

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
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, Hon.	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.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
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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.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 12, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 19—The Protection from Domestic Violence and Best Interests of Children Act (Family Law Statutes Amended)

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister for Housing and co-operative development, that Bill 19, The Protection from Domestic Violence and Best Interests of Children Act (Family Law Statutes Amended); Loi sur la protection contre la violence familiale et l'intérêt supérieur des enfants (modification de dispositions législatives concernant le droit de la famille), be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Attorney General, seconded by the honourable Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 19, The Protection from Domestic Violence and Best Interests of Children Act (Family Law Statutes Amended), be now read a first time.

Mr. Swan: This bill will strengthen The Family Maintenance Act by setting out criteria for the best interests of the child. These amendments would guide our courts to consider factors such as the impact of domestic violence as judges assess the best interests of children in custody and access matters. This bill goes further to enhance protections for victims of domestic violence when parties must be in court together or at a court-sanctioned proceeding such as mediation. Thank you.

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

PETITIONS

Bipole III

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

This decision will cost Manitoba ratepayers at least \$640 million more than an east-side line or an east-side route. The Province of Manitoba is facing its largest deficit on record, and the burden of this extra cost could not come at a worse time.

Between 2002 and 2009, electricity rates increased by 16 percent, and Manitoba Hydro has filed a request for further rate increases totalling 6 percent over the next two years.

A western bipole route will invariably lead to more rate increases.

In addition to being cheaper, an east-side route would be hundreds of kilometres shorter and would be more reliable than the west-side route.

West-side residents have not been adequately consulted and have identified serious concerns with the proposed line.

The NDP government has not been able to provide any logical justification for the west-side route.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the cheaper, shorter and more logical east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, to save ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars during these challenging economic times.

This petition's signed by E. Merry, B. Zahaiko, B. Pedersen and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bipole III

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct its next high-voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba, a decision for which the NDP government has not been able to provide any logical justification.

Since this will cost Manitoba ratepayers at least \$640 million more than an east-side route, and given that the Province of Manitoba is facing its largest deficit on record, the burden of this extra cost could not come at a worse time.

Between 2002 and 2009 electricity rates increased by 16 percent, and Manitoba Hydro has filed a request for further rate increases totalling 6 percent over the next two years.

A western Bipole III route will invariably lead to more rate increases.

In addition to being cheaper, an east-side route would be hundreds of kilometres shorter and would be more reliable than the west-side route.

West-side residents have not been adequately consulted and have identified serious concerns to the proposed line.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the cheaper, shorter and more logical east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, to save ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars during these challenging economic times.

And this petition is signed by B. Franzmann, N. John, B. Divorne and many, many other fine Manitobans.

PTH 15–Twinning

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 2004, the Province of Manitoba made a public commitment to the people of Springfield to twin PTH 15 and the floodway bridge on PTH 15, but then in 2006, the twinning was cancelled.

Injuries resulting from collisions on PTH 15 continue to rise and have doubled from 2007 to 2008.

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation stated that preliminary analysis of current and future traffic demands indicate that local twinning will be required.

The current plan to replace the floodway bridge on PTH 15 does not include twinning and therefore does not fulfil the current nor future traffic demands cited by the Minister of Transportation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate twinning of the PTH 15 floodway bridge for the safety of the citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by B. Metcalf, L. Graham, O. Fillion and many, many other Manitobans.

Ophthalmology Services–Swan River

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health has told the Town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and

patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program; however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

* (13:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

And this is signed by P. Barker, L. Barker, E. Barker and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Liquor Control Commission— Liquor Licences

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

And these are the reasons for the petition:

The Manitoba Liquor Control Commission has substantially raised the cost of annual liquor licences for restaurants, cocktail lounges and other Manitoba businesses.

The MLCC justifies this increase by stating that the cost of an annual licence is being increased to better reflect rising administration costs.

For some small business owners, the cost of an annual liquor licence has more than doubled. These fee hikes are a significant burden for business owners.

The decision to increase the annual licence fee, while at the same time eliminating the 2 percent supplementary licence fee payable on the purchases of spirits, wine and coolers, has the effect of greatly disadvantaging smaller businesses. Small businesses which do not purchase liquor from MLCC in large volumes will not receive the same benefit from the elimination of this supplementary fee. Instead, they're faced substantially increased costs simply to keep their doors open.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider working with MLCC to find alternate means of addressing rising administrative costs.

And to request the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider working with MLCC to revise the decision to implement a significant annual licence fee increase.

And to urge the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider ensuring that the unique challenges faced by small businesses are better taken into account in the future.

And this petition is signed by D. Simmons, V. Simmons and D. Silverthorne and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Medical Clinic in Weston and Brooklands Area

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:

Community-based medical clinics provide a valuable health-care service.

The closure of the Westbrook Medical Clinic has left both Weston and Brooklands without a community-based medical clinic.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider how important it is to have a medical clinic located in Weston and Brooklands area.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by J. Cory, K. Cory, G. Bedford and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

Mount Agassiz Ski Area

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:

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

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

In addition, a thriving rural economy generates tax revenue that helps pay for core provincial

government services and infrastructure which benefits all Manitobans.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

And this petition is signed by R. Scott, W. Henton, M. Porrok and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Waste-Water Ejector Systems

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitobans are deeply committed to protecting the environment, and they want to be assured that provincial environment policies are based on sound science.

In early 2009 the provincial government announced that it was reviewing the Onsite Wastewater Management Systems Regulation under The Environment Act.

Affected Manitobans, including property owners and municipal governments, provided considerable feedback to the provincial government on the impact of the proposed changes, only to have their input ignored.

The updated regulation includes a prohibition on the installation of new waste-water ejectors and the elimination of existing waste-water ejectors at the time of any property transfer.

Questions have been raised about the lack of science—scientific basis for these changes, as a Manitoba Conservation official stated in the October

8th, 2009, edition of the *Manitoba Co-operator*: "Have we done a specific study? No." End quote.

These regulatory changes will have a significant financial impact on all affected Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately placing the recent changes on the—to the Onsite Wastewater Management System Regulation under The Environment Act on hold until such time that a review can take place to ensure that they are based on sound science.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider implementing the prohibition on waste-water ejector systems on a case-by-case basis as determined by environmental need in ecologically sensitive areas.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider offering financial incentives to help affected Manitoba property owners adapt to these regulatory changes.

And this petition is signed, Mr. Speaker, by L. Russen, R. Kitto, C. Dunning and many, many others.

Whiteshell Provincial Park—Lagoons

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial parks were established to protect our natural resources and the environment for future generations.

In July 2009 the lagoons in the vicinity of Dorothy Lake and Otter Falls in the Whiteshell Provincial Park overflowed, creating concerns that untreated sewage made its way into the Winnipeg River system and ultimately into Lake Winnipeg.

In addition, emergency discharges had to be undertaken at lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park four times in 2005, once in 2007 and once in April 2009.

Concerned stakeholders in the Whiteshell Provincial Park have repeatedly asked the provincial government to develop plans to address the shortcomings with the park's lagoons and to ensure the environment is protected, but the plans have not materialized.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider acknowledging that more timely action should have been taken to address the shortcomings with the lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park in order to protect the environment.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately developing short- and long-term strategies to address the shortcomings with lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park and to consider implementing them as soon as possible.

And Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by G. Chambers, R. Assels, J. Chambers and many, many other Manitobans.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Polish Air Disaster

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make a ministerial statement.

Today I rise to express my condolences to the people of Poland and to Polish people the world over, including here in Manitoba where some 40,000 people of Polish decent live.

On Saturday, April 10th, 96 people, including the President of Poland, Lech Kaczynski, and his wife, parliamentarians, military leaders and leaders from a broad array of public life, were killed when their plane crashed in heavy fog.

Every plane crash, every swift and unexpected loss of life is a tragedy. The tragedy of the Polish plane crash is compounded, however, because it not only takes loved ones from their families, but it takes from an entire country the hopes, ideals and aspirations that its citizenry entrusted in its political representatives.

Poland, a country all too familiar with national tragedies, is once again in mourning.

The Polish officials on this flight were themselves returning from the Katyn Forest, where they were honouring thousands of Polish military officers who were executed 70 years ago by Stalin's secret police, an historical event that makes this plane crash all the more tragic and poignant.

* (13:50)

We, too, Mr. Speaker, mourn this loss.

Poland, however, is a country known for the strength of its national character. Already, people are coming together; from political leaders to working families, people are putting their differences aside to help those in need. One newspaper reported the scene in Poland as solidarity everywhere.

Today, we stand to let the people of Poland know that the solidarity shown with their own—within their own borders reaches across the ocean to the halls of this Legislature and to the people of Manitoba.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, that following the remarks of other members, this House stands for a moment of silence so that we can together offer our thoughts and prayers to our Polish friends. Thank you.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the First Minister for his statement, and we join with him and all members of the Legislature today with heartfelt sorrow in extending our condolences to the Polish community who's grieving today on the sudden death of their president, Lech Kaczynski, and his wife, the First Lady Maria Kaczynski, and the 86 other passengers on the fallen plane.

The late president had a vision for his country and a tenacious quest for democracy, peaceful relations and the betterment of society for all of his people. It was a vision that offered hope and certainty that the nation's best days were yet to come. Their solo—their sorrow is now palpable and the grief is shared by all Manitobans with the Polish community. On behalf of my colleagues in the Legislature, I offer condolences to this entire grieving community and the entire Polish nation.

In the midst of this overwhelming sorrow, it is important to remember the strong Polish spirit and the people's unwavering commitment to a free and democratic society. It is this spirit that has already begun to re-emerge and will continue to grow following this mourning period. And the nation of strong people will stand united and continue to build the vision that their late president had so very well articulated. May the memories of President Kaczynski serve as a reminder to all of us the importance of democracy, human rights and peace. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the Premier's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the people of Poland and to the people of Polish origin in Manitoba and elsewhere around the world, on this occasion of the tragedy in the Katyn Forest and the death of President Lech Kaczynski, his wife and many, many senior people in the Polish parliament and the Polish government. With others here, I extend the sympathy and condolences on behalf of the Manitoba Liberal Party and join other MLAs in wishing the very best possible in the future to the people of Poland. Hopefully, out of this—the ashes of this terrible tragedy will emerge a new strength, a new commitment and a new determination to move forward.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for a moment of silence? [*Agreed*]

Please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, today, Monday, April 12, 2010, we join people from all over the world to observe Yom Hashoah or Holocaust Memorial Day. This day is dedicated to the memory of the six million Jewish people and the millions of other victims who were murdered in Nazi death camps during World War II.

On May 1, 2000, Manitoba's Legislative Assembly unanimously passed Bill 19, the Holocaust Memorial act. We recognized then, as we recognize now, that such a dark period in our history can never be forgotten. Though the events and locations of the Holocaust seem distant, the names that appear on the monument here on the legislative grounds remind us of the Canadian victims who perished. We must also be cognizant that there are thousands of relatives of Holocaust survivors who bear the loss of their family every single day.

Holocaust Memorial Day is not only a day of remembrance, it is also a day which allows us to look at the world in which we live and recognize that many people are still being persecuted because of their ethnicity or religion.

Eli Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz said: Wherever men and women are persecuted because of

their race, religion or political views, that place must, at that moment, become the centre of the universe.

As Manitobans, we have shared a responsibility to stand up against these grave injustices around the world and ensure that such a tragic event is never repeated.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members observe a moment of silence in memory of those whom we lost during the Holocaust, and for those who continue to suffer in our world today. Thank you.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): On behalf of my colleagues and all members of the House, I'd like to thank the minister for her ministerial statement today, and just say that I, along with other members of the Legislature, joined together this morning to read names in the—in one of the rooms here. Unto Every Person There is a Name put on by the League of Human Rights for B'nai Brith Canada to perpetuate the memory of six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust through public recitation of their names to personalize the individual tragedy of those who died and those who survived. And among us today was a constituent of mine, a Holocaust survivor himself, Arnold Frieman and his wife Myra, and it was indeed an honour to be with them today and to be able to read names with them there today.

The tragedy of the Holocaust has left a painful scar on humanity, one of which most—one of which must not forget or ignore. Today members of the Jewish community, clergy, school children and civic leaders were joined by many others at a remembrance service at the Holocaust monument here at the Legislature. Six million Jewish lives were lost at the hands of the Nazi regime and millions more affected and forever changed. Nearly five million others were murdered for their sexuality, religion, mental faculty or simply their opposition to the Nazis. For many of us, we cannot fathom the anguish and fear experienced by those who faced this unconscionable horror, but we must now, ourselves, confront what has happened by remembering those who perished and work to eliminate the hatred and violence that continues to plague our world.

We must also remember the survivors of the Holocaust, those who lived through the barbarity of these events to escape the persecution and violence of genocide. These individuals can educate us, helping us better understand what humankind is capable of. The events of the Second World War are not an isolated event and this day of remembrance

offers a time to take a stand against violence, racism and hatred that continues.

We must educate each other and embrace our differences if we are to be able to live in a just society. We must make a commitment to remember humanity's darkest days and fight to prevent an atrocity like this from ever happening again. So we would join with members opposite in a moment of silence, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:00)

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join others in the Chamber today to recognize Yom Hashoah, the Holocaust Memorial Day.

I remember some years ago visiting Holocaust memorial museums, both in Jerusalem and Washington, and there gaining a much better understanding of the horrible and devastating nature of the Holocaust. Mr. Speaker, I've stood beside the Holocaust memorial in our Legislature and read the names of the individuals. I have listened to survivors of the Holocaust here in Winnipeg and the children of survivors telling their stories.

Clearly what happened in the Holocaust was a terrible, terrible event—tragedy and we must do what we can to build a more respectful, a more tolerant society where such genocides can never happen. And I stand with others today in that commitment to work with others to achieve that end.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today, we have Peter Mikus, Boguslaw Dittmar, Sophie Dedwitt and Gerry Bibik from the Polish Canadian Congress, Manitoba division, who are the guests of the

honourable Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Mackintosh).

And also in the public gallery we have with us from Winnipeg Technical College, we have nine adult education as an additional language students under the direction of Ms. Darlene Williams. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Debt Servicing Costs

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): As of March 31st, just two weeks ago, the total debt of Manitoba stood at an all-time high level of over \$21 billion.

With the budget just introduced, Mr. Speaker, this Premier is proposing to add another \$2.3 billion onto the load of debt already carried by Manitoba families. That's a 10 percent increase in debt over just one year, bringing the total debt load for a family of four to in excess of \$76,000, at a rate that is escalating rapidly. The current budget shows that debt servicing, the interest on the spiralling debt, is growing more rapidly than program spending in health care and other areas.

I want to ask the Premier, in the context of cuts to addictions treatment and other areas, whether he feels that his out-of-control debt is sustainable.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the cost of servicing our debt today is 6 cents on the dollar. When the members opposite were in government, the cost of servicing the debt was 13 and a half cents on the dollar. When the members opposite were in government, the debt as a proportion of the economy was over 32 percent. Today, our debt as a proportion of the economy is less than 27 percent.

We are in a time of requirements for all governments to co-operate at the federal and provincial level to stimulate the economy. We are doing that through a very significant program of capital investment, capital investment which will create the hard assets like schools, like universities, like colleges, like hospitals, that will make us better off not only in the long run but provide, in this budget alone, 29,000 person-years of employment.

Our debt is manageable. Our program for economic stimulus will help grow the economy.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr Speaker, the largest addition to this total debt is coming through his west-side bipole line at \$640 million in overexpenditure on one project. His other top priority is a 100 percent provincial taxpayer-funded scaled-down stadium.

And I want to ask the Premier, since his top priorities are the west-side-long west-side bipole line which will waste \$640 million and a scaled-down stadium at 100 percent provincial taxpayer funding, how can he justify cuts to adult education programs in Portage la Prairie, to addictions treatment here in Manitoba, and how can he justify the rapidly-increasing debt payments now adding \$100 million per year onto the next generation of Manitobans?

How can he justify this rise in debt, these cuts to programs and his reckless spending on these useless projects?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there's—the question was filled with inaccuracies. The member appears to be a stranger to the truth.

Mr. Speaker, the bipole is still in the environmental review and siting stage. The money is not even in the capital budget for that significant expenditure.

The stadium proposal is a loan to the Winnipeg Football Club and the university and the City to ensure we have a permanent public asset for the benefit of all Manitobans.

The Addictions Foundation is receiving an increase of 9.6 percent in the budget this year. Budget-budgets for addictions have increased 89 percent over the last decade. Our debt is 6 cents on the dollar, less than half of what they had when they were in office. We are creating jobs; we are doing it in a focussed way which will build the strength of our economy for the future.

The member's just wrong on all the facts and all his conclusions.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the numbers are—the numbers in the budget are very clear at 27 percent and rising in terms of debt to GDP, an increasing share of budget going to interest payments on debt. The largest increase in this year's budget is on interest to repay debt rather than health care and other areas.

We now have interest running, Mr. Speaker, at the rate of more than \$1,300 every minute, interest rising on his debt \$1,300 every minute. In the time it will take him to respond to this question, he will have built up \$1,300 in new interest on his rapidly escalating debt.

I want to ask the Premier to justify to members of the community, one of whom is here today, Ian Rabb, why it is that he's cutting important facilities to put addictions treatment under one roof at the same time as he's running ahead with his west-side bipole line, his 100 percent taxpayer-financed scaled-back stadium and other projects that do nothing to improve the quality of life for Manitobans.

Mr. Selinger: I've already corrected all the errors of fact the member has put on the record. He seems to want to persistently repeating them—to repeat them as if repeating them would make them true.

The reality is, he is just dead wrong on the facts. There is a 9.6 percent increase to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. There is an 89 percent increase in the last decade. There are very significant capital investments in this budget that will generate 29,000 jobs.

And where is most of the money going in the budget? Sixty percent of the increase of all the funding in this budget is going to health care. Ninety percent of all the increased spending in this budget is going to health care, family services, education, justice and infrastructure. Those are our priorities because Manitobans have told us those should be your priorities, and we are being true to their—our word to serve their interest.

Provincial Debt Summary Debt Increase

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has increased the summary debt of our Province by almost \$10 billion over 10 years. And so we know, Mr. Speaker, that they're spending more, but what are we actually getting for it as Manitobans?

* (14:10)

More than 150,000 Manitobans remain without family doctors, 8,900 Winnipeggers continue to wait for MRIs, 2,500 for CT scans, 5,700 for ultrasounds, and the list goes on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

Why is it that Manitobans are forced to spend more and get less and receive less services from this province? Why are they moving Manitoba

backwards or is backwards the new forward, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, I wish the member opposite would talk to her counterparts in Ottawa because I just met with the Minister of Finance this morning and he talked about how well Manitoba and the federal government were able to co-operate together to make investments, to stimulate the economy, to keep things going. That's what the federal Conservatives are doing and the federal Conservatives are saying that this is the right kind of investment to make so that we keep people working, so that we do build hospitals, so we do invest in technology, so we do build roads. I wish the members opposite would think a little bit before they start to talk about that we shouldn't spend money.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know they're spending a lot more money. The question is, what are we getting for it and we're not getting what we should be getting for it.

If we look to our neighbours in Saskatchewan, they have transformed themselves into a have province, leaving us behind still as the last have-not province in western Canada. Recent growth in Saskatchewan's economy has been attributed to the implementation of the 2005 Business Tax Review Committee's findings and subsequent tax relief, Mr. Speaker. Now I believe that that was even undertaken by an NDP Premier in that province at the time.

Why is it that this NDP government is so addicted to spending that they can't see fit to make necessary changes to make us competitive? If the NDP in Saskatchewan got it at that time, why don't they?

Ms. Wowchuk: I would ask the member opposite to look at the budget speech, to look at where we are spending money. She asked what we were getting. I'll tell her what we're getting. We're getting more nurses. We're getting more doctors. We're building roads. We're building schools. Funny, Mr. Speaker, one day they say, build me a road, build me a school, build me a hospital, and then the next day they say, you're spending too much money. You can't have it both ways.

We are moving Manitoba forward and we will make investments so that we have people trained to take the jobs, and I would suggest that the member look at page B-12 and she will see how Manitoba

compares in our expenditure as compared to the other provinces.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, what we're getting—unfortunately, the truth is what we're getting is a child welfare system that continues to fail our children who are falling through the cracks. What we're getting is an increase in health-care wait lists. What we're getting is a revolving door in our justice system, and what we're not doing is making our economy competitive so that we can grow our economy here in Manitoba. That's what's happening. That's the reality. That's the truth.

But, Mr. Speaker, I believe Manitoba can be a have province, and like Saskatchewan, we should already be one. But because this NDP government has recklessly spent Manitoba tax dollars and is showing no sign of changing that habit. And we need only look to the 640 million waste on a west-side bipole line. We need only look to the \$350 million wasted on nitrogen removal. The list goes on there.

How can they honestly think that they're moving Manitoba forward when their path will place us further into dependency, perpetual deficits and skyrocketing debts that will be left for future generations to pick up for their mess?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to talk about Saskatchewan, so let me quote to her the Saskatchewan budget, where the Saskatchewan budget reports that Winnipeg residents, across all family types, have a lower cost of living amongst major cities in Canada. A single Winnipeg resident with a salary of \$25,000 pays \$1,404 less a year than somebody living in Saskatoon. A family in Winnipeg of 50,000 pays \$551 less than in Saskatoon.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would also remind the member that if Saskatchewan was doing a summary budget as we have done a summary budget, their summary deficit would be \$622.7 million. And the members—the member wants to talk about Saskatchewan, let's talk about the real facts about Saskatchewan.

Addictions Treatment Centre Project Status

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, two years ago this government announced 60 new beds for an addiction treatment centre in Winnipeg. Last week, it became very clear, painfully clear, that two years of planning, community expertise and

hundreds of thousands of dollars have gone down the drain.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Healthy Living today explain why his government created false hope in the addictions community by announcing 60 new beds and why he pulled the rug out from under them last week?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): For the members opposite, I'd like to inform the member that we are continuing to enhance the addiction treatment system, and it's basically a doubling of the funding that has happened in the last decade. And you, ma'am, are continuing to vote against that.

Here's some of the things that we've done in the last—since last year. We've added 20 new addiction beds to the system since last year, and the members opposite voted against it. We're continuing to expand youth treatment, the intake and those types of programs, and the members opposite voted against it. And this year, we've increased the funding by 9.4 percent, and the members opposite will be voting against that.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing is fragmented services and supports in the community. We need to see this government pay attention to what is required within this community.

We asked the government a number of questions in the House last week, and the Minister of Healthy Living didn't have any answers. He doesn't know how many—how long the project will take. He doesn't know how much it will cost. He doesn't know how many beds the facility will have. He doesn't know what services will be offered. He doesn't even know whether they're going to renovate the existing building or tear it down and start from scratch, Mr. Speaker.

Why is this Minister of Healthy Living so utterly clueless about addictions treatment in Manitoba?

Mr. Rondeau: I thank the member for the question, because what we have done—also to co-ordinate the services—is to look at the whole spectrum of services out there. And if you look at youth services, here's an example: We, last year, added youth addictions centralized intake to help youth navigate the system. We also have beds for voluntary and involuntary addiction treatment. And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to enhance the whole spectrum of services.

I think it's very prudent to (a) add services that are necessary, (b) bring all the service providers together to determine which services can be provided, and (c) do so at the least cost to the Manitoba taxpayer.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, I think it's prudent that a minister of the Crown should know what he's talking about and should actually have answers in the House.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Healthy Living is wasting valuable time. The Magnus Centre announcement was almost two years ago, and he's moved the project back to square one. While he's wasting time, addicts are literally dying waiting for treatment.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Healthy Living come clean with the addicts of the community and Manitobans and explain why he cancelled his promise to create 60 new treatment beds? Get with the program, get with the community, and get the project done.

Mr. Rondeau: I'd like to inform the member, while we have added 20 new beds last year, we are working with organizations to add additional beds this year. And what's interesting is, rather than wait for one project, we're moving in multiple projects. So rather than wait for one project, we continue to enhance the service.

And I—we're—look at the members opposite and I say, we're working with addiction recovery, Esther House, Tamarack. We're working with a number of organizations to continue to enhance services, and Mr. Speaker, it's where we work across the spectrum to enhance all sorts.

* (14:20)

So it might not just be residential treatment. It might be out-patient treatment. It might be transition treatment. It might be support to prevent youth from getting addicted in the first place, but that's the spectrum of services—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Rural Waste-Water Management Systems Regulation Changes Update

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's been several months since the government made changes to the on-site waste-water management systems regulation, yet the public continues to raise many concerns about the impact of

these changes, such as the financial impact on affected individuals.

Last fall, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities convention—the Premier promised that a group of senior officials from the appropriate departments, along with representatives from AMM, would look at the regulation to find practical solutions on the ground, to quote.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Conservation today update Manitobans on the status of the group examining the regulations?

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in the House a week or so ago, we are looking at the regulation, and we are considering making amendments to the regulation that would make it more flexible and meet some of the concerns that have been brought to our attention by the AMM and by others in rural Manitoba and, for that matter, by the delegates at the NDP convention on the weekend.

So I'm glad to see that the honourable member was paying close attention to the resolutions being passed at the—at our convention on the weekend. And I hope to be able to report to the House very soon that the changes that we are considering—I know that time is of the essence, that given the fact that it's spring, people are going to want to know what changes there are, and I hope to deliver those changes expeditiously.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, we offered pertinent examples of the lack of straightforwardness of this resolution—and changed last week or the week before—but organizations such as AMM, the Keystone Ag Producers, Northern Association of Community Councils and even, as he said, even his own membership, along with hundreds of affected Manitobans, have expressed concern about the impact of this regulation on affected property owners. They have offered solutions such as examining each situation on a case-by-case basis to ensure the best strategy is used to protect the environment.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Conservation advise Manitobans what type of changes to the regulation are being examined?

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Mr. Speaker, that sounds an awful lot like the first question, but the fact of the matter is that, as I've indicated before, we are considering some amendments to the regulations,

and I hope that we'll be able to make that announcement in the very near future because I'm aware of the fact that people need to know what the changes are going to be.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, everyone's on the same page when it comes to protecting the environment in this House, but questions remain about this regulation and its impact.

With spring's arrival, many property transfers are taking place. Last week on CJOB the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stated, and I quote: We also don't want it to become a big bureaucratic nightmare for somebody that's trying to sell their property, too. End quote.

As new housing developments are being planned, people affected by these regulatory changes need to know if more changes are pending.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Conservation today commit a time line for changes on the on-white-on-site waste-water management system regulations, if any are coming forward?

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I think I was anticipating the member's second supplementary in my first response.

I'm aware of the concerns with respect to time and what time of year it is, and, as I committed just a few minutes ago to the honourable member, we will be bringing forth whatever changes we are bringing forward in a very timely fashion.

Lake Dauphin Fishery Co-Management Plan

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, it is now 10 years that this government has been promising to put a co-management plan in place to address the problems that are associated with the Dauphin Lake walleye fishery.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister today table a Dauphin Lake resource management plan, or will she finally admit that this is just one more example of NDP mismanagement?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, sustainability of the stock is the long-term co-management plan. Last year, we initiated a closure and we enforced that closure during the spring spawn around Dauphin Lake.

It's a shame that members opposite, in 1999, issued a press release and then walked away from the closure. There was no enforcement, and that year

over 6,000 pounds of fish were caught, Mr. Speaker, during the spring spawn. I'm going to repeat that so members opposite can hear: Over 6,000 pounds of fish were caught in the spring spawn in 1999 when they issued a press release and walked away.

We're not doing that. We're working with our partners. We're working with the stakeholders. Last year we issued a closure, and we enforced that closure, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, I'd remind the minister there is a memorandum of understanding signed in 2000 and nothing has moved on it yet.

Mr. Speaker, Derek Nepinak, the resource management chair of the West Region Tribal Council, has publicly stated there is a willingness among the First Nations chiefs to establish a consultative framework, a pickerel restocking program, as well as resources for training and joint enforcement of mutually agreed upon regulatory regime. One other stakeholder such as the Intermountain Fishing Enhancement Group are willing to participate. Apparently the only one that isn't is the minister.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister unwilling to work with these groups to develop a management plan?

Ms. Melnick: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to correct the record. Of course, we are interested in our co-management plan. That's why, over the winter, we met with over 14 First Nations communities, over 24 Métis communities of MMF and 10 northern Aboriginal communities.

We've also been meeting with the fishery enhancement groups and, just a few weeks ago, we met with the leadership of the West Region Tribal Council, Mr. Speaker, to talk about the spring spawn, to talk about the conservation of the stock—not only for this generation, but for all the generations to come, to talk about the ability of fishers to work cohesively on that lake to make sure that there's not only a good spawn this spring but all the springs to come, so that we know we're doing the right thing for the protection of Lake Dauphin and for the future of that lake and the fishers of Manitoba.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, 10 years and over half a million dollars spent and still no management plan. Ten years, and the minister is still paying lip-service and applying Band-Aids.

Last year, the Province spent \$45,000 on frozen fish to hand out. Last year, trained fish biologists were kept busy handing out these fillets instead of doing scientific monitoring during the walleye spawning run.

Mr. Speaker, when is the minister actually going to take action that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the Dauphin Lake walleye fishery for the good of the First Nations, sport fishers and commercial fishers alike?

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I would argue that the height of lip-service is issuing a press release to invoke a closure and walking away from it. That is lip-service.

What we are doing is working with the communities—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. A question's been asked. Give her a chance to answer.

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, we're working with communities. Last year, we gave away frozen fish; we did not want to bring hardship on the people who traditionally had done a lot of fishing during that time. But we're respecting the closure, and I want to thank each and every one of those individuals who came forward and accepted the closure and accepted the frozen fish.

We also wanted to make sure that the sort of social engagement that happened around the spring spawn continued to happen. We encouraged people to come out—and I think the member's also speaking against science, Mr. Speaker, which is not a surprise.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Rural Driver's Testing Service Cuts

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, here's another example of how the NDP government has vacated rural Manitoba. They've eliminated many classes of driver testing from our rural communities and forced persons to travel—needing to drive long distances at much greater expense with much larger, heavier equipment.

Young Kirby Wheelans, from Tilston—and, for the minister's information, that's in southwest Manitoba—needs a class 3 licence for a recent job offer.

Can the minister tell Mr. Wheelans, an agribusiness student, why he was told he'd have to wait until June to do his road test in Brandon, over

400 kilometres from home, if the minister's changes were to improve the system?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): I appreciate the question. It's a particular situation. If the member brings it to my office's attention, we will see.

I do know where Tilston is. I'm quite sure it's not 400 kilometres from Tilston to Brandon. I'm not sure if the member's aware of that.

What MPI has been doing is centralizing a lot of the higher classes of driver testing: class 1, class 2, class 3. In many rural communities, there's been a very low number of individuals wanting testing and the intention is to make sure those tests can be obtained quickly and in a reasonable period of time.

* (14:30)

If there's a particular situation, as was raised by the member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) a couple of weeks ago, MPI will step in and we'll make sure those tests are available.

But this has been done to improve service and, of course, improve safety for all Manitobans.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, the service was available close to home but, as the minister has indicated, it is 100 kilometres to Brandon. But now Kirby can't get tested before—by—if he can't get tested by April the 26th, he may be out of a job.

Mr. Speaker, he was told his option was to take a tandem truck to Dauphin or Portage la Prairie. For his information that's 300 kilometres from Tilston for a service that is—in '09 and prior, was available 30 kilometres down the road.

I know the minister said, and I quote, we can guarantee better service and a better schedule, end quote, in reference to removing these testing services from rural Manitoba. Well, Mr. Speaker, is the minister still intransigent in offloading these expenses in environmentally questionable practices on rural citizens?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, if his—if he will give my office more information, we'll see what we can do to make sure that his constituent receives a test sooner. But I should point out, once again, to the members opposite, that, for the higher class of licence—for class 1, class 2, class 3—MPI has expressed concerns that, as of the current time, people can take a test in a very small community

which may not be the safest when you're driving, not only anywhere in Manitoba, but anywhere in North America.

MPI has worked with many communities to come up with the best possible testing opportunities. MPI has expressed its concern. So we're concerned about convenience for all Manitobans. We're also very, very concerned about safety for all Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Maguire: That answer just continues to show how this government continues to offload on Manitobans and now he's taking on the testers. We have a standard of testing across the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, no matter where it was done before.

Not only is young Mr. Wheelans a student but he and his brother just purchased a farm, Mr. Speaker. They want to build a future for themselves at home in rural Manitoba, in order to work locally to help pay for his education and career. This NDP minister's callous decision may leave Mr. Wheelans with no job to help—even help pay for his college education.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister reconsider his government's poor decision to gut rural Manitoba programs and further burden rural citizens, school boards, industries and small business owners who require these licensing services, like young Kirby Wheelans?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the member opposite that, just a few short years ago, there were only five full-service locations in all of the province of Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out that, just a few years ago, there were only five full-time service locations across the province of Manitoba. From working with MPI, from listening to people across the province, there are now 11 full-service centres across the province of Manitoba at which any individual can take any class of licence. There's going to continue to be testing in other communities where the numbers warrant it.

It's funny, Mr. Speaker, some days they'll come in and say that we're spending money inefficiently and yet, other days, they stand up and say that MPI should continue offering services when there may only be one or two individuals in an entire year who

want a class of licence. We will side with efficiency and safety any time.

University College of the North Lack of Child-Care Spaces

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, today the Premier's government made a major infrastructure announcement, \$82 million for the University College of the North. The expansion—this expansion has great potential to improve the lives of many people in the north, but there is some problems with the plan. Let me enlighten the Premier.

Expansion of the campus will see the student enrolment go from 342 to 510, but the First Minister has only allowed an additional 35 child-care spaces. Does the minister think that 35 child-care spaces is going to be enough to cover all the new faculty, as well as the 168 students, given that 72 percent of the students in Thompson have families?

Mr. Speaker, can the First Minister explain to Manitobans how he thinks that 35 child-care spaces are going to be enough for this new institution?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

Indeed, I was in Thompson, Manitoba, this morning for the most significant announcement of post-secondary facilities in several decades in northern Manitoba: \$82 million, the first phase, \$68 million for new facilities for University College of the North. It will include a learning centre and a library. In addition, the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross) has committed to 24 units of housing that will serve the families and children attending the school.

And, as I understand it, there will be up to 75 day-care spaces in the new facility. The member has indicated 35. I will do an additional check on that and let him know. But I understand that there will be a significant expansion of day care in the area to serve the children and families of students attending the school. And, as I understand it, it'll be up to 75 additional spots, but I will undertake to check that for him. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I need to enlighten the Premier; it's 75 total, but 35 new spaces. And 35 new spaces is not enough when you consider all the existing students, and when you consider that 75 percent of the students in Thompson have families.

Look, the problem in Thompson is, bluntly, this: That there are more than 3,000 children under the age of 12 in Thompson; as of last summer, there were only 335 child-care spaces with waits of three to four years for people wanting to get their children into child care.

I would think that if there was a massive deficit situation, which there is, and the Premier's going to make new funding announcement, he should get his facts in order and he should do it properly, instead of trying to do it part of the way, without enough child-care spaces for the students there to be properly supported.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I think we have clarified the question here, but I will undertake to verify the information he's put on the record.

There will be a new day care for—with 75 spots; the member indicates there will be 35 additional. That would square the circle in one way, but let him not forget he is planning to vote against the budget, which has over 600 additional day-care spaces this year. The Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) made this announcement just last week: eight new child-care centres, 650 more child-care spaces, a centralized, on-line wait list and greater work force stability. All of these things were announced Friday.

Will the member now vote for the budget? Or is he again going to vote against it and then complain there are insufficient day-care spots?

Regional Health Authorities Accountability

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, having surveyed my constituents, in excess of over several hundred people responded. And one of the questions I asked them was in regards to the quality of health-care services, and has the quality of health-care services in the province of Manitoba gotten better since 1999.

Mr. Speaker, one in four—less than one in four of my constituents believe that health care is better today than it was in 1999. In fact, over 50 percent would argue that health care today is worse. The primary reason for that is that this government has lost control in administering health care. The regional health care authorities has proven to being an absolute and total disaster.

My question to the Minister of Health today: Will she recognize that the value of having regional

health care authorities come before a standing committee of the Legislature, so there will be more accountability in health care in the province of Manitoba, and constituents across the province will be better served with quality health care?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, just to put some facts on the record for the member, in terms of making our measurement—*[interjection]* Yes. We have 2,000 more nurses today than we did in 1999. We have 345 more doctors today than we did in 1999. I can tell the member, in particular—some members from the Conservatives that were putting incorrect information on the record earlier—that, in fact, we have cut our wait time for cataract surgery by 54 percent since 1999. We have cut the CT wait time down 77 percent since 1998. We've cut our ultrasound wait time by 60 percent, when it was as high as 20 weeks in 1998.

Do you think maybe the people that answered this survey are the same ones that he sent dangerous leaflets to about cardiac surgery that his own leader wouldn't even agree with?

University College of the North Thompson Campus

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, our government's commitment to quality, accessible and affordable education is well known, and I am very proud of the many accomplishments this government has made in improving post-secondary education.

Now, I'm fully aware that some Tory members were against the UCN, the whole concept of UCN, and now I find out that the Liberal leader is also trying to put a negative spin on what I think is a really—a good news story for us northerners.

* (14:40)

So I ask the Minister of Advanced Education, who is very eager to answer this question, to please give us the real facts on what's happening to the University College of the North.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): I think you saw my eagerness to respond to this question.

You know, it's really—it's absolutely extraordinary we've just seen a miserable example of negativity. Imagine the Liberal member from River Heights getting up and taking what is one of the best good news stories in Manitoba, digging deep until he

can find something nasty to say, but that's the way he is.

Anyway, I have some new information to put on the record, and the new information is that the 75 spots in Thompson are all new spaces. Also, for the information of the House in general and for the member from River Heights, at this morning's announcement, unveiling of site plan—Mr. Speaker, there's such a hullabaloo coming from there I can hardly hear myself speak—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Let's have some order, please. Order. Let's have some order, please. Order.

Ms. McGifford: At today's announcement, we were joined by elders who said prayers and blessed the ceremony. We were joined by the mayor of Thompson, who is over-the-moon delighted. We were joined by Dr. Don Robertson, an internationally respected aboriginal educator, who also brought his good wishes. We were joined by the president of University College of the North. It was completely, totally, a good news story, a great example of the investments this government is making.

Highway 59 Upgrade Requirements

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Minister, Highway 59 from St. Malo to the border has been on the books for upgrades to A1 loading for many years. The land has been bought and surveys have been done and redone and redone. The project is shovel ready. Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate if this project is a go this year?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Acting Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's amazing. One day they're asking for cuts and the next day they're asking for spending, and this day it's: When are you going to pave the highway in my backyard?

You know, the amount of money that we've invested—invested, Mr. Speaker—in this province is unprecedented, and I know that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure—Infrastructure and Transportation from Thompson would certainly want to comment that the member opposite should know this, and yet what is he going to do? When it comes time to vote for an unprecedented budget for Transportation and Infrastructure in this province, he's going to vote no and he's going to vote against it. You should be ashamed of yourself as a rural MLA,

with billions of dollars being spent in infrastructure, and the member for Emerson is going to vote against it. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Mr. Graydon: The member from La Verendrye talks about someone should be ashamed of himself; \$440 million he spent somewhere but not on highways south of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, this highway project has the support of the Eastman development corporation as well as the municipalities of De Salaberry, Stuartburn, Franklin and Hanover. Four major trucking firms are located in Steinbach; they make significant use of Highway 59.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to completing this project this year?

Mr. Lemieux: We're proud, proud as a government, to stand before you and all members here, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, to say that we not only respect the views of all Manitobans, but there are highway projects in northern Manitoba, highway projects in western Manitoba, highway projects in eastern Manitoba and southern Manitoba. Every corner of the province in Manitoba is seeing unprecedented investment in transportation, including Highway 75 that run through—runs through the member's constituency itself. Unprecedented amount of money is being spent and yet members opposite—many of the rural members opposite, walk and strut into coffee shops all over the province saying how they're the leaders, and yet they vote against unprecedented amount of money being invested in highways in their backyard. Shame on them.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Windsor Park Collegiate Students

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I rise today to inform all members of this Chamber about a wonderful project undertaken by a team of high school students at Windsor Park Collegiate.

Through the winter, Chynna Knockaert, Matthew Dejonckheere, Elijah Berard-Froese and Victoria Popp designed and built a remote-control hovercraft for entry in a province-wide competition sponsored by the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters group. In addition to technical skills demonstrated by the project, the students were asked to craft a business plan guiding the project's

execution. Local businesses were canvassed to donate material and technical expertise.

Once built, the hovercraft was tested in competition among other high school teams at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. Teams raced their hovercrafts around challenging obstacle courses and were judged on the basis of its lift, load and propulsion.

The team from Windsor Park were among the top 10 teams to be asked back to a final demonstration. At the final on March 23rd, the Windsor Park Collegiate design claimed an impressive silver medal. The students on the team were each awarded a bursary on behalf of the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters.

My thanks are extended to the staff of the Windsor Park Collegiate who helped them, particularly Adriano Magnifico. Your leadership is commendable and the skills you imparted with your students are invaluable to them in the future.

Materials and time were donated by Custom Plastic Creations, Woodcock Cycle and Duha Color Services. Thanks to you, the businesses, for their generosity and community spirit.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I was—I had the pleasure of visiting this school and the bright, young group of individuals demonstrated the leadership and the skills. As someone who was an engineer in a past career, I was very thrilled to look at these students whom I think are the future of our society as engineers and entrepreneurs, and they will build our province, wonderful province of Manitoba, with industry innovation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Education Week

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, as every member of this House knows, receiving a quality education is important for a future full of success. Bright and engaging teachers and first-class facilities can ensure that our young people are given the best start in life they can get, and so it is my pleasure to recognize this week as Education Week here in Manitoba.

Every day across the province, many dedicated teachers work hard to ignite a passion for learning in Manitoba's children and youth. There are many innovative programs that expand students' horizons and teach them the important skills that they—will be needed as they move into the future.

This week the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba association of school boards have put together a number of events to celebrate the work of Manitoba's teachers, principals, support staff and the countless other individuals who contribute to educating our students.

Too many people are unaware of the important role that schools play in our society. Schools are constantly growing, leading in innovation and encouraging openness and intellectual pursuit.

Manitoba schools are also becoming increasingly diverse. As our province welcomes people of many nationalities, our classrooms only benefit from their unique knowledge and experiences.

As the theme of Education Week suggests, our schools are truly opening the minds of our children to a world of knowledge which is, in turn, opening doors to endless opportunities. Education is an important resource in our province, building and encouraging the leaders of tomorrow, yet our schools face a great many challenges in carrying out this vital role. They deal with increasingly-increasing class sizes, limited resources, children who come from troubled backgrounds and parents who are simply not involved. Though the work is challenging, our educators, they are constantly working to bring a high quality of education to students in Manitoba.

I want to thank teachers, administrators, trustees and other staff who dedicate themselves to opening the minds of our young people through education. Education Week is a reminder to all of us that education is vitally important and deserves our full support. Thank you very much.

* (14:50)

University of Winnipeg Students' Association Day Care

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I rise today to celebrate the success story of a wonderful service in my constituency, the newly expanded University of Winnipeg Students' Association Day Care.

The UWSA Day Care has been providing affordable child care to area residents for nearly 30 years. In September 2009, it moved into a brand new state-of-the-art facility right next to the equally new McFeetors Hall student residence. This much larger facility will allow the UWSA Day Care to care for up to 112 children, compared to just 62 in its former location. The layout can accommodate infants

as young as three months, right up to five-year-old preschoolers, and, at a minimum, one-quarter of the spots available are reserved for area residents.

Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to recently host a pancake breakfast for the children and their parents at the start of their busy day. I saw first-hand how this wonderful new day-care centre is helping both parents and children find the support they need and deserve to balance work, school and family commitments. With their tummies full of pancakes and fresh fruit, the children were certainly keen to start exploring the new day and all the adventures they were sure to find along the way. The diversity of these families is truly impressive, representing cultures from literally every corner of the globe.

I was also very proud to witness the commitment of day-care staff, led by executive director Diana Rozos, to not only accommodate but truly celebrate this diversity as the asset it truly is.

Mr. Speaker, it is very encouraging to see such incredible child care provided in my own constituency at some of the most affordable rates in the country. I was extremely proud that this year's provincial budget includes the launch of a pension plan for child-care workers across Manitoba. These professionals do amazing work with our treasured children during the most formative years of their life.

I wish to thank the staff, parents and children at the UWSA Day Care for sharing their morning with me and for teaching me so much along the way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Westfield Industries

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise in the House today to acknowledge the achievement of Rosenort-based Westfield Industries as one of this year's recipients of the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters Manitoba Export Award.

As a global leader in the production of portable grain-handling equipment, Westfield continues to post strong growth year after year despite the economic recession, a true Manitoba success story.

Westfield received the Manitoba Export Award on March 25th, 2010, during this year's Manufacturing Week hosted by the Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters. This award recognizes the success of Manitoba exporters, showcasing the great home-grown talent we have right here in Manitoba.

Westfield Industries demonstrate the innovative and expertise necessary to lead in the competitive global economy providing high quality equipment agricultural products have relied on since 1950.

But it takes more than just great products to stay ahead of the game. Successful businesses also rely on great organization. Westfield has begun to incorporate a lean manufacturing into its production with all employees integrating their techniques into their daily work routine. It is these types of innovations, whether it be pushing the envelope in product design or new techniques in the manufacturing process that put Westfield Industries on the top of the portable grain-handling equipment business.

I know all Manitobans can be proud of success stories like Westfield Industries, especially during this time of recession when many manufacturers are hurting.

I want to extend my congratulations to the management and employees at Westfield Industries for their hard work in making Westfield such a success and winning this year's Manitoba Export Award. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ukrainian Voice Newspaper—100th Anniversary

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, on March 14th, a well-attended banquet celebrated the 100th anniversary of the *Ukrainian Voice* newspaper, which has given Winnipeg's Ukrainian community an important vehicle for expression over the past century and has united people in a way few news sources can.

After waves of immigration towards the turn of the 20th century, Ukrainian-Canadians identified the need to establish a national newspaper to educate themselves about political affairs, disseminate information about their welfare and encourage Ukrainian nationalism.

The idea was born at the Ukrainian Teachers' Association convention in Winnipeg in 1907, and on March 16th, 1910, the first issue of the *Ukrainian Voice* was published. *Ukrainian Voice* appeared during a period when national consciousness of the Ukrainian settlers was very low. Particularly telling is the fact that the term "Ukrainian" was seldom used in the early 1900s. The use of the word in the title to denote a specific nationality was greatly significant because this term not only identified the Ukrainian people as a distinct group but also unified

immigrants from various regions of their home country.

The history of the paper encompasses the organization and development of the Ukrainian community, including religious, cultural, educational, economic, political and social areas of endeavour. This progression reflected the tenacity of the immigrants to thrive and establish themselves under challenging circumstances during a time that other more dominant cultural and religious groups sought to absorb them. The newspaper embraced a self-reliant ideology, and its readers responded with a heightened awareness of their rich heritage and responsibility to cherish it.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the longevity of this valuable piece of Ukrainian culture and look forward to many more years of publications.

I wish to congratulate the creators of this paper, past and present, for their outstanding achievement.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader):

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce that the previously scheduled meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts from Wednesday, April the 14th, will now take place on Thursday, April 15th, at 7 p.m. The committee will still be considering the Auditor General's 2009 follow-up report, with the same witnesses as previously announced.

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BUDGET DEBATE

(Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we'll resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) that this House approve 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, and it's in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), who has 21 minutes remaining, and it's also in the name of the honourable Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), who has 25 minutes.

So we will go to the honourable member for Steinbach to conclude his 21 minutes, and then, following that, we will move to the honourable Minister of Healthy Living.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Minister for Healthy Living for allowing me to continue on with my debate on the budget.

And, when we left off on Friday, there were some remarks regarding what was in the budget and what is not in the budget, and one of the things that has been raised here in the Legislature and, indeed, across Manitoba, is the new agreement, such as it is, to build a stadium in the province of Manitoba. And we remember that the original agreement that was signed, sealed, and, we thought, delivered, by the former premier, Gary Doer, was generally accepted as a deal that was good for taxpayers and good for Manitobans. And, since then, we've seen a new deal that has come forward and been put on the table by the new Premier (Mr. Selinger), and it's clearly not as good a deal as what the former premier was able to negotiate, not as good for taxpayers and, ultimately, maybe not as good overall in terms of the facility itself.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And so we are concerned, and I think that there are many Manitobans that are concerned, who say, sure, we support the Winnipeg Football Club, the Blue Bombers. Sure, we think that they're a community asset, and it would be great to have a new stadium for them. But not at any cost; that there has to be some balance. There has to be some reason.

And we see this debate happening in other jurisdictions where they've built stadiums, and I've referenced what's happening in Minneapolis and the ongoing negotiations regarding the Minnesota Vikings and what will happen to their stadium. And there is a very alive debate, a very vivid debate about how taxpayers' dollars should be used. And nobody is suggesting that, in these facilities, all of the money, a hundred percent, essentially, should be coming from the taxpayer. And that's more or less what the Premier has signed on to, a deal that is

going to put at risk taxpayers for almost the entirety of this facility.

So, let alone—or, putting aside the fact that a good number of Manitobans, perhaps the majority, support the football club itself—and we all hope that it does well both on the field and off the field in this coming year—we do have concerns about the deal, how it's structured and what is going to be left for taxpayers to pay when the risky proposition that it hinges upon, that it's leveraged against, if that doesn't come through. So those concerns are very alive and very real, and they were reinforced to me this weekend in talking to residents of the constituency that I am fortunate to represent.

* (15:00)

I also want to note, with some dismay, that while I was able to conduct some prebudget consultations with residents of the City of Steinbach, the R.M. of Hanover and the Town of Niverville, once again this government decided not to come to any of those communities or those municipalities to hold a prebudget consultation. In fact, I believe I'm correct in saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the riding that I represent, one of the fastest growing and one of the best ridings in terms of the economic environment, has only had one prebudget consultation since 1999, since this government has come into office. And I think that that's regrettable because it's almost as though they don't want to hear a certain perspective, a certain perspective that might be different than their own perspective, their own philosophy as a government.

Indeed, I, in the consultations that I had, which involved not only verbal consultations but an ability for people to respond via mail, the vast, vast majority, well over 95 percent, were concerned about the debt of the province and the growing debt of this province. But the members opposite—the government wouldn't have heard those concerns, Madam Deputy Speaker, because they simply didn't come to the community to hear those concerns.

And it begs the question whether or not these prebudget consultation meetings have gone from being a good exercise, and something that we valued and continued on in government in the 1990s, to something more of a confirmation exercise, where the government simply tries to preordain the answers that they want, knowing what direction they want to go with their budget already.

And, in fact, I know one of the places where they had a consultation meeting, they had several over the last number of years, was in the community of Ste. Anne, a great community where I have lots of friends and where there's lots of good things happening. But, in that community, I understand from one of the participants who was at the meeting, he got a call—he's a municipal official—he got a call the day of the meeting asking if he would come out to the consultation. When he asked who it was that had also been invited, the answer was essentially that nobody had really been invited. They were just hand-selecting individuals to come out to a meeting.

So about a dozen people from—this individual indicated—a dozen people came out to the meeting in Ste. Anne to hear the prebudget consultation performance by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), a hand-selected group. And from that the government has built its foundation for this budget or, at least, the defence of the budget. And I think they're having a difficult time, in fact, defending it.

I know, when the results of the budget came out indicating that there would be a five-year deficit plan, there were many, many people who were shocked by that. I think we were expecting, by the nature of this government, that there would be a one-year deficit projection, but nobody expected that they would be looking at a five-year, a half-decade deficit projection that would require them to change the law, the legislation around balanced budgets, simply to make it in conformity with the existing legislation and to prevent the ministers on that side from taking a 40 percent pay cut.

And that is something, of course—not just a five-year deficit that concern Manitobans, but the fact that ministers would agree to change the legislation simply to protect their own salaries because they couldn't live within the legislation. I know many constituents said, well, wouldn't that be nice if we were able to change laws when something went afoul.

I remember vividly the photo radar debate that happened in this House last fall and the then-attorney general, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and others on his side, stood up to defend the fact that tickets which were deemed to be wrongfully issued should still be paid and that there wouldn't be any money returned. And I remember the attorney general, the member for Kildonan, passionately, as he often does in this House, defending the facts saying, the law is the law. We can't go back and

change the law. It is the way it is. It's written the way it is. And it would be wrong for us to reverse ourselves and to refund the money because the law needs to be upheld the way that it was written. And those were regarding tickets that were deemed to be, by the courts, improperly issued.

And now we have the same government changing the law, exactly what they said they couldn't do only a few months ago, Madam Deputy Speaker, changing the law to protect their own salaries, and it was not lost on Manitobans. This point is not lost on them when they look at how the government treats ordinary taxpayers, families who are struggling every day just simply to make ends meet to ensure that the basics are there for their family and a few extras, how they were treated by the government when it came to the issue of illegal photo radar tickets and now in comparison to the defence of the minister's salaries by the changing of the balanced budget law. That's something that's not lost on them.

I also know that there is concern about whether or not the numbers, the projections in the budget, are actually going to be accurate. It seems to be a bit of a leap of faith whether or not we can trust that the government will be able to get back to a balanced position in four to five years.

We've seen the pronouncements and announcements by this government, whether it's dealing with addictions treatment, for example. We've seen the fancy announcements, but at the end of the day, they don't amount to anything and they're never fulfilled. They get lots of great media on the front end when the announcements are made, but then they quietly try to change or cancel the project later on.

So there's a lot of questions about whether or not the numbers are actually accurate. We never saw the stadium numbers in this particular document. It was never talked about during the Budget Address by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk). She may not even have known about it, but it simply wasn't contained in her address or her budget.

There was questions last week raised about \$14.4 million that was provided by the federal government to hire police officers, where the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), the former, former attorney general, indicated that there would be 30 police officers split between Winnipeg, Brandon and rural Manitoba, hired from the federal

funding of \$14.4 million announced a couple of years ago.

There, again, it was a great pronouncement. It was welcomed, and rightfully so, by officials in Winnipeg and by—in Brandon and in other rural communities who were hoping to see the benefit of that funding. But it seems to have disappeared.

The funding has gone into some sort of a government expenditure that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) can't seem to identify, and I would hope that the member for St. Johns, the former, former attorney general, who made the commitment to the residents of Brandon, to rural Manitoba and to Winnipeg, to ensure that 30 additional officers would be hired—he made that commitment in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. He said that he was going to be strong and to be clear about it, and now that money has been spent on something else. I hope that he goes into those communities and justifies why it is that that money isn't being expended on the police officers like he made a commitment that they would.

So, when we look at this budget, there's obviously concerns about what's in the budget and what's not in the budget. One of the things that was announced, and not too much fanfare, understandably, is the 2 percent tax that's going to be going on quota. And I've had a number of calls and discussions and e-mails, as I'm sure the Minister of Justice—or the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) has over the last number of days about concerns about this tax.

And let's not call it anything but a tax. It's not a levy; it's not a service. There's no service being provided by the government in these transactions. It's simply a tax.

And I understand that the Minister of Agriculture, along with many other of his colleagues, were tasked with finding additional revenue in their department. And, so, no doubt, he looked at this area, this sector of his department and said, well, here are farmers who are at least stable, unlike some of the other industries that he slapped a moratorium on or others that he's tried to regulate off the farm, but looked at this industry and said, well, this one is stable so we're going to slap a tax on them because they can afford to pay it.

Well, I can tell you, in talking with many, many producers over the last number of days, they're very concerned, not only about the process about how this tax came about without any consultation, without

any warning, but the fact that the minister believes that they're able to pay and that they have a lot of excess room.

I trust farmers when it comes to managing their money, when it comes to managing the land and when it comes to managing their operations. I don't trust, and I don't think they do trust, this minister in terms of taking this money from them. And it's not too late, and I hope that—and I think it'll be done by regulation—I hope that the minister will listen to the pleas of those who have contacted him and said, this isn't an appropriate way to balance—to prevent your deficit from even being larger. It's far from balanced. It is a—it isn't well. And I know the Minister of Agriculture wonders if I said "balanced" and it's a word he may not recognize, and I did say that word because it's a word, I think, that people respect in terms of budgeting.

But farmers want to ensure that he is going to listen to their concerns, that he's not simply going to take this money and put it into a lot of areas of an increasing deficit. So I hope that he'll listen to them and know that there's very few sectors in our farming community that haven't been impacted by the variety of things, some of which are the responsibility of this government, like moratoriums and other things, and some which aren't, some of which are global issues, whether they're trade issues, or subsidy issues that sometimes happen with our trading partners, or whether they're a border issue as a result of disease that sometimes comes into a variety of different sectors.

* (15:10)

So some of them are global issues and some of them are man-made issues right here in Manitoba by this government. This is one he can control; this is one that he can take action on. This is one where he can stand up to farmers, where I recognize there are sometimes other issues that are beyond the control of government.

So I hope that he's going to listen to those in the quota industry who are impacted by that, because it simply isn't acceptable to attack the quota sector when they're doing good work, when they're stable, when they are one of the strong points of the agriculture sector.

I know that I made a commitment to the Minister of Healthy Living that I would provide him time, at this time, and so I want to, on behalf of myself and my family and my wife, Kim, thank the residents of

the Steinbach constituency, of the city of Steinbach, the R.M. of Hanover and the town of Niverville, for once again giving me the opportunity through the past year to represent them. I learned a great deal from the residents of the area. I'm always—feel very humble to represent such great, industrious, hard working, honest people, and I appreciate the opportunity to represent them and to say a few words on their behalf on this budget.

So thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased—I'd like to first thank the member for Steinbach and the entire House for allowing me to speak to this and give me leave to speak again today. I'd also like to thank all the members of the House for continuing to be dedicated. I don't think the average person realizes the amount of work, the amount of time and the cost it has to do with time and family and loved ones, to sit in the House, and members from all sides of the House do spend a great deal of time and effort on it and should be commended.

With that said, though, there is differences in this House. There's difference in philosophies in this House, and there's differences in approaches in the House. We, on this side of the House, believe that it's important to invest in infrastructure, in people, in education, in health care, in roads, in technology. We believe that it's important to work to look at the future and move towards that future with energy, and not only energy in ourselves, but real energy which you can do in the oil and gas, hydro-electric and new biofuels areas. We believe that it's necessary to move forward. And it's interesting to contrast that with the Conservatives because it's really telling when the Tories have said, in public, that they will put less focus on other issues such as health care, roads, social service, agriculture, rural depopulation and First Nations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I look at it and I go there, where we will be putting more attention to health care. We'll be training and hiring more doctors and nurses. We'll have technicians in this province. And here's just a contrast between the NDP government and the opposition. And realize, of course, that we're both facing an economic downturn. In the '90s, the Tories chose to decrease the size of the medical faculty, fire nurses, close down the technician training program at Red River, so that

there weren't any technicians being trained and, basically, close down the largest medical facility at that time—sorry, up to that time—which was the Misericordia general hospital. They closed it down.

And that is a choice and it's a choice that they made. And it took many, many years to train the nurses and doctors that left the province at that time. It took a long time to set up a new technician training course, get the MRIs, CAT scans and other scanners that were necessary and the lab techs. But we'll have—and we have got—new facilities. And they're not just in Winnipeg. They're around the province. And we have focussed on hiring more of those people who are responsible for the health-care system. And I'm pleased that we have focussed on health care. And I make no apologies of that because I think Manitobans want a first-class health-care system and we are delivering that.

I've recently experienced some of the positive effects of the CancerCare system and—through people I know—and they are very, very impressed by the response time, the care of the people who work there, and I'm pleased that we're focussing on that. And I know it's a contrast from the Conservatives. I hope that people realize that their leader has said that they won't focus on health care. Members of their party have said that they won't focus on health care. And I think it's very, very appropriate that our party will focus on health care, which is a priority for Manitobans.

We look at other issues, like roads. Every day the Conservatives talk about roads and infrastructure—ones they want built. But, when they were in power, they were not even spending what they collected in the gas tax. So they were taking money for fuel taxes and not investing in roads. In fact, they were not looking to the future. I'm pleased that we have an unprecedented road and highway budget, and I'm pleased that we're investing because there is—if you don't invest in fixing up the roads for 10 years, I am amazed that they appear surprised that the roads deteriorated, and they did deteriorate in the '90s, and I'm pleased that we have a government that's committed to invest in infrastructure, roads, water projects, clean water and sewer projects.

I'm pleased that we're investing in recreational centres, and just on Friday I was pleased to go to the MTS MoosePlex or iceplex, and that's a four-ice-rink surface that is going to provide recreational services for Manitobans. It's going to get more people doing ice skating. It's going to keep people more

exercising, and I'm pleased that we've invested in the Centennial Pool, and I know that you can go to the Centennial Pool out in Assiniboia and you can see people working out and exercising and keeping fit. I'm please that we invested in the YMCA. Why? Because we have young people and families all-busy all the time out there, and then that's keeping people healthy. That's decreasing the amount of diabetes, the amount of hip and knee surgery, the amount of cardiovascular surgery. We're keeping people well and that is an investment, and I think it's really, really important to continue to invest in recreational facilities.

I was excited about the trails announcement where we're building new trails in the city of Winnipeg and the Trans Canada Trail, so that people can go in a safe way, have more activity, more walking, more biking in a safe environment, and I'm pleased that we're investing in those, because those are investments that we will have for decades.

Now, again, I look at the Conservative Party and when I looked at the Conservative Party, they had an engineering building with a leaky roof. They didn't invest in schools. They didn't invest in roads. They didn't invest in recreational facilities and they wonder—and they wondered why people were leaving the province in droves.

I am pleased that we've had record amount of people coming to Manitoba. They come to Manitoba because they think that it's a province with promise and it is building and growing and it's exciting. I look at the Tories and they say they don't want to invest in social services. They do not care about the people who are the most vulnerable in our society. I know they didn't care in the '90s and those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it.

So I am pleased that we're taking unprecedented investments, and what we're doing is we're working with people to create a positive outcome. We're working with people who have been traditionally underemployed and giving them the education and skills and support to gain long-term, meaningful employment. I'm pleased that people are allowed to get literacy training and language training while they're looking for a job. I'm pleased that we look at the most vulnerable and create supports.

I look at the addiction treatment centre and-sector, and I look at basically doubling the expenditures in that area, and the members opposite vote against it time and time again. I'm pleased that we're working with community groups to have

cost-effective prevention, intervention, treatment and follow-up. Those are appropriate. I think it's really good that we are working so that we have a wide spectrum of addiction services out there, and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it's the role of government to make sure that we continue to evaluate programs, make sure we continue to evaluate what's available out there so that we do provide cost-effective, appropriate interventions to help people and I think that's wonderful.

*(15:20)

And I look at the other things that differ between us and the Conservatives. Agriculture: I know we have worked very, very hard in agriculture. I have a huge amount of respect for the previous and the present Minister of Agriculture in working to build the agricultural community. Again, in contrast, the opposition—in the opposition days, they allowed the slaughter capacity to leave; we're working to build slaughter capacity. They kept into the traditional agriculture; we continue to look at value-added.

And I'm pleased the present Minister of Ag made a wonderful announcement about the hemp industry, because I think that has potential. I look at the biofuels industry, where we looked at—look—the new ethanol and bio-diesel mandate, where we're taking non-food-grade product, enhancing the value-added and using that as green fuel, which provides more money for farmers, better economic development and yet another way for our farmers and farming community to diversify. I think that's the future and I'm surprised that we continue to be the party to support agriculture, where the members opposite continue to do nothing in that sector.

And the other sector that I'm very pleased to see that we're working in is the whole Richardson Centre for Functional Foods and Nutraceuticals, where we're looking at flax and Canola, et cetera, and looking at how we can create healthy food, which will help our population and, at the same time, help our farmers. I think that's great. I know I did—what I call it is the taco test, where I took healthy tacos produced in Manitoba from flax and good whole grain, I took them home. Everyone ate them. They were fabulous. They're better. They're good for cholesterol. No salt. They're Manitoba-made and they're going to be exported around North America. That's a positive thing.

And you know what? We've have flavoured seeds which were very, very good. We have all sorts of products that are coming out of the Richardson

Centre which is adding value-added and I'd like to compliment the people out there who are working with farmers to have value-added.

I'd also look at the area of rural depopulation. I find it interesting, because they're talking about rural depopulation, where what we're trying to do is bring more people here. I notice, under our government, what we have done, is we continue to enhance immigration. We continue to enhance language services so that people are coming to Manitoba, and not just through immigration but through inter-provincial immigration. And they do that because we have a positive outlook and we will continue to build and diversify the rural economy and that's positive.

And, of course, the members opposite don't think that First Nations are important. They never did in the past history. They never talk about First Nations. They don't know how to work in partnership and I'm pleased that we are working in partnership with First Nations because it does make a difference.

I look at the Healthy Child initiative. It's in the Department of Healthy Living. We're working and investing \$28 million to support families, to support children, to move forward in the Stop FAS program, to move forward on having parents have information and support them in the parenting role.

I'm pleased to be part of a department that's had a 9.4 percent increase in addiction treatment and working in co-operation with addiction services. And I was pleased to talk to them on how to move that forward.

I'm pleased to be part of a government that has a comprehensive suite of services for seniors and listens to seniors and has one of the best programs to support seniors, Aging in Place, to make sure that they have the supports to grow old in their community. And that also entails things like In Motion, where seniors groups are having activity, fitness, elder aerobics, tai chi, et cetera, so that there's less falls, so people stay flexible, and more—not just physically active, but we also get them to stay mentally active and that helps with decrease in dementia and other factors that may affect them.

I'm pleased that we are moving forward on transportation to allow all people to be able to get from work or home to other areas and that's very, very important and, we will continue to fund Handi-Transit, Winnipeg Transit, transit from around the province and that's important. And I'm pleased that

we're putting money there and helping to provide services for all Manitobans.

I look at the whole area of abuse. We have a very good spectrum of services for elders abuse and that is a very, very positive program that has come out of my department and has made a huge difference.

And I'm also pleased about the funding for public schools which was almost 3 percent increased this year and universities and colleges which was about four and a half percent.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want them to realize the fiscal reality we're working in. We've had six credit rating upgrade-increases; Dominion Bond Rating Service has increased it, Moody's has increased it, Standard & Poor's, and the debt-to-GDP has gone down from 20—from 32.9 percent in 1999 to 26.8 percent. And Hydro has gone from a 16 percent equity and 84 percent debt in 1999 to, now, 25 percent equity and 75 percent, which it means it's changed about 1 percent per year. That's very, very positive.

We're also looking at what we can do on the middle years. We're looking at what we can do to make sure that all people are supported and we will continue to do that. We need to focus on a healthy lifestyle. We need to make sure that we support all groups and not divide them. And we need to look at how we invest in the human and infrastructure needs of all Manitobans.

We as New Democrats have done that. We will continue to do that and I'm pleased to do that because we will not ever make the poorest and the most vulnerable suffer so that a few can get ahead. We believe that all people must live in a just and fair society and that is how a government and province is adjusted.

And I think—I look at what programs we put forward and I stand behind them, and they are in stark contrast to the Conservatives'. So, in closing, I thank the members for allowing me to speak but I hope all Manitobans realize the difference between the NDP government—one that's progressive, that's building, that's caring—versus a Tory government, which was in stark contradiction.

Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Madam Deputy Speaker, it brings me great pleasure to have the opportunity to stand in this House and give another

speech to the budget. This is about my 10th or 11th one that I've given since I've been a member of the Legislative Assembly.

And I always like to start my speeches by, first of all, thanking the great people of Springfield, which comprises the Rural Municipality of Springfield and the Rural Municipality of East St. Paul, two wonderful communities that I currently represent.

And, in short while, when the Premier calls an election in 2011—I think in October he said at his convention—I hope that I will be able to represent the wonderful communities of Springfield, East St. Paul and West St. Paul, another wonderful community, and certainly spend a lot of time travelling my constituency, not just as a politician, but also doing an awful lot of sports events.

I, on occasion, have mentioned to this House that I seem to have incredibly active children involved in sports. I think, yesterday, I spent between six and seven hours on soccer pitches or in soccer facilities, and it was all good. It—really great to see a lot of young people getting out and healthy and exercising, and that's what we want to see in our communities.

Certainly, Springfield and East St. Paul and West St. Paul are healthy, active communities. You've got a lot of excitement and a lot of children out doing whatever activity is, whether it's hockey or soccer, baseball or football. And it's great to go out and watch them play. It's a great opportunity to get out and talk to constituents on a real human level.

And I want to, once again, thank the leadership of my rural municipalities for the great job they do and the work that they do serving our communities.

I also want to thank my staff that does just an amazing job. I'd like to thank Gayle Dowler, who, I've mentioned before, has been serving the MLA for Springfield longer than I've been there. And she does just a terrific job representing the constituents of Springfield. One of my colleagues says that maybe she should run. Well, I think that would be a great idea but she will have to wait till I'm no longer there. She—there's a little conflict of interest, but she is just an outstanding individual, and I thank her for all the work and all the effort that she has put in over the years on behalf of the people of Springfield.

* (15:30)

Also, Gladys Hayward Williams, who's doing just a great job here as the legislative assistant. And Matthew LePage, a great young individual, a young student from the University of Manitoba, who helps out in my office as well. I want to thank him and all of those that help to make this Chamber run, whether it's table officers; our Clerk, Patricia Chaychuk, and others, I want to thank them, all of them, for the kinds of effort—*[interjection]* Rick Yarish. I'm sorry, I'd be remiss if I didn't name him. I thank him for all the work he does, and the fact that when he parks next to me, he doesn't hit my car with his door, because I think if he did that, it would bring down the value of my car and improve the value of his truck. But I'm probably telling secrets that I shouldn't be out of the parking lot here and, you know, all of those that make this building run.

In fact, last fall I had the opportunity, or I should say, this spring I had the opportunity to have a Take Your Kid to Work, and I brought Brigitta to the Manitoba Legislature, and I lined up five or six different meetings of different facets of what makes this building run, all the way from maintenance to security to the Clerk's office, and it was just one of those great opportunities to just reflect how many people are involved in making a session run.

It was a really good opportunity, and I think the highlight was that we got to go to the Lieutenant-Governor's office, and we waited for His Worship and finally he showed up. And I've never before been in the inner sanctum of his personal office. And he took us in there, and she had three questions that she wanted to ask, and she asked them. And then he said, you know, would you like a photo, and we said, absolutely, we would like to have a photo. And he said, well, why don't you sit behind my desk, and he and I stood on either side of her, and she fit really well behind that desk. I think even the Lieutenant-Governor felt he had to look over his shoulder, and he just, of course, loved that moment. And Brigitta, just being the terrific student that she is, deserved that opportunity, that little moment well, and I'd like to thank the Lieutenant-Governor and everybody else who makes this building tick, makes this building run, and they do such a great job of it.

Over the years that many of us have had the opportunity to speak to budgets, we've mentioned that, certainly, since the NDP got into power in '99, that the spending that was going on, the reckless spending was not sustainable. In fact, if you would go back in *Hansard*, you would see, I think I termed

it "the storm clouds," and we kept warning the NDP that the storm clouds were coming, that the kind of expenditures, the reliance on federal transfer payments, that it was not a sustainable system, that you can't keep going—then it was sugar daddy Chrétien, and then we ended up with Prime Minister Harper, who are funding a large chunk of the provincial budget. But that was all falling on deaf ears. I'd have to say that the former premier, Gary Doer, if there's one thing he did, he spent money with relish. He was good at it and very excited, and he was a great booster when he was spending public money. The thing is is that it was not sustainable.

And then we had this decline in the economy and, you would have thought, at that point in time, and even if the NDP weren't going to hold back a little bit on their expenditures and maybe be a little bit more cautious with their spending, if they didn't do that during the good days and maybe put a little bit of money aside and pay down debt and get us ready for the days when it wasn't going to be so good, well, when we hit that economic speed bump, the funny thing is that the New Democrats in Manitoba increased their spending, and that's one of those unique things about New Democrats.

When the economy is booming, they spend lots and then when the economy falters, they spend even more. And they had a budget a year ago which said they were going to spend an horrible amount of money, I mean, an unbelievable amount of money. They were going to have a \$50-million surplus, even though it was a declining economy. Well, none of us here really bought that. We warned that that was not sustainable and sure enough, we ended up with a 550—or \$600-million deficit, probably the largest in the history of this province. Now they're projecting a series of five years of deficits with, really, no plan in place to pay it off, no plan in place to really figure out how they were going to keep sustaining this kind of expenditure, other than borrowing money. And that gets us into a real difficult position where we are just living on borrowed money.

In fact, I read an article just this morning out of the—off the Web site and they're talking about that banks are now going to be far more stringent in the way that they extend credit in the United States because they've come to the realization that you can only support your standard of living, you can only support your lifestyle for so long on borrowed money. And you would think that with all the kind of economists—and we know the Premier (Mr. Selinger), he's a—from what I understand, a Rhodes

Scholar—he should know that there is only so long you can keep this going by borrowing money and keeping up a standard of living that way. And yet we see no appetite, no desire to look at the storm clouds that are now here. It's not storm clouds on the horizon or they might be coming; we're here and we have to deal with it.

What is very different and concerning is you'll have the Premier get up and he talks about the recession: The recession has now hit Manitoba and we've got to deal as best we can with these recessionary times. It doesn't take more than a day or two and you have the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux) get up and say, these are boom times, booming; everything's booming. And there's sort of this strange back and forth, that one moment it's booming and one moment it's a recession, and perhaps the NDP should hold a caucus meeting and should sit down and say, listen, we better come down on one side because really what's happening, they're spending or trying to spend themselves out of their so-called recession even when you have a growing economy. So you can't really call it recession when you have, I believe it's a 2.5 projected growth in the economy and then—but spend as if you've got a booming economy.

I mean, it's all a very, very confusing message coming from the NDP benches, and that is unfortunate because what this province really now needs is a steady hand, individuals who are able to see their way through it, but to just recklessly go out and spend money—\$600 million blown on going with the west-side hydro line, adding that onto the deficit of the Province, and then this concept of a wind farm in St. Joseph, that they're going to help out by 200 million of a \$260-million project a company that's net worth is like \$14 billion.

And then we find out this stadium deal, and, of course, we all support a new stadium. In fact, a new stadium is necessary, but the deal itself is bizarre. It's a bizarre deal at best, that you have basically only public money going in. The partners aren't even signatories of it. Individuals may or might or should or shouldn't perhaps later on buy a team, and they're not going to own the facility, though they have rights to the facility. It's just, again, this confused and problematic message that we get from the NDP.

In fact, what was so strange about that is it wasn't even mentioned in the budget. You would think that that would be something that they would be talking about, that, you know, in the future we

would like to see a stadium for Manitoba. It would actually have prepared taxpayers, that this was something that was on the horizon, but it was really one of these—it came out of the blue, came out of nowhere, and, in fact, if you look at the newscasts or read the papers, sort of look at the memorandum of understanding, it actually looks like it was a Premier who was either forced into a corner or panicked somehow, stampeded into a deal, and that is probably the worst place for anybody to be, in particular a Premier of a province, because the deal certainly is not a deal for taxpayers.

Do we want a stadium? Absolutely. I don't understand why the Premier (Mr. Selinger) then—he's funding it anyway. Why didn't he just come out and say that? We're going to build a stadium and we're going to allow the Bombers to play there, but the way it's structured right now, I fear that, again, it's just going to be further debt added onto the Province of Manitoba, a debt load that is already becoming an issue that Manitobans will be struggling with, and to just look at some of the numbers, they're—and, you know, when you go out in your community and you start talking these kind of numbers, people's eyes roll back to their head, to the back of their head, because they have no concept of these kinds of amounts of money.

* (15:40)

For instance, the Province's total debt is \$23.42 billion, which is up from \$21.16 billion in 2009. That's a \$2.25-billion increase, and I wonder if one of the reasons why this government is getting away with these kinds of terrible, terrible increases in deficit is because, frankly, Canadians are so busy. As I mentioned, you know, Sunday being involved in six hours in soccer pitches, you know, people are genuinely disengaged from the political process and aren't focussing, and should be. They should be focussing on these kinds of deficit numbers.

You know, if this would've happened 10 or 15 years ago there would've been an uprising. Whereas, today, I find that families are struggling, the economy is either in a depression, a recession, I don't know which—where it is. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) changes his mind from day to day where we are, but we know that families are struggling.

And we know that had this province adhered to the Filmon government's debt retirement plan, we would've retired over a billion in debt rather than adding 9.961 billion in debt. This NDP government has almost added \$10-billion worth of debt in

10 years and someday, someday, a generation is going to have to stand up and pay for this. I suspect the individuals on the NDP benches, they won't be the ones that'll have to pay for this. It's going to be our children, our grandchildren, will say, what have you done? You've added so much debt onto this province we are going to struggle forever to pay this off, and that's very unfortunate.

I would suggest to all Manitobans, and certainly to the people of Springfield, those that I've spoken with have indicated to me, and I've said to many others that this is not a budget that can be supported, a budget that has so many omissions that does not include a lot of the debt that is currently being incurred, by design, I suspect, and, as it is, adds so much debt onto future generations. I'm surprised that members opposite would just sit and be fine with straddling generation after generation with this kind of debt.

It would be no different than going out and spending billions of dollars, or millions of dollars, or whatever you wish, on charge cards and then expecting your children to pay for it after you die. Why would you do something like that? Why would you burden the next generation with all that debt? Your own children. Well, we're not doing anything different with the debt that's being added on in the province of Manitoba.

There was a good example when, in Alberta, they felt that with four million people they had \$20-billion debt and that it was too much of a burden on the province, and they went and they paid it off. We are one million–1.2 million people and now we're going to be in the range of \$25-billion worth of debt and somehow the NDP would like us to be, you know, like the Bob Marley song, "Don't Worry Be Happy", and that is not a strategy. That is not a healthy public policy position and it should not be viewed as good politics.

I would caution members opposite that this is not sustainable. The storm clouds are here. We have to deal with what's happening in our province in a real way, and to continue deficit spending, to keep going to the bank and spending that money to keep a standard or to keep going, is not the way to be doing this.

So I leave my comments at that, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I have to say, from the constituents I've spoken to—and they've been many—this is not a budget that I can support. And I would recommend that members opposite join us in defeating this

budget and perhaps we could get a budget that would have some sanity, that would keep in mind future generations, and I'll leave my comments at that.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the budget tabled by the honourable Finance Minister in this august Chamber on March 23rd.

I consider it a privilege to add my few words to those of my colleagues from this side of the House as well as to the dissenting opinions echoed by honourable members of the opposition. But before I proceed I would like to offer my congratulations to the newest member of the Legislative Assembly from the constituency of Concordia.

What a wonderful feeling it was on the evening of March 2nd to see the election results being tabulated and our candidate being ahead in every poll by a very large margin. It was a decisive result. The overwhelming support for our candidate was significant. Besides strongly affirming that the honourable member is the best person to represent the interests of the Concordia constituents, it is also a clear expression of support and approval for this government, that it has always put the welfare of all Manitobans front and centre.

Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, we, on this side of the House, acknowledge with gratitude and appreciation the trust and confidence the people of Manitoba have given to our government from the two by-election results last year and this recent one. And to all our constituents, we pledge to do our utmost best to continually earn the trust given to us.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sentiments about the additional duty entrusted to me as Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, and also as Minister responsible for Multiculturalism. It is a job that I accepted with humility, honour, gratitude and excitement. I am humbled and honoured to be the first woman of colour to be elected in the Manitoba Legislature, and also the first person of colour to hold a Cabinet position in this provincial government. In this position, I have the privilege of working with outstanding department staff, many of whom I have come to know and, as a result, greatly admire for their competence and dedication to their jobs. It is a delight to work with the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism and the

Multiculturalism Secretariat, starting with our deputy minister, her department heads and managers, the support staff, my special assistant and constituency staff. I am grateful for their—all their support and assistance in fulfilling the tasks that I am responsible for.

Madam Deputy Speaker, early this year I set aside time to meet and visit with staff at the offices in 213 Notre Dame, as well as those at the Archives building on Vaughan. The 213 Notre Dame office is an architectural beauty from the outside, but is—it is much more impressive on the inside with its beautiful marble, granite and wood materials. Precious materials and information of the province's history and culture are housed there under the care of the dedicated people working hard to preserve them. Meeting the staff was important to me; now I can put faces to the names of people who do great work for our province. I commend the department staff who are doing an excellent job in this challenging times. The department has reduced internal operating expenditures and explored options for streamlining internal procedures in order to sustain as many services as possible to our clients.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe a very good test to determine whether your job brings joy is your feelings upon waking up in the morning. This job requires long hours and can very well continue into late nights and, many a time, even on weekends. In spite of all that, in the morning I feel inspired and energized to get up and get myself ready for a long day's work, and who would not be inspired and energized, knowing I would see the dedicated co-workers, partners and stakeholders who make our province very proud.

Madam Deputy Speaker, since my appointment last November, I have had the opportunity to meet many Manitobans who excel in music, theatre, dance, visual arts, other art forms, including film production, writing and publishing. I have also attended a variety of their events and visited their facilities. I have also met with the dedicated staff of related organizations and their board members, who volunteer precious time and talents for love of the arts, culture, heritage, tourism and multiculturalism.

I am tremendously impressed with our public libraries, museums and art galleries throughout the province. I marvel at the gifts of our performing artists, writers and visual artists. Several Manitoba writers and visual artists have gained national and international recognition by winning prestigious

awards. Just yesterday, I was at the Winnipeg Art Gallery to join the many friends of Ione Thorkelsson in congratulating her for receiving the Governor General's Saidye Bronfman Award for excellence in fine crafts. This award is considered to be the most distinguished award for crafts. A few weeks ago at WAG, Manitoba's William Eakin is also honoured for a prestigious award he received.

* (15:50)

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to invite those who have not yet subscribed to the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Manitoba Opera or the Royal Winnipeg Ballet to do so. As well, I encourage those who have not yet signed up for a membership with the Manitoba Museum and the Winnipeg Art Gallery to do so. They have made our province's cultural life as one of the best in the world. Add to this the growing artists and performing groups from various ethnic communities and one can say Winnipeg, and, by association, Manitoba, is truly the cultural capital of Canada, not just this year, but for years to come.

What a wealth of talent there is in Manitoba. It is fitting to acknowledge also the efforts of many ethnic, cultural organizations which ensure that newcomers to Manitoba obtain support in adjusting smoothly to living, working, and in actively participating in Manitoba society.

Madam Deputy Speaker, according to the national arts council statistics, there are 3,900 artists in Manitoba in 2006, representing 0.60 percent of the overall provincial labour force. Meanwhile, Hill Strategies' recent research paper indicates that there are some 18,500 cultural workers in Manitoba, which represents 2.8 percent of the overall provincial labour force. It is a testament to the vibrancy of our communities that Manitoba is home to a wide range of artists. According to Hill Strategies, Manitoba is home to some 1,200 musicians and singers; 565 artisans and craft persons; 500 authors and writers; 40 producers, directors, choreographers; 480 painters, sculptors and other visual artists, and 350 actors and comedians.

For the past four months, it has been a privilege for me to visit museums, galleries and libraries in Winnipeg in some rural areas. All of Manitoba needs to appreciate and applaud the staff of these facilities for being faithful stewards and guardians of Manitoba's rich treasures. Their dedication to their job is truly commendable. No wonder our libraries,

museums and galleries enjoy such high status and acclaim.

Likewise, my meeting with arts, culture, heritage and tourism councils and organizations have been gratifying. I am impressed by the efforts of those in the tourism industry to bring more visitors to our province and to continually expand the range of attractions we have to offer tourists. As well, these organizations have brought tourists to Manitoba, along with national and international events. Watch out for several coveted international gatherings taking place near you in the next few years.

Madam Deputy Speaker, although our department's partners are fully aware of the budgetary challenges all governments in the world are facing, I nevertheless communicated in meetings with them earlier this year that the next few years would be very tough on all. That was a very difficult task for me, but it had to be done. The prospect of organizations and projects receiving cuts in grants gave me sleepless nights as I knew these artistic, cultural and heritage programs contribute significantly to the quality of life and, in many instances, have transformed people's lives.

Research abounds that shows clearly the positive impacts of art and cultural activities on health and wellness, education, learning outcomes and economic growth. It was a great relief to know that, in their present budget, these valuable programs will continue because their government recognizes the importance of art, culture, heritage, tourism and multiculturalism in their individual and collective life.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at the budget consultations held—consultation held at the Winnipeg constituency earlier this year, I heard from my constituents that they are aware of the worldwide economic downturn and the inevitable budget deficit as a result. When asked what options the government should take in the face of reduced government revenues, the various groups which participated in the consultation were unanimous in their desire to see the funding to core government services be maintained and not cut, even though it would mean running a deficit.

I learned that consultation participants in other places expressed the same opinion. Madam Deputy Speaker, many constituents said that it would be okay to run a deficit if there is a plan in place to get out of it and achieve balance over a reasonable period of time. I would encourage the members

opposite to ask around and listen to what people say now that the budget is out for everyone to see.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the 2010 budget ushers Manitoba into a five-year economic plan which helps the province continue to weather the worldwide economic recession while positioning Manitoba for return to surplus by 2014.

The last I heard, Madam Deputy Speaker, the federal government is running a 54-billion deficit this year and is not projected a balanced budget until 2015. Manitoba will be a year ahead in recovery. Budget 2010 projects a summary shortfall of 545 million, yet core services in health, education, family services and justice are enhanced. Many Manitobans will appreciate the situation and will agree with the government's approach in confronting the economic downturn.

When faced with less income, the average family will reduce non-essential spending but will continue to provide for what is important, such as the family's health, welfare, security and the children's education, even if it means taking money out of their savings and, if savings are already spent, borrowing the needed funds so long as there is a plan to address the shortfall within a reasonable time.

Budget 2010 continues to invest in vital front-line services to ensure health care, education, training, policing and support for families continue. On education and training, Budget 2010 provides a funding increase of almost 3 percent for public schools; provides post-secondary institutions with a 4.5 percent upgrading increase; increases apprenticeship training support by two million; continues support for Rebound, the program that helps low-income people learn new skills that lead to jobs; allows for tuition fee increases by 5 percent at universities and 150 a year at colleges, which still keep Manitoba tuition rates below 1999 levels and the third-lowest in the country; provides additional resources for the Bright Futures fund to encourage at-risk students to complete high school and attend university or college with more support for access programs; creates a new grant for students who need additional financial support to attend; and provides new mining training facilities in Flin Flon.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have visited several schools and day cares in the Wellington constituency earlier this year when the House was not in session. I was heartened to hear day-care administrators and workers are appreciative of the support our government has given their centres and staff. They

will be pleased to learn of the creation of more child-care spaces in this budget. I can still see the smile on the face of one of the child-care workers I had spoken to after he heard that this budget creates a pension plan for child-care workers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, health is wealth. What worth is money if your health is compromised? What good is having the family's budget balance at the expense of skimping on buying a needed medicine? Sadly, in the 1990s, when the province faced a recession, the Conservative government cut spending to health, which saw hundreds of doctors and nurses leave, and medical and nursing school spaces reduced. It took years of intentional effort and resources to reverse the deleterious effect of this wrong decision on the economy and people's lives. Budget 2010 will provide additional funding to train more doctors and nurses, improve emergency health-care services and upgrade the emergency department at the Health Sciences Centre, continue building a regional cancer centre and upgrading the Westman lab in Brandon, construct a new mental health crisis response centre and proceed with plans for the new Women's Hospital in Winnipeg, consolidate specialized services for children and youth with disabilities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, those whose incomes are challenged almost always end up living in substandard housing. The past budgets of our government have consistently addressed that, including Budget 2010, which will see an additional 1,500 new social housing units over the next five years, upgrade some existing units and the involvement of people in social housing in the construction and renovation projects to develop skills and community pride. Also, an increase—also increase the operating and capital investments in social housing by close to 10 percent.

*(16:00)

Madam Deputy Speaker, the film industry in Manitoba will see increased economic activity as a result of extending the Film and Video Production Tax Credit to 2014 and enhancing the existing tax credit based on film and video production costs for labour, goods and services provided in Manitoba. Already, Buffalo Gal Pictures said the film tax credit contained in the 2010 budget has resulted in their company obtaining contracts recently to shoot three feature films this year worth 50 million.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I fully support Budget 2010, which will stimulate economic growth. It will

build and upgrade infrastructure to create jobs and invest in innovation to secure a prosperous future by investing 1.8 billion in infrastructure spending, a 90 percent increase over 2008, that will create 29,000 direct and indirect jobs. Building CentrePort Canada will include construction of an overpass at CPR's main line and interchange at the Perimeter Highway, building an all-weather east side road and invest in winter roads, providing another 30 million to Canada-Manitoba infrastructure programs, bringing the provincial total to 70 million this budget.

So much more can be said to support Budget 2010; however, I would have to cut my speaking short in favour of other members who want to lend their voices to the animated debate on Budget 2010.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to express my whole-hearted support for this well-thought-out, responsible and caring budget that puts the welfare of Manitoba's families first.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this budget and to tell government just what people in Charleswood think of this budget that they have most recently tabled.

But, first of all, I would like to welcome and congratulate the new member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), and I wish him well. I hope he enjoys his job and feels as privileged as I do in mine, and it—public service is an honourable profession and there's a lot of opportunity to do a lot of good. And, unfortunately, what we often talk about in this House are not necessarily all the great things that we as politicians can achieve, but there are a lot of local issues that I'm sure he will feel very, very satisfied that he will have an ability to effect change and make people's lives better, and I wish him well in his new role.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm—I have stood in this House on a number of occasions, and probably the last several budget speeches have caused me to reflect on what that budget is going to do to my kids, but this time I'm going to make my comments on behalf of my future unborn grandchildren because, sadly, this budget is going to hurt them profoundly. And it does put such undue pressure on future generations because we have an NDP government that lives for the present and doesn't look far enough ahead to see what a mess that they are going to leave for future generations. And, you know, as I've said in other budget responses, too, I don't know whether

my children are going to make a decision to stay in this province.

A lot of the young people are certainly looking at what is ahead for them and whether it's a bright future here in Manitoba and, sadly, for some of them, they will leave and that also means, you know, grandchildren that they will have one day may not be here in this province and, if they are in this province, this budget is going to have a profound effect on them because they are going to be born with a debt on their head, a debt that they had nothing to do with or had no idea that it was coming.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

What I have found particularly startling is how every member of this NDP government thinks and talks the same way, and what I find is them demonstrating that they are all really clueless about the egregious effects that this budget is going to cause for years to come. And as I sit and listen to a number of their speeches, I really don't have a sense that they have a very deep understanding of the effects of this budget.

And, at first, I thought it was just their usual negative, socialist views—their cup is half empty or however empty it is—but the more I've listened to some of their remarks, the more I realize how clueless and indifferent they really are. They lack the absolute, basic understanding that burgeoning debt will have a profound effect on people in the future, and that is a very, very fundamental lack in understanding, and, Mr. Acting Speaker, I find it very disheartening.

A lot of the NDP MLAs last year laughed when I said that, eventually, their spending is going to catch up with them. And I can recall sitting in this House, and particularly last year more than other years, you know, we'd been warning them at some point—at some point—you're going to hit a wall. And a lot of members across the way laughed. And last year it was probably louder laughter than in other years but, you know, we've warned them that eventually their spending is going to catch up with them, that, at some point, the chickens will come home to roost.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, it looks like some of that is already starting to happen. Their overspending has hit a wall and, unfortunately, it is going to affect taxpayers in this province, some that aren't even born yet. Unfortunately, it's going to last a long time, and my children and their children will pay for the

sinkhole debt created by this NDP government. This debt elephant is going to hurt for years to come.

What they don't seem to realize is that all of this spending will affect and hurt future health spending. And we hear them in the House every day standing and talking about what they think, you know, are all the benefits of spending all this money. But they don't seem to realize that, at some point, you don't have an economy that is going to create the kind of money you need to spend on health care, on education, on justice, on roads—you know, on a myriad of very, very valuable social programs. You need a thriving economy in which to do that and economies don't tend to thrive when there is this debt elephant hanging over the head of a province.

And, unfortunately, the NDP government does not seem to have that basic understanding, and it's a fundamental gap in their thinking or, some people might say, and have said, their non-thinking. At some point somebody has to pay, and this NDP government doesn't seem to understand that and instead they trot out, you know, deficits in other provinces or deficits at other levels of government. They don't seem to have a look at what they have created in this province where we now have the largest debt that this province has ever, ever seen.

We've got the largest deficit that this province has ever, ever seen, and now, Mr. Acting Speaker, somebody is going to have to pay for that, and they don't seem to understand that.

The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) gleefully stands in this House and talks about health capital spending. What she doesn't tell people is that all of her capital spending is debt financed. She doesn't tell the public that she has tripled health capital debt, and today, that debt stands at \$1.2 billion.

Yes, wouldn't it be wonderful all the time if, you know, governments could just go and do whatever they want, but at some point you have to make, you know, a conscious decision is, what is affordable, what is not affordable, and then a minister has to make a decision and a government has to make a decision in terms of where their priorities are.

What we saw with this government is that they have tripled health capital debt and that stands today at \$1.2 billion. So, each year, around \$150 million is going to be needed to pay against that debt. That's what they've done; \$150 million from our budget just has to be earmarked for health debt. And so we see now the government starting to feel the effects of this

debt elephant in what we have seen happening right now because we are seeing in this budget that health care is being squeezed a little bit.

* (16:10)

We are seeing this government make a decision to freeze nurses' salaries, and I'm sure there will be other health-care unions that will also be affected by this for two years. That is what happens and that is what we've been saying. You know, at some point, the chickens come home to roost. When you hit the wall, you're going to have to start making some decisions, and this government thinks that maybe it's going to be short term. This is not going to be a short-term problem for this government, Mr. Acting Speaker. They've got a structural deficit that they've created and they've got a problem that they are going to pass on for many, many years.

What was or what is concerning is the fact that this government decided that they wanted to debt finance all of the health capital projects. There is a past history of health capital projects being paid for by cash. In the 1990s, not all health capital projects were debt-financed. There were cancer projects that were paid for by cash. There were mental health projects that were paid for by cash, and there were others too, and why this government felt that they had to take every single health capital project in Manitoba and debt-finance it is beyond me, especially when they were getting so much federal money, and they didn't use any of that federal money instead to look at possible ways of putting it towards health capital.

Yes, we do have some serious problems with some old infrastructure, whether it's in buildings or whether it's in equipment, but it's certainly something that this government should have had a closer look at and 'priorize' and then determine, you know, how much of the federal dollars could they spend towards it, and, certainly, they should have been able to spend some of it because they have had unprecedented amounts of federal dollars flowing this way. But, instead, we saw this government in very, very typical NDP style, deciding that they wanted to debt-finance absolutely everything.

So the precedent was there in the '90s. Instead they've gone and borrowed everything and the question is why. Why would they not be more fiscally prudent? We saw a previous NDP government create a huge debt mess in Manitoba in the '80s, and it looks like the past is repeating itself.

Somebody did tell me a number of years ago that by the time this government, this current government that was fronted by Gary Doer for the longest time, by the time they're finished in power, we are going to have a worse mess than what Howard Pawley left Manitoba when that NDP government fell in the '80s, and I think we're starting to feel that now. The Pawley government cranked up debt phenomenally in just six years, and what happened after that, Mr. Acting Speaker? It took the Filmon government years to clean up that mess and it wasn't an easy road. Some tough decisions had to be made, but the NDP don't seem to understand that they are the cause of the problems. When they crank up their spending, when they don't pay attention to it, when they raise debt and deficit, eventually somebody has to pay and they don't seem to understand that it normally is not something that they are capable of doing.

One of the really interesting things I read once, and I really actually—I couldn't believe it, and I was reading a Frances Russell column, and even Frances Russell said in her column that NDP governments come in and they all typically react the same way. They just take all the money that there is and they spend every cent of it. They crank up debt and deficits, and then a Tory government has to clean up—come in and clean up the mess.

And that seems to be historically what ends up happening in this province, and yet, and yet, these NDP MLAs don't seem to want to take any responsibility for the egregious mess that they are going to leave this province. And I would like to indicate that while the Gary Filmon government was cleaning up the mess, they kept health care as a priority and they kept funding health care as one of the top priorities of the '90s.

And, again, Mr. Acting Speaker, they don't seem to want to take responsibility for the messes that they make. And they also don't want to hear that in the 1990s, despite the fact that the federal government kept back almost a billion dollars with a unilateral decision from Manitoba, on top of the debt that Howard Pawley left Manitoba, Gary Filmon did not decrease health spending in this province; they backfilled it.

And, if this new Finance Minister would even care to go back and look at those numbers from the '90s, she would actually find out that the funding in the '90s for health care was one of the—Manitoba had one of the best-funded health-care systems in Canada. They like to use different numbers when

they're talking about it or they like to look at the—all the negative aspects, but they have sadly neglected to put on the record properly that, in the 1990s, Manitoba had one of the best-funded health-care systems in Canada, and they did not decrease health-care spending. It was increased and it was backfilled, despite what the federal Liberals did. And, sadly, the NDP likes to cover up a lot of that truth, but now we're not totally surprised to see that happen, because that seems to be the modus operandi in a number of departments these days.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this government has sunk this province into record debt levels. Year after year it's gotten worse, but this year we've hit the mother lode of all debts. Total debt right now in Manitoba is \$23.42 billion. That's up from 21 billion in '09. This is a \$2.25-billion increase in just one year. How can any government do that? And, you know, they even have—had the gall to try to say, well, this is related to the recession. Well, a few months ago they said, there was no recession, Manitoba was booming. And, in fact, they have brought in this budget after the recession has already moved on.

What they have done, Mr. Acting Speaker, in just one year 2.25 billion in increased debt. I'm not—that's probably historical for this province. I doubt anybody has ever been able to do that. It boggles the mind, but it seems to be something that the NDP are quite comfortable with. But when interest rates go up, this province is going to be strangled by debt payments, and, at some point, we're going to see some very serious problems.

No wonder Manitoba struggles for a better reputation in this country, Mr. Acting Speaker. Debts rising, debt payments are going to have to go up, and this is going to squeeze out other departments, and we're already seeing that, when, in this budget, a number of departments have had to see their spending cut.

We're seeing the government decide to freeze wages for the civil service and for nurses, and I'm sure other health-care professionals. They certainly didn't build any of those raises into the budget. So we know that that money is not there for nurses' wages. And I'm sure that the nurses are having a lot to say about the way this government has made the decision, the fact that it's bargaining out in the media, and the fact that it is their poor fiscal management that has actually created the mess where they have to do this. If they had been more prudent when time

was good, Mr. Acting Speaker, they wouldn't have the problems they have now.

So I wonder where we will see health cuts in the future. We're certainly seeing a number of things starting to happen in health care, and, because they have mismanaged things so badly in Manitoba, I imagine that is going to escalate.

Their freewheeling spending and their penchant for borrowing and creating debt has always bothered me. I've said that year after year as I've stood in this House and, unlike the new Finance Minister, I don't like the idea or accept the idea that debt is okay. It's not okay. Trying to get out of it when the money stops flowing is going to be very, very challenging. And you go to any home—and she said families, you know, largely live that way. She needs to be listening to what the concerns are being raised across this country that families are heading into trouble with all the debt financing that they have brought into their lives, that it is not a good thing for families. Yes, sometimes families are in a position where they have to do that, but that's not the norm. And for this minister to create a, you know, to say, well, that's okay, families live like that, she obviously hasn't been paying enough attention to the top economists. And, you know, the banks in the country were saying that a lot of families are in trouble because of the debt that they have seen in their families.

*(16:20)

Mr. Acting Speaker, I haven't been supportive at all of this government sucking money out of Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C. and Ontario to fund their free-spending ways while all of those other provinces were trying very, very hard to get their finances in order. I find it very offensive that this NDP government was quite content to go to Ottawa, cap in hand, always begging for funding. And they don't seem to—again, and maybe that's part of the basic fundamental gap in their level of understanding—is when they go to the federal government for money, that money comes from hardworking taxpayers in other provinces; other provinces that have worked really, really hard to try to get their houses in order, and, instead, right now, we see this government taking all that money, not 'priorizing' it properly, spending it wherever they want, cranking up debt, cranking up deficit, while other—and then still being a have-not province on top of it all—and allowing all these taxpayers in other provinces to fund what is going on in this province.

And I find that embarrassing, and I don't know how this government could have been so, you know, relaxed about it because they should be embarrassed about it. You know, the—I'm sure the other provinces, you know, were doing their best to put their own houses in order and here they've got this NDP government from Manitoba lapping at their heels, begging for handouts.

So I think this NDP government has certainly let Manitobans down. And, instead of looking at solid economic development here and finding ways to help Manitoba stand on its own two feet, they've typically looked for an easy way out, you know, gouge other provinces. And you have to wonder, and I've said it before, where's their pride and where's their vision? And now they rub Manitobans' noses even—into it even more by spending probably in the vicinity of \$350,000 in advertising to try to fool people into thinking it's a good budget and a balanced approach. So it's like adding insult to injury, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Well, I want to say this new Premier (Mr. Selinger) is no Gary Doer. He's really stuck it to Manitoba with this budget, and I would note that, you know, if the former premier, Gary Doer, campaigned on a balanced budget platform in the last election which returned the NDP to power, why isn't the new Premier keeping that promise and respecting that promise? Why has he done what he has done?

So he really did; he stuck it to Manitoba and the longer that he is in power and that this NDP government is in power, I guarantee you, the worse it's going to get. Imagine where we're going to be and where debt will be if this NDP government stays in government for much longer. Manitoba will be bankrupt if these guys are given another mandate.

Besides spending money, this NDP government is good at one other thing: the big orange propaganda machine which spews out rhetoric at record levels. And how much do they spend on this? Probably in the vicinity of around half a million dollars. Imagine, Mr. Acting Speaker, half a million for political spin masters, and I'm sure that wasn't cut back in this current budget.

So we get lots of spin but we get zero accountability, zero responsibility and zero leadership from this government; things we need for good government, but things that are lacking with this current government. In fact, we see abuse of power instead, with political interference in where Hydro wants to put a power line, where the NDP will

recklessly squander 640 million against the recommendations of hydro experts.

We now see taxpayer money being put at risk for a football stadium that wasn't even factored into the budget. I'm a major football fan, Mr. Acting Speaker—[interjection]—oh, now the Finance Minister is now saying that the hundred million dollars or thereabouts is factored into this budget. Well, this is interesting. The Finance Minister is indicating that she has factored that borrowing into this current budget for the football stadium.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if the government is going to borrow a hundred million from the project, I think they need to be out having some conversation with people in Winnipeg and in Manitoba. People want a football stadium. We want a football stadium, but Gary Doer would never have done what this current Premier is doing with the football stadium. And Gary Doer was on record a number of times, and he would not have put TIF financing in place for where the current arena is and he did not put a hundred million of government money, public money, into it. He was much more prudent. And he said, yes, and we agreed with him. He said, yes, there's room for some public money, but not a hundred million. And I would urge the members opposite to go have a look again, then, at what he said because they obviously haven't paid enough attention to it.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, as the Health critic, I have to say that I am very worried about the future of health care and the danger signs that have sprung up in this budget. There are serious warnings from expert about the lack of sustainability with the current levels of health spending, and we're already seeing the effects of this. Yet, nowhere in the budget was there anything pointing to ways to address this, no innovations mentioned.

If patients were getting a bang for the health buck that would be a different story, but they're not. This week we learned, or last week we learned that the WRHA, even with all their health spending, wasn't meeting 13 of 17 priority standards in infection control. Then we learned that superbug rates have been increasing over the last several years. Why hasn't all the health-care spending leading to better infection control in this province, better patient safety?

Why have the NDP allowed the RHA administration to soar? They've added 60 million more dollars over the past 10 years to administration in the RHAs in Manitoba, and that is money that is

being siphoned away from health care. And, with all the health spending, why does a patient die in an ER after waiting 34 hours for care and not getting it?

And, on a final note, Mr. Acting Speaker, I've listened to several NDP budget responses and I'm really quite surprised at their focus. Instead of doing what a government members would normally do, and that's stand in the House and talk about all the good things in their budget—that's normally what you do in here. You look at your budget; you talk about all the positive things. That's a government's role.

Instead, a majority of their speeches have been spent attacking the opposition, and that really is something telling, I think, and I find that absolutely bizarre. And I have to say I've never heard it as bad as I've heard it this year. And I just want to particularly note the speech from the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady). Never in my political career—never in my political career have I heard a sitting member attack a future opponent as she did. In fact, most experienced MLAs realize that it is our job to attack policy or ideas, but attacking individuals is not a class act, nor is it very professional, and I hope her leader has pointed that out to her. I have never seen or heard a speech like that in this House ever before.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to comment, and I just want to indicate that I cannot support this budget because of the fact they are raiding the rainy day fund in order to pay down their debt. They are cranking up debt. They are cranking up deficit and this budget is not one that is good for Manitoba, and anybody with any common sense will realize this is not a budget they should support.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): It's a distinct privilege today to put a few words on record regarding Budget 2010, but, before I do that, I'd like to congratulate our newest member in the House, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). I know he's got big shoes to fill because the other member from Concordia, who's no longer—

An Honourable Member: Had big feet.

Mr. Jennissen: Had big feet? Well, he certainly made a great and huge imprint on this province so he has his work cut out for him if he wants to fill those shoes, but, you know, he's a very smart and capable young man. I think he will. In fact, I think—I've already discovered he's so smart he's learned something it took me a whole lifetime to learn. He's

learned that youth and ability are no match for old age and cunning. And that's pretty smart, I think. I think he deserves a lot of credit for a well-fought campaign and winning the way that he did.

* (16:30)

I would also like thank our Finance Minister because I think she deserves a lot of credit for crafting a progressive budget, a planned, proactive stage-by-stage, sure-footed budget in a difficult economic time, when the temptation would be there to go hard right, that what our honourable opponents would have done; gone hard right. We know what that did to us in the '90s.

I'm glad we didn't succumb to that temptation, that there was no knee-jerk reaction, no draconian cuts, that we put our efforts to protect our front-line services, because we know that now is the time to stimulate economic growth. As they used to say in Saskatchewan, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I was there, I guess, as a farmer 50 years ago helping my dad. And the pig farmers used to say, and from an honourable colleague, in those days a pig farmer was 100 pigs; it was huge. Pig farmers would say, you know, I'm going to get into pigs even more because the price is high. By the time they got into it, actually, the price would be down. So, when you want to stimulate at the bottom of the cycle, that's what we're doing. That's a sensible thing to do. I congratulate the minister, but the opposition is angry. They've run into a very bright lady, and they don't like what she's doing.

Well, I think it's a very planned, sensible, step-by-step incremental approach, and, you know, you're going to just have to accept it. She knows what she's doing; we know what we're doing. We are stimulating the economy to the tune of \$1.8 billion, which will create 29,000 direct or indirect jobs. Let me give you some examples. Six hundred million of that goes to highway construction this year, which is part and parcel of our 10 year, \$4-billion highway construction program.

Consider what the Tories used to do. When they were in power, we were real lucky if we got 90 million a year for capital. There are 1,500–1,500–new social housing units over the next five years. There's more, many more dollars for water treatment and waste-water systems. This government takes our pure water—doesn't take it for granted. We know that it's one of our precious resources. In fact, we created a whole ministry, the Water Stewardship, to protect our water.

Member opposite criticize this budget because, after 10 years of balanced budget, this one is not balanced, and the projected \$545-million deficit really bothers them. Yet, somehow, that seems to me that pales in comparison to the deficit they rang up in '92-93. Seventeen years ago, when the dollar was worth more, their budget was over three-quarter billion dollars, Mr. Acting Speaker. It was \$762-million deficit that year, the largest in the history of Manitoba. It was not run up by this government, but by the previous Tory government.

And not only this province is running a deficit. Other provinces are running a deficit; the federal government is running a well over \$50-billion deficit. The Alberta government is running a deficit. They got oil revenues; they've still running a deficit. Ontario is running a deficit; they have an eight-year plan to rebalance. And so the question I asked the members opposite, because on alternate days they ask for more money: fix my road, build me a bridge, build me a school. And the next day, they, you know, they say, cut, cut, cut, cut. What would they have us do? They want us to do slashing and hacking as they did in Saskatchewan, as they just did in Saskatchewan. The farm program just lost over \$100 million there. They don't want us to do that, I'm sure. We're not going to do some of the things they did, because we see this is as a five-year work in progress, not a one year. That would result in draconian measures.

We're not selling our Crown corporations as they did at bargain basement prices. We're still suffering the rate shock, and that was akin—you know, that was in my mind, selling MTS was like selling your house to pay for your car. It made no sense. We didn't blow six million bucks hiring an American consultant, Connie Curran, to tell us to buy fewer bedpans, to do a little more slashing and hacking. We didn't do that, but we did, we bought new ambulances. *[interjection]* We didn't fire nurses; we actually—we didn't fire nurses. We actually trained them and then hired them. We didn't squander money on smart health; we didn't flog frozen food. We didn't starve the educational system as they're starving it, or they used to starve it.

And, another thing, we talk about doctor shortages. They cut the entrance to medical school from, what was it, 80 to 70. We have 110 entrance spots now. That's the way, if you want more doctors—and it takes years to get a doctor through the process; that's what we did. We didn't try to privatize homecare; they did. We protect health care; we don't

slash it. We're funding education this year properly at 3 percent, and the operating increase for post-secondary institutions is at 4.5 percent. Ninety percent of our increased funding is for improved health care, Education and training, Family Services and Justice. And yes, the biggest focus is on health care—is on health care. It will receive 60 percent of that funding and that's very important for us. *[interjection]* Thank you. I thank my honourable colleague.

The member from Thompson, the other day, made a very important point. He said that in this province, and particularly in the north, there's a sense of optimism and there really is even though this is a tough economic cycle and we have these boom-bust cycles. We see it all the time up north in mining.

Forestry, hydro, and mining in northern Manitoba are extremely critical, and forestry is going through a rough patch right now. We all know that. Hydro, however, is doing very well. We've unprecedented development in the north. We're building dams. We're building Wuskwatim and also Keeyask and Conawapa. They're on the way, so we're going to have clean, mean, lean, green hydro energy and we sell it to the Americans at, you know, a firm power at a very high price and that's good for all Manitobans.

We don't have oil, at least very little compared to Alberta and Saskatchewan, particularly Alberta, so this is the equivalent of our oil, and this won't run out. The rivers will not go dry, at least I hope not. So we've got energy for the future and we're developing that energy and we're developing it with our partners in the north, the Aboriginal people. We do not ignore them. I can't remember the time the Tories actually built a dam up north. They didn't build dams. They didn't build roads. They didn't build airports. We had to do that.

I also would like to talk a little bit about mining because it is—mining is probably one of those sectors that is as big as agriculture and is very important to us but we underreport it or we just don't seem to give it the highlighting that we ought to give it. So it's an underreported success. The value of this sector is enormous. In fact, I think, in the year 2009, the value for our nickel, copper, zinc, gold, and caesium was \$1.3 billion, and in that same year, we spent close to 90—or, no—\$80 million in exploration, mineral exploration. And that industry really appreciates the fact that we have a MEAP program, a Mineral Exploration Assistance Program, as well as other

programs to help that industry, a very important industry.

I would also like to say a little bit about mines because they are so important for my region in the north. We have 10 operating mines at this moment. We have Crowflight Minerals Inc. with the Buckle Lake nickel mine in Wabowden. It obviously produces nickel. We have the HudBay Minerals Inc, Trout Lake mine in Flin Flon. It produces copper and zinc. It is close to the end of its life but we're hoping to extend it a little bit. HudBay Minerals Inc. also has the Chisel North mine and a concentrator in Snow Lake. We reopened the concentrator and the mine is working again, and from the Chisel North mine near Snow Lake, we are—we meaning Hudson Bay Minerals Inc.—is working on a decline to access the Lawlor deposit. The initial phase is not worth a lot of money, I guess—well, it is a lot of money, \$85 million, but the second phase will be larger and it'll involve a total of \$450 million. That will fully develop the mine and it will also create jobs for at least 400 people.

Now I want to pay special tribute to two brilliant geophysicists who helped find the Lawlor deposits, several lenses of concentrated minerals, and those two geophysicists are Dave Koop and Alan Vowles from Flin Flon. Chisel North is an important mine. As I said, it's open. The concentrator is working. We're going to get the Lawlor mine operational. It'll create an awful lot of jobs in northern Manitoba. The scuttlebutt is, when you talk to miners—I don't know how accurate it is—that the identified mineral, the ore, at today's prices is already at roughly \$8 billion in the Lawlor, at the Lawlor site. Could be much more, but it's very exciting, nonetheless.

As well, I should point out, apart from these 10 mines, these 10 operational mines, we also have several very promising ventures. Sherridon, where the old Sherridon copper mine used to be, which left a legacy of tailings and problems that we have to fix and are fixing, there is some really promising drilling going on and we hope to have a copper mine there eventually.

Snow Lake mine which used to be the former New Britannia, the gold mine in Snow Lake, is in the process of reopening, and, I think, by 2011 it will be fully functional, at least if gold prices hold. Victory Nickel near Grand Rapids is trying to work the Minago deposit. They're building a road. They're doing a feasibility study. There's a good chance of that mine opening in the near future. Lynn Lake,

there's a lot of mining activity in Lynn Lake, around Lynn Lake. We haven't—I haven't heard yet whether any mines opening or not, but, certainly, there is—you do run into a lot of geophysicists when you go to Lynn Lake and they all seem, you know, very friendly and very excited, so I think we can hope for some major stuff in that area.

* (16:40)

I should point out as well that in northern Manitoba we're happy with the investments that this government makes in our region, in our part of the country, and I can only name a few of them. I can't obviously go through all the examples. We're happy that, for example, we're getting four new water bombers. It may not seem like much here, because there's no need of it, but in northern Manitoba where the weather right now is—well, it's not dry, but there's not enough snow in the bush. So we could have forest fires, and we need those water bombers. So we're very happy that this government has funded UCN and takes the University of the College North seriously. The former government didn't always do that, or the former—the members of the opposition party, sometime made light of the University College of the North, absolutely needed. If for no other reason than symbolically, we need our own college up there, and this government is coming through with that.

We're getting a mining academy in Flin Flon; it's in the progress. And there will be a new and stronger presence in Flin Flon from the University College of the North, and we're looking forward to that. But I guess, if I had to pick one thing for northern Manitoba that people really focus on, it's roads. And I know I hear my southern colleagues talk about they need this road fixed, and that road fixed, but I don't know if they realize that wherever they come from in the rural area, whichever little village or town, chances are that their little village or town will have more than one road. Usually, there's a road to the east and the west and the north and the south. If you go to northern Manitoba in my region, there's just one road—Flin Flon, Cranberry Portage, Snow Lake, Lynn Lake, Leaf Rapids, Nelson House, one road. You get in and you get out. Now, if that one road is in disrepair, you're in trouble. Those roads are the lifelines—are the lifelines—for us in northern Manitoba. Those are our lifelines, and I can say that this government has put an enormous effort in making those lifelines a lot better—a lot better. We spend a lot of money on roads not just in northern

Manitoba, but they were needed most in northern Manitoba.

For example, I have to drive to Flin Flon or fly to Flin Flon, but when I drive, that's roughly 800 kilometres, and 15 years ago those were pretty difficult roads to drive. They were accessible roads. They weren't super bad, but there were a lot of potholes, a lot of bridges weren't right—major problems. Those problems have largely been fixed. For example, when I drive, when I go, for example, a week or so when I go to Flin Flon or to Cranberry Portage, I get into my car and get to the turnoff there at No. 6 Highway at Perimeter, I notice a traffic light. That wasn't there before our government was in power. It took the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) to make sure we have a traffic light there.

Then I travel on Highway 6 north for a long, long time, and you will see all kinds of improvements to Highway No. 6. You will see the straightening of the road in some of the dangerous curves. We've spent millions of dollars on that road, and there are even big, large trucks, perhaps oversized trucks, hauling stuff back and forth. Didn't have that before. So that road is greatly improved. Then, when I get to the Easterville junction, No. 10, and the Easterville, which is No. 60, I have an hour and a half to drive on a road that has been vastly improved again. That wasn't the case 15 years ago. I know, I was a Transportation critic.

I used to sit down regularly with Mr. Findlay—a wonderful man, by the way, respect him greatly—but he had a southern view. And his view was up north you have 4 percent of the population, you had 4 percent of the budget. Let's see, 4 percent of 90 million is three point something. Well, that's not enough, because, as I said, those roads are out lifelines. We needed a lot more money. What did this government do when it was elected in 1999? This government said, you in northern Manitoba will get a quarter of the budget. We needed that because we were so far behind everybody else, and I'm really glad that they stuck to their guns. And you can understand that 4 percent from—for 90 million isn't very much, but, as you get a quarter of, let's say, 600 million or 500 million or 400 million, that's a lot of money, and you can fix a lot of roads.

Anyway, I was on my way to Flin Flon. Once I get to the Easterville junction and No. 10 again, and I'm heading towards The Pas, another 70 kilometres fully paved, fully paved, fully paved. When I get to The Pas, I notice a lot of work's been done on

bridges in around The Pas, and then when I get to go to Wanless, which is roughly another, let's say, that would be approximately 40, 50 kilometres, it's fully resurfaced as well.

When I get to Wanless, I drive to the junction of No. 10 and 30, and it's been fully surfaced—resurfaced as well. And, when I get to No. 10 junction to 39 to go to Cranberry, that 16 kilometres is in great shape. It's been resurfaced. Also, public road in Cranberry Portage itself has been resurfaced. That wasn't happening in the '90s. Once I get from Cranberry Portage to Bakers Narrows, approximately 30 kilometres has been resurfaced. The only chunk that hasn't been resurfaced is that chunk between the airport and Flin Flon itself, which is roughly 25 kilometres, and, even there, they're fixing the bridge at Big Island, putting a lot of money in fixing that structure, but, eventually and soon, I hope, it will be paved.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, 10 and 10A in Flin Flon have been paved. So has Main Street. Bridges have been fixed. That stuff has happened in Flin Flon. People in Flin Flon can see the changes that have occurred and they're very happy that those changes have occurred.

Mr. Speaker, our people up north are happy with this government. They're happy with this budget. They do share that optimism that the member from Thompson talked about, and, apart from—but take my own community. I'll take this as one example. Apart from the road upgrade, I can talk about Flin Flon, the shopping mall which wasn't there before, but we put it into place, Flintoba Mall. We built a new primary health-care facility; we've got new ambulances; we've got upgrades to the hospital. We doubled the dialysis unit in the hospital, actually, and we put in, only a week or so ago, \$1.1 million, about to put in, as a clinic in the hospital. That should help with our waiting lists. We're working with advanced access so our patients don't have to wait too long. Those are great things to do for the hospital, great things to do for the region. We upgraded the hospital with a new elevator. I don't know if I mentioned that as well.

We've done a lot of things in the Flin Flon area, so the Flin Flon community has dramatically changed. The skyline has changed. We have a Lighthouses program. We have stable funding for public transit, Mr. Speaker—stable funding for public transit finally. We have a neighbours alive program, and I already mentioned that we have a mining

academy coming. It's coming and the UCN will have a greater presence in an already—you know, it already has a capacity there, but it'll have even a greater presence.

So I'm somewhat mystified when I see our friends just attacking this budget and making it sound like this is not a budget for all Manitobans. I believe it is, but, you know, I guess I understand where they're coming from. I mean, they're always not too sure which direction they're going. I guess it's—what is it? Monday and Wednesdays and Friday, sometimes, they ask questions for spending and then the Tuesdays and the Thursdays, it's cutback, cutback.

So, you know, I guess I can see that is illogical, Mr. Speaker, that is illogical, but maybe the fact that they're illogical is because it stems from their very name, because I don't think you can be a progressive and a conservative at the same time. You know, I've always struggled with that one. I know progressives and I know conservatives. I've never known the two of them to match easily, so maybe that's why there's so much flip-flopping. To me, it's an oxymoron. It's like square wheels or military intelligence, as some people say, or jumbo shrimp. Oxymorons are contradictory and maybe that's why we get these contradictions, asking a question, you know, spend, spend, spend on one day; the next day, cut, cut, cut. That doesn't make sense.

All I know is that, in northern Manitoba, we're happy with the direction this government is going. We're happy with the budget. We're happy with the fact that the people sitting here, at least on our benches, are people that reflect the vast diversity of Manitoba, all the peoples of Manitoba, not a very—the very narrow scope. And it's not their fault—not their fault that we don't have the immigrant experience or the Aboriginal of the North experience to any great degree. Not their fault, they just didn't elect enough members, I guess, but we certainly had them here and we certainly do represent all of Manitoba.

And it is a broad scope and we're not going to turn hard right. We're not going to be near Republicans. We're tired of the Thatchers and the Reagans and the Mulroneys. We're going to go a different direction. It's a much better direction for the people of Manitoba. I'm very proud of this budget and I'm very proud of this Finance Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Interesting to follow the member for Flin Flon, certainly has given me some topics for consideration and for debate. But, just at the outset, Mr. Speaker, I have to indicate that now I know why we didn't get any roads in the Pembina constituency. They all went to the honourable member from Flin Flon. And the money that has been spent out there is unbelievable, and I just wish that they would share some of those things in the southern part of the province, as well, in the constituency that I represent.

Before I get into the actual debate of the budget itself, I do want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the work that you continue to do on our behalf for trying to keep some semblance of order in the House here, and we do appreciate that. To our table officers for the work that they do, and also want to wish the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), the newly elected member, well as he takes on his role here in the House.

* (16:50)

And I recall back when I was first elected, I know that this was a very new experience for me. I know that he's had some other experiences within the House, I believe. Well, not within the House itself, but in the Legislature, so certainly he's a part of the—what we as MLAs try to do for our communities, and I think we all are trying to do what is best in our own areas.

But, coming back to the budget and the points that were made by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), again as I have to indicate that the amount of money that he was talking about that was being spent in his constituency makes my mouth water because there are so many things that we need, and the area that I represent is the fastest growing area in rural Manitoba.

And I know that I've been through a number of the issues for many years and that I've been trying to make the government of the day aware of the issues that we have out there, and it seems to be falling on deaf ears. And today was the first day that I did not read the petition on the Tabor Home, the needs that we have within our area regarding personal care facilities.

And, Mr. Speaker, having met with several families this past weekend, I really need to say that I'm beginning to think that we are—and this government is imposing and putting on elder abuse within the area. And some of the stories that I heard,

the things that are taking place regarding people moving into personal care homes, moving away from families and friends, hour, hour and a half drive, it's not that this government was not aware of the issues. The issue has been there for many years. I've been bringing that to their attention, and it appears as though nothing is happening. It's falling on deaf ears. I don't begrudge the fact that other MLAs in other jurisdictions are getting personal care homes or are getting facilities, but it's just not acceptable the fact that we are not looking at areas in the province that are growing, and growing rapidly, and not addressing the issues that are out there.

Something that we have said on this side of the House for years, coming back to the budget, and that is that you make some of your worst decisions in the best of times. And that's exactly what we see happening—has happened here. The years have been good. The NDP have had some, 10 good years monetarily. We had—we've seen increased growth, and they've had the dollars and, yet, though, their priorities, in my opinion, have not been the right ones. And they've continued to spend, spend, spend, and now we see that we are at \$23.5 billion in debt as a province in total.

This past year the indebtedness has gone out by—up by \$2.2 billion. Mr. Speaker, this is not sustainable, and that's what we are trying to tell the government of the day that the budget that they have proposed and brought in is not sustainable. Bob Rae, when he was the premier of Ontario, thought that he could spend his way to prosperity. It did not work then; it doesn't work now. You can't do that, and I know that he is now gone, of course, to a different party, but I also remember him indicating—it was two years ago—that he wishes that he could relive those days, that the decisions that he made at that time were not the right ones.

And, again, as I say, you cannot spend your way to prosperity. It does not work. And so, I guess, just coming back to the budget again, it's something that's not sustainable; we can't keep going.

And I know that my predecessor here was talking about the fact that they're referring back to the '90s and how some of the programs needed to be scaled back. But I want to remind them that we had inherited—we inherited a huge, huge mess from the Pawley era. We had no choice. And, also, the revenues were not increasing the way they did now. And so the past 10 years, these were the good years

where we were suggesting and recommending that government put dollars away for times like this, times when the revenues would decrease, would slow down. That has not taken place.

And so there is a responsibility that the government has to look after the needs that are provincial responsibilities. And, as I say, the personal care homes that we need within our area, what we're doing to our, our—the people who built the country, the people who give us—gave us this wonderful place to live, what we are doing to them is—it's not acceptable. We can't continue to do that, to force them to move away from their family and friends, as I've said time and time again.

So that's an area of responsibility that this government has neglected. They did not bring this out in the budget at all, and so it's just not acceptable.

The other one I want to talk about is Education for just a few minutes. I know that I had a very good discussion and talk with the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) just this afternoon regarding some of the issues that we are facing in Garden Valley School Division. But, again, I want to indicate that what we see happening in Garden Valley School Division is something that's taking place in Western School Division in the neighbouring community.

Again, as I indicated, we have some of the fastest-growing communities in rural Manitoba situated in my constituency. We've known this for many years, the continued growth. We've known the needs that we have. We've got huts. We don't have the washroom facilities that we need. In fact, I will indicate to you, I just had a meeting with our chair of the school board who indicated that students were, in fact, missing classes because there were not adequate washroom facilities. Now, this is what's taking place. In fact, she went so far as to say that some of the students were dehydrating themselves so that they would not need a washroom.

Now, in today's day and age, we should not be doing that, and it's not something that has come up overnight. This is not a huge surprise, the growth that we've had. We've seen it there for many years, and yet, though, here's a government that has not responded to the needs in the area.

And just to expand on that, the fact that this fall we had four classrooms in the hallways in the high school. It's unacceptable. Again, is this something that just all of sudden happened? No. This is something that has been progressively taking place

year after year after year, and we've been pointing out some of the issues that are out there regarding the growth that we have, the fact that we need infrastructure dollars. It's priority spending. Are we going to have to spend money? Yes, we will, but I maintain that some of the expenditures that this government has made in the last several years could have been spent in a much wiser fashion, and so now we are reaping the fruits of some of the neglect that this government has shown in the last number of years.

And so, just give you an example, \$14 million that they have spent in forcing unwanted, enhanced drivers licences to Manitobans. Now that \$14 million could have certainly built part of a personal care home, if not completed it. It could have built a school, which we needed so desperately. Yet, though, that has not taken place.

I do want to thank my constituents, though, for the way they are dealing with some of the growth and the challenges that we have with growth. Am I saying that we don't want growth? No, I appreciate the fact that we have it, but I do want to thank the boards, whether they're school boards or whether they're the health boards, personal care home boards for the way that they continue to manage the resources that they do have, although they are limited, but they do manage these resources and manage them in a good way, so I do want to thank them for the work that they continue to do on our behalf.

And, Mr. Speaker, the other area that I just want to talk about is the infrastructure deficit that we see within highways, and I brought this up numerous times as well. That's the twinning of Highway 32. With the growth that we're seeing taking place, Highway 32 leading into 428, this combination of highways, with the new school coming now, the new high school, there's going to be huge traffic.

And I know that this is something that the mayor of Winkler, Mayor Harder, has brought to the attention of highways year after year after year. I've talked about it here. I've asked questions during question period on this issue, but we do need to address the fact that we have an infrastructure deficit, whether it's highways, whether it's education-wise, whether it's the health-care facilities that we have within our area—certainly, we need to continue to look at the growth that we have. We need to meet those needs.

And, you know, as the member for Flin Flon has indicated, he's talking about all the nice roads that he's gotten out there, and I don't begrudge him that. I just wish that some of those dollars could have been spent in the area that I represent in order to meet the needs of a community that is industrious, that is hardworking, that is contributing to the tax base of this province, that wants to see this province continue to grow. And, certainly, we would like to

see some of those dollars coming into our community.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Pembina will have 18 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 12, 2010

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