not cut services to people, and what are those services? Well, more than 40 per cent of our budget goes to health care. Some of that is equipment. Some of that is the infrastructure. Some of it is the—is drugs, but mainly the investments in our health-care system—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: It appears that the member for River East and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) want to have a discussion. Might I encourage both of you to use the loge to either my left or my right to have that discussion so that I might be able to hear the debate ongoing in the Chamber here this morning. I ask you, and I encourage you, to use the loge, please.

Mr. Swan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, nearly 40 per cent or over 40 per cent of our budget goes to health care. It's people helping people providing health care when they need it across the province of Manitoba.

Another quarter of the budget is our education system and, yes, there's investments in schools, investments in infrastructure, investments in technical vocational equipment. But, by and large, those investments are made in teachers, in teachers and paraprofessionals in our classrooms preparing our young people to meet the challenges they're going to face in the real world.

About 10 per cent of the budget is Family Services, helping those in our society who have the biggest challenges and, again, the great majority of that spending is real people helping real people.

And, of course, everything else including Justice, which is only about 4 per cent of the budget, is about providing safety to people who live in communities like mine and other communities across the province.

And, you know, when the opposition stood up and said they didn't like the increase in the PST, we challenged them and said, well, what is your plan? And we didn't really think that they were going to put their plan on the record, but, frankly, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased they did because it allows Manitobans to compare and contrast the approach between the mean, cutting Conservatives and the visionary, investing New Democrats.

And just yesterday morning after telling Manitobans that they should expect tough love, the Leader of the Opposition sent out a press release which gave Manitobans a little hint of his vision of Manitoba. And he announced that, if he had the opportunity to bring down a budget, he would cut \$287 million from the budget and he also had another \$265 million in additional cuts he didn't even really specify, which means taking \$550 million in investment out of the things that Manitobans count on.

And now, of course, now when we've put that back to the opposition, they've started trying to spin and get out from under their own press release. They say, don't look back in the past. They actually mean yesterday morning. It's quite incredible, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the—well, we know the vision of Leader of the Opposition because we've seen his version of tough love before when he was sitting around the Cabinet table when the Filmon government—the Filmon government, which he calls one of the finest governments Manitoba's been blessed with. Well, this was a government that froze health-care spending. This was a government that laid off 700 teachers, politicized an entire generation of teachers. And, on the one hand, I'm happy about that because we've got so many great teachers that have joined our caucus. On the other hand, the opportunity cost, the loss of excellence in education that our young people suffered in the '90s is something we never, ever want to go back to.

* (11:40)

This, of course—the Filmon government fired a thousand nurses, cut those people out of our health-care system. And even when they stand up every day and talk about roads and bridges, the Filmon government reduced funding for bridges and highways no fewer than five times, and put the brakes on infrastructure spending.

And, well, would—what would this opposition leader actually do if he ever had the chance to get his hands on the books of the Province? Well, the first thing he said is he'd cut every government department by 1 per cent. Easy thing to say; what does that actually mean?

Well, in health care, for example, that would mean the cut of \$52 million. That's equal to 700 nurses. Imagine 700 fewer nurses than we have today, providing vital health-care services to Manitobans. I suppose the Leader of the Opposition can; certainly, as New Democrats, we don't.

And, of course, as Justice Minister, he would cut \$5 million out of the Justice budget. That's about 60 corrections officers. We know what happened when he was sitting around the Cabinet table when there was a government that didn't invest in corrections officers, that didn't ensure the safety both of inmates but also people working in our correctional facilities.

The member for Fort Whyte, the opposition leader, would cut \$16 million from the Education budget. That would be cutting 200 teachers out of our classrooms. I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, that we're investing in making classroom sizes smaller for our kindergarten to grade 3 students. We've got a Progressive Conservative Party that would believe in making classroom sizes larger, if you even had programming in your schools.

They would also cut \$11 million from the Family Services budget. That's equal to 135 social workers out there in the field, protecting the most vulnerable people in our province.

And what else did the Leader of the Opposition say? Well, he and his spinners sat down and they invented a—or came up with a term I really haven't heard before. They're calling it a hiring chill. Well, the Progressive Conservatives would have a hiring chill for the civil service and, of course, what he wants to do is to remove 1,000 civil servants from the Province. And he calls them civil servants, and he does that for a reason, because he doesn't want to tell you who those people are and what they do. Who are the civil servants that wouldn't be hired—the positions that'd be lost? Well, they'd be flood forecasters, they'd be public health nurses, they'd be doctors, they'd be social workers, they'd be corrections officers, they'd be highway workers. There'd be positions sitting open if the Progressive Conservative Party ever had the chance to run this province again.

And you know, I guess all I can say to the Leader of the Opposition is: The '90s are calling, they want their policies back.

Now, in my—I had a lot of chances, as I always do, to speak to young people and people across the West End, and in my response to the Speech from the Throne, I was able to speak pretty much the entire time I was allotted about young people and what's important to them.

And you know, Wednesday at lunchtime, I had the chance to meet with a group of young people from Tec Voc High School, which happens to be the alma mater for the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief). And I told them they were going to go in and watch question period, and it was going to be one of the most interesting question periods of the year, as QP after the budget comes down always is, and I talked to them about some of the choices that our government had made. And I told them the opposition will be all over the fact that we're going to be raising revenue by increasing the provincial sales tax. And we talked about that, and I told them what that would mean. It means if I go for the lunch special at Spring Roll Restaurant, two blocks away from Tec Voc, where those students eat as well, yes, that'll mean a 6-cent increase in the cost of my lunch special.

What are those students—what am I getting for that additional 6 cents? Well, for those students, they know that they're living in a province that has a minimum wage that continues to go up each and every year. And of the students that were coming to visit me, I asked them how many of them had part-time jobs. Well, the students that go to Tec Voc come from the West End; they come from across the Winnipeg School Division. Many of them do have jobs to help support themselves, to perhaps support their families. Perhaps their families would even send money back home to help out with their expenses.

And I told them that we believed raising the minimum wage every year, helping them, was the right thing to do, and I told them that the minimum wage would be going up from \$10.25 to \$10.45 making Manitoba the highest minimum wage in the country. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, those students at Tec Voc are very appreciative of a government that believes that they should have every opportunity to get ahead. And they—I talked with the students of Tec Voc with investments and education,

and I can tell you last year in 2012 there were more grads walking across the stage at Duckworth Centre wearing their lovely green gowns graduating from Tec Voc than anybody could ever remember being the case.

Those young people at Tec Voc know that with this government's investments, with this Minister of Education's (Ms. Allan) attention and passion for education, they've got the greatest opportunity of getting ahead. And, Mr. Speaker, we know the students coming out of Tec Voc, many of them are in technical-vocational areas. They know that there are more apprenticeship opportunities than have ever been there before. But it didn't happen by accident. That happened because of careful, thoughtful investments by this government each and every year so that when they come out of Tec Voc High School they are going to get great jobs. They're going to start earning the first day they show up on the job site. And what about those students at Tec Voc who want to go on to university or college? Well, I'm proud to tell them that we've got the third lowest university tuition in the entire country, the second lowest college tuition in the country without even taking into account when they get their diplomas or they get their degrees and they stay in Manitoba we're going to give them back a further rebate of 60 per cent of all the tuition that they've paid.

And that may not matter to members across the way, Progressive Conservative members who have got a very different view of this province. But I'll tell you if you're on Spruce Street or you're on Dominion Street or you're on Erin Street those are important investments. Those are things that are important to real people who want to build their future here in Manitoba, and that's why our government is standing up for them.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, I do know young people at Tec Voc, young people at DMCI, they're very excited when they can go to get their driver's licence. In fact, sometimes they get in their own cars, more likely they're borrowing their parent's cars or their brother's cars. And, you know, I'm always happy as the MPI Minister to go out and talk about auto insurance and what it's like in other provinces because that's something the members of the opposition—they had their chance at the MPI committee. They asked questions for two hours or so. They didn't really want to get into the comparisons with other provinces because it's not very convenient.

And I guess this is hitting home for me given that I've got a daughter who's only 10 months away from being able to get her beginner's licence. I look around this Chamber and I see—not just on this side of the House, but on the other side as well—who have young people in their house who are getting their beginner's licences who are driving. And I look at the difference in the cost of auto insurance in Manitoba and some other provinces. The same insurance having a young person in their house, the same insurance that costs about \$1,200 in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, that insurance would cost \$3,000 for a family living in Calgary. That same insurance would cost \$7,000 for a family living in Toronto. If you're a young person living in a place with private auto insurance you can forget about driving or else you'd better come from the kind of family that has a seven-car garage or else you're likely not going to be driving.

And, you know—and last election campaign who was their star candidate? Who was their star candidate who—they'd knock on their tables and they were calling across during question period and debates in Legislature. What did their star candidate say? He thought that privatizing MPI was a good idea. And did the former leader, my old friend, Hugh McFadyen, did he say maybe it wouldn't be a good idea having that candidate running? Did he say, no, that candidate's wrong? No, he didn't. He just stepped aside and let it all happen. And how did it work out for that star candidate? What was his comment election night? This was worse than our worst-case scenarios. Well, that really sums up a lot of things on the Tory side of the way. I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker, for Manitobans, getting rid of Manitoba Public Insurance and getting rid of the protections of having public auto insurance would be worse than the worst-case scenarios for so many young people and so many working families across this province.

And, you know, there's a lot of other things that I would love to talk about. I could talk about justice, but, you know, there's nothing in the response in the opposition about justice. I listened to the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), who's the critic for Justice. I didn't hear a word about public safety in his half-hour speech. So, you know, we'll have that debate and those discussions another day, I'm sure.

* (11:50)

The most important thing, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, is that there truly are some differences in

opinion, and that's healthy. That's why we come into the Legislature and we debate. It's a difference in vision between those who are going back to the way it used to be: those who would impose cuts, who would send nurses fleeing from the jurisdiction, who would have teachers finding other things to do, who would freeze spending, who would let this province begin to tatter and fray around the edges and send our young people, like the young people at Tec Voc, elsewhere.

You know, there's another vision, the vision that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) put forward on behalf of all Manitobans on budget day, a vision of continuing to grow this province, of making tough choices but the right choices to continue to make this province stronger and better and greater and provide opportunities for young people.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know, in a few days, every member of this House will get their chance to stand in their place. I'll be standing in support of Manitobans; I'll be standing in support of Budget 2013. Thank you.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): And it is a pleasure to stand once again in this House and put a few comments on the record about Budget 2013. And just following the Minister of Justice, it does provide me with the opportunity to indicate that yes, very definitely, there is a difference between them and us, Mr. Speaker.

And Manitobans are speaking out. Manitobans are speaking out pretty clearly and with my—you know, with force, Mr. Speaker, about Budget 2013. And many of them—many of them have indicated—and, well, you know, we do have a democratic process, and the Minister of Justice did indicate that, you know, there are differing opinions on things.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is what democracy is all about. Democracy is the ability for people to speak freely and articulate their point of view, and at the end of the day, they do have an opportunity to vote. And we have a law in place today, balanced budget legislation, that does give Manitobans the opportunity to vote and to have their say before any major tax increases are made by any government of any political stripe throughout this province, no matter who would be in place, and that was put in place for a specific reason. And I'm proud that I was part of a government that put that clause in place.

And you know, it's taken several years for this government, as they, piece by piece by piece, have

tried to pull apart and break apart the balanced budget legislation. It's taken, I think, 14 years for them to come to the conclusion that they have to take away that democratic right from Manitobans to have their voices heard. And I say shame on this government for doing that to Manitobans; they've taken away that democratic right.

And, I guess, Mr. Speaker, they think they've been in government for 14 years and they have the divine right to govern this province. They have the divine right to dictate to Manitobans what is best for Manitobans. They don't think that Manitobans have a mind of their own and can make decisions on their own on how to spend their hard-earned money. They want to dictate from on high and say, Manitoba taxpayers, we know what's best for you, you can't think on your own; you don't know how to spend your money—we will tell you what you should do with that money, and we're going to raise your taxes and we're going to take more money out of your pocket and that is our divine right.

We are going to dictate to you. Mr. Speaker, this has become a dictatorship not a democracy, and I don't think Manitobans are going to stand for this. As a matter of fact, more and more Manitobans are speaking out and saying, what is this province coming to? We're one of the highest taxed provinces across the country, and many Manitobans are saying—and these are Manitobans who have raised their children here, their children who have been educated and now are looking, to start a career. And their parents are saying, and I have to question whether I want my children to even stay here in this province with this tax regime or am I going to encourage my children to go elsewhere, to other provinces where there's land of opportunity. There's opportunity for them to move ahead, not to be dragged down by a government who tends to put their interests first at the expense of Manitoba taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, there are—there's one of my constituents who is 56 years old now, and she emailed me and said that she's not going to encourage her kids to stay here. She's going to encourage them to move away. And she's saying at the age of 56, if she knew 20 years ago what she knows today she wouldn't be here in Manitoba and she wouldn't have raised her family here in Manitoba either. That is a shameful scenario and one that we cannot support and we will not support, and that is where there is a fundamental difference between them and us. And I'm proud to stand on the side of

Manitoba taxpayers, Manitoba taxpayers that don't want to see the kind of dictatorship from on high that they're seeing with this government.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I'd like to just go back in history a little bit, and I know that members opposite often go back to the Filmon years, and that's quite their right. And we tell them, well, they should look to the future and not to the past. But, if we look back just a little further than the Filmon government, I'll give you a little bit of a history lesson. In the days of Howard Pawley—and I think there was that infamous year in 1987—*[interjection]* Well, we'll forget the '90s and we'll look to what Howard Pawley did to this province, and he brought this province to its knees. And, again, it was that dishonesty that was the defeat of the NDP Howard Pawley government.

And you know, we had a government then that raised the PST by 1 per cent, but what else did they do? Mr. Speaker, take a look at Manitoba Public Insurance, and that was before the days that there was an independent Public Utilities Board that looked at MPI rates. The MPI rates were set around the Cabinet table in those days. And what did Howard Pawley and his Cabinet do? They kept Autopac rates artificially low before an election campaign. Very much like Greg Selinger did before this election campaign when he was dishonest with Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the debate to the honourable member for River East, but she's mentioned an individual by family name and I'm pretty sure the member knows that we're to use constituencies or minister's portfolios during that. And also I caution the honourable member on the choice of words she had with reference to the individual. So please judge yourself accordingly.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I was just getting a little carried away, I must admit, that I was comparing Howard Pawley, which I believe I can mention by name because he is no longer in the House. And it's the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today who acted just like Howard Pawley did then when before an election he wasn't honest with Manitobans, just as Howard Pawley was not honest with Manitobans and said one thing before an election and did something else after an election. And Howard Pawley, around his Cabinet table, set Autopac rates artificially low before the 1986 election, and right after the 1986 election he raised those Autopac rates with the stroke of a pen. And

Manitobans were outraged then just as they're outraged today when they see the actions of, again, another NDP government that said one thing before an election and did something else after an election. And they are not going to forget what has happened under this government. And you know we can say the NDP has been in power for 14 years and they have a mandate. Well, they've become so arrogant and so out of touch with Manitoba taxpayers that they believe they can do anything and Manitobans will still continue to elect them time after time after time.

* (12:00)

Well, Mr. Speaker, that arrogance has caught up with them and Manitobans are not going to stand for the actions of this government, when they say one thing before an election and do something completely different, a complete about-face. Now, the Premier may not have told the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) what he said before the election. Maybe he thought no one would remember. And I'm just wondering how many of the backbench members of the New Democratic Party had any inkling that the Minister of Finance was going to stand up on budget day and indicate that there was going to be a 1 per cent increase in provincial sales tax. I wonder how many of them have—had ever mentioned that to their constituents. I wonder how many individual Manitobans during the budget consultations gave the Minister of Finance the suggestion that the provincial sales tax should be raised by 1 per cent in order to deal with their spending problem.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is a spending problem. It's not a revenue problem. And we hear them say they have to take advantage of the money that the federal government has put on the table for infrastructure. Well, we didn't see the federal government raise the GST by 1 per cent to put the portion of money into the province that they're going to put in. Why would this government have to look at raising the PST to match that money? It doesn't make any sense, especially after the unprecedented increases in revenues and transfer payments that this government has received from the federal government. It makes no sense at all, and I don't know why they're trying to fool Manitobans into believing that this is their only option.

Mr. Speaker, we, on this side of the House, will not condone the kind of arrogance and the kind of decisions that have been made by this government.

We will listen to the people that are talking to us and telling us that enough is enough. You know, strangely, that was exactly the language that they used back in 1987. Enough is enough. We have had enough of a government that is so arrogant and so out of touch with Manitobans that they would increase the provincial sales tax.

Now, I know the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and I were both in the Legislature and we remember fondly the days back in those days when—we remember back in those days, and I know the member from Elmwood reminds me on a regular basis of the outrage that was there by Manitobans of the major rallies that were held at the Legislature, where the horses and buggies and hay wagons were out in front of the Legislature, and Manitobans said enough was enough. They were not going to take it anymore. And, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government lost its power and its moral authority to govern this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to talk about moral authority, too, because how can a government with any credibility stand up and say we're going to raise taxes today when a year and a half ago we had a Premier—a Premier who was clear and said that he would not raise taxes?

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the constituents in River East that I have spoken to and many, many more that I haven't talked to yet are going to take the opportunity to speak out.

I'm getting emails from the constituency of Rossmere, from the member for Rossmere's (Ms. Braun) constituents who believe that I'm their member of the Legislature, and I will correct that and I will indicate that they should rightly be calling their NDP member of the Legislature who is right next door to me, and telling her how outraged they are. I'm sure she's getting those calls and those emails from many of her constituents, as I'm sure many in the backbenches of this government are getting those calls and those emails.

And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to support those that believe that this government is out of touch with reality. They're out of touch with the Manitobans that—*[interjection]* Well, we've had many floods over many, many years, and governments have had to rise to the occasion and deal with those—and deal with it—and, you know, there isn't any government that does everything right or everything wrong.

And I don't think that we—there are many times, when we stand together in this House and say, let's move in a certain direction that's going to protect Manitobans; let's work with Manitobans. And we give credit where credit is due to a government regardless of political stripe. But, Mr. Speaker, this is a wrong-headed decision by a government that is completely out of touch with Manitobans and taxpayers, specifically in Manitoba, that are saying we're taxed to the max; we can't take any more.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are not going to take this latest increase by a government that is arrogant, that is out of touch and wants to take away the democratic right from Manitobans to have a vote, to say yes or no to a may—a decision that's going to have a major impact on their pocketbooks and their households.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will not be standing to support the NDP and this budget. And no matter how they try to spin what they're doing, it is morally wrong; it is dishonest to tell Manitobans one thing before an election and do something that will impact them so negatively after an election.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to let Manitobans know what this government is all about. It's morally irresponsible, it's dictatorship at its worst, and I feel badly that we're removing the democratic process and 'disenfranchises'—and disenfranchising Manitoba taxpayers with proposed legislation that has been brought forward.

We will fight it tooth and nail to ensure that Manitobans know how wrong this government is and how wrong the direction that they are taking is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the budget and say that I am fully in support of it, mainly because it's focused on infrastructure, which is something that's very important to me. I've always emphasized that, and it's very important to Manitobans in general and, in particular, to rural Manitobans.

I know my particular seat, the Interlake—I look back to the bad old days of the 1990s when the Filmon government was in power. And the Leader of the Opposition was a member of that government, and I know he's very keen about the Interlake nowadays, always works it into his speeches and all that. I guess he has some family there, and wouldn't it be nice if he could pull that off.

But I'm just going to remind the people of the Interlake of their record back in the 1990s, which was pathetic from the Interlake's perspective. They never turned a wheel in the Interlake in the 10 or 11 years that they were in office—I know that for a fact. I just look at the highways that were left to decay in the decade that they were in power. Not a single road—well, I shouldn't say that, there was one road they did build. It was past Betty Green's house, who, incidentally, ran for them 1999 and once again in 2003. So they did build one past their candidate's farm. I have to give them credit for that.

*(12:10)

But, you know, if he's so keen about Arborg, for instance, why didn't they do some work in that area? There was not a single RTAC standard road within 30 miles of the community of Arborg when I was elected in 1999 and now the community is surrounded by new asphalt.

First road we did was No. 7 Highway to hook them up to the unrestricted system and then followed with the PTH 68 project which now spans the entire Interlake and across into Westman all the way to No. 5. This highway has been upgraded and now is unrestricted, a massive project that straddled many ministers of Transportation in our government, the one that's sitting in front of me right now and others. So I really have to take my hat off in that regard.

The member—the Leader of the Opposition had no record whatsoever. So that's—first thing. Their record in the Interlake, I should also remind members opposite, the House in general and Interlakers, was a record of vote rigging and scandal.

That's how they conducted themselves in the Interlake. The—in the Monnin inquiry, I think, said it all. Was it—Judge Alfred Monnin said, what was it? Never did he see such a bunch of liars in all his time on the bench. So that's the type of representation they had pending in the Interlake. And it followed into the 1999 election, of course, with the despicable smear-campaign that was orchestrated against me and, of course, there were convictions that time. I think it was their caucus chief of staff was convicted of defamation of a candidate and obstruction of justice.

So this is the type of leadership that they're purporting to bring to the Interlake and people in that region haven't forgotten that, and I'm standing here today, I think, as a result. But wouldn't they like redemption on that basis? If only they could win the Interlake seat, then all of that would have been

forgiven: all the vote rigging and the smear campaigns and totally ignoring the infrastructure needs of this constituency. All of that would be forgotten if only they could win this seat which, I assure you, they will not.

I'd also like to address some words that the Leader of the Opposition put on the record during his response to the budget speech where—well, he was talking about another road project in that immediate area and said that I was not in support of that, and I take him to task on that. I'm in support of all infrastructure improvements within my constituency and I will lobby for all of them.

But I do speak frankly to the people I represent. I don't lie to them or try and misinform them; I tell them the way it is, that highways projects are based on road counts and what the policies are. So, you know, we will do our utmost to address the needs not just of that community because the Interlake is not just the community of Arborg. It straddles a wide area, and I represent the entire constituency not just chosen sectors of it as does the member from Fort Whyte.

As I said, I represent the entire Interlake, and we're all familiar with the flood of 2011, the damages that were incurred there. This is going to be our task going forward to rectify that damage. We've gone a long ways down the road largely single-handed with over \$1.2 billion in expenditures. If only our federal counterparts were at the table with us that would be much appreciated, but from their perspective it's business as usual. Standard DFA is enough in their minds. This government has rolled out six, seven, eight, nine different stand-alone programs, have invited Ottawa to participate but to no avail.

You know, I look back to 1997, the flood of the century, compared to this, the flood of the millennium, and the Chrétien government to back then, to their credit, did put additional monies on the table over and above just standard DFA—it was called the JERI program—and we would hope and wish that this current federal government would follow suit, but that doesn't seem to be the case.

I recall the meeting in Meadow Lea hall just a short time ago, and the Minister of Finance was there to address the audience, as was the Leader of the Opposition, and I really have to say, his performance—and I'm speaking of the Leader of the Opposition—his performance there was pathetic. Talk about lapdog to the federal government.

All of the nonsense that Member of Parliament Sopuck put on the record that day was beyond the pale, to say the least. You know, what a shell game—what a shell game these feds have played with us. You know, standard DFA, once again. That was Mr. Sopuck's answer to the needs of the people of the Interlake was, if only the provincial government had asked for our assistance under DFA, we would be there.

Well, that was just utter nonsense—just pure bunk—because obviously we had done exactly that. We had asked for DFA; they said, well, you know, ranches, hay, this is a loss of production issue. The AgriRecovery program is more suitable to that. So we took that advice to heart, and after the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) toured through the Interlake last August, we made an application for AgriRecovery, and back and forth—back and forth—no confirmation that Ottawa was interested in that until the Meadow Lea hall where they said, well, they should have asked for it under DFA instead, not answering still our request for AgriRecovery, which is still on the table.

We're still hoping that they wake up and come to their senses, but frankly the words of the Minister of Agriculture for the federal government, Gerry Ritz—his response was, well, what do these farmers want. They want to be compensated twice for the same flood. If ever there was a profound—a profound lack of understanding, I would say—you know, I don't want to call a federal minister stupid, but, my goodness. Is that how little a grasp he has of the reality of what occurred here in Manitoba—that farmers want to be compensated twice for the same flood? My goodness, are members opposite—their Conservative compatriots here—have they not been able to communicate to Ottawa that this was a major disaster? Our members of Parliament, can they not get the message through to the federal parliament, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture, that this was a massive flood that spans more than just one year?

So, you know, that was really pathetic, and the Leader of the Opposition, like a good lapdog, was just—backed them up completely that, oh, this was exactly the way it was. Really.

You know, farmers in the Interlake must be profoundly, profoundly disappointed in the lack of support that they're getting from Ottawa in this regard, and, you know, we will continue to lobby, but the provincial government cannot continue with

stand-alone programs. We are Canadians first, and when a province is faced with a disaster of this magnitude, all Canadians are supposed to pull together in order to pull this or that particular province out. To be cut adrift the way Manitoba has been by Ottawa in regard to this flood is very, very disappointing.

And, you know, I just have to look to—while we're talking about infrastructure here, right?—what was the most important thing that was done over the course of this flood? It was, of course, the construction of the emergency outlet out of Lake St. Martin. That's what—that's where the real problem lies is in the Lake St. Martin area, because they have really borne the brunt of flooding over many decades, and it was incumbent upon us to address that issue, which we did. I've been calling for it for a number of years, because it's within my constituency—knew that the cost was huge. And, when this government stepped up to the plate and did that construction which reversed the tide of this flood, that was the most important act in my opinion.

* (12:20)

And where is Ottawa? Did they participate in that program or the construction project? Not at all. Our opinion is this was an emergency action taken in the midst of the flood. It fits the parameters of disaster financial assistance. They should have paid for 90 per cent of the cost of that diversion and associated works which is in the 70- to 80-million-dollar range, not a hundred. It did come in on time and under budget which is another kudo I would like to give the government. But where is Ottawa in this regard? Why will they not cost share in a fundamental project such as this?

Now more disinformation from Ottawa, and Mr. Sopuck was mouthing this off in Meadow Lea hall, bragging about their mitigation program. It's a \$99.4-million flood mitigation program; not a \$100 million, \$99.4 million, okay. And giving the people there the false impression that this money was going to go toward the future mitigation works that we need. The truth is that this is a program spread across the entire country and it's not just for the upcoming year, this is a multi-year program. So, you know, if Manitoba succeeds in getting 1 or 2 or 5 million dollars, I don't know, out of this program, given that we've only got roughly 3 per cent of the population, I'd be surprised. So for them to give the impression that they're ready to go on the next big ditch out of Lake Manitoba, is completely false but

I'm not that surprised, that's all we get frankly is falsehood and misinformation.

I'll give you an example—another example. I was in Vogar last summer as well, and again the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) was with me speaking on behalf of the provincial government. And this was at a time when people were sandbagging, right. The lake was coming up and up and they were sandbagging and going back and building their dikes higher and higher, and they were getting tired, understandably, a little frustrated.

The army had come in recently to build up the dikes along the Assiniboine and the Portage Diversion. Well, you know, we were looking in the Interlake; we'd like some of that army participation. Mr. Bezan stood up in front of 300 people and he said, you know what? The army would come to the Interlake if only the Premier (Mr. Selinger) would ask for it; the army would be there tomorrow. That was disgraceful, Mr. Speaker, to put such false information on the record.

And I clarified it in my own mind because we held a celebration here in—at the Legislature to thank the military for the works that they did because it was fundamental to staving off a collapse of the dikes that would have caused a catastrophic flash flood in the Portage eastern area. So we thanked the military for their efforts. Brigadier general, or whatever his title is, I'm not sure, but he was the commander for the Forces in western Canada, was there. So I asked him: Sir, what is the story about the military? Would you come to do this type of work? And he said, no, that's not our mission. We—we're soldiers, we go to Afghanistan. In fact, those soldiers were off for a tour of duty there. They step in when there is an imminent catastrophe on the verge, when there's an explosion or what have you, a tornado hits or something like that. They don't do chronic sandbagging over the course of a summer; it's completely outside of their mandate. So for Mr. Bezan to have misinformed all of those people at the Vogar hall was just another example of all the spin and the nonsense that we have been getting throughout the course of this flood.

Cottagers—how many cottages were damaged during this flood? Hundreds and hundreds. And this government stepped up, even though they're outside of the scope of disaster financial assistance, that's the way it is. And Mr. Bezan, I think, the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) reminded me, in one of his public speeches, said that cottages were luxury items,

that they weren't—they didn't warrant disaster assistance, I guess. Quite the attitude to take, but, you know, that was the story. So I guess we'll have to go with that: luxury items. I wonder if they think that feed and freight assistance for ranchers in the inundation zone is a luxury item as well, and I know that these people are in very dire straits right now, especially with the extended spring that we're having. It may be June before our cattle and our sheep get on to pasture, so they need this help now. And that goes back to 2012, so, you know, once again, Earth to Minister Ritz: the crisis is not over. Get the message. Step up to the plate. Do the right thing, and help the people of Manitoba. Help the government of Manitoba to help the people of Manitoba.

We've issued—just recently the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) has submitted two flood reports to the public. One specific to Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin, and it's noteworthy and I want to put it on the record for all of my constituents that the government has accepted all of the recommendations of those reports. We will be looking at further mitigation works to try and address the challenges, because there is a problem around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin that has to be addressed with further work. So that's a part of what we're doing today with this budget. You know, cutting taxes, cutting services, this and that. Now is not the time to do that. Not only are we facing this unprecedented global recession, which is not coming to an end, but we're facing massive infrastructure challenges as well.

So now is the time for government to step up to the plate not step back and stick their hands—heads in the sand as members opposite would obviously do for a period of years, as they have done in the past as we well know. That's exactly what they did back when—back in the '90s when there was a recession they pulled back, they cut back services. Well, people can't not eat or not drink. People can't hold their breath for one or two or three years until the economy recovers. It is incumbent upon governments to intervene, to step up to the plate, spend the money, look at training programs, create employment and, by the way, fix infrastructure at the same time. That's how governments are supposed to respond when economies are in trouble, and that is exactly what this government has been doing through four terms in office now.

We began immediately when we took office in 1999. We started an infrastructure renewal program,

Mr. Speaker, you know it yourself. You were part of a committee that went across the province to—Vision 2020 I believe it was called—to look at all our highways, and the state of our highways as a legacy of members opposite was deplorable; three-quarters of our highways were in the last five years of a 25-year lifespan. We were facing a systemic collapse of our highways network. That's how members opposite did business in 1999. It was a travesty, to say the least, and that's why they've been on the opposition benches for the last 12 or 15 years.

The—drainage, another very important system of infrastructure for rural people—when we came into office, a judge had thrown The Water Rights Act out the window. There was no law. The judge said, if you can't manage to maintain infrastructure, you don't deserve to be in the business of it, and The Water Rights Act was thrown out the window.

When we came into office, that was one of the first three acts that went through this Legislature: a ban on union and corporate donations, a ban on panned hunting, and the third thing was the reconstitution of The Water Rights Act.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is almost up. It's almost 12:30, so I know other members want to have their thoughts on the record, so I thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Was the honourable member for the Interlake concluded his remarks?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Yes, I have.

Mr. Speaker: Then when this matter is again before the House the debate will remain open.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

CORRIGENDUM

On Tuesday, April 16, 2013, second column, 10th paragraph, page 519, should have read:

After two years of figure—figuratively treading water, will this government commit today to find a prompt solution for those remaining homeless, and put their priority ahead of political funding?

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 19, 2013

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