

**Third Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
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DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
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MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 16, 2009

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### PRAYER

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 18—The Regulated Health Professions Act

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** I move, seconded by the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 18, The Regulated Health Professions Act; Loi sur les professions de la santé réglementées, be now read a first time.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Ms. Oswald:** Bill 18 will strengthen and modernize the governance, accountability and transparency of health professions and will enhance patient safety and consumer protection. Through extensive consultation and the co-operation of existing professions, we believe this harmonized approach to health professions' governance will be a strong step forward for Manitoba patients and Manitoba people.

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

### PETITIONS

#### Ring Dike Road—Ste. Rose du Lac

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Ring Dike Road is a well-used gravel municipal road that is used as a secondary road in and out of the community of Ste. Rose du Lac.

Given this heavy pattern of use, there is strong interest in the community in seeing the Ring Dike Road upgraded to a paved provincial road.

It would be most cost-effective to upgrade the Ring Dike Road to a provincial road at the same time as upgrades are being undertaken at the junction of Highway 68 and Highway 5.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider upgrading the Ring Dike Road at Ste. Rose du Lac into a provincial road; and

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider upgrading the Ring Dike Road at the same time that work is being done on the junction of Highway 68 and Highway 5.

This petition is signed by D. Parthenay, Claire Ogg, Mike Hayward and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

#### Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by J.K. Hoepfner, B. Abelson, Amanda Heppner and many, many others.

**Traffic Signal Installation—PTH 15  
and Highway 206**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) stated that traffic volumes at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald exceeded those needed to warrant the installation of traffic lights.

Every school day, up to a thousand students travel through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts their safety at risk.

Thousands of vehicles travel daily through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts at risk the safety of these citizens.

In 2008, there was a 300 percent increase in accidents at this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate installation of traffic signals at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald.

To request that the Minister of Transportation recognize the value of the lives and well-being of the students and citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by Eleanor Zieske, Valerie Anderson, Margaret Hadaller and many, many other Manitobans. Thank you.

**Seven Oaks Hospital—Emergency Services**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The current Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP government are reducing emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital.

On October 6, 1995, the NDP introduced a matter of urgent public importance that stated that "the ordinary business of the House to be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely

the threat to the health-care system posed by this government's plans to limit emergency services in the city of Winnipeg community hospitals."

On December 6, 1995, when the then-PC government suggested it was going to reduce emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital, the NDP leader then asked Premier Gary Filmon to "reverse the horrible decisions of his government and his Minister of Health and reopen our community-based emergency wards."

The NDP gave Manitobans the impression that they supported Seven Oaks Hospital having full emergency services seven days a week, 24 hours a day

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Premier of Manitoba consider how important it is to have the Seven Oaks Hospital provide full emergency services seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

This is signed by S. Hardy, D. Fulcner, T. Daley and many, many other fine Manitobans.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts  
Second Report**

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Chairperson):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I would like to add that the committee has agreed to report chapters of reports that have been considered and completed.

**Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):** Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense.

*Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Second Report.*

**Meetings**

*Your Committee met on Wednesday, April 15, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.*

**Matters under Consideration**

- *Auditor General's Report to the Legislative Assembly – Audits of Government Operations dated December 2008: Chapter 2, Monitoring Compliance with The Ambulance Services Act*

- *Auditor General's Report to the Legislative Assembly – Audits of Government Operations dated December 2008: Chapter 3, Pharmacare Program – Part 2*
- *Auditor General's Report – Audit of the Pharmacare Program Manitoba Health – April 2006*

#### **Committee Membership**

- *Mr. BOROTSIK*
- *Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Ms. HOWARD (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. JHA*
- *Mr. LAMOUREUX*
- *Mr. MARTINDALE*
- *MR. MAGUIRE*
- *HON. MR. SELINGER*
- *MRS. STEFANSON*
- *Mr. WHITEHEAD*

#### **Officials Speaking on Record**

- *Carol Bellringer, Auditor General*
- *Arlene Wilgosh, Deputy Minister of Health and Healthy Living*
- *Hon. Ms. OSWALD*

#### **Reports Considered and Passed**

*Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:*

- *Auditor General's Report – Audit of the Pharmacare Program Manitoba Health – April 2006*

#### **Chapters Considered and Completed**

*Your Committee completed consideration of the following chapters as presented:*

- *Auditor General's Report to the Legislative Assembly – Audits of Government Operations dated December 2008: Chapter 2, Monitoring Compliance with The Ambulance Services Act*
- *Auditor General's Report to the Legislative Assembly – Audits of Government Operations dated December 2008: Chapter 3, Pharmacare Program – Part 2*

**Mr. Derkach:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that the report of the committee be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

\* (13:40)

#### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I am pleased to table the following report: Manitoba Justice Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2009-2010 Departmental Estimates.

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Supplementary Estimates Information for the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, 2009-2010.

#### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

##### **Provincial Ice Jams and Flooding**

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** The Red River is cresting today in Emerson, in Letellier on April 17, in Morris on April 19 and in St. Adolphe on April 21.

Yesterday afternoon, Mr. Speaker, the ice began to run on the Assiniboine River causing a sharp incline of water levels in the city. Water levels in the city are currently at 22.5, James Avenue.

The current forecast indicates the Red River will crest in Winnipeg today. It will begin to gradually decline and will remain above 20 feet until the middle of next week. The Red River at James Avenue would be close to nine feet higher if the floodway, the Portage Diversion and the Shellmouth Dam were not operating to protect Winnipeg.

Today, the City of Winnipeg has expanded their local state of emergency to include properties outside the primary dikes. There are now a total of 12 local states of emergency in Manitoba.

New partial ring dike closures are now proceeding at Niverville and Gretna. All ring dikes along the valley are being carefully monitored. Partial closures are in place at Emerson, Dominion City, Letellier, Roseau River, St. Jean Baptiste, Morris, Rosenort, Aubigny, Ste. Agathe, St. Adolphe and Riverside, which is fully closed.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the R.M. in the St. Adolphe area issued a voluntary evacuation order for a hundred residents outside of the ring dike who are isolated by floodwaters. That's in Ritchot. In addition, approximately 40 residents of the St. Adolphe Personal Care Home were evacuated to Winnipeg as a precautionary measure.

The Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters has helped evacuate 175 people from Peguis First Nation, and are beginning to move 225 medically vulnerable people from the Fisher River First Nation. A reception centre has been established at the Century Arena at 1377 Clarence Avenue in Winnipeg for those who have been evacuated from their homes.

Again, I'd like to urge those who have been evacuated to register with the Canadian Red Cross registration and family reunification line, Mr. Speaker, and that number is available. Since March 25, 298 people have registered with the Red Cross. Communication is vital during these rapidly changing flood circumstances that we have experienced this year because of spring flooding. We will continue to ensure that all flood-affected municipalities have the most current flood information.

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose):** I'd like to thank the minister for the flood update that he presented here. We know that there are ongoing problems and rising levels. They still continue to rise, and the City has now declared a state of emergency in the whole city rather than just in areas. We know the anxiety that the people that are affected are feeling out there, and we are certainly thinking about what problems they are facing. Our thoughts are certainly with them.

As the update says, communication is vital and any improvement in communication that can be done in these situations is absolutely essential. We still hear occasionally that people aren't getting the message soon enough on a variety of issues, and I think any improvement we can do in that respect is certainly well worth devoting our efforts to.

Once again, I thank you for the update and the ongoing briefings on this. It's certainly a very serious situation and all our thoughts are with it. So thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** I rise to thank the minister for his statement to recognize that there are many people in the Red River Valley and elsewhere, in Peguis and Fisher River, and at various other places around Manitoba, who are severely affected by the current flood conditions. We recognize the severity of this

flood, ranking it the second most severe flood in this century.

I want to also thank and recognize the contribution of many, including those members of the Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters, the members of the Red Cross and many, many others who've contributed to the fight to help save communities, save homes, save lives. Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today recipients of the Minister of Education Awards for Excellence in Teaching. We have Teaching-Excellence Early Years, Patricia Lynne Goosen; Teaching Excellence-Middle Years, Sylvia Christina Marshall; Teaching Excellence-Senior Years, Brian Henri Martel; Outstanding New Teacher, Vanessa Helene Rigaux; Team Collaboration, Laurie Lynne Bachewich, Susan Ann Davar and Pamela Jennifer Ryznar; and Outstanding School Leader, Dan John Giesbrecht. These guests are the guests of the honourable Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson).

Also in the public gallery we have with us from Warren Collegiate 50 grade 11 students under the direction of Ms. Lee Stewart. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

Also in the public gallery we have from Springs Christian Academy 40 grades 9 and 11 students under the direction of Mr. Brad Dowler. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Red River Floodway Gate Operation Status

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** We know that hundreds of citizens of the province are at this very moment responding to the call to assist with residents around Manitoba and, in particular, here in the city of Winnipeg with some emergency sandbagging activity to protect people and their homes.

As has been referenced by the minister, a state of emergency for properties on the river side of the primary dikes within the city of Winnipeg, impacting

some 240 homes, was declared at about 11:15 this morning and is due to remain in effect for two weeks.

I wonder if the Premier or the government could simply indicate what is the current status of the operation of the floodway and, in particular, the level of the floodway gate. Can they indicate what level of protection the floodway is expected to provide to the people of Winnipeg over the course of the next few days?

\* (13:50)

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Yes, first of all, it does make sense for the City to have that authority proclaimed. If there are any individuals or equipment in an area for the 260 homes that are being sandbagged in Winnipeg, that the City doesn't have access to property and people haven't voluntarily sandbagged, then it makes sense to have that kind of authority. I think it's appropriate for the City to have invoked it.

Certainly, I want to thank again the volunteers that are sandbagging. Some of the sandbag protection systems on Kingston Crescent I don't believe were required to be raised. I'll just look at the Minister responsible for EMO. I haven't got the briefing—I was in Thompson this morning—on the current state of the cfs flow of the floodway. We are attempting to continue to balance the needs and protections in the city of Winnipeg with all three flood protection devices we have for the city of Winnipeg.

The Shellmouth Dam has had water operate through it prior to the flood event. It is now storing a considerable amount of water and not flowing it through from the west to the city of Winnipeg. The Assiniboine Diversion was limited up until early this morning. The primary amount of ice has come through the Assiniboine River, and the Assiniboine Diversion device has been further utilized in the last number of hours to have I think close to 20,000 cfs flowing north into Lake Manitoba. The indication I had as of late yesterday was close to 40,000 cfs in the floodway.

Of course, we're trying to balance off the needs for flood protection for the city of Winnipeg and, of course, the flooding that can occur with the utilization of the floodway. That's the balance we're trying to achieve as we use the floodway and we use other devices in the valley.

### Winnipeg Protection Levels

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The Premier indicated in that response that he wasn't currently aware of what the state is of operation with respect to the floodway gates at the control structure south of the city. I think it's important for Winnipeggers, in particular, to understand exactly how the floodway operation is going to impact on the city of Winnipeg in terms of water levels.

We now know we have a state of emergency, and many are asking about the level of protection for citizens within the city of Winnipeg provided by the floodway. I wonder if the Premier can simply indicate what level of protection the city of Winnipeg will receive through the operation of the floodway, given that what we have even with the constantly revised and increased levels of water that are coming through is something that is still below 1997 levels.

What level of protection will the floodway provide to the people of Winnipeg in the hours and days ahead?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** The member will recall that in '97 the floodway was used well beyond the state of nature. There was flooding in Grande Pointe. There was flooding in Ste. Agathe. There was a considerable amount of flooding south of the floodway. The city is protected at 24.5; the projection at 22.8 of yesterday, I think it was 22.5 that was achieved just early in the morning.

The member will know that the floodway provides a tremendous amount of relief, and now with the increased scope, it can deal with catastrophic floods. But in dealing with the floodway and the Portage Diversion, the Portage Diversion is taking 20,000 cfs of water away from Winnipeg. The floodway is taking 40,000 cfs of water away from Winnipeg. That's actually more, with the two devices, than the whole amount of water going through the city of Winnipeg, is handling. I think we're at over 90,000 cfs in Winnipeg; I believe it's around the 40,000 mark at the floodway.

So we are attempting to operate the floodway in harmony with communities south of the floodway which, of course, is what I thought the members opposite last week were asking for in their questions. But if they have a new position on that, I'd certainly like to hear it.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Three weeks ago, the government said the floodway, as of April, will provide one-in-700-year flood protection. What we have occurring presently is well shy of a one-in-700-year flood in terms of the levels. It's below 1997, and yet we have localized states of emergency within the city of Winnipeg.

Can the Premier just be clear? Was the statement that the government made three weeks ago about a guarantee of one-in-700-year protection and everything up to one-in-700-year protection for the city of Winnipeg an accurate statement, or is it a statement that was made prior to the rising waters, which they now may wish to revise?

**Mr. Doer:** Well, I know the budget is being voted on today, and I guess the member still hasn't read the budget, because in the budget it states that we have one-in-500-year protection this spring, and we will achieve one-in-700-year protection by the end of the year. It's right in the budget, and he should read it before he votes. He'll probably vote against it without reading it but that's just another matter.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, if we had a catastrophic flood beyond 1826 or beyond 1997, we would be evacuating Morris, we'd be evacuating Ste. Agathe, we'd be evacuating St. Adolphe, we'd be evacuating every farm community that's only protected two feet above 1997 levels. If we had a catastrophic event, there would be evacuations. The floodway would then be used to have massive amounts of water, up to 100,000 cfs, going through it because the capacity to deal with the floodway for a catastrophic event beyond 1997 is there.

We also have the ability to not evacuate Grande Pointe, not evacuate St. Adolphe, not evacuate Ste. Agathe, not evacuate Morris, operate the floodway to protect Winnipeg below the 24.5, and at the same time not evacuate people south of the floodway by the operation of the floodway. So, yes, we have had some sandbagging in the city of Winnipeg of 650,000—there's 650,000 people in Winnipeg, 680,000. There have been 250 homes that have been sandbagged. Absolutely right. It does make sense for the City to use those powers. But, yes, if a catastrophic flood was here there would be massive evacuations, but the floodway would be able to protect up to 400,000 people in the city of Winnipeg in terms of not being evacuated. So that capacity is there.

We also have the capacity to operate the floodway in harmony with people south of the

floodway. We're trying to do that. I know the former government tried to do that in '97. We hope to achieve that. So far, we have been able to do that in most cases here south of the floodway, and that's the goal we have in operating the floodway right now.

### **Red River Floodway Winnipeg Protection Levels**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** With all due respect to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, who is now saying that we are only prepared for a one-in-500-year flood, in a press release given out from his minister's department it says, and I quote, and this is dated March 20: "Today, the floodway's channel capacity is more than double what it was in '97. The floodway expansion project is on schedule to provide one-in-700-year flood protection this spring."

One-in-700-years. The minister says one-in-700-years. The Premier says one-in-500-years. Which is it? Manitobans want to know.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to put in perspective for members opposite what is happening in Winnipeg right now and in the Red River Valley and what happened north of Winnipeg.

In parts of the Red River Valley, it's the third-worst flood of the century. North of St. Jean, it is the second-worst flood of the century and, certainly, last weekend it was the flood of the century north of Winnipeg. Yesterday, we surpassed the 1950 flood. In 1950, 107,000 people were evacuated, Mr. Speaker; 10,000 homes were destroyed. We were at flood stage in Winnipeg for 51 days.

Thanks to the floodway, the Shellmouth Dam and the Portage Diversion, today James Avenue is at 22.5, and we are using the floodway in a way that's going to protect Winnipeg and also not create negative impacts in the Red River Valley. That's what counts.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, and I think we need to give credit where credit is due, and thank you to former Premier Duff Roblin for making sure that that happens.

Mr. Speaker, Winnipeggers and Manitobans have been told by this government that we are protected, several times, day in, day out, press release after press release, that we are protected in the city of Winnipeg to a one-in-700-year flood. Now the Premier is saying, no, check out the budget; we're only in for one-in-500.



The fact of the matter is people in the city of Winnipeg are out sandbagging. They're working hard to try and save their homes when this Premier and this government said that they would have up to one-in-700-year protection. We're nowhere near those levels, yet they're still having to sandbag to try and protect their properties.

What do they have to say to these people? Were they actually telling the truth when they said that we were protected up to one-in-700 years?

\* (14:00)

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, last week the members opposite asked the question, and then they asked another question about areas south of the floodway. So, I do know over time, if you try to have one position in Winnipeg and another position outside of Winnipeg, actually people pay attention to that. We are trying to have the operation of the floodway work in harmony with the people south of the floodway.

I happened to sandbag in 1997. The sandbagging changed. The levels changed a couple of times, Mr. Speaker. We certainly supported the fact that we were getting updates from the provincial government at the time and, of course, we were protected in the city of Winnipeg.

We can run more water in the floodway with potential damage to places south of the floodway. Grande Pointe was flooded in '97. St. Agathe was flooded in '97. Thousands of people were evacuated in '97. We are trying to protect Winnipeg in harmony with communities south of the floodway. That's the challenge we have right now. So far, we're trying to meet that challenge effectively.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** The unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker, is that Manitobans are getting a different position from this government every single day on this flooding issue.

Well, then, I would ask the Premier—I mean, he says that, you know, one day we're speaking on behalf of this, on behalf of that. Who was he speaking to when he said in his press release and his minister said that we are protected to one-in-700 years? Who was he speaking to?

**Mr. Ashton:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I've said this before: I offer members opposite a briefing on the current operation of our flood protection system. I hope they will take up that offer.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we can get into debate about the floodway and the floodway expansion, but, you know, I would just urge members opposite to recognize we're still in what is now, in parts of the province, the second-worst flood of the century.

Our flood protection system has reduced the level in Winnipeg by nine feet over what it otherwise would be. The ring dike protection south of the city is protecting dozens of communities and thousands of Manitobans. I want to suggest, Mr. Speaker, because I know there's a tendency for some of us, for many of us, to engage in partisan debate, but right now there's a major flood on, and I would urge members opposite to pull together.

Let's unite as Manitobans. We can have this debate afterwards, Mr. Speaker, but right now we need to work together to deal with the second-worst flood of the century.

### **Red River Floodway Daily Operation Reports**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, a lifelong resident of Morris whom I spoke with this morning says he's monitored flood events every year, including daily measurements of water levels and levels of floodway operation in past events. I see from the Water Stewardship Web site that a flood operation report must be submitted to the minister by June 30 every year the floodway is operated, but my constituent has been seeking the daily floodway operational information throughout this event in 2009.

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) have the daily data to date on floodway operations, and will she share this information with the public?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Mr. Speaker, I offer members opposite a private briefing. I can indicate we have a media briefing every day, when all of the details of both the forecast and the operation of the flood protection system are provided. There is a direct number that people can phone. I'm not going to read it into the record. It's available. There is the Web site that is available.

I'd also stress, Mr. Speaker, that through the EOCs that have been established and through the municipal offices, I can't say enough about how our municipal leaders, our municipal officials are getting the word out immediately because that's the way it

works in a disaster. You work with the people on the front lines.

So I want to stress to the member opposite that perhaps the first place anyone should start is by talking to their local municipal office. They're on the front lines. We work with them, Mr. Speaker, and that line of communication is absolutely critical in any emergency situation. I can't say enough about how effective the municipalities have been in working with their citizens. They know best how to communicate—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

#### **Provincial Ice Jams and Flooding River Crest Predictions**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, the information that my constituent is seeking is not available until two to three weeks after the floodway operations cease. So I'm asking for those daily operation data reports to be made available.

Mr. Speaker, people in the Red River Valley, for the most part, are protected, but we have learned yesterday that this flood is now the second worst in 100 years from the St. Jean area to the floodway gates. Residents of St. Adolphe began emergency operations yesterday and are now, today, under a voluntary evacuation order. This all happened very quickly overnight.

Interestingly, the ministerial statement indicated yesterday that the Red would crest in Morris one day later than it would crest in St. Adolphe. That was yesterday. Today, the ministerial statement says the crest is delayed in St. Adolphe for three days.

I would just like to ask the minister to please explain these fluctuating crests. How can they change the crest level overnight to three days, Mr. Speaker? We need some more information.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Mr. Speaker, I once again offer the member—in fact, any member of this Legislature—a briefing with our forecasters, with any of the professionals that are dealing with us.

I note, by the way, Mr. Speaker, to put it in perspective, the height at Emerson as of yesterday had increased because of the flood levels by 37 feet. When you're talking about all along the Red River Valley, you're talking about increases in elevation of that level. When they're forecasting, they have to take into account not only the main river flow but overland flooding and the tributaries. In the case of

the city of Winnipeg, they take into account the Assiniboine River and all its tributaries.

A week ago, we were dealing with ice jams, Mr. Speaker. I can't say enough about how our forecasting staff have been working 24/7 in terms of this. And, yes, things are developing. I think the member talked about flowing. We have the second-worst flood of the century. I think the member opposite should understand the complexity of the forecast and the good job that our staff are doing.

#### **Red River Floodway Daily Operation Reports**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, there is the public out there wanting this information. They may be watching us right here, right now. I'm asking questions and we're just not getting any answers here. This is information that the public is asking for.

Mr. Speaker, the last report on the Web site is the flood operational report of 2007, and I'll quote from them, and it says: "From its completion in 1968 until 2007, the Red River Floodway has been operated in 26 of the intervening years. Operation of the floodway has saved many millions of dollars in damage in the city of Winnipeg. However, on occasion the operation has aggravated flooding outside of the city of Winnipeg."

Mr. Speaker, will the minister provide the daily data of the operation of the floodway as it becomes available every day so that people outside of the city can be well informed?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Mr. Speaker, we have a regular media briefing. Regular media bulletins are issued.

We specifically have been identifying the flow in the floodway, Mr. Speaker, because that's the important factor.

I can tell you one thing we have not done, Mr. Speaker, is throughout the circumstances we're dealing with here, at no time has there been any situation in which there has been any flooding, artificial flooding, above the state of nature, because we are not going to trade off the Red River Valley against Winnipeg or Winnipeg against the Red River Valley. We want to maximize protection for all Manitobans.

I realize the member opposite may want to see the annual reports. Right now, we're less concerned about the annual report from the floodway. Our focus

is working with Manitobans to deal with the second-worst flood of the century, and we're going to work to protect all Manitobans—all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

\* (14:10)

### **Assiniboine River Diversion Capital Investment**

**Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate the minister's remarks.

Mr. Speaker, once again the Assiniboine River Diversion, a vital part of Winnipeg flood protection infrastructure, is in use once again this year, as the First Minister (Mr. Doer) mentioned earlier.

While more than two-thirds of a billion dollars has been spent on flood protection related to the Red River, we have seen virtually no capital investment on the other river we have flowing by the doors of the Manitoba Legislative Building.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister if we can expect, proportionally speaking, the same level of consideration and investment for the Assiniboine River flood protection infrastructure.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Mr. Speaker, we have always said that there are three key components to flood protection in Manitoba, three of them. One of them, of course, is the floodway. The second one is the Portage Diversion. The third one is the Shellmouth, which plays a key role in terms of the management of the Assiniboine River system, not only, by the way, in terms of flood protection but in terms of water supply throughout the years.

So I suggest, Mr. Speaker—and I realize that the member opposite represents Portage and I know he knows about the Portage Diversion, but he may wish to take a trip out to the Shellmouth and see what an investment that was, a historic investment.

We have always said three things are key in terms of the flood protection and the flood management in this province. The Shellmouth is there not just for the Red River; it's there for the Assiniboine River, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Faurichou:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have visited the Shellmouth Dam and, indeed, it is a vitally important part of our flood protection here in the city of Winnipeg.

However, the minister completely missed the mark with my question. No money has been spent at

the Shellmouth or on the diversion in Portage la Prairie. [*interjection*] Well, the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) makes reference that that is not true. Well, then, why was the minister not forthcoming in his answer and went on in political rhetoric?

I ask all members to look at the river outside these doors and imagine for just one moment four times the volume of water in that channel if the Portage Diversion was not operating at capacity today.

I would like to ask the minister whether or not they are considering expansion to the capacity of the channel in Portage la Prairie in the future.

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, the design of the Portage Diversion I think is one of the key elements here. Again, it shows the tremendous vision that was put in place when comparing Manitoba in 1950 and where we're at today.

In terms of the capacity of the Portage Diversion, it's important to note that, in addition to the normal capacity, the failsafe did come into place and it does flow overland into a field. In fact, certainly compensation is available. That's part of the operating system as we do with the floodway.

But I want to stress here, after every significant flood event, just as Manitobans sat down after 1950 or after 1997 and worked to make a difference, we will be doing the same in the future, Mr. Speaker. But it's not going to be one or another part of the province; we'll look at the entire province.

We will work with our partners in the federal and municipal governments, Mr. Speaker. We will look at further flood protection, but right now I want to stress again, we're right in the middle; we're still in the middle of the flood, the second-worst flood in the century in this part of the province—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Faurichou:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear anything about capital investment on either of the other two vitally important infrastructures here in the province, because there hasn't been any.

Mr. Speaker, as the City of Winnipeg has declared some local states of emergency today for parts of the city as it tries to address the flood situation, the Assiniboine River Diversion is a key component in this flood-fighting strategy.

I'll ask the minister, and I hope the minister is listening—and I will have to say that this minister has

had in his possession for more than eight years now the upgrades necessary on the Portage la Prairie-located Assiniboine River Diversion, and we haven't seen any action by this government across the way.

So I ask the minister once again: Is upgrading of the Assiniboine River Diversion a priority of this government?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, dealing with the immediate flood emergency is a priority of this government, and once we have dealt with this very significant flood event, we will be sitting down to deal with that.

But I do want to hope, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite would not leave the impression that the Portage Diversion did not work. It was vital. One of the reasons we're able to manage the flooding all along the Assiniboine into the city of Winnipeg, a waterway nine feet below 1950 levels, is because the Portage Diversion worked, the Shellmouth Dam worked and the floodway is working.

Our flood protection is providing nine feet of relief right here in the city of Winnipeg. I think all members of this House should thank the wisdom and the vision of Manitobans who in the past pulled together and recognized the wisdom of that kind of investment.

Mr. Speaker, we did it in the past. Of course, we're going to do it in the future, but our No. 1 priority today is to fight the flood, the significant second biggest flood of the century.

#### **Emerson Lagoon Upgrade Requirements**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in this House realizes that there's a catastrophic event taking place, and we all want to work together. What we're not seeing happening is the predictions of these crests are not very accurate and it's not the first flood.

I remember the '50 flood, actually, Mr. Minister—I mean through Mr. Speaker to Mr. Minister. There are other things that happen when these floods take place, and because of the threat of flooding in the valley, Emerson being the oldest community and the first one to flood, there was a ring dike built around the town to protect it and its residents from up to the '97-plus-two-feet level. However, some melting snow and rainwater that would normally have left that community by run-off is held inside the dike, forced into the lagoon which causes the lagoon to

become overcapacitated. The Emerson lagoon is aging and needs to be replaced with one with more capacity.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible today commit to funding to increase the capacity of the lagoon and the fast-tracking of the process?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, following this flood emergency, we will certainly be looking not only at flood protection but any other implications. I do appreciate the tone of the question from the member opposite.

I think it's important to note, by the way, Mr. Speaker, in 1950, Emerson was inundated with water. There was a total evacuation; so was Morris. In equivalent flood events at that time, we saw thousands—in fact, over 107,000 Manitobans were evacuated.

So I appreciate the question from the member, but we will certainly, once the flood event is over, be looking at any and all impacts, see what can be improved in the future, but today we're still in the middle of the flood event. Our No. 1 priority today is fighting that flood event and protecting Manitobans.

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, due to the unusually wet fall, heavy snowfalls and unprecedented rainfall in February, Emerson was forced to empty a portion of its lagoon. The town received an emergency discharge permit from the government or from the Province. Accompanying the permit was a letter advising the council that no more emergency permits would be issued. This means that they would then have to pay thousands of dollars to truck the waste to another lagoon possibly 100 clicks to Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister responsible advise whether the Emerson town council can rely on the provincial government to fund these costs until a new lagoon is built?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) met with the council just as recently as a couple of weeks ago, I believe.

Mr. Speaker, I talked to the mayor of Emerson myself a week ago, and I want to stress that, indeed, they are working with the relevant department in terms of this. We understand some of the pressures that are out there and the ancillary impacts of the flood, including on lagoons and in terms of wastewater systems.

This is something that has happened in other major flood events, and it's something we recognize. We will be working with the relevant municipalities in addition to flood protection, obviously aware of some of those other impacts.

I thank the member for raising that issue, and we are, indeed, in fact, working with the municipality on that.

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, I still don't believe that that was a commitment to do what the question asked.

Mr. Speaker, the lagoon in Emerson is again full and fully surrounded by flood waters with no relief in sight for the foreseeable future. The town is doing its best to manage under this situation until a new lagoon can be built.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister instruct staff to review this situation, retract the letter that you had sent in February and notify the council that they can expect full co-operation going forward until a new lagoon is constructed? Will the minister do this in writing today?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, we are working with the municipality. I thank the member for raising the question, and, indeed, we will be working with municipalities across the province not just in terms of the immediate flood situation as we proceed—many of the other implications whether it be in terms of management of waste-water systems.

I can indicate, Mr. Speaker, many municipalities have been very significantly impacted in terms of municipal roads, and, in fact, one of the reasons we declared the Disaster Financial Assistance program as early as we did is because there's a lot of municipal damage out there. I look at the R.M. of St. Laurent, for example, where two-thirds of the municipal roads have been affected. So we are going to be working with municipalities in all aspects of the impact of this flood event.

It is a very major flood event. Yes, we're working on flood protection, but we'll also, over the next weeks and months, be working on those other implications, Mr. Speaker, as we do understand and recognize its impact on individual Manitobans and municipalities.

\* (14:20)

### Highway 10 Construction Effect on Constituent's Housing

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** This Tuesday, I asked the Infrastructure Minister to look at a very serious constituency issue involving Trudy and Chuck Morgan and their residential water source.

On April 7 at approximately 5 p.m., Mrs. Morgan felt her house shake. Shortly after that, she realized that they had lost access to their well water. The well's walls caved in and the water increased to the level of the wellhead. The Morgans have serious concerns about the work being done on Highway 10, and they feel that this may have contributed to the loss of their well and a possible foundation issue with their home.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Infrastructure today share with the House what he has learned of the situation that has emotionally exhausted and could financially burden the Morgan family?

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Well, let me just say—first of all, Mr. Speaker, I thank the MLA for raising the question with me aside from regular question period as opposed to trying to make cheap political points out of an item. I've asked the department to go and consult with this individual and work with the person to find out exactly what the problem is. What they've done is they've gone and, my understanding is, paid a visit to the gentleman.

Indeed, millions upon millions of dollars are being spent to fix up Highway 10 south of Brandon. We're very proud of that fact that the highway's being fixed, and there may have been other circumstances related to extra water going into the person's well, Mr. Speaker. But staff have gone out and talked to the gentleman.

**Mrs. Rowat:** I would like to correct the record. Since 1 o'clock this afternoon, the Morgans have not received any calls or any contact from the minister's staff since I had raised the issue with him on Tuesday. So Mr. Morgan has some serious questions.

When Mr. Morgan had asked the Highways officials last week when the situation occurred, you know, what exactly was happening, he was told that last summer, Highways had hit an underground spring directly west of their home. At that time, Highways had installed weeping tile and piping that

would direct the flow of the spring into a nearby slough.

I have been told that neither the landowner nor Mr. Morgan were notified nor were they given consent to continue with this action or to do this action. The story gets worse. Apparently, the pipe never had the opportunity to assist the water flow as it was covered and plugged with soil. So it appears that the spring water was likely diverting directly into the path of the Morgans' home and well.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister why his department did not inform the Morgans of his department's actions with relation to the springs.

**Mr. Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, the department has advised me that they're going to speak to the gentleman and have further conversations with him to find out exactly what happened, but I'm sure the MLA from the area can look around the area and see thousands and thousands upon gallons of water flowing over roads and bridges in the area.

That's regrettable, but a lot of the staff in the Brandon department have worked tirelessly making sure that those roads are safe. Certain roads have to be blockaded. They're putting hours upon hours of extra time making sure that cars don't go straying into areas that have water over top of the roads and going into ditches where someone might be harmed. So, Mr. Speaker, they are trying to balance this off with a lot of the issues and situations. So I'm sure the member or the MLA has some appreciation for this.

They've advised me that they're going to speak to this gentleman as soon as they can because this situation has been going on for a couple of months with regard to some of the damage that's taking place when we're working on Highway No. 10.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Number 10 highway is not closed in the area that the situation is. Mr. Speaker, this family has no drinking water, no potable water, water that they can use to drink, to bathe. They have to use other sources. They are very concerned. They cannot financially afford the \$7,000 or \$8,000 cost to put in a new well.

Mr. Speaker, last week, there were several individuals visiting the Morgan property. There were surveyors. There were highway staff and, apparently, nobody since Tuesday. This gentleman has said that last Saturday there were people who were on his property who refused to share their credentials. They would not say why they were on the site. However, he did confirm that there was a request from the

Highways department to be there. We have not seen anybody since I raised the question with the minister but people prior.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister of highways confirm that it is common practice for people sent into private property by government departments to refuse to explain why they're there and refuse to share their identifying credentials?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure—you know, the MLA is trying to slam civil servants when they're trying to help someone, but we are going to try to help this individual if in any way something happened to the person's water source, whether it's a well as a result of some construction.

Now, the member opposite can't have it both ways. She comes in to question period asking a question. Nobody's there to help. No one's there talking to anyone and then she just talks, mentions in her last question that all kinds of individuals from highways people were out there talking to the person.

She can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. People are trying to help this individual with their water source. We are going to do that, but I understand also that the people out in the Brandon region and the Westman region are very, very busy these days with a lot of issues, and they're going to use their best judgment how to make best use of their time.

We will address this. We will help individuals in Manitoba when there is a problem that resulted from some of the work that we—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

### **Rural Health-Care Services Need for Family Physicians**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health: Many Manitobans don't have a family physician, and this is a particular problem in some areas of rural and northern Manitoba where, indeed, there have been many concerns raised about the delivery of health care. Let me give you an example: the death recently of Chace Barkman as a result of a meningitis case that went undiagnosed in the nursing station at Garden Hill. Many people in northern Manitoba don't have their own family physician or even quick access to a physician in their own community.

I ask the Minister of Health: Is it her view that every Manitoban should have a family physician?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is. That's why we're working in conjunction with the Faculty of Medicine to increase the number of individuals that we educate here at home. That's why we're working very aggressively on our recruitment and retention strategies to bring doctors to Manitoba and to have them stay here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, it's why we created, in partnership with the Faculty of Medicine, the first-in-Canada rural and northern residents' program so that students can have, in exchange for the specialty of their choice, time to experience northern Manitoba and, indeed, hopefully set down roots there. Other jurisdictions in the country are looking to that model. We're very proud of it and it's, indeed, highly sought after by many applicants.

**Mr. Gerrard:** If the minister believes that every Manitoban should have a family physician, then that's good.

I ask: Why has the government so miserably failed to deliver on this promise in 10 years? Ten years and you still haven't been able to do it. Let's take an example. Up in the Burntwood Regional Health Authority from February 1, 2008, to February 1, 2009, there were some 13 doctors who either left or handed in their resignations to the BRHA. Even the BRHA has said publicly that there shouldn't be a turnover of more than four or five doctors in a year. Some of the doctors have said, you know, it's not even about money; it's about respect, which this government has so badly failed to provide.

I ask again: Why has the minister so badly failed to deliver and ensure that there's a family physician for every Manitoban?

**Ms. Oswald:** Mr. Speaker, certainly we know that health outcomes improve when people have access to health professionals, and that's why, of course, we're using the interventions that I mentioned in my previous answer to increase our supply of doctors. We have, indeed, seen a net increase of doctors to the province of Manitoba every year since 1999.

We've invested, of course, in more seats at the medical school. We know that the Conservative opposition during the last recession thought a great money-saving measure was to cut the spaces in medical school, the shocks of which Manitoba is still feeling today, but we reversed that decision and, indeed, augmented that. We also provide incentives and return-of-service grants for doctors to go and

work in more difficult-to-recruit areas, like rural Manitoba and the north. We've seen an increase every year and, indeed, there's more to do.

\* (14:30)

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I ask leave to ask my second supplementary.

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave to ask his last supplementary? [*Agreed*]

**Mr. Gerrard:** The minister talks about things she's doing, but she has failed miserably to ensure that every Manitoban has a family physician. You've set a goal; why aren't you reaching it?

Look, let's have another example. We seem to have a revolving-door policy for doctors in some areas. Dr. Barodia, in Thompson, was hired without signing even a two-year contract and, as a result, when he left very shortly afterwards, Manitoba lost not only a doctor but I believe something like \$80,000 that it took to recruit him.

For 10 years, this government has been saying we're going to try and do something, but for 10 years they've failed miserably in ensuring that every Manitoban has access to a family physician. Why has the minister failed to deliver on this critical promise?

**Ms. Oswald:** I'm reasonably certain that the member opposite is aware that shortages of doctors is a national and, indeed, international challenge. We know that Manitoba is ahead of the game in terms of seeing a net increase in doctors every year in Manitoba.

I also would believe that the member opposite knows that there are areas of Canada where it is more difficult to recruit doctors than other areas. Urban centres are easier to recruit; northern remote areas more difficult to recruit. That's why we have instituted a number of return-of-service grants. That's why we've endeavoured to bring diagnostics and centres of excellence outside of the Perimeter of Winnipeg so that there are great environments in which doctors can work.

Every jurisdiction in Canada is experiencing a shortage of doctors. Every jurisdiction is working to recruit doctors, and Manitoba has seen a net increase every year. Yes, there's more to do, Mr. Speaker, but that's why we're continuing to invest.

**Mr. Speaker:** As previously agreed, that ends question period.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Interlake Flooding Disaster Financial Assistance

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** I rise today to commend this provincial government's commitment to Manitobans in the Interlake-Westlake region. Just last week, the Minister responsible for Emergency Measures (Mr. Ashton) and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) announced an increase in the Disaster Financial Assistance program for August to September of 2008 flooding in the Interlake-Westlake region. The funding available is to increase from \$670,000 to \$3 million. This significant increase in funding will help alleviate the hardships faced by producers by overland flooding last fall.

This funding is available to producers for infrastructure, private property and farm damages, including bales, as well as for land restoration projects required due to the heavy rains that devastated so much of the Interlake-Westlake region.

The challenges posed by overland flooding cannot be understated. The crops of many producers in the Interlake-Westlake region were desolated and the fields where farmers did attempt to harvest using four-wheel drive and tracked-combines incurred considerable damage in the form of ruts and holes.

Earlier last month the governments of Canada and Manitoba announced delivery of urgent funding through the Manitoba Livestock Feed Assistance Program, which provides cattle producers a payment of \$70 per head for breeding stock to help cover the cost of feed. They're also funding the Manitoba Forage Restoration Assistance Program, which enables producers to apply for payments of up to \$40 per acre to re-establish forage crops, forage seed fields and pastures affected by flooding last fall.

Producers who were forced to reduce their breeding herds by at least 15 percent during the period of excessive moisture will be eligible for a tax deferral program where 30 percent of income from net sales can be deferred. For herds that were reduced by 30 percent or more, 90 percent of income from net sales can be deferred.

I'm glad to see the government of Manitoba working with the federal government to bring forward these solutions to the Interlake-Westlake region, which will bring some much-needed relief. Today, as the spring flood waters continue to rise and we enter into this current period of crisis, I know

that this government will be there for the people in the coming time of trial. Thank you.

### Manitoba Government Employees

**Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie):** Earlier today, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton) and Emergency Measures management organization, made reference to ice in the Assiniboine River, and I would like to, at this time, for all honourable members' attention, regarding a flood event related to the Assiniboine River ice that took place about 48 hours ago.

This event will go completely unnoticed here in Winnipeg. Mr. Speaker, a massive ice jam broke up on the Assiniboine River upstream of the flood-control structure at Portage la Prairie. As the ice moved into the reservoir above the dam, the ice boom protecting the Assiniboine River Diversion gates held, as it was designed to. The ice had only one direction to travel and that was directly at and through the flood control dam structure where two Manitoba government employees were at the controls.

Mammoth chunks of ice, larger than ever witnessed in the decades of combined experience, slammed into the structure, causing such violent tremors in the structure that the huge floodlighting over the dam went into reset mode. The operators stayed at their post operating the dam in almost pitch-black darkness for hours as constant structural tremors from impacts from the ice did not allow the lights to go back on.

In my opinion, the actions of these government employees safeguarded the integrity of not only this vitally important flood-control structure but the life and property of every Manitoban downstream in the proximity of the Assiniboine River. Mr. Speaker, these operators fought back every human emotion of self-preservation to perform their duties speaks volumes of the dedication as Manitoba government employees.

Mr. Speaker, we, in this Chamber, are so fortunate to have hundreds, yes, indeed thousands, of government employees that don't look at their work as a job but as a life of commitment to the service of their fellow Manitobans.

I ask my colleagues in this Chamber to help me show appreciation by applauding the Manitoba government's employees.



### École Van Belleghem

**Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the work of École Van Belleghem in my constituency. Schools not only play an important role in our children's education, they are important in building community.

Yesterday evening, I had the pleasure of attending École Van Belleghem's Family Fun Night, which has become an annual event at the school. It was an opportunity for teachers, parents and students to get together and learn, all while having fun. The jazz band from Collège Béliveau was kind enough to play music while teachers, parents and students enjoyed a pizza supper. Parents and students were then invited to participate in an hour-long workshop on a variety of subjects, such as yoga or storytelling. The students were given a choice about the subject they wanted to study and brought a parent or guardian along with them.

Last night, one of my daughters and I studied Japanese writing, while my other two daughters, along with my husband, learned how to make a bouncy ball in Mad Science class. The various experts putting on the workshops were from the community at large, making it a great way to learn more about your neighbours too. After the workshops, families also had an opportunity to view the students' artwork, which is on display around the school.

Family Fun Night brings families together and reminds us that our school is also a community. Congratulations to all those who participated and helped organize this event, especially to Principal Monèle Schrot and Vice-Principal Michelle Olson, and their staff at École Van Belleghem.

I look forward to attending next year's Family Fun Night. Thank you.

### Community Newspaper Day

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, it's with pleasure that I rise today to recognize Community Newspaper Day, which we will celebrate here in Manitoba tomorrow, Friday, April 17.

This will be the fifth Community Newspaper Day since I first proposed it in a private members'

resolution to recognize the good work of the weekly newspapers and the role they play in our towns and cities.

This year will be the 90th anniversary of the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association's Better Newspapers Competition Awards Banquet and Convention to be held next week, April 24 to 26. As a former owner and publisher of a community newspaper, the *Headingley Headliner*, I want to congratulate all those who have been nominated to receive awards at this year's banquet.

Community newspapers are the hearts of our communities. Indeed, they use the term, heart space, to define their place in our communities. Newspapers connect advertising products to consumers, people to local upcoming events and issues, relay news of past events and provide a historical record of the life and times of the community. People are connected to their local paper like no other medium. There are 47 community newspapers in the MCNA and many, many other ethnic community newspapers which reflect the multicultural mosaic of Manitoba. Nothing brings communities closer than a newspaper directly for and by a cultural community.

Today I recognize the great service community newspapers provide to Manitobans. Please help me recognize Community Newspaper Day tomorrow, April 17.

\* (14:40)

### Abraham Doras Shadd and Rosemary Brown

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Mr. Speaker, February of each year is Black History Month. During that month we remember the stories, experiences and accomplishments of people of African origin. In Canada, our African-Canadian population is made up of individuals from a range of places across the globe, including the United States, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa and Canada.

Here in Canada, the stories of African-Canadians are seldom heard. Today I wish to share with members of the House the story of two exemplary Canadians.

Abraham Doras Shadd was born in 1801 in Delaware. He devoted his life to the abolitionist movement, protested racism and played a major role

in the Underground Railroad. Abraham Shadd provided escaping slaves with food, shelter, clothing and guidance and, in 1851, he and his family moved to southern Ontario. Abraham Shadd was the first black person to serve in Canadian public office when he was elected to the Council of Raleigh in Ontario in 1859.

Rosemary Brown was born in Jamaica in 1930. She arrived in Canada in 1950 to go to school at McGill University where she experienced racism and sexism. She fought for her rights and those of other women and minorities, and became the first black woman elected to public office in Canada when she was elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly in British Columbia in 1972. She also ran for the leadership of the federal New Democratic Party, making her the first woman to run for the leadership of a Canadian federal political party.

On January 31, 2009, Abraham Doras Shadd and Rosemary Brown were commemorated for their achievements by Canada Post by being the subject of beautiful commemorative postage stamps. The Congress of Black Women of Canada held the Pioneer's Gala on January 31, 2009, where the postage stamps were unveiled.

These stories are just two of many that we have of so many amazing individuals in our country. We should be proud of their accomplishments.

This year the Jamaican Association of Manitoba sponsored the Annual Black History Month celebrations in Winnipeg and we, as legislators, thank them for their leadership.

### House Business

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

**Mr. Speaker:** On House business?

**Mr. Hawranik:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I would like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution, Manitoba's Growing Debt is a Worrisome Liability, sponsored by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

**Mr. Speaker:** In accordance with rule 31(9), it's been announced that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution, Manitoba's Growing Debt is a Worrisome Liability, and will be sponsored by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### BUDGET DEBATE (Eighth Day of Debate)

**Mr. Speaker:** Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Morris, who has 17 minutes remaining.

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I started this response to the budget debate yesterday, and today I'm going to finish it, but today we've just learned that, overnight, we are now facing the second worst flood in 100 years in our province. It defies the spring predictions that we were coming up with until now, but, of course, nature is going to do what she wants to do and will remind us constantly of that.

Today, I did want to seek some answers for some constituents of mine who are very diligently looking and monitoring the levels of water south of the city around their homes that are protected by dikes because they know that when even inches or feet are going to affect them negatively, Mr. Speaker. In past, they have been very, very—they've watched this very carefully, and they're looking for information about the operation of the floodway and what the daily log is, like how much the gates go up and down in a regular day, or daily, or during the week because they do know that does affect them as far back as Morris. So they're looking for that kind of information. They can't find it on the Web site, so I was hoping to get that information available today, but, of course, we just get empty rhetoric, as we usually get from the government when we pose questions in question period.

I do want to go back and speak about the budget, and, as I was saying yesterday, it is a budget I am not going to support. The reasons why I'm not going to support this budget are because of the many things it does not do, Mr. Speaker. I mentioned yesterday there are some things, there are some nuggets, that all of us would support. Not would we all support the same things, but there're certain things that we would support. But, in its totality, it's a document that we

cannot support. The reason for that is because it provides for unprecedented debt in the province of Manitoba, and will leave a legacy of debt and dependency for my children and my grandchildren.

I'm concerned about the future of this province, what we leave to future generations, and I know this government is only concerned about getting themselves re-elected. I don't think Manitobans need or want a government that is so self-serving that they've really forgotten about the legacy of debt and dependency they leave for the people of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I understand the concept of stimulus. I understand that, but if this government thinks it's going to pull Manitoba out of a recession by itself, I think they give themselves a heck of a lot of credit where it's not due. Many other people in the private sector have talked about incentives, incentives that would provide tax incentives. What about this dreaded payroll tax, people will say. Why can't we get rid of this payroll tax? That would do a lot for businesses who have to pay this tax. If they didn't have to pay this tax, they would be able to expand their business operations, Mr. Speaker.

Another dreaded tax, the land transfer tax. Now, this is going to have a very negative effect on new home starts, and I know the people on the other side, at least some of them, know about this because they did have a delegation meet with them on this. They said, let's just take that tax away. That creates a stimulus for people to buy new homes and that keeps the market going. What their projection is for the fall is that, by the fall, we will be seeing layoffs in that sector, Mr. Speaker. I think that is just the tip of the iceberg, and I think there are many, many more negative things coming as we go forward into next year.

\* (14:50)

I'm concerned about pension funds and the seniors who have saved for their life and now find their pension plans depleted, Mr. Speaker. I think that's very unfortunate.

*Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

I want to say that Manitoba seems to believe that they will be unaffected by this negative downturn that we are just beginning to see. Certainly, our stats in unemployment have maybe not been as high as the rest of Canada, but we need to see employment in the private sector. The government can't just employ

everybody in the province; that's not self-sustaining. Even though that might be part of their overall plan and then, you know, it's the socialist way, everybody works for the government and we just take care of everybody. I can tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that that is not the way that Manitobans want to be governed. They don't want Big Brother. They want some control over their own lives.

I cannot support this budget, and there are a number of reasons why. I'm going to say why I cannot support this budget. It fails to address the priorities of Manitobans. It's increasing our province's debt to an all-time high of \$21.1 billion which creates a credit card bill of over \$18,000 for every man, woman and child in the province. Hardworking Manitoba families will be forced to pay off this bill in the months and years ahead.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it fails because it gambles with incomes and social programs by increasing our dependency on Ottawa handouts to a record level of \$3.8 billion, more than double—double—the handouts received in 1999.

This fails Manitobans because it runs a deficit and is misleading. They misleadingly are calling it a surplus by using the misleading accounting practice of calling Crown income revenue, when in fact that income is not available to government because it is required to meet obligations such as Manitoba Hydro's record \$7.4-billion long-term debt.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget fails to announce a plan to tackle corruption, waste and mismanagement within government by endorsing—endorsing—the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority brown envelope tendering scheme, and this government thinks that that is actually fair practice.

It's interesting that, when we speak about health care, back in the last century, this government promised to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. That was in the last century. Now, almost 10 years later, we are still spending 40 percent of our tax dollars on health care and we're not getting any better service. In fact, it's just declining and there's no plan to alleviate that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget fails to repeal the vote tax, although they have decided for one year at least to follow our example and not take money out of the pockets of hardworking Manitobans as they face this recession. But, if they can do it this year, they should be principled enough to do it the year after that and the year after that and

repeal the bill and not take the vote tax, but because they have not said that they will not do it, we cannot support this in the budget.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they still are bent on this reckless and environmentally harmful west-side Bipole III project instead of proceeding with the east-side line which is supported by the majority of people. This adds billions to the cost of hydro transmission and is not supported by any third parties. It's a drain on the taxpayers of Manitoba—a needless, needless drain.

This budget fails to offer a plan to create opportunity and wealth so Manitobans can feel hope that we'll one day emerge from the hole of debt and dependency and see a brighter future. As I said, I cannot support this budget for these reasons.

I would encourage the government to support our amendment. We have put forward some good amendments and, perhaps, they should have a look at those. We encourage the government to vote for our amendment and not continue on this plan of indebtedness for our future generations. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Madam Deputy Speaker, it's an honour and a privilege to have the opportunity to put a few comments on the record in regard to budget 2009.

I would like to take this opportunity, first of all, to welcome our new colleagues here in the Chamber. I would, first of all, like to acknowledge and welcome the new MLA for Elmwood, who has joined us here in the Legislature. It's interesting, I have known this new MLA for a very, very long time. We were actually talking about it today and we remember that, it'll be 30 years ago next month, in 1979 when he was the member of Parliament for Winnipeg-Birds Hill, the newly elected member of Parliament for Winnipeg-Birds Hill. I went to Ottawa to work for a member of Parliament and we showed up at the House of Commons at exactly the same time.

It was a very, very exciting time in the House of Commons in Ottawa because we had a very charismatic and dynamic leader in Ed Broadbent. He was one of the most successful leaders, federal leaders that the New Democratic Party has ever had. We had some very memorable and incredible members of Parliament for the NDP at the time that were walking the hallowed halls of the House of

Commons. I can still remember the very first time I saw Tommy Douglas walking down the hallway in the House of Commons. I remember I was absolutely thrilled out of my mind. It was the first opportunity for me as a young person to get to know him and to have an opportunity to work with him and around him. It was very, very exciting.

The other member of Parliament at the time that everybody knows so well, who was from Winnipeg, was Stanley Knowles. He was really a remarkable parliamentarian. He actually did something for my husband and me that I don't know if I've ever shared in this House. Stanley married Neil and me in the House of Commons. Stanley actually married Neil and me after Stanley had his aneurysm. It was because of our close relationship that I'd always take an opportunity to go and chat with Stanley because I just thought it was such an incredible opportunity to have the opportunity to take time with him and learn from him about why he had become a social democrat and had done so much work on behalf of working people and what he believed in. It really was special for Neil and me to have Stanley officiate at our wedding. It was really terrific.

Getting to know the MLA for Elmwood, it is so exciting to have him with us today because, of course, he garnered so much respect from his colleagues in Ottawa and from all sides of the House. It's a little different in Ottawa. There are not just three parties; there are four. It really is an honour, I think, for us—[interjection]—even five sometimes for a while; it's hard to keep track. I think it's very, very important for us to remember that his nickname in the House of Commons, in Ottawa he was known as the Dean of the House of Commons. I think that that is a compliment to him as a person and a human being in the kinds of work that he did. It really is a privilege for us to have him here with us and join our caucus, and we're very, very thrilled.

\* (15:00)

Now, the other MLA that I'm welcoming to our Legislature is somebody whom I have exactly the opposite relationship with. I never had the opportunity to meet the MLA for The Pas before he got elected, but I have heard so many incredible accolades about the kind of person that he is and the contributions that he has made to the north and to his community. It is really wonderful to have him join our caucus. I know that the work of the previous MLA, Oscar Lathlin, whom, unfortunately, we lost last fall, was revered by many, many people up

north. I know that so many people have commented that they have such a comfort level that they know that that work is going to be carried on. The legacy of Oscar Lathlin will be carried on because of the election of our new MLA. So I want to thank him so much for his commitment to run and to public service. We really welcome him, and I really look forward to the opportunity to get to know him and to work with him. I want to appreciate, on behalf of all of my caucus team—it's really great to welcome them here to the Legislature.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to just say a few words about the flood that is occurring now and thank the Minister responsible for the Emergency Measures Organization (Mr. Ashton) and all of the incredible work that he is doing in regard to this incredible phenomenon that we have been faced with over the last month and the work that is going into the protection of all of our province.

Of course, I have Kingston Crescent in my riding. On Good Friday I had the opportunity to go to Kingston Crescent. I went with our Premier (Mr. Doer) to visit many of my community and constituents that were obviously being threatened by the flood waters that were approaching their homes. It really reminded me what an incredible province that we live in, because people are just there all the time to help out. I think we're just so fortunate that we feel like just a big community when these kinds of disasters occur, and we can always depend on everyone to pull together and work together. It was just so evident all throughout Kingston Crescent last Friday when the Premier and I had the opportunity to drop by. We didn't just drop by; we were there for almost three hours. It was so neat because I didn't just meet the constituents on Kingston Crescent and Kingston Row; it was constituents from all over St. Vital and people from all over Winnipeg that were there to support the homeowners.

On behalf of all of my colleagues, I just want to say thank you to all of those volunteers who have just done so much in so many places all across the province of Manitoba.

I'd like to turn now to budget 2009. I'd like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) on all of the hard work that he has done in preparing budget 2009. I think it's pretty remarkable the job that he had before him when we went into the economic downturn last fall and he was looking at the prospect of putting this budget together with the uncertainty of not knowing

exactly what we were faced with in regard to the financial markets, in regard to how our economy might respond. This really is, I believe, an achievement here in Manitoba for us to present our 10th straight balanced budget. I think this is probably a phenomenal achievement, and I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance, the MLA for St. Boniface. I believe we are the only jurisdiction in Canada that has tabled their '09-2010 budget, and it is a balanced budget. You have a look at what is happening in oil-rich Alberta with their deficit budget, so it really, I think, puts it into perspective, what we've been able to accomplish here in Manitoba.

I believe that budget 2009 is going to help cushion our province against the future impact of the global economic uncertainty. This is the first time—and I think this is an important achievement—in 50 years that a government has presented 10 balanced budgets in a row. I think that's something that's very, very important.

So we believe that we are well positioned to weather the tough economic times and the uncertainties that we're facing, not only as a province, Madam Deputy Speaker, but also as a nation.

I know this might come as a big surprise to members opposite, but I'm actually proud to support the budget, and I'm certainly looking forward to seeing what the members opposite are going to do. *[interjection]* I'm getting a few heckles from members across the way about their paycheques. They're worried about their paycheques, but we need to just ensure them that all they have to do is vote for the budget, and they won't have to worry about their paycheques.

I'd just like to also mention that I think it's remarkable that, in 1999, when we got elected, our fiscal stabilization account, our fund, was at \$226 million.

**An Honourable Member:** After they sold the Crown corporation.

**Ms. Allan:** Of course, after they sold a Crown corporation. Yes, that's certainly an important piece of information.

Over our nine years in government, we've been able to build up our Fiscal Stabilization Fund to \$634 million, and we are taking, in budget 2009, we are taking \$110 million of that Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and we're re-investing it in Manitoba. We

believe it's an investment in vital services that we believe are going to support Manitobans through the uncertain economic times that we are going to be facing over the next year and the next budget year.

I want to take some time, Madam Deputy Speaker, to talk a little bit about some of those services that we believe are important to women in our province. As the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I actually had the pleasure of co-hosting an FPT meeting, federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting, last week with the Honourable Helena Guergis.

It was an opportunity to meet my colleagues from across the country. It was remarkable to meet other women from jurisdictions like Newfoundland and have an opportunity to talk with them about what they're facing in their provinces, some of the challenges that they're facing, some of the challenges that they're facing in New Brunswick. It really was an incredible opportunity to hear their stories.

But it also reminded me, Madam Deputy Speaker, about the incredible work that we have done here in Manitoba on programs and services that are critically important to women, and critically important to women who, sometimes—quite often—are low-income earners, sometimes single parents. There are, many times, when there are barriers in place if you do not have a government that realizes that programs and services for women are critical so that they can get into jobs, they can get into training, they can participate in our economy and truly make a contribution to society.

One of the most important areas I think that our government has shown leadership in Canada, and always has shown leadership in Canada, is the priority that we put on day care. We put a priority on it from four different perspectives. It's about access; it's about affordability; it's about quality; and it's about wages. We really have come a long way.

\*(15:10)

We remember, during the Liberals' last national government, when we finally got a national child-care strategy and a program. They promised it in 1997, in the red book, and we didn't get it until there was a minority government and huge pressure was put on this government to finally come through with that promise in 1997. We finally got a national child-care strategy, and our government was the first jurisdiction in Canada to sign on to that national

child-care strategy. Then, of course, we lost it when the Progressive Conservatives came into power.

You know, it was incredible for us as a provincial jurisdiction to take on that responsibility because you don't always want to do that when you're a provincial government, is take on the federal government's responsibility. But what we believe so strongly that a child-care system, that provides services and meets the needs of working families, was so important. We have done so much work on this file that we believed that we had to put money into that program and pick up the responsibility for that program because the federal government basically reneged on the commitment that they had made to Manitobans.

So we have expanded spaces here in Manitoba. We have 5,000 newly funded spaces and we are going to continue to do that. We have reduced child-care fees for low-income families. In fact, we have the second-lowest fees of any jurisdiction in Canada, second to Québec—do you want me to finish?

So I'm getting a high sign from the member across the way that apparently my time is up, just when I was getting on a bit of a roll about all of the great work that we've done here in Manitoba for women, but I understand we have to squeeze everybody in this afternoon.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I look forward to supporting this budget with all of my colleagues on this side of the House and we look forward to seeing what the opposition's going to do today. Thank you.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** It brings me great pleasure to rise in this House as the member of the Legislature for Springfield, representing both the rural municipalities of Springfield and East St. Paul.

I just wish to take a moment and make some reference to the flooding danger that's taking place in the East and West St. Paul area of the province. We know that the rivers have been rising dramatically. We've gotten through the ice-dam issue which was a clear problem and now with the rising levels there are a lot of areas of great concern.

Driving in this morning, I again checked out some of the locations and previously, for instance, in Highland Park there were the orange, smaller tube diking systems in place, and as of last night they started to put in very large black tubes, which are substantial, to try to hold back the creek so that it doesn't push up the creek and flood the entire Highland Park. There's a lot of danger there.

I would like to thank Mayor Morris and council of East St. Paul and Mayor Dearman and council of West St. Paul, the fire departments on both sides of East and West St. Paul who have been doing a yeoman's work. They've been working very hard, whether it's delivering notices or helping out and spending a lot of time. These are, by and large, volunteer fire departments. I'd like to thank the RCMP officers who have been helping with controlling of individuals coming in and out of a lot of areas that have now been cut off.

I'd like to also thank the municipal staff in both East St. Paul and West St. Paul who have been doing double and triple duty. On Easter Sunday morning, driving to church, there were staff from East St. Paul out with their wands and they were steaming open a lot of the culverts to try to get the water out as quickly as they could before the crest came. They were not at home doing Easter egg hunts with their families. They weren't at home having Easter ham in the afternoon. They were out working and they were out working long, long hours.

In fact, on Saturday I was travelling through the community and one individual decided to take his little son—his son would have been six or seven years old—and his son was out helping his father. We sort of had a talk, and he said, well, at least we get to spend some time together. That's how dedicated these staff are. They're putting in unbelievable effort and time, not just that they have to do their duties in working on the flooding, they also had to put a lot of time into getting the community prepared for the melt that we've now experienced.

So I would like to, again, thank all the volunteers that have come out and started to sandbag. I know in St. Clements and St. Andrews, they've had a couple of calls for volunteers, and there has been amazing take up. I know there is a youth group from Eastview Community Church that was supposed to do an activity, and instead, they decided they would all go out to St. Clements and they would sandbag. That they did, and you know, that kind of community, that kind of sense of belonging and helping fellow citizens out is very important.

I would also like to thank those who helped to support—in each one of our cases, we have these individuals, my staff, I'd like to, once again, thank Gayle Dowler, who is, as I call her, my gift from God. She is just the most unbelievable woman, and I thank her. Every time I speak to her, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank her for what she does for myself and

for the people of Springfield. She does serve her community unbelievably well, and I'd like to thank her as well as Gladys Hayward Williams, who does an amazing job fielding the questions and the concerns and issues. Lest we forget, we are here to represent the people that elect us, and in this case, the communities of Springfield and East St. Paul.

I also want to take this moment and thank the many, many volunteers, and I would say, the hundreds of volunteers who, over the past year, have come out and helped to stuff envelopes for mailers that were to be sent out into the community and came out of their free will and their time, no political affiliation. In fact, I suspect some of them weren't even necessarily voters or supporters of mine but believed in what we were doing as far as mailers were concerned. There was one we did on a survey for a seniors home that is being proposed for the Dugald area. People came out and stuffed these envelopes. Again, it shows the sense of community, and I am very proud to be able to represent such a community that is prepared to come out, give of its time, and support their community, and work and build, and be builders for their community. I'm really proud of them and I'd like to say thank you very much to all of them.

I'd like to also move on and make a few comments on the budget. I know time is short, so I will make my comments fairly brief. I would suggest that this is a dangerous and frightening budget, Madam Deputy Speaker. Over the years, if you go back into *Hansard*, you would see that I had spoken about storm clouds on the horizon, that the kind of spending that was being undertaken by this Premier (Mr. Doer) and by this government was not sustainable. Well, the storm clouds aren't on the horizon any more. Now the storm is here.

I would suggest to this Premier and to his government that denial is not a river in Egypt. Denial is a dangerous thing to live in, and we keep hearing from this government that they have a steady and balanced budget. Well, on paper, they might be able to have steady and balanced. In reality, they do not, and the Premier knows, and we know, and Manitobans know that the storm is here and it is a tough storm.

Today's economic news, for those who haven't heard, the economic news is grim again. What we have is a Premier and a government that live in denial. We have massive, massive spending, unparalleled in the history of this province, and it's

basically spending transfer payments, transfer payments that we all know, especially those who were here during the '90s. I wasn't one of those, but there were others who know how fickle transfer payments can be. If there is a crisis or a government that has seen its revenues decline at the federal level, the first thing that tends to get cut is transfer payments.

That is a danger for this provincial government because they live in a time of spending. Forty percent of its budget is transfer payments, and they're spending every penny, nickel, and dime of it. But what is even more concerning is the massive debt that is being accumulated. Not just have they seen an increase of unparalleled proportions of transfer payments, but so is the debt of this province. We are now over \$21 billion, that is, over \$21 billion in debt, and there's this great opportunity for politicians to try to confuse the whole issue. I think we should always talk about the mortgage; the mortgage being foisted upon future generations by this Premier (Mr. Doer) and by this government. The mortgage on the province is over \$21 billion. That is an enormous number.

\* (15:20)

I look back over the years. There were other governments who viewed—for instance, Alberta, they're about 3.5 million people. They had a debt of approximately \$20 billion and said it was too much, and went on and paid it off. Other jurisdictions, whether it's Saskatchewan or British Columbia or other areas, have gone through a process of trying to reduce their debt during the good days. During the good days they put money on top of the debt, unlike this government that, during good days, increased the debt and now finds itself in a position where it's relying on very fickle transfer payments, 40 percent of its budget, relying on more debt spending and in an economy that is shrinking.

In fact, today General Motors announced that they will be cutting back, accelerating its 1,700 dealership closures in North America. Madam Deputy Speaker, we will not be immune from that. One of our largest paper manufacturers is also looking at putting itself into court protection, and the news goes on and on.

But the Premier somehow believes that there's a bubble over his government, a bubble over the province. We know that's not the case. We know that the storm is here, and yet the government and this Premier (Mr. Doer) live in denial. This is dangerous,

dangerous territory to be in. We've seen that, even within this budget, although they've tried to spin how much they believe that Manitobans will accept from them as far as spin goes, there are glaring difficulties in the province, whether it's infrastructure, whether it's health-care spending, whether it's education spending. We know that they've probably come to the end of the road when it comes to the kind of massive expenditures we've seen over the last 10 years, and they've come to an end with the kind of spending that they have.

Yet they have, to some degree, been successful in spinning. It's the old adage they've been able to spin, and the adage is turning a sow's ear into a silk purse. This Premier (Mr. Doer) is brilliant at that. He is incredibly brilliant and being able to spin and being able to create a silk purse out of a sow's ear. That's what we have with this budget.

The fact that they've increased debt, the fact that they have not done a lot of the things they've talked about and yet re-announced them over and over and over again. We're facing a flood of epic proportions and somehow the Premier has been able to spin that the floodway can take more money, even though we know that no ditch—no ditch can take more water than the smallest culvert. We know that the PTH 15 bridge restricts the kind of flow that can go down the floodway because the water still has to go under that bridge. But the Premier is successful in spinning, again, that somehow the floodway can take all this extra water, even though we know that it's restricted, at least at one point, and that's at PTH 15. We know that there are problems with it and the Premier is able to spin on budget, on time, even though he's thrown all kinds of stuff overboard. I would suggest to the Premier he should do the right thing, replace PTH 15 bridge with a twinned bridge and get that done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Premier talks about spend, spend, spend. He had the opportunity to do the right thing and spend the money properly. What he did is he overspent by \$60 million with the forced unionization—\$60 million that could have gone to do the project right. Instead, he made poor choices and he has to live with those poor choices. Unfortunately, so do the people of Manitoba.

In the few moments that I have remaining, I would like to suggest to this government, to this Premier, that there is a lack of vision. The Premier knows that. The Premier knows that he's living on a hope and a prayer. His hope is that transfer payments



will continue to come at least at this level, if not increased. His prayer is that it will come for as long as he is Premier. That is not the way to run a province. We need a vision. We need more than denial. We need more than a hope and a prayer, and the Premier has not put forward a vision. He has not put forward a plan that we need going forward.

We know that the storm has hit. We know that revenues are going to decline for this province, and the fact that the employment growth in this province is basically on the public sector side is concerning, and it should be concerning to the Premier. Yes, we're pleased that he's had the ability over the last 10 years to take federal funds and do all kinds of stuff, but the day of reckoning has come. The day of reckoning is that, if there's even a small decrease in federal transfer payments, this government, our province, is going to have to make hard and difficult choices.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would have to say that this is not a budget that can nor should be supported. The Premier has had warning after warning after warning. He had opportunity to take examples from other jurisdictions who, during good times, paid down the debt. Instead, he did sort of what Gordon Brown did in England, who spent and spent and now finds itself in difficulty.

This Premier had the opportunity to just look next door where they use a reasonable and balanced approach in Saskatchewan and have slowly paid down the debt, have kept up with infrastructure spending, have kept up with social services, have kept up with all those things and have been paying down their debt. They use a very smart, reasonable and balanced approach. I would say to this Premier, this is not the way to go. Deficit spending, fudging the books, going out and saying the budget is balanced when you know full well that the actuals never are. He has to always take money from somewhere else to make it look like the budget—that the actuals are balanced.

This Premier knows it. This government knows it. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) knows it. It is unfortunate, Madam Deputy Speaker, that when we look into the gallery, we see that media isn't there. As strong as they used to be, we know that they've suffered a lot. We know that there have been a lot of layoffs when it comes to the media, and they don't have the opportunity to look at what the government is doing. They've not had the

opportunity to dig as deep as they might have in years gone past.

This Premier knows he's gotten a lot of pass go, his little game that he's been playing, but the time is coming. The time of reckoning is coming for this Premier and this government, because the money is going to run out. I would suggest a \$21-billion-plus debt for a province of 1.2 million people is far too high, and this Premier should have been dealing with that debt, should have been dealing with it responsibly in the good times, and now he's going to have to face his record during the difficult times.

I know that my time has come to an end. I would like to thank this House for the opportunity to make a few comments on the record, and we look forward to the vote. Perhaps, we will see that this government will come to its senses and do the right thing and, perhaps, present a budget that can be supported by all members of this Manitoba Legislature.

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** I want to say what an honour it is again to speak on a wonderful budget presented by a magnificent Minister of Finance. I thought the headline that we saw about "Prairie Prudence" in tough economic times would actually give a little bit of a brain transplant to members opposite to come to their senses and vote for a sensible budget, but, regrettably, that has not taken place. They look like they're kind of like Pavlov's dog or Pavlov's partisan dogs, and they're going to continue in their ideologically extreme ways. That's regrettable. That is regrettable.

\* (15:30)

I just want to start by saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, how proud we are to be Manitobans in this great country of Canada as we debate this budget today. The kind of positive, can-do attitude that we see in every valley and every creek and every community, with every municipal leader working together with the federal government in unity in a positive way to deal with one of the largest threats to our homes, our communities, our livelihood, even our lives if we don't protect ourselves, is something that I think we should all be very proud of.

Now, I had the pleasure of going back to Glenwood Crescent last night and visiting a number of people—or yesterday afternoon. I learned two things: people are pretty relaxed and always like to work together, and secondly, I'm not in as good shape as I was the last time there was a flood, in '97. But, you know, you learn that the hard way—a little

stiff today and, you know, it's important to take heed of that. I guess I've got to take my daughter's advice and actually pump iron or something. I don't know, but one learns.

But the can-do attitude is really, really important to note, and again, everybody that we've talked to, the municipal leaders, the other—the federal government gets the fact that we are dealing with this event with a command and control system that you wouldn't see, for example, in the United States. I know members opposite like the kind of disorganization and chaos of a deregulated economy and community, but look at how we're trying to deal with this flood pressure here in Manitoba compared to what happened with the kind of chaos of FEMA and the National Guard and different municipal leaders in New Orleans. I will take the kind of regulated command and control system we have here in Canada and here in Manitoba any day over the kind of American model the members opposite worship, whether it's in the economy or whether it's with emergencies. I'll go the Canadian way, the Manitoba way, every day of the week, Madam Deputy Speaker.

You know, it's interesting because one of the parts of that is always saying the same thing to the same people, no matter where you are. Now, we would have thought that members opposite, led by an individual that goes up to The Pas in the morning and says he will be with the northerners—in the last election campaign—be in solidarity with the northerners, and then goes to Arthur-Virden that same day and says, we'll re-allocate all the money from the northern highways to southwestern Manitoba, and he got caught saying that. We would think that if you tried that once and it didn't work, you'd learn a lesson from that. You'd learn a lesson that you can't say one thing to one group of Manitobans in the morning and get away with saying something else in the afternoon.

But what do we get today in the House? What did we get in the House today from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen)? The old, the formidable, Conservative Party of Manitoba is falling like a house of cards with the integrity of the Leader of the Opposition. Just look. They now have, the mighty Conservative Party in Manitoba—the former mighty Conservative Party in Manitoba—the party of Roblin is now proposing that we will open the floodway more in the city of Winnipeg and flood the people south of the floodway.

**An Honourable Member:** Shame.

**Mr. Doer:** I say, shame on you. If you think you're going to get away with saying one thing in here and another thing out there, you've got another think coming. Just like you saw in The Pas, Madam Deputy Speaker. And that's why—

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

**An Honourable Member:** Call an election.

**Mr. Doer:** I think I will.

Mr. Speaker, you can't get away with that. You shouldn't get away with that. You shouldn't try to get away with it. We keep track of these things, and the people keep track of these things. They know a vacuous kind of bending leader when they see it.

They usually expect it from the Liberal Party. I mean, the Liberals are good at it, I've got to give them credit. They're the only ones I know that can have one position on the floodway in Winnipeg and another position on the floodway in Selkirk. Build the floodway faster is their position in Winnipeg, and don't build it is their position in Selkirk.

Now, I thought the Conservative Party that took a position not to build a dam at Ste. Agathe—don't sacrifice one group of Manitobans to protect another group of Manitobans—I thought that was the fundamental principles, the Roblin principles that existed in the Conservative Party.

But we saw today the pandering to people in one region, i.e., Winnipeg, and the neglect of people that voted for many of them outside of the city of Winnipeg. The way they talk about Perimeter vision, I have never seen a more cynical, opportunistic position to try to suggest that we should flood people south of the floodway because there's 260 people requiring sandbags in the city of Winnipeg. Is that what this party's become? Is this what you stand for? Is this the kind of fibre that you're now left with?

I say, Mr. Speaker, you know, you better—*[interjection]* You say you better wake up—I want to tell the members opposite we saw that the members opposite, when they went to The Pas with all their MLAs, when they tried to spread all that negative campaigning in Elmwood, the people overwhelmingly brought in the NDP representative in the last by-election campaign.

You know, Mr. Speaker—

**An Honourable Member:** He got less votes than Maloway.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, you stick to that story. That'll really get you ready for the next election campaign. You just keep on believing that. You know, you send all those people in to have democratic inclusion in The Pas. It works so well for you. Keep doing it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we're not surprised about errors from the members opposite. They said that the rainy day fund would be drained in three years in 2006. They were wrong then. They were wrong then; they're wrong today. They said that there would never be an internal trade agreement. They were wrong then; they're wrong again today. They said we would never have an inland port. They said we would never have an inland port.

They said the inland port would go west to us to Saskatchewan. In fact, I think they should actually be running for office in the province of Saskatchewan. I predict that the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), you know, will not celebrate the great strength of his Manitoba constituents. He'll be looking to run in Arizona, or in Texas, or Saskatchewan.

I'm proud to be a Blue Bomber fan. I'm proud to be standing up for Manitoba—[*interjection*] There you go again.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** It's good to see members on this side of the House are proud of the 10 Grey Cups the Winnipeg Blue Bombers won, Mr. Speaker. The two Grey Cups that Saskatchewan's won are okay. The member opposite can support that, but that's the same kind of research we're going to see when he does his budget reply in a few minutes.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, Oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, again, this budget is steady. It's positive and it builds on the shoulders of the hardworking Manitobans across this province. It's really not government's budget; it's the people's budget. It's the people's budget that we're presenting. It is the hardworking people, the innovative individuals in our province. It's the people in our province that decide the priorities that we will go forward with. They want us to continue to build. They don't want us to go back to the 1990s.

The member opposite, when he was mayor of Brandon, had never even raised that big, big icon of

an issue for himself, the private wine stores, the foo-foo wine store that he wanted in Brandon where they don't sell Crown Royal and they don't sell rum. We have a much better system in this province.

\* (15:40)

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that in the 1990s, the government chose a route, when the economy was being challenged, to reduce the number of spots in medical school, to reduce the number of nursing training spots, to fire over a thousand nurses, to reduce the amount of money to universities, to reduce the money for colleges, to actually reduce the number of RCMP officers in the province, and they still ran a deficit of \$762 million. You know, they're the cut-and-run party. Cut health care, cut education, cut communities, cut justice, cut highways and run a deficit. That's what they are. That's what they were. That's what Manitobans rejected overwhelmingly in 1999 and continue to reject it every day in this province.

This budget is a positive steady document. It speaks to growth. It speaks to economic opportunity. It speaks to a balanced approach. You know, the members opposite, there are two balanced budgets in North America, so there's only two, there's not any others. [*interjection*] Yes, well, four banks said it's balanced. I don't care what the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) says, I'll go with the banks. I know he's a great economist. But, Mr. Speaker, two balanced budgets in North America and you're going to vote against it. There's only one province in Canada reducing and eliminating the small business tax. Now, what have members opposite got against small business?

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has got nothing left to do in Manitoba. They're going to be like the Maytag repairman. They've got nothing left to do, and you are going to vote against the elimination of the small business tax in Manitoba. I say, shame on you. You cannot be so partisan that you cannot vote for a budget that's balanced. It won't work.

Mr. Speaker, they're going to vote against \$380 million for social housing, money for Brandon for Neighbourhoods Alive! They're going to vote against \$545 million for highways. They're voting against 50 bridges. We're not going to let members opposite have a free vote anymore and a free ride. We're going to every one of your constituents and said: I voted against the 18th Street Bridge. I voted against Neighbourhoods Alive! in Brandon. I voted

against more money for the cancer facility in the Brandon general hospital. I voted against the Len Evans Centre for technology and science. No more free rides for the free riders across the way.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud of our positive record. I want to point out members opposite ask us to spend more money every day of the week—spend, spend, spend, spend. Even the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) couldn't resist asking us to spend more money in the same breath that he talked about debt. It is unbelievable. You actually have to add those two things together. I know it's complicated, but you spend more, you have more debt.

Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the fact that the highest spending level in this budget is education and training. We are investing in innovation in the future. They're going to vote against 13 percent increase and apprenticeship in training programs. Hope for young people. They're voting against hope. They're voting against opportunity. They're voting against the people of our province that we are continuing to retain in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good budget. It uses the GAAP accounting method. Who has recommended that? The Auditor General has recommended that. The previous Auditor General recommended that. The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce recommended that, and they're going to vote against that as well. They are voting against reductions in taxes. They're voting against increase in investments for our future. They're voting against the very, very fibre that makes Manitoba and Canada a great country for all our people to live in.

Mr. Speaker, there is considerable infrastructure in this budget. But part of this infrastructure is CentrePort Canada. CentrePort Canada is an infrastructure program that members opposite said would never happen. They said it wouldn't take place. Well, just this week, not only did we have a private sector investment with Rolls Royce and Pratt & Whitney, for the best world cold-weather testing facility in Thompson, Manitoba, we also announced the largest investment in an inland port in the history of Manitoba. They're going to vote against it.

They're going to vote against their own Prime Minister that put \$100 million on the table that we are matching this budget. We will tell every Manitoban that they are voting against 10 additional police officers. We will tell every Manitoban they're voting against 50 bridges in this budget.

This is a balanced, steady budget and members opposite should vote for it. They should vote with Manitobans. They should vote with the people. They shouldn't vote against the people of Manitoba and that's why I'm urging them to have a conversion on the road to sanity, to have a conversion on the road to democracy and have a conversion on the road to a steady balanced approach rather than the extremism and partisanship that we see from members opposite every day of the week.

Vote for the budget. Vote for the future. That's what we're going to do and we're proud to do it, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has indicated his rah-rah speech to his backbenchers who haven't read the budget. I would like to certainly say to the Premier that his spin cycle seems to be going on full mode here right now, but it seems the gears of that spin cycle are wearing thin, not only with Manitobans but certainly others who actually know something about finances.

The Premier certainly is a well-respected politician, make no mistake about that. He's well respected. He's been leading his party for a long time—a long, long time—and certainly he's formed government for a while, but the fact of the matter is that I don't believe—unless—I still believe that he's a respected politician. He's got good political acumen, but his financial acumen, unfortunately, is somewhat deficient, and I'm sure I can point out some of the mistakes that the Premier has made in his previous 20-minute rant.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, as always, I'm humbled and certainly honoured to be able to stand in this wonderful Chamber and be able to speak finally to the budget. I'll be the final speaker of the Progressive Conservative Party caucus to the 2009-2010 budget, and I always am in awe when I have the opportunity to stand in this august Chamber and thank the constituents of Brandon West for their opportunity to have me stand in this and represent them as their sitting MLA.

Believe me, it was a difficult race in the last election and certainly the Premier threw everything at Brandon West, but the people in Brandon West, I do thank them for having the sense about them to put in a Progressive Conservative member in Brandon West as opposed to an NDP member. But I guess that only speaks to the fact that there are no safe seats, and all of the members on the government side

should recognize the fact that there are certainly no safe seats. There are none of their seats that are totally 100 percent safe, either. I think that what they should do is put a better effort forward, Mr. Speaker, in trying to represent all of Manitobans in this budget of 2009-2010.

I would also like to welcome the Member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead), the new MLA from The Pas. He, as I'm sure I do, is in awe when he enters this Chamber, and certainly he is as much respectful of the constituents that put him here as I am of my constituents.

I'd also like to welcome the rookie Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie). He's new to this Legislature. I have had the opportunity of meeting the rookie member in another life. He certainly, I'm sure—he's quick in the uptake, make no mistake of that, and I'm sure he'll be able to learn the procedures and the rules of this Legislature properly sooner than later. I'm sure, given the opportunity, he'll be able to pick up some of the nuances that we have here in the Legislature, but one of the things that I do know of this individual, the Member for Elmwood, whom I have a lot of respect for; he and I spent a number of days and weeks and months and years together in another life, and I have a lot of respect. I've always gained a lot of respect for the Member for Elmwood, but one of the things he did mention in his budget debate was that he's never had the opportunity nor did he ever vote for a budget in the House of Commons. That's true, Mr. Speaker, so I take it from that—I would hate to see him ruin his record, quite frankly. He does have the opportunity to stand and vote with the opposition in opposition to this budget because that would be the right thing to do. I know the member always has done the right thing for Manitobans and for his constituents.

\* (15:50)

I know, when I was in the other House, that this member voted against the budget, not because he didn't cherry-pick about areas that he was in favour of or that he wasn't in favour of. What he did was he voted against the budget for ideological reasons and ideological purposes. I know, Mr. Speaker, that he wouldn't vote against equalization payments being sent to Manitoba. I know he wouldn't vote against that, but he voted against the budget. So he voted against equalization flowing to Manitoba, but he wouldn't do that. I know he wouldn't because he's an honourable man. I know he didn't vote against the budgets at the federal House because when they put

more money into the military, I know he didn't vote against that, but he voted against the budget. He did. I know he didn't vote against infrastructure dollars flowing to Manitoba. I know he didn't vote against infrastructure dollars coming here, but he voted against the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I know he didn't vote against a number of things that were in that budget, but he voted against the budget because it was the wrong budget, in his opinion, ideologically. I respect him for that, and, certainly, we on this side of the House will vote against this budget because we do not believe this is the right budget for Manitobans. It's not the right budget for Manitobans. This budget is misnamed. This isn't steady and balanced. This should be tax, spend, borrow and beg budget. That's what it should be, the tax, spend, borrow and beg budget.

They say this budget is balanced. I have to say that to try to even grasp to the point that this is balanced is spin cycle at its finest. The reason why they say it's balanced, and make no mistake about this, is because if it's not balanced under the current legislation, until they change it and I'm sure they will, the ministers across the way will lose 40 percent of their salaries. So, if the Finance Minister brought forward a budget that he said was not balanced, that legislation would kick in and they would lose 40 percent of their salaries. But, as Mr. Speaker, don't feel threatened, because the Finance Minister has so many loopholes that he's built in to this budget, they will never be threatened with their salary reduction, which is a shame, by the way, because I think they should be. I think they should be threatened with salary reduction, and I think they should put a better effort forward as to a real balanced budget.

Let's look at it, Mr. Speaker. Right now, he shows a balanced budget, but the numbers speak for themselves. All you have to do is look at the budget. We have expenses up 4.4 percent budget to budget. We have revenues that are being budgeted as flat, flat revenues. So expenses are up; revenues are flat. We have a debt that's gone up by over a billion dollars budget to budget. We have a transfer of \$110 million from a Fiscal Stabilization Fund to balance the budget. We have a reduction of debt repayment of \$110 million that, by the way, is legislated in Bill 38. We have a reduction of \$110 million of debt reduction, and it's been reduced to \$20 million.

The Minister of Finance, with all of that fiscal machination, has come up with a number of \$2 million. With over \$10 billion, \$10 billion in expenditures and \$10 billion in revenue, he comes up with a surplus of \$2 million. Now, Mr. Speaker, as we all have recognized in this House, we are facing now a terrible natural disaster. We have people fighting for their properties and for their lives, literally and figuratively. We know that there are going to be some expenses that are going to be associated with that battle. Those are expenses that aren't identified in this budget. So a \$2-million surplus is going to be eaten up very, very quickly. We're not going to be able to have this budget recover any of those costs and still be balanced.

As the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) said, you can call it a balanced budget, but you can't call it balanced when the financials hit at the end of the year. The unfortunate part is when the financials hit at the end of this year, they are not going to show a balanced budget. But what they'll do is one of two things. They're going to borrow more money, which they've done in the past. They're going to borrow a lot more money to pay the bills. They're going to do that. I have no doubt. They're going to borrow more money to pay the bills, and they're going to take some money out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and they don't have a lot there because they weren't very frugal during the good economic times; they weren't very frugal at all. So they spent it all. So now they don't have a lot in savings accounts. They're going to move what they do have and put it in to offset the losses that they're going to have in this fiscal year.

Now the Finance Minister only has one year, only one year to use that Fiscal Stabilization Fund, because I think he has underestimated his revenues in this budget. He's probably underestimated the expenses in this budget, Mr. Speaker, not only from the natural disasters, but also from his own natural disaster, and that's the inefficient services that he's providing for Manitobans. So he's going to have less revenue, he's going to have more expenses and, when the fiscals come out at the end of this year, we are not going to have a balanced budget, but he's going to be able to stand up and say we have a balanced budget.

The other thing he can do, Mr. Speaker, is that he can fall back on what's known as a summary budget. Now he took great pains to change the legislation to show a summary budget. What that means is that he can now bring in Manitoba Hydro and its net revenues to balance the budget. Even with

the summary statement and bringing in the net revenues of the balanced budget, he still is overexpended. Manitoba Hydro can't even save his soul on that one. He's going to have to do some more things other than just balance.

So what he's got now, Mr. Speaker, under the legislation, he's got a four-year rolling average that he can use, so that doesn't mean he has to balance every year. He can balance on a four-year rolling average. Isn't that wonderful? He can depend on Manitoba Hydro for its revenues. If they go down, then he's going to use some other tricks of the trade. He's going to say, and under Bill 38, this is really interesting, if there's any natural disaster, he can then go back and say, we don't have to balance the budget.

Well, I should tell you, we're facing a natural disaster. So already he's got his excuse for this fiscal year. He's got his four-year rolling average; he's got his fiscal stabilization plan; and he's got Mother Nature. But he's also got something else to fall back on. In that same legislation, Mr. Speaker, it says that if any other level of government reduces revenues to the province, he doesn't have to balance the budget. Well, when you're dependent for 40 percent of your total budget on the federal government, there's a really good chance, under these economic conditions, that some of those revenues are going to be reduced. Now he didn't say by how much. He didn't say 1 percent, 2 percent, 3 percent, 4 percent. He just said any reduction in revenues coming from another level of government, they don't have to balance their budget. Well, I don't think it's going to come as a surprise that when you depend on equalization payments to the level that this government does, that they're going to be reduced.

Mr. Speaker, this Finance Minister will find that in the next fiscal year they're going to be reduced, but he'll fall back on that and, again, won't have to balance the budget, because he can put any numbers forward right now. He can bring any assumptions. He can bring any predictions. He can bring any amount of revenues, from any sources, and he doesn't have to follow that, because he can fall back on reasons why he doesn't have to. Now I said this budget should be the tax to spend, the borrow and the beg.

The minister takes great pleasure in reading one headline the day of the budget when people didn't have a chance to analyze the real truth in that budget. But there are other newspapers, and there are other

newspaper articles. Here's one in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Mr. Speaker, that was March 26, that says the budget spin is ludicrous. It says here: "Manitoba has decided 'not to run a deficit like some other provinces,' Finance Minister Greg Selinger said in a document tabled with his budget," which topped \$10 billion. "Spin is to be expected from a finance minister at such times, but to suggest that the 2009 budget reflects well on the government takes spin and puts it in orbit."

We now have spin cycle. *[interjection]* That was the *Free Press*. *[interjection]* No, no, no, this was an editorial in the *Free Press*. It wasn't Shannon Martin. No, not a chance.

\* (16:00)

By the way, Mr. Speaker, here's another one, another *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial: "Gambling on recovery." It means he's rolling the dice. He's rolling the dice with the budget. He's rolling the dice with Manitoba's economy.

Here's another one: Balance is a matter of perspective. That's another editorial. Here's another heading: "Selinger's theory of relativity." It was an editorial in the *Brandon Sun* that spoke exactly to what the budget wasn't, and that was balanced. So here are other editorials, Mr. Speaker, in newspapers that certainly don't speak to what the minister has to say.

Now, taxes, Mr. Speaker. Tax, spend, borrow and beg. Taxes right now in Manitoba are the highest, almost the highest, in the whole country.

I received an e-mail, and I can mention the individual's name because I talked to him. I received an e-mail this morning, actually, Mr. Speaker. It was unsolicited and it came from a gentleman by the name of Ed Nyczai.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the letter: My 2008 tax return submitted, I paid \$5,385 in Manitoba income tax. Out of curiosity, I also calculated what my provincial tax would have been in four other provinces, based on the same taxable income, in my case, as follows: Manitoba tax paid—are you listening?—\$5,385; Ontario tax paid, \$3,982; Saskatchewan tax paid, \$4,157; Alberta tax, \$2,869; and British Columbia tax, \$2,820.

The lowest, \$2,820, B.C., to Manitoba's \$5,385. As you can see, Manitoba tax was considerably higher than the other four provinces, even

Saskatchewan, by \$1,228. It is past time the NDP should alleviate the tax burden to middle-class Manitobans more in line with the other four provinces, at least to match Saskatchewan.

The recent budget cuts to middle-class Manitobans was not only a joke but an actual insult. I should tell you it was an insult to Mr. Nyczai, and he sent this e-mail because he wanted to make sure that Manitobans knew that this tax regime in Manitoba is uncompetitive and it's destroying Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, there has been tax reform in other jurisdictions: Saskatchewan, New Brunswick. They've actually legislated their tax reform.

We used to have an item in the budget, last year, that said that this minister and this government was actually going to give some tax relief—albeit minor—but some tax relief to Manitobans. None of that is reflected in this budget 2009. We're becoming more and more out of the loop, Mr. Speaker. Is it any wonder that B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan ministers and premiers don't invite us to the table any more? Is there any doubt as to why they don't want our input into their financials because, quite frankly, they don't want to go back to the same degree that this province has.

Mr. Speaker, we have debt, a mountain of debt. We're drowning in debt. Right now, we have \$11.8 billion in what the Finance Minister refers to as net debt. I wish the members across the way would listen to this statistic: the combined debt of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan is less than the debt held here in Manitoba. Three western Canadian provinces combined have less debt than we have in Manitoba.

Now, I know the members across the way are going to say, that's all right, that's good. Well, I think you should ask that question of CanWest Global, just how well they can manage their affairs when they're saddled with that kind of debt. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if you could ask GM or Chrysler just, well, how they can manage their affairs when they're saddled with that amount of debt.

Mr. Speaker, we just had AbitibiBowater today announce they're going into protection, bankruptcy protection. Do you know why? Because they have too much debt. They're not going into bankruptcy because they have too much revenue or they're spending too much, it's because they've acquired too much debt. But this minister and this government do not realize that too much debt gives this government

the inflexibility to be able to perform its duties and provide the services that Manitoba needs.

Now, those other provinces retired their debt in the good times. We decided that we were going to attract and keep our debt, Mr. Speaker, and we've done that.

Now, the minister also will come up and say, we've got the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio that we've ever had in the province of Manitoba. Well, that's not true. But he can say it. But, if you want to make comparisons—and debt is the key to this whole budget. Because when they spend more and they bring in less, they have to borrow money and they're going to do it again, make no mistake about it. Right now the debt-to-GDP in British Columbia is 15.8 percent. The debt-to-GDP in Saskatchewan is 6.3 percent. The debt-to-GDP in Manitoba is 23 percent.

Now, the numbers probably don't mean a lot to the members opposite, but the fact of the matter is, we're getting dangerously high on the debt loads. I did hear the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) at one time say, tell that to the banks. Well, you know, I wish GM had have told that to the banks, or I wish Chrysler had have told that to the banks, or I wish AbitibiBowater had have told that to the banks, because banks will lend money. But they also want to get paid back, and they're going to get paid back with my children's taxes in the future, and they're going to get paid back with my grandchildren's taxes in the future. It's wrong. It's absolutely wrong.

Then we go into, the last point is begging. Begging. Okay? We have taxes. We have taxes, we have spending, we have borrowing and we have begging. So we go to the federal government—and the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) voted against those budgets in the federal Parliament. He voted against them to give Manitoba \$2.063 billion in equalization payment this year.

Now, the worst part about that is not that it's about 40 percent of our total operating budget with transfers and equalization. The worst part about that is the \$2.063 billion is the same this year as it was last year, and do you want to know something? Next year it's going to be less because now we have other provinces who are saying, enough is enough. Ontario now is going to be expecting money from Ottawa because they're going to be a have-not province. We've been a have-not province under the full term of this government, and we're proud of it. They're proud of being a have-not province. They're proud of

being a have-not province. In fact, they go begging for more. Constantly, they go begging for more. Why can't they get out under the thumb of welfare and become more self-sufficient? Because they don't know how, Mr. Speaker, by putting forward budgets like this on a continuous basis that aren't balanced and don't look forward to the future.

Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely going to vote against this budget because we don't want to beg anymore. We don't want to get any more debt. We don't want to tax Manitobans to the point where we cannot be competitive in this country. We don't want that to happen, but this minister certainly wants it to happen.

Mr. Speaker, I would have loved to have seen some leadership come from that side of the House. I would have loved in this budget if the Finance Minister and the Premier (Mr. Doer) would have said, we are going to be fiscally responsible. We're not going to spend and borrow. What we're going to do is we're going to have efficient services provided to this great province of ours. We're going to—*[interjection]* One minute. We are going to, in fact, make sure that we will be becoming a have province sometime in the future. At least tell us that. We would like to get rid of the dependency from Ottawa. But, no, they don't want to do that because it's so easy, so easy for them to go with their hat in hand and say, we can spend more money because other provinces are going to give it to us.

\* (16:10)

Mr. Speaker, we're going to vote against this budget on this side because we want a tax regime that's competitive, and it's not reflected in this budget at all.

Mr. Speaker, I am more positive about this province, and I'll be even more positive about this province when we can change that government, that NDP government, that socialist government, and make it a Progressive Conservative government.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to just say a few words about the flood going on. As we all know, there's a tremendous number of citizens, volunteers, municipalities, RHAs and individuals working together to make sure that we minimize any disruption or negative impacts on Manitobans during this flood event. Our crews, our public officials have been working overtime, flat out, to help Manitobans in their current situation as a result of ice jamming,



high-water levels along the Red River and the tributaries.

Over the last decade we have worked hard to ensure we minimize disruption of floods, setting up municipal emergency plans, changing legislation to ensure new developments in the Red River Valley are compliant with '97 levels plus 0.6 of a metre, ensuring we have the proper resources in place to aid in flood prevention and mitigation efforts. Over \$800 million in provincial and federal funding has been invested in flood preparations since 1997. Over 1,700 individual homes, businesses and farms are now protected. The community ring dike program has seen improvements in construction around 18 communities at the '97 level, again, plus 0.6 of a metre. Today the floodway channel capacity is more than double that it was in '97, and we are on target to meet our one-in-700-year flood protection objective.

Three million sandbags have been made available in MIT's warehouse for use, two new sandbagging machines have been made ready for use, 3,000 metres of water-barrier material have been made available and we have two Amphibexes, ice breakers and ice-cutting machines, as well as several ice-cutting machines available. Considerable work has been done to protect individual drinking-water supplies, including the conversion of domestic wells to rural water-supply pipelines. There has been remediation and protection of existing wells.

Mr. Speaker, today, for nine years our government has invested wisely, managed the public debt, reduced taxes and encouraged growth in the economy. During these economic times that we now face, Manitoba continues its balanced approach, building upon our successes and preparing our province for a better future. Despite our strong and diversified economy and that we are well positioned to weather the storm, the effects of the global economic slowdown, now called a recession, will undoubtedly be felt here in Manitoba.

Budget '09 presents a strategic plan to stimulate the economy and to ensure that Manitobans have opportunities to work. This plan positions Manitoba to emerge from the economic storm both stronger and better positioned for the emerging economy with a focus on training, businesses taxes, access to credit, innovation and investment.

Thanks to our sound fiscal management, Manitoba will be deficit-free in '09-10. This year's budget is our 10th straight balanced budget. It projects a summary surplus of \$48 million,

\$634 million is in the fiscal stabilization account and provides \$20 million for debt payment this year. The financial community across Canada has positively commented on Manitoba's strengths and sound fiscal approach, especially at a time when the global economy is slowing. I have several quotes which I'll skip over because they are on the public record already.

Given the deterioration in the economy and the significant downward pressure on revenues, the Manitoba government could have taken the easy way out. Notably, it could have opted to run a deficit, which has become the norm across Canada and around the world in '09, or it could have elected to postpone previously announced tax cuts. However, the government chose not to take either of these paths. Over the short term, the infrastructure spending and tax cuts will provide some much-needed stimulus to the economy. From a longer term perspective, the province's fiscal management, not to mention its steadily improving tax competitiveness, will stand us in particularly good stead.

Manitoba has built a diverse industrial base and, as a result, the most stable economy over the last decade. Investment has increased in Manitoba companies. Since '99, Manitoba employment has expanded by 60,700 jobs. The unemployment rate at 4.2 percent last year was the lowest in over 30 years. More than 10,000 jobs have been added to Manitoba's economy in '08. In '08 we led in private capital investment growth at 15 percent, compared to 2 percent for the country as a whole. Real business investment in machinery and equipment was up 7 percent last year, bringing the five-year average growth to 27 percent.

Forecasts for the upcoming year put Manitoba's unemployment rate to be the second best among Canadian provinces. Our economic growth at minus 0.2 percent, believe it or not, is better than the Canadian average of minus 1.8 percent. Clearly, Manitoba is not immune to the global recession. The decline demonstrates the need to move forward with the economic stimulus package presented in the budget.

Budget '09 outlines 10 points—or a 10-point strategy—for economic growth which will maintain a steady economy while building for the future, a plan that will help navigate Manitoba through these difficult economic times.

The first point in that plan is modernizing infrastructure. We will devote \$1.6 billion for

infrastructure projects, such as social housing, schools, hospitals, highways and bridges, universities and colleges, water and waste-water treatment plants—all of these things to address the infrastructure gap and to stimulate the economy. Funding for infrastructure includes an increase of \$625 million and a plan that will help create and maintain an additional 10,000 person years of employment. Some of the examples of things we're going to invest in: \$387 million in social and affordable housing as part of the largest-ever investment, including \$160 million in capital funding for rejuvenation projects such as Lord Selkirk Park and Gilbert Park in Winnipeg and the Brandon Tenant Park; funding a new \$310-million, four-year capital program to construct new schools and renovate existing facilities; building and improving highways with a total of \$535 million for Manitoba roads, including the Trans-Canada Highway, Provincial Highway 59, PTH 75, Provincial Highway 8, First Street in Brandon, and Provincial Highway 10; and investing \$46 million in water and waste-water projects, as well as developing a new all-purpose road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg in partnership with the communities that live on the east side.

We have recently partnered with the federal government to jointly invest \$212 million into CentrePort Canada, our inland port, to take advantage of Manitoba's position as a trade and transportation province. The creation of CentrePort Canada Way, a four-lane divided expressway linking the inland port to the Perimeter Highway, will connect Inkster, Route 221, the James Richardson airport, Weston rail intermodal facility all to the Perimeter near Saskatchewan Avenue. Other Canada and Manitoba joint-funding initiatives include \$85 million to upgrade Highway 75, Manitoba's key trade route to the U.S., and \$48 million for upgrades to the Hudson Bay rail line and the Port of Churchill. The Province's vision includes integrating inland port development with larger Manitoba international gateway related corridor initiatives, such as the Mid-Continent Trade Corridor, the Port of Churchill and future polar air routes.

The No. 2 priority in the list is focussing on skills and knowledge. Investments in education, training and skills development will help Manitobans prosper in the knowledge economy. Investments include a 6 percent increase in base operating grants and strategic programs for universities and colleges, 5.25 percent increase to public schools—the largest

ever in the history of Manitoba—and more training seats for apprentices and new tax credits for employers who provide apprenticeship placements. We are offering the most extensive apprenticeship tax credits in Canada, expanding these credits to include advanced-level apprentices, and extending the co-op and graduate student components of the Co-op Education and Apprenticeship Tax Credit. We also have additional investments in bursary programs, doubling the available scholarships for Aboriginal medical students and expanding nurse training across the province. We also are creating Rebound, a program to provide training and employment opportunities for Manitobans who have lost their jobs. These investments in education and training, economic development and job creation not only build our economy, but also support poverty reduction efforts and efforts to improve the well-being of Manitobans.

Since '99, we have had a number of initiatives to reduce poverty, including increasing the education property tax credit to reduce the tax burden for low-income families, especially women, and increasing the minimum wage, in which we have strengthened the purchasing power of more than 28,000 minimum wage earners and their families. Our investments in social housing and the Manitoba Shelter Benefit have also made a big difference to people with modest incomes. Today, Mr. Speaker, 40 percent fewer Manitoba children are living in poverty than a decade ago. We are not complacent about this, we have more work to do, but we have laid down a solid foundation.

\* (16:20)

Thirdly, growing through innovation. Budget '09 recognizes that research and innovation generate new business opportunities, create jobs, and support immigration, and build the economy. Budget '09 supports increases to Manitoba Research and Innovation Fund for new initiatives. The Research and Development Tax Credit will be made refundable for corporations that work with research institutes in Manitoba on new technologies. Manitoba has the highest research and development tax credit in the country at 20 percent.

Extending the Green Energy Tax Credit to include solar systems complements work already done for geothermal as well as wind power. Our newly formed Manitoba Innovation Council begins work to forge closer relationships between business

and research and investment communities, which will lead to a stronger culture of innovation in Manitoba.

Fourthly, we have taken initiatives to increase access to credit and capital. A new set of measures will help businesses deal with tighter credit and capital markets, including doubling the Community Enterprise Investment Tax Credit to lever \$17 million more in investment capital for small- and medium-sized companies, and doubling the amount of shares the business can apply for under the Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Industrial Opportunities Program will triple the value of loans made available through this program.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we're phasing out the general corporation capital tax, as promised. On a balanced budget, our fifth priority, we have 10 straight balanced budgets, the first time in Manitoba in 50 years of Manitoba history that that's been achieved. We will keep Manitoba deficit free with a summary surplus of about \$48 million that includes core government departments, Crown corporations, and the pension obligation.

This budget will provide a 1.8 percent increase in summary expenditures but also will manage with one-third of the departments holding the line or seeing very slight increases of less than 1 percent. As well, summary budgeting and reporting is now consistent with the accounting standards, established by the Public Sector Accounting Board and based on GAAP, that are applied by the Office of the Auditor General in assessing the completeness of our financial statements. We meet the Auditor General's recommendation to both budget and report in accordance with GAAP, which requires financial statements to be prepared on a government reporting entity basis, therefore eliminating the need for two sets of books. Adopting this standard in Manitoba greatly improves transparency and accountability and provides a full and accurate picture of our financial situation.

Also, it is a multiyear planning approach that allows for flexibility in planning, such as a financial downturn that must be bolstered by sufficient positive balances. Because of this approach, we have the ability to react to situations in a measured way instead of having to make hasty decisions that could lead to the reduction or elimination of services valued by the people of Manitoba.

Manitoba's opposition agreed to the importance of adopting this approach in accordance with GAAP until very recently at least. This is a quote from the former Finance critic: I can tell you that we believe in GAAP and it should be fully implemented.

I wonder if the current Finance critic follows the same approach.

It should be further noted that, under the previous government's five balanced budgets, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund was used three times, a Crown corporation was sold, and a special transfer was taken from Manitoba Lotteries, all to balance the budget. In 1998-99, there was \$185-million draw from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund that manufactured a \$23-million surplus and an \$80-million increase in the accumulated deficit.

Number 6, Mr. Speaker, strategic tax reductions. Strategic tax reductions have helped create the Manitoba advantage. The savings to families are three-quarters of a billion dollars; including business savings, it goes over to \$1 billion. Since '99, Manitoba's overall rankings for personal costs and taxes have been among the best in the country, making Manitoba one of the most affordable provinces in which to live. We have the second-lowest combined taxes and living costs in the following categories: for single persons, for single parents, for two-earner families earning \$60,000, and for a two-earner family of five earning \$75,000. We have the lowest combined taxes and living costs in the following category: a one-earner family of four earning \$40,000 and a one-earner family of four earning \$60,000.

We are continuing to implement tax reductions as part of our economic stimulus. Personal, corporate, and small business tax cuts for '09 will continue helping to maintain the purchasing power of families and the financial strength of business. Tax cuts for this year include the elimination of the small business tax in December '10, becoming the first province in Canada to permanently remove this tax, which stood at 8 percent in 1999.

We have approximately 80 percent of taxable corporations that will benefit from this reduction, and dropping the small business rate from 8 percent to zero reduces tax for a firm of \$500,000 taxable from \$67,000 to \$12,000 in '11, a saving of \$55,000 and the highest tax savings among all provinces. We also continue to reduce the general income rate to 12 percent from 13 percent, which is a decrease from 17 percent in 1999. Also, in this budget,

Mr. Speaker, the mining tax has been changed from 18 percent to three rates, 10, 15 and 17 percent, depending on their taxable income. We are following through on the '09 personal income tax reductions.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of savings for the future, we are committed to providing vital services while paying down our debt, but we must do so in a responsible way, reflecting the current economic environment. Budget '09 provides for a \$20-million debt repayment and leaves the Fiscal Stabilization Fund at \$634 million, up from \$226 million in 1999, and allowing for \$110-million investment in vital services. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund has been tripled over the last 10 years. In light of these needs to protect vital services, amendments will be introduced to provide the government more flexibility in making the debt payment requirement under balanced budget legislation.

The balance that would otherwise have been paid to the debt retirement account has been redirected to infrastructure to stimulate the economy and create jobs. It should be noted that the two largest draws in the history of the rainy day fund were 1998 and 1999, at \$186 million and \$185 million, respectively. On tackling debt and pension liabilities, Mr. Speaker, over the past nine years, we have contributed \$924 million to the debt retirement account to address a general purpose debt and pension obligations, and, again, we are adding \$20 million to that this year.

Debt-servicing costs have been cut by 54.5 percent from 13.2 cents on the dollar to 6 cents on the dollar. The opposition charges that our debt is at an all-time high. A more accurate reflection is the Province's debt-to-GDP's position, which has declined by a third. Mr. Speaker, it will go up slightly but still will be 25 percent lower than it was in 1999. The net debt is increasing because of this year's stimulus package, but debt-servicing costs are down 50 percent at 6 percent on the dollar—once again, more than half of what it was in 1999.

Most provinces have tabled deficit budgets so far this year and have increased their debt-to-GDP ratios. This is not unexpected as we are in the midst of the worst recession in a generation. The federal and provincial governments across the country know they must take action in the face of a weakening global economy. Everyone knows this is the right thing to do, except Manitoba's Official Opposition.

Now the opposition has said that the debt of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan is

lower together than the debt of Manitoba. I have to correct the record, Mr. Speaker. The debt in British Columbia, net debt, is \$27.9 billion, more than two and a half times of the debt in Manitoba. I wonder if the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) would like to take the opportunity to apologize to the Legislature for this information that he continues to put on the record. I know he won't apologize because for him the facts never get in the way of a good argument. In the case of B.C., their debt has increased by 14 percent, and for Saskatchewan, just under 12 percent. Meanwhile, in Manitoba it is going up 6.4 percent.

With respect to the Crown corporations, Manitoba Hydro has achieved its 75-25 debt-to-equity ratio ahead of time, and now it's the lowest that it's been in Manitoba Hydro's 57-year history. Mr. Speaker, we have grown the wealth in Manitoba. Our net debt-to-GDP has declined 15 percent in the last five years, while the book value of our assets has increased by 18 percent. Debt-to-GDP has gone down; the wealth of Manitobans has gone up.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many other things that could be said about this budget in terms of our expenditure. It's been the slowest—second-lowest growth over the last decade. Our expenditure per capita is the fourth lowest in the country—

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The time now being 4:30, we will conduct the appropriate votes and—[interjection] Order, please. Order.

The question before the House is the proposed subamendment of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

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

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Speaker:** All those in favour of the subamendment, say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those opposed to the subamendment, say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Speaker:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

**Formal Vote**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I'd ask if you'd canvass the House to see if there's support to have a recorded vote, please.

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have support for a recorded vote? [*Agreed*]

Okay, the honourable member has support.

Order. A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

The question before the House is the subamendment moved by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

**Division**

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

**Yeas**

*Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurshou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.*

**Nays**

*Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Blaikie, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wowchuk.*

**Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):** Yeas 20, Nays 35.

**Mr. Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Now, we will deal with the amendment. Order, please.

The question before the House is the proposed amendment of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Voice Vote**

**Mr. Speaker:** All those in favour of the amendment, say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Speaker:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

**Formal Vote**

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Opposition House Leader):** A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

**Division**

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

**Yeas**

*Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurshou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.*

**Nays**

*Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Blaikie, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wowchuk.*

**Madam Clerk:** Yeas 20, Nays 35.

**Mr. Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Now, we will deal with the main motion.

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

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those opposed to the motion, say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Speaker:** In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

#### Formal Vote

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Opposition House Leader):** A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

\* (16:40)

Order. The vote before the House is the motion moved by the honourable Minister of Finance.

#### Division

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

#### Yeas

*Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Blaikie, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wowchuk.*

#### Nays

*Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.*

**Madam Clerk:** Yeas 35, Nays 20.

**Mr. Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** I wonder if there might be will of the House to call it 5 o'clock.

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

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, April 20.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 16, 2009

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