

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

**Official Report**  
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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter	Gimli	NDP
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BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
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DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
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FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
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WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 25, 2015

*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 and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name for—and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

## House Business

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** Good morning, Mr. Speaker. First, on a matter of House business, in accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private member's resolution that'll be considered on the next sitting Thursday is the resolution on Prioritizing the Health and Safety of Manitoba Stroke Victims, sponsored by the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that, in accordance with rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution that will be considered at the next sitting Thursday is the resolution on Prioritizing the Health and Safety of Manitoba Stroke Victims, sponsored by the honourable member for Charleswood.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And then, Mr. Speaker, following consultation with the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak), I'd ask that you call report stage amendments on Bill 200, and when that is concluded, proceed to Bill 208, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act, sponsored by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

**Mr. Speaker:** So is agreed that the House will first consider report stage amendments, public bills,

Bill 200, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act, and then, following that, second readings of public bills, Bill 208, sponsored by the honourable member for Tuxedo. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS—  
PUBLIC BILLSBill 200—The Coat of Arms, Emblems  
and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll now proceed to call, under report stage amendments, public bills, Bill 200, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act.

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart),

*THAT Bill 200 be amended in Clause 2 in the proposed subsection 5(6):*

*(a) by replacing the section heading with "Fossil emblem"; and*

*(b) by striking out "marine reptile".*

**Motion presented.**

**Mr. Speaker:** The amendment is in order.

**Mr. Friesen:** Just to provide a bit of rationale for the change. We had committee on this bill last week, and I was pleased to welcome members from the CFDC, including the director, Peter Cantelon, who came and presented at committee. And in the context of that committee, the recommendation was made that the wording of the—of this bill would be simplified. And, Mr. Speaker, as I probably mentioned earlier in debate at second reading on this bill, there was a desire to construct language on this bill that would allow for other groups in the future to bring other recommendations for possible fossil emblems, and that was the reason why this particular fossil emblem, the *Tylosaurus peminensis*, was to be designated as the marine reptile fossil emblem of Manitoba.

It has since been indicated and, indeed, the director of the CFDC indicated as well, that as a result of a committee that was struck in this province to study this area and to recommend possible

candidates, that it actually is the decision and the recommendation of that committee that there would be only one fossil emblem. And I believe that that committee was charged with doing the adjudication, looking at various other candidates, if you will, for what could be a good fossil emblem for Manitoba. And on the basis of their discussions and the basis of their research, on the basis of the measurement and the adjudication of those other candidates for this, that it was the unanimous decision of that committee that the *Tylosaurus peminensis*, the mosasaur commonly referred to as Bruce, would be the best symbol to put forward.

So that gives me a lot of comfort, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, like I said, there was a desire there to make sure we weren't stepping on anyone's toes—any fossil toes. I know that—I believe it was the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) who said at the committee, he says, as long as this wouldn't turn into, like, a land of dinosaur advocacy groups marching on the back lawn of the Legislature. But it sounds to me like we've got consensus here. There is a broad-based acknowledgement not just in the southern Manitoba area of how important the mosasaur is to the province of Manitoba as a symbol but around the province as well.

So, on that basis, that's the rationale for the wording change to strike the words marine reptile so that we could more clearly convey to people that the mosasaur, if passed, would be, then, a fossil emblem for Manitoba.

**Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

And it's my pleasure today to rise to speak to the bill put forward by the member for Morden. I listened closely to his comments just a moment ago on the amendment and was pleased to hear that consultation and due process had been followed in this regard.

We as a government are very focused on consultation. That is the very essence of governing responsibly, to go out and talk to the people themselves across our province to see that what we do in here is done according to their will.

So, you know, quite often, we put together groups of esteemed Manitobans who know a lot more about fossils than even the member of Morden—member from Morden opposite and myself know, I'm sure, because I am no fossil expert by any

means, although I do have a small fossil collection myself at home. I'm very proud of my trilobite, but I'm not putting the trilobite up to compete with the mosasaur here.

\* (10:10)

I stand here today and confirm my support for the mosasaur as our fossil emblem, not just marine fossil, but fossils in general. I think there may have been some debate out there, not that I'm aware of any controversy, but who could argue with Bruce as the symbol—[interjection] Oh, wait a minute, there's some—there may be some contention here; we'll see if there's speakers following me. And I know the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen) may contest this because there may be some rare fossils or maybe even some living dinosaurs in—where is it, Lake Athapuskow, I believe, eh, a lake that I'm familiar with. Back in the day, there was some talk about a giant sturgeon but those are living animals, so they—it—in order to be recognized as a fossil, you have to have lived many, many millennia ago. So I think it's safe to say, you know, that Bruce is going to be the fossil of the day here

So—and I commend the member opposite for his endeavour because, all kidding aside, what's been accomplished in Morden there with the museum is truly extraordinary. I had the opportunity myself to tour there—not recently. I think five or six or seven years ago we were doing a consultation, coincidentally, in Morden, at the time and I took a few moments just to go down and have a look, and it was just extraordinary. That's the only word to describe what's been accomplished there, so my hats off to the people of Morden in this regard.

And I know our government also recognizes the good works, not just of the people of Morden and their museum but museums across our land. And I don't know what members opposite would do should they ever come to power and implement their massive cuts to budgets. I think, well, their record speaks for themselves. I have to say, you know, Mr. Speaker, that museum funding was actually cut in their time in office. So, you know, well, so, that is noteworthy, you know. If we're going to maintain the house of Bruce, then we have to put the money on the table in order to do so.

Now, we've added a number of provincial emblems in recent times. I think we've got a provincial soil now, compliments of the member of Spruce Woods, I believe, put it forward, the Newdale soil. Correct me if I'm wrong.

And just recently, our government, as recent as last year as a matter of fact, designated three new symbols. The walleye—much as I would like to say pickerel, Mr. Speaker, I cannot do so. Now it is officially the walleye, and that wasn't—you know, that was a decision made by, again, panels of experts who think—*[interjection]* Well, a member opposite says the walleye is an American fish and you know, there's a lot of anecdotal discussion in this regard.

Canadians call them pickerel but, you know, officially, to satisfy all of the scientists across all of North America and have some uniformity to it, you know, we acquiesced, and it is now officially the walleye. I recall we had some discussion. I'd actually researched it quite a bit because I've caught a few walleye over the years, or pickerel. It had a range of names, going back to walleyed pike is what it was called when I was a young man growing up. That was its official title; I remember documentation to that effect. But that's been resolved.

And also very important, I think, Mr. Speaker, that we designated the bison as our official mammal. I thought that would have been done already, myself, you know, but, you know, as they say, the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago and the next best time is right now, so that hadn't been done—an oversight, perhaps, but corrected now, thanks to the action of our government.

You know, quite often, we come to office and we think all of this stuff had been done. Myself, when I was first elected in 1999, I thought, geez, what could be left, eh? We've been a country for well over 100 years.

I thought all the drainage ditches would have been constructed and in good operation. Lo and behold, came into office and found out that The Water Rights Act had been thrown out the window, that we had to go right back to the beginning and reconstitute The Water Rights Act. So as legislators, we can never assume. We have to do our due diligence and make sure that things are done. So, now, the bison is officially our mammal.

And, well, other things—we have an official grass, as well: the big bluestem, which is very important because, you know, the blue—the prairie—tall grass prairie spanned the entire West, 100 or 200 years ago when this country was young, was getting started and now, surprisingly, very little of it is left. You know, we've advanced with agriculture and rural development and so forth, and

that has had an impact so our government recognizes that.

And I had the honour as Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship just a short time ago to amend regulations to declare the protection of ecospheres now, which is something new. I also declared protection for the little brown bat, which is endangered, given the disease threatening them, the white-nose syndrome; declared a couple of birds—I forget their names, I apologize; and also the alvar, something that, as an Interlaker, didn't think was so rare. We just thought of it as a ridge, but actually it is rare.

It's, you know, where the limestone surface—limestone formations basically come right to the surface. You might have two or three inches of topsoil, and it's an extraordinary terrain when you get into it, especially if you've just spent the last half an hour pushing through the heavy poplars and wading across a swamp. When you walk out onto the alvar, it truly is a breath of fresh air. And, in addition to the alvar, we also designated a fern called Gastony's cliffbrake—I remember that now, took a while—but so that has been designated as well.

So, you know, I think it's incumbent upon all of us as legislators never to overlook the smaller things under our domain here and to take the time to recognize things such as the mosasaur as our official fossil now, and we'll move forward, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure there are other emblems we might consider in the days and months to come.

But I'm sure other speakers might want to address this. I want to hear potentially of that giant beast in the northern lakes, if the member of Flin Flon is going to share that with us or not. But I stand today supporting this bill and the mosasaur, Bruce, as our official fossil, and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there any further debate on the amendment?

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

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

Any further discussion on this bill?

**SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS****Bill 208—The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act**

**Mr. Speaker:** All right, then we'll proceed directly to Bill 208, under second readings of public bills, Bill 208, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act.

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), that Bill 208, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act; Loi sur la responsabilité et la transparence en matière réglementaire, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

***Motion presented.***

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I'm pleased to rise this morning and introduce this bill into second reading, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act, and I want to thank the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) for his work on this bill and the previous member for Morris as well, who also introduced this bill before this House. And I hope that members opposite will see fit to pass this today.

\* (10:20)

This is a very important bill for small and mid-size businesses in Manitoba, which, of course, we know, Mr. Speaker, is the backbone of our community. And certainly I know, after travelling around all across this great province of ours and meeting with small and mid-size businesses, that the No. 1 issue that comes up is the excessive red tape that they need to go through in order to just make a living and also the taxes in our province, and they're concerned about both of those things.

But, Mr. Speaker, this bill requires the government to develop formal procedures to make the process for an act and regulations more transparent. And, again, I would assume that if the government is interested in transparency and accountability that they wouldn't have a problem supporting this. But the bill also requires government departments to develop regulatory reform plans to eliminate unnecessary regulations and encourage restraint in making new regulations. Both the government procedures and department plans must be made public.

And, again, this is not talking about regulations that are necessary and should be there, and there is an important difference, Mr. Speaker. We understand

that some regulations are necessary in order for safety issues and so on for people working within the business community and for business owners and so on. But what we're referring to today is what's also known as red tape which is redundant regulations, duplications, things that are not necessary and do cause a rather cumbersome process for those in the business community to—in order to conduct business, and when there is excessive red tape we know that businesses choose not to expand here in Manitoba and they look for other areas and other jurisdictions where the regulatory burdens aren't as cumbersome, and so it does prevent businesses from growing here in our province.

And so I would think if members opposite are concerned about creating jobs in our province, Mr. Speaker, and if they're concerned about our economy and our economic performance here in Manitoba, I don't think they should have a problem supporting this bill today.

Mr. Speaker, there are currently tens of thousands of provincial regulations in place in Manitoba and as a result the normal small-business owner in Manitoba spends 10 hours of time each month complying with government regulations, that's nearly a full workday for most small-business owners. And let me tell you that these entrepreneurs are frustrated with this.

We have spoken to small business and medium-size business owners all across this province and every day they turn around and their government-related costs go up and more regulations are introduced and they're very, very concerned about this.

Since this bill was last introduced, the NDP have subsequently hiked the cost of businesses exponentially, Mr. Speaker. We know that they broke their election promise and raised taxes significantly. Of course, they raised the PST from 7 to 8 per cent and that has had a negative impact on businesses in our province and on those employees that work for those businesses as well.

Again, this government wants to take more money from Manitobans so that they—because they believe they know better how to spend their money than Manitobans do. So Manitobans are paying more and getting less for their money, and that's unfortunate because when we look at how health care is in our province, Mr. Speaker, how education is, we know that we have among the highest wait times in health care in Canada for many diagnostic

services in our province and we also know that our children are ranked dead last in Canada in the areas of English and mathematics and sciences, and those are—that's very significant.

Manitobans know that they're paying more and they're getting less out of this NDP government, and they're very concerned about the direction that this province is taking. And so, Mr. Speaker, I know the CFIB has done—and I want to commend them for all the work that they do, and they represent a number of businesses in our province and I want to thank them for all the work that they do because we know that they've done a lot of work in the area of red tape and their reports have indicated that their members are very, very concerned about the direction that this NDP government is taking when it comes to red tape.

So—and, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that, you know, it's been a very frustrating time for many small- and mid-size businesses in our province. We know that they are very concerned about this. That's why we're bringing this bill forward, once again, for debate in the Legislature, because this is what we're hearing from small- and mid-size businesses in Manitoba.

And I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that if members opposite cared about the future of our economy here in Manitoba, if they cared about jobs in our economy here in Manitoba that they would support this bill, because this unnecessary red tape, again, is cumbersome for those small- and mid-size business owners who are choosing to move and live and relocate and expand elsewhere as a result of these regulatory burdens.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I look forward to hearing from members opposite and encouraging them to support us today.

Thank you.

**Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to stand up today and speak to the member's bill, and I couldn't disagree with her more on most of what she just put on the record.

I remind the member that we have one of the strongest economies in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and this has been—a number of forecasters have noted that. The Conference Board of Canada has predicted that Manitoba will either—will lead the nation in 2015-2016. The Bank of Montreal also made forecasts that Manitoba would be one of the fastest

growing economies in the next couple of years. And the Royal Bank of Canada, as well—Bank of Montreal, Royal Bank of Canada, the Conference Board, all of them, all indicators—private sector indicators, public sector think tanks that indicated that Manitoba will be one of the strongest economies in Canada. And that is a fact—and that is a fact.

And not only that, Mr. Speaker, but there's also, you know, again, there's facts that bear that out. We have the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada. Winnipeg, for example, is forecast to be one of the fastest growing cities in western Canada. We will be the fastest growing city in western Canada except for Vancouver.

And members opposite like to talk a lot about all the so-called great things that are happening in Saskatchewan. I'll remind the member that Winnipeg is projected—protected—projected to grow faster than Regina, Saskatoon, Mr. Chair, and we've got a very rosy future. The only ones who are pessimistic about our economy and our future are the members opposite. You know, the negative nellys across the way, you know, the-sky-is-falling members, they wake up every day and they're hoping that things are bad. But you know, and, unfortunately, you know, things are great and—for them. You know, and then—*[interjection]* Yes, so—but that's the way they want to portray the economy.

We take a different approach. We believe that there's a great deal of optimism in the Manitoba economy. We believe that—we believe in the strength of our private sector, Mr. Speaker. We believe the strength in our public sector. We've worked with the private sector. We've worked with the educational institutions. We worked with labour to grow our economy, and this is a success story that all Manitobans can embrace.

I just want to remind the member, just today, she mentioned the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and perhaps she should do a bit more research. Because just today—just today—just today—they have announced that Manitoba's Business Barometer index continued upward in June, a gain of 2 and a half points, which is quite significant—which is quite significant gain by the CFIB business confidence.

But what is important, Mr. Speaker, is not only there—is their business confidence up, while the Canadian number—we're at 60, almost 65 per cent of small business have confidence in the economy. At the national level, that's only 59 per cent—where their

party is in power at the national level, where Stephen Harper is in power at the national level and their business confidence in the federal government has fallen. Business confidence in the federal government has fallen while Manitoba has taken a significant leap—a significant leap—in the last number of months.

\*(10:30)

But what is important to note in today's announcement, what is important to note is how business confidence has changed from the beginning of the year to now. The beginning of the year—and this is what's important to note—at the beginning of the year about 10 per cent of businesses had intentions to create full-time employment. Mr. Speaker, 16 per cent had intentions to cut back on full-time employment. There's almost been a complete reversal of that in the last number of months. Now 24 per cent of small-business—24 per cent—owners expect to add full-time staff in the next few months, compared to 4 per cent who expect to cut back. Almost a complete reversal of what happened at the beginning of the year to now, and members opposite failed to mention that in their comments.

As well, if the member wanted to look into the Free Press business section she'd note the another private—this is interesting—a private sector sink—think tank, the Fraser Institute—not often that we—not often that we'll mention the Fraser Institute in this House, but the member needs to read—you know, she could go and look, and I'll read the first line of the headline: The private sector has been playing a bigger job creation role in Manitoba in recent years, according to a new study by the Fraser Institute. The private sector has been playing a larger job creation role in Manitoba in recent years, according to a new study by the Fraser Institute. You know, so maybe the member can do a little bit of research and share the confidence that we have in the provincial economy instead of being such a negative nelly.

You know, we know, as I mentioned in this House before, at the beginning of the year the—at the beginning of the year there was this—give me—just last—in April, the manufacturing—a survey done, monthly survey on manufacturing in April, where they've looked at all the different economies across Canada, talking about how or not there's been an increase in manufacturing sales. Only one province, Mr. Speaker, only one province saw an increase in sales, and that is Manitoba. Only one province saw

an increase in sales, and that was Manitoba. And this, as I mentioned, was the third gain in five months.

I'll remind the member again, they like to point to Saskatchewan as their example of a, you know, economic juggernaut, but I'll remind the members that Saskatchewan had their—last month their sales were down 4.9 per cent; 3 per cent gain, which is quite significant here in Manitoba; a 4.9 per cent decline in Saskatchewan. That is—remind—I'll also remind the member about wholesale trade. Again, released just recently, Manitoba recorded its fourth increase in five months. The sales rose by 2 per cent. Saskatchewan, where sales rose by 0.6 per cent, again, Mr. Speaker, shows that our economy is growing faster than the Saskatchewan economy, growing faster, in fact, than most economies, and that is because small business has confidence in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the member that just in this year's budget we brought forward measures to continue to grow the economy. One was we extended the—we increased the threshold for small business from 425 to 450. This took an additional 2,000 small businesses off the tax rolls; 2,000 small businesses will no longer be paying income tax to the provincial government because of actions of members on this side of the House.

Now, these great captains of commerce across the way, these great, you know, titans of industry—these great titans of industry across the way, they voted against it. So maybe they should go to their friends in the CFIB—well, actually they're our friends today—they're actually our friends today. Maybe the member should go across to their friends and say, oh, you know, well, we had a chance, we had a chance to vote for small-business tax cuts. We had a chance to support you when you growing your businesses, but we said no. We said no. The short-sightedness of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Again, you know, the member—it's—we understand the issue of so-called red tape. We've taken action on that front but, as well, I think the action is in—we've proven the fact that we have an economy, we have an environment that creates jobs, creates opportunities and, again, there's just two articles today that I cited out of the—I could go on and on because there's many, many more examples I could provide to members about how our economy's growing. Full-time employment, No. 1; total employment, No. 1; private sector



employment, as I said, No. 1. The majority of jobs that have been created in the last number of months which, I might add, is a record—it is a record number of growth. Our job growth record here in the province—our job growth is a record. Most of those jobs are in the full-time jobs. The majority of those jobs, again, are in the private sector. I have no idea why members opposite are so critical of the success of our private sector in this province.

Again, you know, retail sales are up. Almost everything—you know, Mr. Speaker, understand members opposite need to realize that we have a plan. The plan is to invest in the economy; we're doing so. Every private sector's think tank will argue—will agree with us. They recognize the need that we should continue with our private sector investment, 5.5—five-year—billion-dollar plan.

I just note today as I was driving in across—down Highway 8 over the Perimeter, I was delayed because we are rebuilding those bridges there. I note, the other day one of colleagues was talking about his trip from south Winnipeg up Pembina Highway, and there's construction there. Other day I was driving down Highway 75—King Edward—delayed because there was construction there. Everywhere you'll see an intersection on Highway 59 and 101, there'll be work there to improve, to completely rebuild that intersection.

These are all investments that are growing the economy, Mr. Chair. These are all investments that will make Manitoba a better place. Obviously, those individuals that are doing the construction are small business. They're out there creating jobs. We'll have a growing economy.

I don't have no idea why members opposite are so much opposed—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member's time on this matter has elapsed.

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** So many people want to speak to this resolution from the member from Tuxedo. I'm very pleased to rise to speak—excuse me—to the private member's resolution, Chronic Deficits Mean Less For Essential Services.

And I listened intently to the member opposite and, you know—

**An Honourable Member:** You're on the wrong resolution.

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, the minister's talking about debt. So here we are talking about debt, budget-based

deficit—'busted' based budgeting—there we go. All right, now we're on the right one.

But many of what the speaker said is interesting. You know, I listened intently to the minister across the floor. And, you know, a lot of people say that the best time to plant trees is 20 years ago, in this case maybe 16 years ago. Second best time is today. The best time to stop digging a hole, a deficit hole, was 16 years ago. Second best time to stop digging a deficit hole is today, Mr. Speaker, but they can't do that.

And he talks about statistics. And when you're at the bottom there's only one way to go, and that's up. And, you know, so we are—we have been at the bottom time and again in Manitoba. And—*[interjection]* No, that's okay. Don't—no, those are my notes. Don't take those away. Yes, all right.

All right, regular accountability and transparency act. So what Manitobans want to know and what I see time and again from this government is that they have—they've been running deficits and those deficits that we see here, Mr. Speaker, compromise front-line services.

And I listened to one of the ministers last week responding to one of my questions in cuts to the Healthy Baby program, and she said, no, that's not happening. Well, I hope she tells that to the young woman that just lost her job in the Healthy Baby program, because she had to apply for her position that she's held for 10 years because this government reduced that. Reduced those positions, and she had to apply and she didn't get that position, someone else did. And now they have to travel around southwestern Manitoba further than ever before delivering those services—trying to deliver those services that this government has reduced. And this minister stood up in this House and said, no, that's not happening. So she needs to get out in the real world and find out what is indeed happening.

So when we look at transparency, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that this government doesn't have a clue on how to go about that.

We have—when I first became involved in government here, in opposition, and I found out about how many FIPAs we had to file to get information from this government. It was shocking. And the information that we get back and how much is redacted from that information—so, obviously, no intent at transparency.

I was recently at a conference, Mr. Speaker, on open government and open data, and there was another member from the government there as well. So we listened to many people talking about open government and open data. And one of the very, very simple things that could be done is to not post information in PDF format. When I had spoken about this in Public Accounts, I can see the civil servants nodding their heads. I don't see the minister or the deputy minister nodding their heads. So the civil servants understand the need for open government and open data, but the politicians across the floor don't. They want to restrict information as much as possible for Manitobans so that they can't see what this government is doing to the economy.

\*(10:40)

You know, we've seen, Mr. Speaker, over the last several years this government has underspent by over \$2.3 billion on infrastructure, yet they still run deficits. And, you know, you underspend in one of the—what this government said was one of the most important areas of the economy—infrastructure—you don't get the job done, and then you continue to run deficits, and that deficit—those deficits cost front-line services.

But, again, we have to dig in and ask more information through FIPPA's to even get any of that information from this government. So we can see that they are restricting—trying to restrict the information flow, they're trying to restrict what happens and how that becomes transparent, and they don't want to be accountable to the public because, heaven forbid, the public might vote them out of office. Well, the opportunity will be there, Mr. Speaker, during the election for the public to decide which way things should go.

So obviously we want to see this move ahead. It would be lovely if you could just ask a question of the government and they would indeed answer the question, but time and again we see here, not only in question period but in other areas of the government, that there are barriers put up in place to individuals that are looking for information from this government. So quite sad, Mr. Speaker, to watch this, and obviously the government is trying to control the message.

However, what we see more and more is there is information coming from people in the civil service that are upset with what this government does—more brown envelopes coming under the door because they don't like how this government is trying to

restrict information. They want the information out there so that the public truly knows what's happening.

And, again, we don't see this from this government. Time and again they're trying to restrict the information flow. Just a very simple process would be to stop publishing information in PDF format because the reason for that is PDFs are not searchable, and that, indeed, does also restrict access to information.

So I know there's others here that were anxious to speak to this, and I'll allow them—I'll sit down and allow them to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise and put a few words on this bill, and I thank the member to bring the particular bill which our colleague spoke about. And how can anybody disagree that we have—the red tape has to be reduced and cut? But this is on—what the bill's intentions are or how it has to be applied and what are the ingredients of it. As the member spoke from Selkirk, we already are doing most of it and exceed, in fact, in some of the requirements. So I would say that the bill's intent is all right, but the detailing, when I look at—see, we are already doing a lot of work in this area.

And I think that I'd like to inform those members who are perhaps new—they don't know my background—that when I came from India as a graduate engineer, it was a fascinating vision to come to this country and try to see what do I do. I was very ambitious from my childhood, and I wanted to go and own my own business.

So first job I got was in Versatile, which is now Buhler Industries. And when I was trained in India after graduation, I was given one of the most important things they call regulations. And they were Russians who were training us and regulations were given for safety. So as an engineer we were taught, you must follow the safety rules. So when you are drilling on a machine, you put a clamp and then drill. When I came here, one of the foremen called me and he said, pick up—I was given a trial to, say, run and try to see how you can do physical work, and I said, I have no problem in doing that. But he said, go and look at it. Well, the shop was in a mess, you know, disorganized, so he said, go and pick up that and do the drilling. So I said, where is the clamp? So he called the other person, he said, why clamp? Just

hold it and drill it. I said it could be dangerous. The other guy whispered, he said, looks like trouble, about me. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? Three days later I was let go. And I was very surprised when I asked for safety.

So to cut the story short, when I started my own business, I hired the same gentleman to run my shop who fired me. When he came in the interview, he looked at—he said, well, you look like I've seen you. I said, yes, you fired me and you don't remember. He said, oh, sorry, sorry. I said, no, no, there's no need to be sorry, but what I'd like you to do when you go and work in my shop, to make sure you don't deregulate things we're already doing.

Small-business owners, we were very concerned about safety. Welding glasses had to be put by every person who welds. What are these things called? Regulations. So if we shortcut the regulations, if we shortcut the requirements, which governments are responsible to do, then we are going to really create havoc and chaos in the society.

So as far as the red tape is concerned, yes, we have already done a lot of work in that area, and I think that I would like to say we can improve upon, yes, but we have to work together in a co-operative way. And as I see here in the notes here that I'll go back to, when I was here I went to apply for my business licence. There were three desks; one desk is when you apply for federal sales tax, then another building you go and apply for the provincial sales tax, so there were a lot of things that were wrong at the time.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we have one-stop shop that you can go and get everything done right away and very efficiently. So the technology has improved, a lot of things have improved, but our regulations, our practices, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) said, our economy is going very, very well, we are doing extremely well in terms of job creation and making the small business pay no tax. That makes me extremely happy, and attract more businesses in Manitoba will facilitate such acts that we have already done.

So I would say that our requirement and needs and responsibility are to protect public, to protect good employers also, by getting undercut the shady competitions that, in fact, my own experience I can keep on citing, competition goes and does copy your product without any protection. We have done that. We have done a lot of things to protect even a business owner, small-business employers, so we are

looking at both aspect, employers, employee and the whole society, and we are doing that. So I don't think that you can reduce and make a chaos by a hodgepodge way; we have to go in a very systematic way. We have to go in a very scientific way, and I think we are doing that.

So I would say that if you look at the things that I would say here, we see working with Dwayne Marling, VP of Manitoba-Saskatchewan Canadian restaurant food services association and chair of Manitoba Employers Council subcommittee on red tape reduction to streamline regulations. We had already announced with Terry Shaw from Manitoba Trucking Association that we'll allow truck trailers outfitted with new generation wide-base single tires to carry the same weight on dual tire—as dual tires. That will not only reduce fuel cost but will ease regulations for truckers coming into Manitoba.

So these are very progressive work we have done, Mr. Speaker. So I would say, yes, the red tape is absolutely a bad thing to have, and we are working on to improve that and we will continue to do that.

So I would request the member from Tuxedo, who is wearing orange colour and the orange *[inaudible]*, that she should try to understand the real value of the orange and try to understand how to get that value implemented in most of your ideals, that you see I have no problem in all the business ideas you have. But try to understand what we are trying to do is make it best from both ends, and that is the orange value.

\*(10:50)

So I would say that all these thoughts that we share today are positive. Small businesses in Manitoba are doing well, Mr. Speaker. The small businesses all over the world create 80, 85 per cent of jobs. And as a small-business owner, I must tell you, I used to work 12, 18 hours a day and felt very good about it, because that contributed. There were 51 employees at one time working with me—I never said for me—and they were co-workers. They were co-partners, I would call them. They worked hard, but my own orange value made them to make them believe they were partners with me.

And I'm proud to say, when I was running for election, one of the foremen was the person who nominated me in The Maples, and I—at my nomination meeting, so that makes me feel that you don't have to think—as typically, when people say, you are a businessman, why are you in this party,

this is what I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker. We have done remarkable in terms of looking at businesses, looking at small-business issues, looking at economic development, looking at a balanced approach.

And I think, with these words, I would say, the intent of the bill is absolutely, no doubt, good intentions. Let us work to see how we can implement the ideals we—supporting we already doing.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand—to rise today, put a few brief words on the record in regards to Bill 208, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act.

I do thank the member from Tuxedo bringing it forward, but I do have to correct the record from the member from Radisson; the colour she's wearing today is actually coral, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to the member—the minister from Burrows is actually wearing blue, but I don't quite know why we're discussing this today in the House. It's quite interesting morning, this fine Thursday morning in Manitoba.

I'm listening to the member from Radisson, and he mentions how a lot of the items that are put forward in this bill have really good intentions and that he talks about how their government is working co-operatively, and I think that maybe the member from Radisson should take those co-operative intentions and go back into his caucus and have those chats, so that maybe the government, the NDP party, can start working co-operatively together within their own party, before they start trying to go outside of these great walls of the Manitoba Legislature and profess that they are trying to work co-operatively with Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, there are currently tens of thousands of provincial regulations in place in Manitoba. And as a result, the normal small-business owner in Manitoba spends 10 hours of time each month complying with government regulations. And no doubt that's actually a modest estimate to the amount of time spent. That's nearly a full workday for most business owners.

Now, what I would like to put on the record is that the NDP government doesn't necessarily understand the fact that small-business owners, medium-size business owners, do not have the staff that the new delay party has, Mr. Speaker. Most of the small-business owners or mid-size business

owners, they don't necessarily have, you know, accountants, bookkeepers and that. It's generally the same one or two people doing all of those jobs.

And so we're hoping with this, with bringing forward this bill, that the government is going to see fit to move it forward and see it go to committee and listen to what some of our ratepayers and small-business and mid-size business owners have to say in regards to the amount of red tape in this wonderful province of ours, Mr. Speaker.

Less red tape will benefit everyone, not just business owners. It will benefit the bureaucrats who run the systems because they'll be able to offer better service, and they'll have happier customers, Mr. Speaker. Businesses will have more time to focus on their businesses and their customers, leading to more competitiveness and more jobs.

The last time the bill was introduced—and I'd like to thank the member from Emerson and the previous member from Morris for putting a lot of work into this bill, as well. It seemed that the government didn't seem interested in passing it, Mr. Speaker, even though they say that it's got some good intentions and probably could use the odd amendment, then I'd encourage them to bring forward some amendments, and let's move this bill forward.

In closing, I hope that the members opposite in the NDP government, the NDP side of the House, will support this bill, move it forward to committee and let's hear what other stakeholders and the taxpayers of Manitoba has to say, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** I'm delighted to get up to speak to this bill because it's such a fun topic for us to be able to discuss. As my friend, the member from Selkirk, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) put on the table, the bill allows us to get our economic performance, our financial record on the table yet again.

And I think it's pretty clear that we have made incredible strides during our time in government in making Manitoba among—if not the best economic performer in Canada. People are working here in Manitoba. Joblessness is misery. Joblessness is associated with the other side of the House. On this side of the House people are—we support employment growth. We support making sure that everyone has an opportunity to get a good education, a quality education, that it's accessible and then it's

affordable for students, and then their position to go on and get a good job—and of course there are many good jobs in Manitoba because we invest in the economy.

And so it's no surprise that our approach is growing the economy and that we're—are doing exceptionally well. I think it's noted that the Conference Board of Canada has singled out Winnipeg—Winnipeg, Manitoba, the heart of the country—and it's forecasting growth of 2.5 per cent in 2015, the strongest growth rate of any city on the Prairies. They're not saying Regina. You know, they're not saying Saskatoon. They're saying right here in Winnipeg. So I thank my friend from Selkirk, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) for putting that on the record because it's so important to reiterate to Manitobans just how extraordinarily well our economy is doing and how it's supporting families, making sure people are working, and giving opportunities for young people and, frankly, bringing hope and optimism to the people of Manitoba as opposed to, well, frankly, the negative nellys across the floor who for some reason feel it's very important to downgrade Manitoba at every possible turn.

And we know why that is—we know why that is—because they have no agenda of their own, save one. That's to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget, lay people off and destroy the economy of Manitoba, all in one single stroke. And I can tell them, in case they're not certain about it, we're never going to let that happen. We don't roll over for anybody and we'll be sure to be taking this to the people of Manitoba over the next nine or 10 months.

But there's something else I want to say in the few short minutes that I have, because when the members opposite talk about red tape, when they talk about red tape, this is a reflection of their continued loyalty to the far right wing in politics. This is Margaret Thatcher. This is Ronald Reagan. And they're still fans of the discredited era of deregulation. And don't you get it? When they talk about red tape, all they really want to do is deregulate. And let's see, of the very number of places that they would deregulate on as a result of this incredible devotion they have to an exceedingly far right-wing agenda that promises not only to scare Manitobans but, frankly, to put them out of work.

Now when they talk, they talk about red tape for small business, but in fact regulation covers the broad spectrum of public policy that we do. So, for example, when they say they want to privatize child

care, that what they really mean is they want to deregulate all of the things that make sure that our kids in child-care centres are safe, are protected, that they get a strong education while they're there and prepare them for life in school thereafter. So there's one area. And then they—take the environment and think of the deregulation that has gone on with the Harper government in Ottawa when it comes to the environment. They roll it into omnibus budget bills so that no one can see it, not transparent, but frankly hidden, deregulate so that they can not only damage the environment but also proceed with an incredibly right-wing agenda.

But then think of how it applies to labour. We have been leaders in making sure that there is health and safety regulations—

\* (11:00)

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

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable Minister of Education will have five minutes remaining.

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 13—Chronic Deficits Mean Less for Essential Services

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 11 a.m., it is time for private members' resolutions, and the resolution we have under consideration this morning is entitled Chronic Deficits Mean Less for Essential Services, sponsored by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us this morning—oh, I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

WHEREAS the Premier vowed to bring the provincial budget to balance in 2014 in the 2011 election; and

WHEREAS the provincial government members promised to continue to stick to that plan in the 2011 election; and

WHEREAS the former Finance Minister—Minister of Finance last year stated that the Province was on track to return to balance in 2016; and

WHEREAS the current Finance Minister reiterated in December of last year that it is the goal of our government to return to a surplus in 2016-17; and

WHEREAS the 2015 budget, as proposed, contains no plan to ever return to surplus; and

WHEREAS interest rates are projected to rise; and

WHEREAS the international bond rating agencies have warned that a downgraded credit rating will come unless the provincial government is able to start exercising more fiscal discipline; and

WHEREAS a 1 per cent rise in the interest rates the Province pays on the debt would cost the provincial government \$50 million extra in this year alone; and

WHEREAS funds dedicated to servicing higher debt costs cannot be spent on delivery of essential services; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is withholding any information about a forecast timeline for a return to a balanced budget.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to admit that it has failed Manitobans by having no plan to balance the budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately release an achievable plan to end the Province's chronic deficits before a credit downgrade dramatically increases the cost of borrowing and handicaps the Province's ability to continue to deliver essential services.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

WHEREAS the Premier vowed to bring to—

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House to consider the resolution as printed on today's Order Paper? *[Agreed]*

*WHEREAS the Premier vowed to "bring the provincial budget to balance by 2014" in the 2011 election; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government Members promised to continue to stick to that plan in the 2011 election; and*

*WHEREAS the former Minister of Finance last year stated that the province was "on track to return to balance in 2016"; and*

*WHEREAS the current Minister of Finance reiterated in December of last year that "it is the goal of our Government to return to a surplus in 2016/17"; and*

*WHEREAS the 2015 budget, as proposed, contains no plan to ever return to surplus; and*

*WHEREAS interest rates are projected to rise; and*

*WHEREAS the international bond rating agencies have warned that a downgraded credit rating will come unless the Provincial Government is able to start exercising more fiscal discipline; and*

*WHEREAS a one percent rise in the interest rates the province pays on the debt would cost the Provincial Government \$50 million extra in this year alone; and*

*WHEREAS funds dedicated to servicing higher debt costs cannot be spent on delivery of essential services; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government is withholding any information about a forecast timeline for a return to a balanced budget.*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to admit that it has failed Manitobans by having no plan to balance the budget; and*

*BE IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to immediately release an achievable plan to end the province's chronic deficits before a credit downgrade dramatically increases the cost of borrowing and handicaps the province's ability to continue to deliver essential services.*

**Mr. Speaker:** The resolution is in order.

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise this morning to speak on the subject of chronic deficits and what they mean for essential services in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has failed to properly manage the finances of the province of Manitoba over the past 16 years, and that failure comes with immense meaning, immense conditions for Manitobans who must pay more as a result. This is a government that has demonstrated that it is hungry for revenues, that it will break its word in order to find new revenue streams, the biggest

example of that, of course, is the colossal betrayal in the 2011 election when the NDP government promised not to increase taxes.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province at the time called the very idea nonsense, and when the government was elected—the NDP government was elected, and I was a legislator new to this Assembly in 2012, their first order of business was to widen the RST and apply the RST, the retail sales tax, to haircuts and personal services. They applied it to home insurance policies; they applied it to group life insurance policies.

Mr. Speaker, all of these were areas that had never been subject to taxation provincially before. And, of course, we know that those measures came after initial measures the government had been widening the RST for years previous to that, applying the retail sales tax to things like accounting services and legal fees. And when they realized there was no more width they could gain in clawing in new sources of revenue, there was only one way to go for this government, and that is up. And so they raised the PST from 7 to 8, and in so doing, right now in the province of Manitoba those tax measures that this NDP government has brought in simply, since that time, add an additional \$500 million of revenue to the books. Each year, this Finance Minister sees almost \$500 million more in the coffers as a result of those decisions.

*Mr. Ted Marcelino, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

Now, if this government had been able to stick to some kind of economic plan, if they had been able to live within their means, then maybe they would've had a compelling argument to make to say, well, look what we did; we eliminated the deficit with that money.

That's not what this money—that's not what this revenue went towards.

It boggles the mind to think that this NDP government could be looking at \$500 million more per year in just additional taxation measures and still have a higher deficit now than they did when they brought in that tax. As a matter of fact, just last year, again, to point out the failure of this government to be able to set a course, this government set a target of \$357 million as their projected deficit for the fiscal year that just ended. And did they make that target? No. Did they come anywhere close to making that target? No.

Now, that didn't stop them from giving disingenuous updates throughout the year in the quarter 2 result, in the quarter 3 result because, as you know, the government is compelled to indicate along the way how they are doing on achieving their plan. Well, what they did was said they were ahead of schedule, but when the actual numbers were released just this spring, when we came back into session, we found out this same government's actual deficit was \$424 million, up 20 per cent from their projection. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say again, this is with \$500 million of additional revenue flowing into government coffers simply from the PST hike and the widening of the tax. This is to say nothing of the fact that every year more and more money accrues to a government naturally through personal income tax and corporate income tax. Those are healthy streams of revenue that continue to add to government.

But the main change under this current Finance Minister, the main—the—one of the main charges we have against this government now is that knowing how bad their situation is and knowing how badly they have mismanaged this province's finances, they had—they feel, I guess, like they have no choice but to become even less transparent and more secretive than they were before. Mr. Acting Speaker, I say this because in every budget previous for the last number of years, you could flip the budget document open to about page 10 or so, and what would you'd see is you would see a summary government balanced financial strategy. And it would show for five years coming what the government's projections were for how they were going to get from their current untenable position, where they spend more than they take in, to getting back into balance.

And this Finance Minister continued to chirp from his seat, wrong, wrong, wrong, but he knows that those charts were in his budget. If I need to, I will table the 2014 budget for him. I will table the 2013 budget for him, but I remind you, Mr. Acting Speaker, these are his documents. What those documents showed is that the comprehensive, the total government costs would be—their projection would be in balance over five years or six years. Absent in this budget is any summary document showing how total government spending will get back in the black. There is no such plan. This government has no plan to demonstrate financial strategies that will put our province back in the black. The only alternative is that this government will continue to overspend as they always have.

They lead the nation in this category, and that is overspending their planned budget. They lead the nation in that category. And I remind the Finance Minister that is not a good thing.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would want to mention, and I made allusion to this yesterday in debate, in the Budget 2014, there is a foreword, just as there is in Budget 2015. And the forewords are pretty well identical from year to year, with the exception of one important sentence. There's one sentence dropped out of the 2015 budget. It's—it appears in the 2014 foreword.

\* (11:10)

The sentence is this: A summary budget presents a more complete picture of how the provincial government and other related entities operate as a whole and what the total cost is of providing services and programs to people in Manitoba.

That sentence is removed, it is redacted, it is whited out from this year's document. Suddenly, overnight—his predecessor believed in the summary budget. His predecessor's predecessor believed in providing summary budget information. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of this province believed in providing summary-budget information, because in a press release from 2009 he said a summary budget is the way to go following the recommendation of the Auditor General.

This Finance Minister says he is unequal to the task, so he removes from his budget document the sentence that says: A summary budget presents a more complete picture. This Finance Minister can hide from the opposition party. This Finance Minister can hide from the economic community here in Manitoba. The Finance Minister cannot hide from debt rating agencies, bond rating agencies who structure debt and who set the terms and conditions under which they will allow the debt of this province to be reconfigured and decided again—the terms of that debt, how it will be apportioned and then how it will be set up for payment.

This government is in danger of losing its credit rating of Aa1. Last year, Moody's already expressed profound concerns and said they were changing their stable outlook to negative. A day after this Finance Minister's failed budget, Moody's again published a press release to say there is now additional pressure on the government's current rating because of its continued inability to make this a priority.

You know, just days ago, this government put out some rules to protect Manitobans when it comes to automobiles from false advertising and misleading pricing. Mr. Acting Speaker, this is false advertising and misleading pricing when it comes to Manitoba's fiscal situation.

At the end of the day, these are not conversations we are having in a vacuum. We know that the more money that this government pays for debt servicing costs is less money to front-line services, less money to education, less money to health-care delivery, less money to social services. And we know the failed record of this government when it comes to front-line services. It is time for this government to get their act in order. We understand that chronic deficits mean less and less for front-line services in this province.

**Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance):** Again, it's my pleasure to rise this morning to speak about the economy, and we had a chance earlier to discuss this important issue.

And I want to just acknowledge the member opposite for his comments and I had the—I listened quite intently. You know, what I wanted to hear from the member opposite was for them to reveal to Manitoba what their plan is. I wanted to hear what the member's—the Leader of the Opposition's plan is to return to surplus. I wanted to hear what the members opposite plans were to deal with these so-called chronic deficits. I wanted to hear what the members opposite plans were to deal with concerns raised by the so-called bond rating agencies, the credit rating agencies. I wanted to listen to what the member had in terms of his plans to grow the economy. I wanted to hear what he had to—what his plans were to respond and provide essential services to Manitobans. But I heard nothing. I heard not a peep from this member opposite, not a word from this member opposite.

I'm hoping maybe the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), when she speaks to this resolution, that she will tell Manitobans what the plans are for—from the Progressive Conservative opposition when it comes to dealing with debt and deficits in this province, because they said nothing. They said absolutely nothing.

They brought forward an amendment to my budget. Again, they're very coy. They did not mention what their plans were. We know the member for Tuxedo, when she was a critic she brought forward amendment saying they were going



to return to surplus immediately. Their plan is to return to a surplus immediately, and that would, of course, mean 400-, 500-million-dollar reductions in expenditures in the budget.

Now, this Finance critic and this Leader of the Opposition mention none of that. They said none of that in their amendment other than they—again, I don't know—very vague references to their intentions, and Manitobans want to know. They want to know what their plans are. They know that our government has a plan to return to surplus in 2018-2019, which, incidentally, is the same commitment they made in the last provincial election. That's what—we know that, but we don't know what their plans are now.

The member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), in all of his—all of our deliberations, and we've had a chance over the last number of months to discuss financial issues, fiscal issues, not once did he ever state what their plans were, in terms of dealing with some of these issues that they argue are facing Manitobans when it comes to the economy.

One thing for certain is that the member talked about the issue of Moody's, and we do take their opinion and outlook seriously, but I'll remind the member, but two credit—the other two credit rating agencies, Dominion Bond and Standard & Poor's, they have affirmed our credit rating at A high and AA. And I'll also remind the member that our current ranking is two steps higher than it was when their party was in power last here in the—in government. I remind the member that their ranking—again, our ranking is higher than when they were last in office. It is one of the highest in the land. It is an AA rating. It is one of the highest in the world, really. Manitoba is an incredibly good credit risk when it comes to investors.

And I had a chance last fall to go and meet with those individuals who look at the province and decide whether or not Manitoba is a good credit risk. They're incredibly optimistic about—very bullish on Manitoba's future, and why shouldn't they be, because, as we said earlier, we have an economy that's producing jobs. We have either the Conference Board of Canada, the—both the Bank of Montreal and the Royal Bank have all made predictions, forecasts that Manitoba will be one of the leading economies in the nation, either No. 1 or No. 2 in the nation in the years ahead. That is terrific news. That is news that we are very proud of.

But we also recognize that is only because of the result of this government working with all

Manitobans, whether you're in the small-business sector or large business, whether you're members of the trade unions, whether you're working the educational institutions. This is a collaborative effort of all Manitobans that can share in this success.

Again, the only ones who don't like this, the only ones who are—don't—are disappointed that Manitoba will be leading the nation are the members opposite. The members opposite, the negative nellys across the way, the gloom-and-doom party across the way, they don't share in this optimism that Manitobans have about their economy.

Winnipeg is—will be, again, by the Conference Board of Canada, predicted to lead the nation—excuse me, to lead western Canada, except for Vancouver. Again, then, I just mentioned earlier on today in my comments, we had a chance to speak about this in other terms, we made a choice. We made a choice, Mr. Chair, to continue to invest in the economy. Following the great recession—and these are terms—this is the term that has been used by the Harper government. He calls the economic downturn of the 2009 period, 2010, as the great recession. Manitoba was lucky in a way, is that we never—we didn't fall into recession like many of the other economies.

We made a decision to continue to invest in the economy to grow the economy. We have one of the fastest growing economies in Canada and North America. We're producing jobs, record number of job, and those people who are working are getting paid more. And we're proud of that, Mr. Chair.

Members opposite, they have a plan to—I don't know what their plan is. But we know their intentions in the past have been to—they spoke about their intentions to kill that plan, to put 70,000 potential jobs at risk, 60,000 jobs in the private sector.

*Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

Again, as I mentioned today, there is—Canadian Federation of Independent Business released a report where business optimism is up, up significantly here in the province, but what's more important is that more small businesses are looking to create full-time employment, almost a reversal of what it was earlier on. They were, at the beginning of the year—if I could just find my note here—at the beginning of the year, 10 per cent of small businesses intended on creating full-time employment, 16 per cent of small businesses planned on cutting back.

\* (11:20)

Now, almost a complete reversal of that has occurred from the beginning of the year to now where now 24 per cent of small businesses in Manitoba have the—their intention is to create full-time employment, where only 4 per cent, Mr. Acting Speaker, only 4 per cent of small businesses now plan on reducing their workforce. That is almost a complete reversal of the trend we noted from the beginning of the year, where now 65 per cent of small business in Manitoba are optimistic about their abilities to succeed here in the province. Whereas at the federal level only 59 per cent are—have the—when it comes to the nationwide, 59 per cent are optimistic about their chances of seeing their businesses succeed. Our number is 65 per cent here in Manitoba, a significant increase.

You know, that Manitobans—you know, the members opposite they want to, you know, criticize this government, and that's their intent. I understand that, but they should also present to Manitobans their plan. Again, I'll remind the member that debt servicing costs, we're actually spending less money both in terms of on our core which is \$10 million less to service the debt. On summary we were paying less to service our debt. We came into government, we were spending 13 cents on the dollar to service our debt. Now that's down to 5.6 cents on the dollar to service our debt.

The net debt to GDP—and the member talks about the bond rating agencies. They'll look at net-debt-to-GDP ratio. When they were in government, compared to our ratio now our ratio is significantly lower than what it was. Our net-debt-to-GDP ratio is one of the lowest in the nation and it will continue to get smaller as our deficits become a smaller share of the overall economy. This year—well, last year the debt would be about 7 per cent—0.7 per cent of the overall economic—overall GDP. Now it's fallen to—excuse me—0.6 per cent and next year its falling—it's going to fall to 0.4 per cent. And eventually, Mr. Chair, it'll be eliminated; it'll be 0 per cent. That is good for the—for Manitoba.

But, again, what I want to know, the member opposite he did not reveal his intentions on this issue. They did not say what their plans are to reduce this deficit. I never heard a peep out of that member. I'm hoping that maybe the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), who I assume will be speaking next, will tell us what their plans are because, you

know, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans want to know what their intentions are to deal with the economic situations in this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer):** I've got two—

**An Honourable Member:** Midland.

**The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer):** Honourable member for Midland, okay.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** I listened very intently to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), and his entire economic forecast is based on hoping that the economy grows faster than the debt and the deficits.

Nowhere does he talk about reining in spending in order to control his deficits, his wasteful spending, which is hurting essential front-line services because he's now spending over \$850 million a year just to service the debt and that \$850 million does not go to front-line health care. It does not go to education. It does not build a road in this province. It goes out of province to pay the debt, and they continue to increase our debt and as the debt increases so does our debt payments and our interest costs on that.

In this resolution brought forward by my colleague from Morden-Winkler, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) in the 2011 election campaign promised to balance the budget by 2014. But we know what happened to that forecast, as what happens with many of their forecasts.

First of all, the Premier misled Manitobans when he promised not to raise the sales tax. He promised that. He went to—all NDP MLAs went to the doors promising not to raise taxes. In fact, the Premier called it ridiculous, wouldn't do that. What they did right away after the 2011 election is they broadened the sales tax, home insurance, tax—sales tax on home insurance, disability insurance. They increased fuel taxes, increased the registration costs on MPI—on vehicles through MPI. It's an insatiable appetite for spending by the NDP.

And as if that wasn't enough, they go another year and then they raise a 14 per cent increase in the retail sales tax to take it from 7 per cent to 8 per cent, huge drain on Manitobans, on their budgets at home.

Manitobans don't have the luxury of endless spending like this NDP government does. Home-owners have to balance their budgets, businesses have to balance their budget, otherwise they go out of business, they lose their homes if they don't do

that. But this government has not been able to curb its spending and that's—that again is costing our front-line services because that money is not available for things like home insurance, or for home insurance but also for health care and education. And that's just a direct drain on Manitobans.

And this—unfortunately this government can only run on projections, on forecasts because they can't run on their record because it's dismal. We know that they couldn't run a lemonade stand and make a profit out of it, and never mind this province.

So they're—they—instead they're borrowing more money. Hydro rates have gone up 20 per cent which is costing every Manitoban both in their homes, in their businesses, it's costing them more. We will continue to pay more with their west side bipole waste line. It's—they seem to be intent on selling power into the US at a discount, at a loss, and Manitobans will have to pay the difference because prior to the last election the previous, previous, previous, previous, however many previous Finance ministers it was, Rosann Wowchuk declared Bipole III would not cost Manitobans one penny, a claim repeated by the Premier (Mr. Selinger). Manitoba Hydro continues to apply for rate increases to pay for Bipole III.

Again, it is now another misrepresentation by this government to Manitobans. Manitobans knew all along that they would have to pay for this, but this government has not owned up to that, they are misleading Manitobans on both Manitoba Hydro and on the deficit.

The—our member from Morden-Winkler very well outlined the differences the government is now using in their summary budgets, or lack of projections in their summary budgets. They're hiding. This government is hiding and they're using forecasts that have no—they have no intention of even being able to meet even if they could make an accurate forecast which they can't. All we do know for sure is that Manitobans are going to pay more and get less, and their waste is affecting front-line services that cost each and every Manitoban.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I urge this government to actually take what this resolution says, that its chronic deficits mean less for essential services. Manitobans need those essential services and they—this government should support this resolution because it speaks to the problem this government has. Thank you.

**Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy):** Very proud to put some words on the record here today. Heard the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) talking about forecasts, sounds like it's the word of the day, so I'd like to talk about some of the forecasts. And, you know, members opposite don't need to take my word for it, they don't need to listen from the government.

Independent private forecasters are predicting that Manitoba's economy is one of the best and will continue to be one of the best in the country, which simply means our plan is working. So who am I talking about when the member for Midland talks about forecasters, independent private forecasters, who are we talking about? We're talking about CIBC World Market. We're talking about Scotiabank. We're talking about BMO Capital Markets. We're talking about TD Bank. We're talking about the Royal Bank. We're talking about CMHC. We're talking about IHS Global Insight, the Laurentian Bank. Over and over again we're hearing from independent, private forecasters.

\* (11:30)

BMO Capital Markets senior economist Robert Kavcic said in a note to investors, first we must praise the often overlooked but now rising star on the regional labour force map, Manitoba. Now, I don't know exactly who Robert Kavcic was talking about when he says that there's a group of—someone's overlooking Manitoba's economy, but it sure sounds like he's talking about members opposite.

Now, he goes on to say this about the labour market in Manitoba: employment growth will lead the country at a very strong 3.1 per cent year-over-year clip, the best pace the province has seen in 13 years. At 5.4 per cent in March, the jobless rate is now second lowest in the country.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, I've got to tell you, private forecasters continue to say the same things about Manitoba's economy. You don't have to take our word for it. And they don't seem that happy about it. Well, if you're proud of who you are and where you live in your province, you should be ecstatic about it. But they don't seem to be doing that.

And when you talk to businesses, here's what businesses say. Businesses say that they are proud of the contribution and the great work that they do in our neighbourhoods and our communities all over Manitoba, and they want to give back. And they've

recognized the best way to give back is to make sure you hire local people. So that's what we're hearing.

So what do we do? Now, when local people get those jobs, when you have a strong economy it creates a demand for jobs. What happens when these people get these jobs? Well, they're great jobs. They're high-paying jobs. And so what ends up happening is those people who get those jobs, those workers want to make a good living for themselves and their families so they can give back.

And so what does a government do? Well, we work with those businesses to help train those workers, because we know if we give them the training that they need that they can continue to make a good living for themselves and their families. And this is what's happening all over the province. And this is why when you work with businesses and you work with families and you work with workers and you invest in training, that's how you grow your economy. That's what's happening here. That is something to celebrate.

Now, in terms of jobs we continue to lead in job growth, very strong job growth in the private sector, incredibly strong job growth when it comes to full-time jobs, one of the lowest unemployment rates. Headlines read this: Manitoba's economic elite. So that's—these are the—this is what the media is reporting both nationally and locally. Strength in diversity, the headline reads in talking about Manitoba's economy. Construction business booming in Manitoba, Manitoba manufacturers end on a high note.

So when you talk to the good folks down in Steinbach like Valeant, or you talk to the people in Canada Goose, people—big companies that are hiring lots of people, you ask them. You know, in the case of Valeant they shut down a shop in one part of the country to expand the shop in Manitoba. So why—like, why is this happening here? So I asked the question. I said, why are you closing down in one part of the country and you're moving to Manitoba and expanding jobs and facilities here? It was pretty simple. They said three key things as to why businesses are thriving in Manitoba and why they want to be here. (1) This is an incredible, affordable place to do business. It's cheaper and it just makes more economic sense to expand in Manitoba because it's more affordable to have a business in Manitoba—small, medium and large. They said that we have one of the youngest and fastest growing demographics. They look at our young indigenous population and

they say, what incredible potential there is. They look at our new Canadian refugee community and they say, wow, what possibilities we have. And now we are seeing that more women and young women are looking at non-traditional trades, so we're seeing more women moving into jobs that they never thought they could get before.

Now, I've got to say, the third point is that they have a government—they said there is a government that will work with us to train this incredible demographic. So you create this demand for jobs, we have this amazing demographic, and so you're seeing companies wanting to do business here in Manitoba. And our message is clear: we stand with those businesses, we stand with those workers.

Now, often I get to hear members opposite brag about Saskatchewan. They have a strong message for any young person—*[interjection]* They have a strong message for young people: you should move to Saskatchewan. That's often what I hear. You know, they like Saskatchewan so much. But, you know, when you talk to young people here's what they'll tell you. They are proud of who they are. They are proud of their neighbourhoods. They are proud of their communities. And they are proud of their province and they want to give back, Mr. Acting Speaker. And we continue to invest in young people so they can give back, so they can have a sense of contribution. That's what we continue to do.

Rosemary Sparks, executive director of BuildForce Canada, another independent validator: There has never been a better time to get involved in the trades in Manitoba. The next 10 years, there's going to be a demand, 12,000 jobs alone. This is what happens when you have a strong economy and you have a plan that works.

Just let me read some of these jobs that are out there and we continue to train. This is why we've tripled the amount of people in apprentices, over 10,000 apprentices now, and we're starting younger than we ever have before. Here's some of the jobs: boilermakers, bricklayers, carpenters, concrete finishers, construction estimators, construction managers, construction millwrights, industrial mechanics, contractors and supervisors, crane operators, electricians, floor covering installers, glaziers, heavy equipment operators, heavy duty equipment mechanics, home building renovation managers, insulators, iron workers, structural metal fabricators, painters, decorators, plasterers, plumbers, refrigeration and air condition mechanics,

residential-commercial installer services, roofers, shinglers, sheet metal workers, steam fitters, pipefitters, sprinkler system installers, tile setters, trades helpers and labourers, truck drivers, welders and related machine operators.

That's what happens when you have a strong economy. You create a demand for jobs, and when you stand with businesses and you have a young demographic and you stand with businesses and you train them, that is how you continue to be seen and be one of the strongest economies in the country, Mr. Acting Speaker. That is what's happening. Now what are people saying? What is she saying? Well, Rosemary Sparks is saying there's never been a better time to be in Manitoba when it comes to trades.

Mike Moore, here's what Mike Moore says, from the president of the Manitoba Home Builders' Association. Once again, don't take our word for it. This was the word of the day that the member brought up from Midland: forecasters. These are what independent people are saying. Mike Moore, no one would disagree with him. There's never been a better place to start your own business. It's possible in Manitoba after only five or six or seven years as a tradesperson to start your own business.

So not only are people saying that this is a great place to be and live if you want to have a trade, but just as importantly, independent validators say, well, it's a great climate to start your own business. It simply means the plan is working. It simply means—and look, hey, it simply means the—and now what is Michael Legary saying, co-founder of Startup Winnipeg, right? I believe and many people believe and have said that when it comes to start-ups, Winnipeg and Manitoba lead not only the country but probably North America. There's no better way to get your new idea, approach or product to market than to come on down to Innovation Alley.

Now, at one time, when members opposite were in government, people saw Adelaide Street as a place of struggle and challenge, but now they had to rename it Innovation Alley, one of the most exciting places to be when it comes to start-ups, and we saw that yesterday. An investment of a digital media tax credit, which we've been able to give, continued to help start-ups expand their businesses, and how? By hiring more young people.

We continue to invest in this incredible demographic. We continue to work with businesses. And so the message is clear. It always has been clear

that people, young people, workers, families are proud of who they are. They're proud of their hometowns, they're proud of their home province and they want to give back. And this government continues to stand with those people to make sure they can do that.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, pleased to rise, and I listened intently to the minister's comments.

And it would be fabulous in Manitoba if businesses were able to celebrate their successes because they can be successful. Unfortunately, this government is determined to punish business in Manitoba, and I've seen that for 16 years first-hand. I have seen what this government does to businesses, how they punish them time and time again, not just with taxation but with regulations on how their business should be run. There is—everyone in that government thinks they know better how to run people's business than the business owners themselves, and that's a sad way to be in Manitoba, because business owners are successful, they know how to run their business, they know what it takes, they work with their staff, they work with their customers, and then, at the end of the day, they are punished by this government.

\* (11:40)

It was—I was really quite surprised over the last 16 years, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, as we saw the companies that I'm involved in—they make a lot of donations to charitable causes and community, and those requests were mounting up. They—we were getting more and more and more of them every month. And it was really quite shocking, the volume of those requests. And so we actually had to set up a little bureaucracy in our company. And we said, you know what, we're going to meet once a month and determine, look at all the requests. We don't even have time to respond to the volume of the requests, so if we're going to make a donation you will hear from us, if not, thank you for the opportunity. But they were all very good causes, and then when we talked to those agencies, we'd say, well, why is there such a volume of requests from the public sector, from charities, from these various agencies, and we talked to many of our colleagues as well. And the response we got back was, well, the government was reducing their support so we have to go to the private sector for support because we're not getting it from the government.

So another—if you want to look at it as a taxation on business, I mean, we do donate and we do support communities. But time and again, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, we saw the volume of those requests escalating because of the inattention of this government and the reductions that we saw, and the reductions are responsible. They're responsible for—are obviously because they're mounting the debt. They're paying more in interest rates, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) seems to be confused on what he might be responsible for, whether he's responsible for fiscal policy or monetary policy, not—he's not quite clear on the difference in those.

And we do know that the government may have not gone to the market yet with these warnings they've got from the bond rating agencies. But the deputy minister, in Public Accounts, the Deputy Minister of Finance, did tell us that the experience of Ontario when they went to the market was—with a similar warning was that there was a, I believe, it was a one point increase in interest rates that they experienced. And the deputy minister did say that Manitoba often tracks Ontario's experience. So when the government goes to the market this year, will they see an increase in interest rates? Well, the deputy minister's opinion, probably. And that means a further reduction in money that's available to front-line services. So we see this time and again.

And now we have this year where the minister has openly stated that he has two sets of books. He's going to hide one from Manitobans; you can't see that one because we don't want you to know all the facts; we'll just give you the facts that we think you need to know. So he's openly said that they have two sets of books now. They're going to, you know, not allow Manitobans to see what's truly happening to the finances in Manitoba, all of the Crown corporations. Those results are going to be hidden from Manitobans, so don't pay attention to that shiny object over there; look at this shiny object over here. So try to distract people from what's really happening in Manitoba where we see that the government's inability to manage anything is taking away from front-line resources that Manitobans depend on. And we see that all over Manitoba, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, not just in Winnipeg as the minister was bragging about, but the rest of the province as well.

If you were to go to an emergency room today, how long would you wait? How many hours would you wait to be seen in that emergency room? It's not minutes, it's hours. And as you travel around the rest

of the country and into the US, you might see some billboards that emergency rooms brag about their wait times. Because they're saying our wait time in this emergency room is now four minutes, is now 10 minutes. And instead, in Manitoba we have eight hours, 10 hours, 24 hours. How many people leave the emergency room without being seen? So all those essential front-line services are being damaged by this government and by their intent to escalate the debt without any controls.

They don't seem to know how to manage a budget. It was shocking again when I spent some time in Estimates with the former Justice Minister and asked him why a particular line item had gone up by some 14 per cent, the same amount that they had increased the PST by, 14 per cent that particular year. So why that line item had gone up that amount? And he huddled together with his staff, and they talked back and forth for several minutes, 10 minutes or so, and then they came back and they said, well, we don't know. Okay, if you don't know what's in a line item and why it went up, you can't manage a budget, and that's obviously what we see from this government. They can't manage a budget.

So I thought I'd give them some time to revisit that in Estimates the next day, gave the minister another chance. You know, you've had some time to do some research on this, I know. Can you tell me why that particular line item has gone up 14 per cent?

So, again, they huddled together and they conversed and they did come up with a little more information. They did say again that they didn't know, but they also said, we can't tell you.

So not only did they not know, but they can't tell us why they don't know or what they know. So, you know, it's not surprising, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that we're in the mess that we are now, and when you're at the bottom of the hole or the bottom of the barrel, now's the time to stop digging, not digging even further to get Manitobans in a hole that, you know, we can't see out of anymore.

It's just—I look at the budgets that this government has produced and they don't know where the money goes, so they can't manage it, and so, as a result, what we see is constant degradation to those important front-line services that Manitobans depend on.

So it's sad to watch, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, sad to think where Manitoba could be, because we

have tremendous opportunities here. We have tremendous businesses. We do have good civil servants, tremendous civil servants that do good work and want to do good work, but are being prevented from doing that work by this NDP government. We saw that recently where certain ministers didn't include their staff in discussions and awarding contracts that were untendered, and it was a surprise to the staff, surprise to the civil service, so those are things that we see in a government in disarray.

So all those opportunities that Manitoba could have had, they're still there, they're waiting, and there's an opportunity there for Manitobans and Manitoba to be a great province again. But we're not going to see that under this NDP government because they continue to diminish front-line services. They continue to attack businesses. They continue to drive businesses out of the province, drive mining out of the province, because people are looking for an opportunity and looking for a place where they're wanted.

It doesn't take a big change, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, but apparently it's a change that this government is not able to follow through on.

So with those few words, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I'm sure there are others across the way that want to address how they've reduced front-line services to Manitobans.

Thank you.

**Hon. Melanie Wight (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities):** It's a pleasure to get up and be able to put some facts on the record, as opposed to what we just heard from members opposite. I'm not sure what province they're living in. It doesn't seem to be Manitoba, so—oh, no, they don't have—they've never gone outside of their doors to see the incredible growth that's occurring, Mr. Speaker, across the province.

We know that we made a deliberate choice, Mr. Speaker, to invest in infrastructure, to grow our economy, to protect our front-line services, to keep Manitobans working. We made that choice and we are seeing now how well it is working, and the incredible growth that we're seeing in our province, and I certainly understand why, through this session, members opposite did not want to be asking questions about things like our budget, or Manitoba's economy, because everyone except them knows that

we are doing better than probably ever in the history of our province.

Our economy is thriving because of the investments that we have made on this side of the House and the great work by all the people of our province: our businesses, our non-profits, every part of society, our teachers, who are doing, by the way, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just put on the record, an incredibly good job.

I know members opposite often like to speak as that that is not the case, but we have some of the best, most creative, most dedicated teachers in the country working here in Manitoba, and you can see it at every—I've been to a bunch of grads lately and farewells for different grades, and I am in awe of the talents and the creativity of our children. They are amazing and they are doing a great job and we're very, very grateful to our wonderful teachers who are also just making such a difference. And the plan in that area as well, Mr. Speaker, to really attach kids early to careers and make that an easier pathway for people because our businesses are growing. Everywhere in the province our businesses are growing.

\* (11:50)

Our deficit is down, Mr. Speaker, and we do not know what their plan is except to—except to—privatize child care, we do know that. We know that they're against regulations. So the regulations, for example, that protect our children in those child-care facilities, the—what—that they call red tape, they just call it red tape—that that red tape is there to keep our children safe.

We know they don't like the regulations in workplace health and safety as well. Mr. Speaker, we've seen that many times in this House how they have not supported ensuring that our workers actually come home to their families alive and well. So we know they don't like that kind of regulation so we do know that part of the plan.

We know that they want to cut a half a billion dollars out of our budget. I'm just mystified about how that's going to help our front-line services. When I calculate what half a billion dollars is, it would actually be the removal of Housing, Conservation, Labour and Immigration, Multi-culturalism, Tourism, employee pensions, Children and Youth Opportunities, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Mineral Resources, and, hey, they can still

cut 20 per cent out of Agriculture. So it is a massive, massive loss to our province if that's their plan.

We know that if they were to come in and follow that plan, Mr. Speaker, we would lose about 70,000 jobs. Our future would be washed away and our children would not have the kind of opportunities that we know that they have in this current environment.

I think the member from Point Douglas did a wonderful job of pointing out that it's not us saying this. It is businesses all over our provinces. It is people like the Bank of Montreal. It's not exactly, you know, NDP followers that are telling us what-great plan this is and how well it's working.

We know that the Leader of the Opposition has a dangerous plan. When he was senior Cabinet minister in the previous government here, he fired 1,000 nurses and laid off 700 teachers. So it's hard to understand why anyone would think that he is going to be the person that's somehow going to protect front-line services as he's cutting half a billion dollars out of the budget. We know that his plan for child care would put 30,000 publicly funded spaces at risk. That would more than double the fees that our parents have to pay; it would cancel child-care construction projects—which, by the way, we're putting into every new school we build—oh, because we do build. That didn't happen the last time the Tories were in power. It was not—I don't—there was not a crane in the sky and nothing was being built.

So we are investing in Manitoba's future and we know that that is one of the most important ways that you can invest in our future is to invest in ensuring that there is child care available for everyone; that helps business. It might be a surprise to the members opposite, but that is absolutely essential and key to business being able to grow in our province. They need a strong workforce. We need our parents to be able to go to—be able to have a place to take their children that's safe, that still has regulations in place. And without that, Mr. Speaker, business in Manitoba will not be growing. So it's a huge, important piece for the businesses.

We know that the Opposition Leader wants to spend dollars to increase private 'profits' at the expense of Manitoba families. I think he's been very clear about that. He has not put forward a plan with regard to health care as—my goodness, even Charles Adler was—had a rare moment of clarity there and was able to acknowledge.

So I totally understand why they do not want to speak about our plan. I know why they don't want to talk about affordability, Mr. Speaker, because this province is the most affordable place to live in the entire country. So it was us that cut the business tax, small-business tax, to zero. It wasn't a Tory government that did that.

The Leader of the Opposition also doesn't want to talk about—really, he just doesn't want to talk about anything that builds the future of Manitoba, I can just sort of sum it up in one line, or all the good things that are currently happening in our province.

Right now, speaking of the child care, because to me that's—it's very close to my heart, we have the lowest child-care fees outside of Quebec right now. We know with the change that has been suggested by the opposition, that that is going to change.

When Brian Pallister was last in government, of course, they eliminated the funding for the Manitoba Child Care Association—

**The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer):** Order. Order. Order, please.

**Ms. Wight:** Oh, I apologize. Leader of the Opposition.

**The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer):** Thank you. Please continue.

**Ms. Wight:** Eliminated the funding for the Manitoba Child Care Association, cut \$8 million from child-care centres. This is not somebody who we want to put the care of our children or our families into his hands, Mr. Speaker.

We know that this is going to hurt families in Manitoba. We know, Mr. Speaker, which government is on the side of the regular people of Manitoba. And it isn't the Leader of the Opposition.

We know that we have always been the one that is working to make things better for all people, not for the 1 per cent, not for the people who already have the most in our province. We have always been the people that are working to make sure that this province is a province of equity, where we are doing everyone—everything that we can to raise up our vulnerable people, to give people who have barriers a true opportunity a real chance to change their lives. And that is what we stand for.

And I am very, very proud to be on this side of the House speaking about the future of Manitoba and how we intend to continue to keep it growing.



**Hon. Mohinder Saran (Minister of Housing and Community Development):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to put on the record a few words regarding this PMR.

We know budgets are about choices, and we had a choice to cut services and return to balance recklessly for the sake of austerity like the members opposite, but we chose another way. We chose to invest in prosperity. We chose to return to balance through growth and by building our economy. Our government believes in a balanced approach that is fiscally responsible and that keeps our health care, education and economy strong.

We know that our plan to invest in core infrastructure and skills training is working. Manitoba's economy is growing more than other provinces, and our job creation record over the last year is the best in Canada. We know that our economy recovers; now is not the time to make reckless cuts that would destroy our economic growth, throw Manitobans onto the unemployment line and hurt families.

We have said all along that we will return to balance responsibly and not by sacrificing the front-line services Manitobans count on. We will not do it by slashing the services Manitoba families count on, like health care and education.

We won't abandon communities facing flooding emergencies or forest fires.

Instead, we are building on our economic plan that is forecasted to put Manitoba at the top in economic growth over the next two years. We are creating more opportunities—

**The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer):** Order. Order. Order.

When this matter is next before the House, the honourable Minister for Housing and Community Development will have seven minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 this afternoon.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, June 25, 2015**

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