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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 6, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ride for Wishes

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to address the Assembly on the importance of charity.

More specifically, I'd like to highlight the 17 years of dedication, hard work and successes of Charlene and Victor Dziedzic, who are here with us today in the gallery, and their commitment to this year's annual charity Ride for Wishes in support of the Children's Wish Foundation.

On May the 14th, the Dziedzics graciously hosted the 17th and final annual wish ride at their Inwood ranch. Despite the snow, the rain, horse riders and ATVs from across Canada and the United States rode miles of muddy trails. A record number of people attended the breakfast and dinner. Festivities included a game tent, bounce-a-roo, appearances by Batman and princesses, with auction prizes and 50-50 draw, all helped to contribute to the cause. Wonderful fireworks soon took over the night sky as the barn dance was in full swing.

A fun time was had by all who attended this extraordinary event that created lasting memories and friendships. It all started with 50 families and friends in 1999 and ended with about 1,500 people packing the Dziedzics' ranch. Over 60 wishes were granted with the help of countless volunteers and military people over the years.

Madam Speaker, all money raised will be donated to the Children's Wish Foundation, with the last ring-ride bringing in \$51,000 and counting. Victor and Charlene Dziedzic should be showered with applause for their 17 years of dedication and incredible contributions to the foundation. It was no surprise that Charlene was named provincial Children's Wish Foundation volunteer of the year.

The Dziedzics truly made children's dreams come true. As such, I'll ask all members to join me once again in showing their appreciation for the Dziedzics as gracious volunteers and supporting the Children's Wish Foundation of Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Coop Vélo-Cité

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): Madame la Présidente, cette semaine nous fêtons la Semaine nationale de l'environnement, donc c'est aussi le temps pour le Défi Transport. Nous voulons célébrer cette semaine en soulignant les résultats d'une campagne de socio-financement à Saint-Boniface consacrée aux vélos et au développement durable.

La Coop Vélo-Cité est une coopérative sans but lucratif qui vise à promouvoir le cyclisme utilitaire et l'autonomie de ses membres en ce qui concerne l'entretien de leur vélo. Les membres de la coop ont accès aux outils, aux formations et à l'équipement nécessaires pour construire leur propre vélo et en assurer l'entretien. Tout ça pour le prix d'un laissez-passer mensuel d'autobus.

La coop a recueilli des fonds pour financer la construction de son propre atelier à Saint-Boniface. L'atelier a été conçu par Prairie Architects, entreprise connue pour ses édifices écologiques. La semaine dernière, la campagne de financement a dépassé son objectif, fixé à 15 000 \$.

Les revenus de la campagne vont permettre à la coop d'acheter les outils et l'équipement requis pour équiper son nouvel atelier. Accessible à toute la communauté, l'atelier offrira des conseils d'experts en entretien de vélo ainsi qu'un espace pour faire la réalisation de travaux d'entretien et de réparation.

Madame la Présidente, l'appui à la coop aide non seulement à promouvoir le transport actif, mais aussi

à protéger l'environnement et à favoriser la bonne forme physique.

Félicitation à la Coop Vélo-Cité.

Translation

Madam Speaker, this week is National Environment Week and it is also time for the Commuter Challenge. We would like to celebrate this week by pointing out the results of a crowdfunding campaign in St. Boniface aimed at supporting cycling and sustainable development.

Coop Vélo-Cité is a not-for-profit co-operative that promotes commuter cycling and allows its members to keep their bicycles in good running order themselves. Co-op members have access to the tools, training and equipment needed to build their own bikes and maintain them. All of this for the price of a monthly bus pass.

The co-op has raised funds to build its own workshop in St. Boniface. The workshop was designed by Prairie Architects, a firm known for its eco-friendly buildings. Last week, the fundraising campaign exceeded its goal of \$15,000.

The funds raised will allow the co-op to buy the tools and equipment required to outfit its new workshop. The workshop will be accessible to the entire community and will provide expert advice on bike maintenance as well as a space to do maintenance and repair work.

Madam Speaker, supporting the co-op not only helps promote active transportation, it also helps protect the environment and promotes physical fitness.

Congratulations to Coop Vélo-Cité.

Remembering D-Day

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): First of all, yesterday was Canadian Armed Forces Day, so a happy belated Canadian Armed Forces Day to all our proud men and women in uniform.

I stand before you and my colleagues today to remind us of a historic day in our Canadian military, D-Day, June 6, 1944. I stand before you to remind you of the veterans from our province of Manitoba who served on D-Day and throughout the Battle of Normandy.

For Canada, 14,000 soldiers were to land on the beaches; another 450 to drop behind enemy lines by a parachute or glider. The Royal Canadian Navy supplied ships and about 10,000 sailors.

Lancaster bombers and Spitfire fighters from the Royal Canadian Air Force supported the invasion.

The Canadians who landed on Juno Beach were part of Britain's Second Army. The Canadian assault forces were the 3rd Infantry Division, commanded by Major General R.F. Keller and the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, with Brigadier General R.A. Wyman in charge.

The units were from across the country; from east to west, from the North Nova Scotia Highlanders, to the Canadian Scottish from Victoria. The province of Manitoba was represented by the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles and the Fort Garry Horse.

The bombardment of the beaches began at 6 a.m. Within an hour, the lead landing craft were away from the ships. Two hours later, the German defences at Juno Beach had been shattered and Canada had established the beachhead.

Decades after D-Day, even though humanity seems far than ever from finding some way to gain eternal peace for this world, everyone can agree on at least one point: those who fought, and died, to free Europe on that day altered the course of history.

On a personal note, as the special envoy for military affairs for our province, I have already partaken in several ceremonies, such as Juno Beach and most recently this past Saturday at Vimy Ridge Memorial Park with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles and the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada. These ceremonies are to remind us of the lives that were lost, to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice and to those who were fortunate to return home.

* (13:40)

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to recognize the presence of two veterans we have today, Mr. Stan Butterworth and Mr. John Stoyka, who were part of the historic period.

Lest we forget. Merci beaucoup. Thank you, gentlemen.

Jackie Healey

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, violence against women and girls in its myriad of forms has absolutely no place in our

society and quite obviously demands we collectively stand together in denouncing its actuality.

Last week we witnessed an abhorrent example of violence perpetrated against the bodies, minds and spirits of two Manitoba women, colleagues at an addictions centre. We heard directly from 23-year-old Jackie Healey, a student at Red River College finishing her very last day of work practicum as an addictions worker.

We all know that it takes very special people who want to dedicate their lives to the emotional, mental and physical well-being of people who are struggling with trauma as manifested with addictions. This type of work is certainly not easy and necessarily involves a great deal of compassion, understanding and caring throughout the course of the individual's career. Ms. Healey was at the beginning stages of this journey, now abruptly halted as the result of the unprovoked attack. It was reported last week that as a result of the attack Ms. Healey has lost 99 per cent of her vision in her left eye.

On behalf of our whole caucus, and I'm sure this whole House, we send our thoughts, prayers and love to both Ms. Healey and her colleague as the long emotional, physical and spiritual journey of healing and recovery begins.

Finally, let me affirm that every day across Manitoba, indeed across Canada and the world, women experience a myriad of violence, not the least, savage physical assaults, rapes and murder, often unnoticed or reported and—or resulting in judicial responses.

Violence against women, whether it be in the privacy of one's home or in the workplace or on the street, must be truthfully acknowledged and tackled together in this House within the spirit of partnership because Manitoba have—Manitoba women have the right to safety and security.

Miigwech.

Trooper Fred Butterworth

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I rise today to honour the many veterans and fallen who, 72 years ago, stormed the beaches of Normandy, France.

But on a personal note I must further recognize a hero of mine who I never met, Trooper Fred Butterworth. The oldest son of Fred and Doris Butterworth, he was a Winnipeg man, volunteered to

serve in the Second World War and was joined by his brother.

His youngest sister, Ruth, my grandmother, once remarked that I resembled him, but how could I have known from a faded picture in an old frame?

He was a Sherman tank crewman in the Fort Garry Horse, an armoured regiment. He fought through the beaches of Normandy, the fields of France, the waterways of Belgium, the Rhineland and the liberation of Holland.

On 13 April 1945, the Fort Garry Horse were tasked with breaching the outskirts of Groningen, a city in the north of the Netherlands. Despite the war's end only a few weeks away, resistance in the city was fierce. While street clearing, Trooper Fred Butterworth's tank was struck by a hand-held anti-tank weapon. He was killed instantly. His tank propelled into a nearby house, crushing most of the frontage while flames burned the remainder of the building. Today a plaque rests at the side of this house, commissioned by the family that lived there, thanking Trooper Fred Butterworth for laying down his life to liberate their country and their home.

Across the Netherlands, Canadians are thanked with monuments, kind words of hospitality. We need only look to the gallery to thank the veterans who liberated Europe.

My colleagues, will you join me in a special thanks to Stan Butterworth, a Fort Garry Horse veteran, younger brother to Fred Butterworth and my great-uncle.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a matter of House business, could you seek leave of the House to revert back to ministerial statements?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to revert back to ministerial statements? *[Agreed]*

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable Minister for Sustainable Development please proceed with her statement.

Canadian Environment Week

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): Madam Speaker, I'd like to take this

opportunity to tell the members of the Legislature about Canadian environmental week, June 5th to the 11th.

The theme this year for Canadian Environment Week is: why climate actions matter to you. And each day of the week focuses on a specific subtheme and coincides with Clean Air Day, which is June 8th, World Oceans Day on June 8th, and Rivers to Oceans Week, June 8th to the 14th.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the federal government for their planning and organization efforts for this progressive and important week. It's critical that we inform our citizens of the important issues affecting our beautiful Canadian environment so that we can ensure it is a safe and prosperous future. That is why we look forward to partnering with our federal, municipal, interprovincial and grassroots partners as we develop our made-in-Manitoba climate action plan.

We have to be grateful for Manitoba. For example, Manitoba's provincial parks offer Manitobans and tourists from across the globe the opportunity to be close to nature with family and friends. The journey to Churchill is another truly unique Manitoba tourist destination. Churchill is known to many as the polar bear capital of the world, but it is also famous as a beluga whale-watching hot spot, birdwatching and has an incredible view of the northern lights.

Hunting and fishing in Manitoba is also world renowned, with avid sportsmen and -women in envy of our incredible wildlife and fish. With over 100,000 lakes and 30 fish species, as well as everything from big game to small waterfowl, we recognize the significant ecological, traditional and social values healthy wildlife populations provide to all Manitobans.

There are several events going on around the province for Canadian environmental week. I encourage Manitobans to celebrate Sustainability Day by attending the educational event at the Assiniboine Park Zoo on June 7th from 9 to 5 where I will be bringing greetings in the evening from the Province of Manitoba during that reception.

Green Manitoba and producer responsibility organizations have organized the initial Call2Recycle initiative in partnership with Take Pride Winnipeg which launches the Manitoba Back to School Battery Recycling campaign at the Assiniboine Park Zoo, also on June the 7th.

Also, the Commuter Challenge runs nationally from June 5th to the 11th, and Manitobans are consistently among the national leaders in the Commuter Challenge. In 2015 more Manitobans registered and participated than in any other territory or province in the country, and I hope that all members make an effort to walk, cycle or take transit during Environment Week and throughout the year.

I encourage all members of this House, staff and all Manitobans to engage in this meaningful event around Manitoba this week and to think consciously of how we can make our Manitoba environment safe and prosperous for generations to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Minto—sorry, Wolseley.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): We get mixed up all the time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the minister for the statement highlighting the importance of Canadian environmental week. Certainly, there is an enormous amount to celebrate but also an enormous amount to take action on and an enormous amount to be very, very concerned about. Our world, our planet—and our province is no exception—face no small number of severe and urgent environmental challenges that everyone in the gallery will be wrestling with whether we be on the younger end of the age spectrum or the older one, and it is incumbent upon this government to build on the very good work that our government accomplished on these fronts while we were in office.

Our caucus, for our part, will be paying very close attention to make sure that actions do follow up with the words that have been provided, and I also hope the government of the day gives proper acknowledgement to some of the many amazing stakeholder groups out there that are really making a huge difference at the community level, groups like the Manitoba Eco-Network or Climate Change Connection, all of the campus sustainability co-ordinators, the student groups in all of our schools across the province who are now working in whatever way that they can to make a positive difference and help our society transition to a far more environmentally friendly approach to our planet than what we have inherited so far.

* (13:50)

So we will be keeping a close watch on a number of various files. Last week in question period we asked about the surface water management, for instance. We may well ask about that again. It's a very good piece of legislation. Multiple stakeholders supported it. And if the government is in favour of it, as they've said they are, we really anticipate watching them bring it in to the Chamber.

So thank you very much for giving me a chance to provide these words of comment. And I thank the minister again for her celebration of Canadian Environment Week.

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

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: First of all, thank you for—to the minister, for recognizing Environment Week and how important the environment is to Manitoba.

I want to use my time to speak specifically to an important environmental infrastructure that is wetlands. Wetlands are very productive ecosystems for birds, plants, animals, amphibians, reptiles. They are also vital environmental infrastructure. But they are threatened.

Wetlands help our environment by storing carbon and filtering out the pollutants which cause algal blooms before they reach Manitoba's lakes and rivers. Yet continued loss of wetland infrastructure will exacerbate flooding. It is also predicted that at the present rate of wetland loss that by 2020 an additional 370 tons of nutrient pollution will find its way to Lake Winnipeg.

Wetlands are vital for us to be able to adapt to a changing climate with increased droughts and increased wet weather leading to floods. Wetlands are very important for us to be able to adapt to drought, and at the same time they're very important in wet years because they act as water storage and diminish the risk of severe flooding.

So as we think about and work on Environment Week this week, I think it's particularly important that we be talking about and considering the role that wetlands play to help us adapt to climate change and the role that wetlands play in a healthy environment in our province.

I salute all those who are working in Manitoba to help ensure that we have strong future for our wetlands here in our province.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery—well, we did have them in the Speaker's Gallery—where we have with us today two veterans of the Normandy battle, and I think we've met them this morning, Mr. Stan Butterworth and Mr. John Stoyka. And it was a privilege I think for us to have them here. They are guests of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes).

Also in the public gallery we have with us today from Coop Vélo-Cité, Roxane Dupuis, Janelle Delorme and Eric Gosselin, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger).

Also in the public gallery from Springs Christian Academy 50 grade 9 and 11 students under the direction of Mr. Brad Dowler. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Boniface.

And also in the public gallery from 'loid' Roberts school 23 grade 6 students under the direction of Lindsay Blamey. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum).

On behalf of all honourable members here, we'd like to welcome you all here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Services Public Sector Review

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, it wasn't a good week for truth and transparency from the Premier and his team last week. No coherent answer for why they are giving themselves a pay raise, no defensible position for freezing minimum wages for low-income Manitobans. And now we've learned that the Premier is keeping his private contractor's review of government services.

How can the Premier defend hiding the results of a review of government-wide services? What has he got to hide?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, thank you to my colleague for raising the issue that

the vast majority of any work done in respect of a performance review would be open and available to the public. But we do have some rules—some of the members may be aware of these—that require freedom of information, protection of privacy and so on, to be followed in respect of a number of issues. And, certainly, the members opposite are no secret—that shouldn't be a secret to members opposite. And so those have to be respected in the interests of privacy for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim Official Opposition Leader, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, Conservative commenters are saying that, quote, the communication strategy for the Tories so far has been somewhere between obfuscation and outright stonewalling, unquote.

The Premier cynically ran a campaign promising openness and transparency, yet his first acts in government are to limit access and to keep hidden from the public.

What is he really up to? Will the Premier change his hidden approach, or was this his plan from the beginning?

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, I appreciate very much the topic that the member has raised. It allows me to reminisce, I suppose, if I wish to, about Tiger Dams covers up over many, many years, millions of dollars spent on party friends without exposure to the public view by Cabinet ministers who should know better and who are gone now except for one or two. It allows me also to reference secret severance payments made to former party friends who no longer were friends, apparently, so they were paid to leave.

It would also allow me to mention, Madam Speaker, of numerous other examples. But I don't wish to refer to those things. I'd simply say this to the member: The fact is that we are going to pursue openness and accountability in every respect, something that the previous government avoided at all costs.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim Official Opposition Leader, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Marcelino: Conservative commenters are telling us this Premier's approach is, quote, arrogant, unquote, and, quote, Harper-like closed door, unquote.

This is not the kind of change Manitobans voted for. This review is but one example of a growing list to the Premier's hidden agenda.

Will he come clean, or will he continue to leave Manitobans in the dark?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I appreciate the new alliance between the Winnipeg Sun and the members opposite. I really do, but I don't know how effective it will be, frankly, because the members opposite didn't do any organizational review, any performance review, any accountability review, any value-for-money review for 17 years. And so claiming that there was openness when no review was ever done is hardly a case that's supported by the facts.

We're going to do a review. We're going to get to value. We'll find out how to get this situation, which is a mess, frankly, inherited from 17 years of pure mismanagement, in order. And we'll do that by thoughtfully addressing the needs of Manitobans in a constructive, open and transparent way.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim Official Opposition Leader, on a new question.

Seniors' School Tax Rebate Impact on Manitobans

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the public are concerned about the Premier's hidden agenda, and we've already seen his approach creeping out. In a matter of days he has transitioned from the angry protester to, quote, what you get—you get, quote, you get what you pay for, unquote, Premier.

Just a while ago he was talking endlessly about transparency, yet post-election, we've seen his hidden agenda of clawbacks and cuts.

Why didn't the Premier tell seniors during the campaign period, making as little as \$4,000, that—per annum, that he considered them high income and that they would have their tax credit drawn back?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, thank you to my colleague for raising the issue; I think it was an issue.

* (14:00)

The actual facts are these, Madam Speaker: The new official opposition can't attack our agenda, so they make one up. And it's the hidden agenda, a fantasy agenda, one of their own imagining. If they could attack our real agenda, we'd get substantive

questions from the leader opposite about things we put in our budget, which is here for anyone who wants to read it to read. But there are no substantive questions forthcoming because they can't raise questions about the real agenda, so they imagine a phony agenda.

Now, they ran on this, and this is the result. So I suggest they look at a new approach if they wish to be an effective opposition in this government.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim Official Opposition Leader, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, the Premier's righteous indignation is as phony as his election promise not to jack the taxes of seniors. He keeps talking about the things he criticized in opposition but he kept them in place in the budget, and he is targeting seniors and low-income Manitobans.

Why won't he admit that average Manitobans would have been better off under the NDP plan for everyday Manitobans than his plan to soak seniors and minimum wage earners?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the average Manitoban family makes \$4,000 less per year—pays \$4,000 more in taxes than if they lived in Regina, thanks to the NDP. I don't think they're better off at all.

But I wanted to thank the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for her statement. I think it was a wonderful statement, and I appreciate it. I spoke to Jackie Healey on Saturday, and I expressed our support and our encouragement to her on behalf of all of us here, and I know all of us want her full recovery and wish her the very best, and so I think it's important.

She's a resilient young woman with a strong spirit, and she was so disappointed because she felt a closeness to the people she was trying to help, and I think that's particularly what gives me a sense of poignancy about this, and I think all of us, that she was trying to help. And so I know that all of us wish her and her family the very best, and I appreciate the member's statement very much.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim Official Opposition Leader, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Marcelino: Manitobans are also talking about the fact that the Premier and his government can't or won't answer the most basic questions about the budget. No Manitoba affordability section, no long-term budget projections, cuts to the highways

budget for—of \$48 million, but nothing about which projects they would cut.

We know the Premier was part of the Stephen Harper government, but is this why he is bringing Harper-style cuts and Harper-style communications to Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the NDP continues to focus on playing the politics of division and of fear. We just returned from—last week from meeting with credit rating agencies whose major concern was that we not continue the record of broken promises of the previous administration where they went down and told people repeatedly they'd get their spending under control but never did, who ran deficit after deficit that was far higher than what they had projected, that raised taxes on Manitoba families regularly, on seniors, on young people, on struggling families that they promised they would not.

This is the legacy of broken promises and distrust that we've inherited, and we are doing our very best to restore trust, confidence and faith in Manitobans and in all we deal with, in every portfolio, every single day, to overcome the failed record of the members opposite.

Budget 2016 Financial Projections

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): You know, it's been a rough couple of weeks for the Finance Minister. First he held a media conference on his bogus deficit, and he wasn't able to explain it. Then he tendered an audit they had—that he said would be open and transparent, which we've 'sern'—since learned it will be kept secret from the people of Manitoba. Then he tabled a budget that failed to include year-over-year projections.

Did the Finance Minister leave out those year-over-year projections because he doesn't want the people of Manitoba to know what his real agenda is?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Our government was proud last week to stand up only six weeks after election—it's probably a Canadian record—and deliver a budget on behalf of all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we were clear. This is a budget that will move things ahead for Manitobans. It will lower the burden of taxation. It will build the economy. And it will funnel the savings that we find

in the operation of government right to the front lines.

This is a good-news story for Manitobans, and Manitobans have interpreted it as such. The only ones who seem to see it differently are them.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, it was a good-news budget for the Cabinet because they all got a raise even though they didn't even deserve it.

You know, Madam Speaker, year-over-year projections provide Manitobans with an indication of where the government is going year over year. It's been a tradition in Manitoba over several generations to include year-over-year projections.

Isn't the reality, Madam Speaker, that the Finance Minister didn't include year-over-year projections because he had something to hide?

Mr. Friesen: I'm happy to talk about accuracy in reporting because this member will understand across the way that it was his government that brought a projection only a year ago at this time and said that their deficit would be \$442 million. Then they revised that figure to \$660 million, and then it was revised again to the true \$1-billion deficit that it's truly seen to be.

It is an enormous challenge for all Manitobans. But let us be clear. When it comes to transparency, when it comes to hitting the numbers, we will accept no lessons, no lectures from this group.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Allum: Madam Speaker, we're not lecturing. We're not offering any lessons. We're asking a question.

Why didn't the budget include multiple-year projections? It's that simple.

But he didn't do it. That only leads Manitobans to think that he has something to hide, that there's a real agenda that Manitobans don't know about.

So, Madam Speaker, can he please tell this House in simple terms why he doesn't have multi-year projections in the budget? Does he have something to hide, yes or no?

Mr. Friesen: Struggling to understand the nature of the member's question, because he seems to imply

that his record was one that was about hitting his targets, but we know that was not the case.

This was not a government that ever hit its targets. Our predecessors regularly, on an annual basis, would set a target and they would overspend their planned budget each and every year, costing billions and billions of dollars to Manitobans.

So here's what Manitobans can be sure of. This is a government that cares about transparency. This is a government that cares about accuracy. The difference between us and them: They missed their targets; we're going to hit ours.

Health-Care Audit Public Disclosure

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, Manitobans are becoming more and more distrustful of a government that hasn't followed through on even the most basic elements of transparency and open government.

This government has said it will set up a separate private contractor's review of health care and that this would be done within the first 100 days, but we have yet to hear any details.

With the clock ticking, when can Manitobans expect to hear an answer as to what they have up their sleeves when it comes to cuts in health care?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): The member opposite speaks about 100 days, but he seems to have forgotten the last 17 years.

Seventeen years, Madam Speaker, of overspending, 17 years of not getting results in health care, 17 years of our seniors, of Manitobans, of young Manitobans, of all Manitobans, waiting to get desperately needed service.

I don't know how he could have forgotten the last 17 years when he was thinking about 100 days, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on a supplementary question.

*(14:10)

Mr. Wiebe: On this side of the House, Madam Speaker, we're looking forward; we're not looking backward. They won't tell us—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Wiebe: That's right. They won't tell us who they will consult with. They don't tell us what front-line services they think should be protected. And they won't even tell us who they consider to be a front-line worker. In fact, the Conservatives haven't said much at all about their value-for-money audits except that they don't plan to disclose the results to the public.

Will this minister commit to being truly open and transparent by making the results of the health-care audit public and letting Manitobans know exactly what cuts are on the table?

Mr. Goertzen: You know, Madam Speaker, he doesn't want to look backwards now but, you know, of course he doesn't want to look backwards. It's a good thing that Hansard isn't written in disappearing ink, that it's still there, that you can still go back and look at the last 17 years of a government that overspent year after year after year and didn't get results, ended up last in the country, 10th out of 10 in so many issues of health care.

He doesn't want to look backward. Of course he doesn't want to look backward because the record is abysmal, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wiebe: All bluster, Madam Speaker, and no answer once again.

How are Manitobans expected to trust a government that refuses to disclose the results of these audits publicly, even after they made it a central campaign promise? As the press noted today, it's simply not reasonable to take steps to obscure the public's view of important government activity and then claim you support transparency.

So I ask this Minister of Health: In an effort to not just talk the talk but actually walk the walk, will he make the full results of the health-care audit public?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, that's an interesting question coming from a member who sat in a caucus that underwent a rebellion, a rebellion that was caused by secrecy, that they couldn't actually even trust each other. And now he's suddenly become the great standard-bearer for transparency.

When it comes to the upcoming innovation and sustainability review, and it's true for the review on core services, those issues that don't deal with

proprietary or legal issues will be made public, Madam Speaker.

Yes! North Initiative Youth Engagement Concerns

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, the Conservative announcement in Churchill yesterday not only failed to mention their northern strategy, Yes! North, it only highlighted Winnipeg projects, so even a measly \$300,000 commitment which fails to provide a comprehensive economic strategy for northern communities anyways has been ignored in favour of a hidden agenda of so-called efficiencies.

As a northerner I can tell the minister that investments in the North are about hope and opportunity for the young people who live there.

With only 66 days left in their 100-day commitment, where is Yes! North and what investments outside of Winnipeg will it include?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question.

Our government was proud to announce for Manitobans that even on another issue we are boldly moving ahead and keeping our commitment that we made to expand tourism in the province of Manitoba. We know that this province underinvested in tourism for years and years, the bottom of the nation when it came to investments in this. We understand the huge potential that is here for investments in the North, in the south, east and west, all across this province.

And that is why we were pleased yesterday to announce our 96/4 plan whereby we are going to reinvest 4 per cent in tourism, marketing and development each and every year.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen) talks about expanding the Manitoba brand, but clearly he doesn't consider northerners to be part of that brand.

The Conservatives don't even give northern communities a seat at the table. I've talked to communities who feel like they did not have meaningful conversation and weren't given a formal opportunity for input, and yet they stand in the House every day and claim they are committed to stakeholder consultations.

Why doesn't the minister consider young northerners, whose future depends on a government that stands behind them, stakeholders in the North?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question about partnerships, and partnerships are important to the province of Manitoba. We have indicated from the outset that we are committed to the idea and the practice, the principle, of partnerships.

Government needs to avail itself of the experts and of the community groups all across the province. That is a commitment that we've made. But it's also a path that we are already walking down in the North as well, I assure her, where the minister was only recently up again talking to area groups, talking to experts, talking to community people about how to grow the North and how to provide those good jobs for all Manitobans. That's work that we will continue to do.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Lathlin: I believe the announcement in Churchill was a stunt.

It's not like there aren't opportunities for investment in the North. Our young people need this new government to stand behind them and give them the supports and opportunity for a better future.

What is Yes! North going to do for our young northerners?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I take exception to the word. A stunt is when a government in its last, dying days desperately goes to seniors and tries to buy their vote with a \$1-billion deficit, knowing they can't afford it, doing it irrespective of income. That is a stunt.

What this plan is is a plan that is supported by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. It's supported by the tourism sector. It is supported by northerners who joined us in that announcement, understand what the net effect of it and the net gain of it will be for all Manitobans.

Will it solve all problems? Absolutely not. But it is a step in the right direction that puts us further down the road, good jobs for Manitobans.

Changes to Child and Family Services Government Policy Plans

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the failure of the NDP when they were in

government to adequately support families resulted in the number of children in care going from about 5,000 to over 10,000 children in care.

Instead of being supported, thousands of families were broken apart.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Pallister): Will the Conservative government be like the NDP and continue to apprehend thousands on thousands of children, or will the Conservative government initiate major changes in Child and Family Services so that families are much better supported and fewer children need to be in care?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I want to thank the member opposite for the question.

And this government is absolutely committed to protecting the most vulnerable children in our society. We know that there's way too many children in care, and we're going to do everything we can to ensure that those children are protected, the most vulnerable citizens in our society.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, as reported in the Free Press, the Minister of Families has said that the way that Child and Family Services treats children is unacceptable. He has also said we need to fix the system.

The minister has a mandate in his mandate letter to ensure that children in this province stay with their families.

The story of Phoenix Sinclair has shaken Manitobans. Far too few of the 62 recommendations have actually been implemented. It is urgent that the Conservative government share its plan, not just words, for major changes to Child and Family Services.

Or is this Conservative government going to be like the NDP, all talk and no action?

Mr. Fielding: As mentioned, ensuring that the most—the children—the most vulnerable children have a place where they can grow up in a healthy environment is absolutely our commitment.

We know, once again, after 17 years, having the most amount of kids in care is something that needs fixing, and a part of that, of course, a part of our first part of our plan is to introduce the protecting children act, which is a big commitment for this

government. It's a first step in terms of helping address some of these issues, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member of River Heights, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, the protecting children act, which deals with information sharing, is important, and it can help, but it is not the overall answer to improving Child and Family Services.

*(14:20)

When a child in the care of Child and Family Services is moved 105 times in a single year, the answer is not better sharing of information 105 times. The answer is making sure that there is dramatically fewer changes in place or home during the year or, even better, in supporting the family so that the child doesn't even have to come into care.

I ask the minister: Will he make the critical changes that are needed to improve Manitoba's child and family services system, and what will those changes be?

Mr. Fielding: Madam Speaker, I can tell you, listening to some of the stories that you heard over the years, as a father of three, breaks my heart, and I think that does for anyone in this Chamber whatever political stripe you are.

We truly think that the first step is the protecting children act. That is something that Justice Hughes has talked about, of the importance of sharing of information with people like the service providers, government and law enforcement agencies. We think that is a first step. There's much, much more that needs to be done in terms of this. It's something that, you know, is going to be a focus for myself and this government, and that's why this Premier (Mr. Pallister) made this a priority in terms of the first step being within the first 100 days.

Intravenous Cancer Treatment Funding Increase

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, Manitoba families know well the effects of cancer on patients. We know far too well that cancer takes away family members, loved ones and friends far too often, and that far too many lives are cut short. Cancer is the leading cause of death amongst Manitobans and we know that vital investments in cancer treatment will save lives.

Can the Minister of Health, Active Living and Seniors please inform the House of our government's

commitment to increase funding of cancer drugs for Manitobans?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, that is an important question asked by my friend from Brandon East today.

It was an honour for me to be at an announcement made by our Premier earlier this afternoon that there will be an additional \$4 million provided under Budget 2016 for the intravenous cancer drug program, Madam Speaker.

We know, and all Manitobans know, that one of the most devastating things that you can hear is that an individual has cancer. I had the opportunity, while we were at CancerCare, to meet with their CEO, Dr. Navaratnam, and she indicated to us that this funding would be helpful to those who fight this deadly disease.

All members stand with those Manitobans who are fighting with cancer. They need to know that they never stand alone, Madam Speaker.

Minimum Wage Earners Increase Request

Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, a record number of young people, including members of our Green Team, are making more money because we increased the minimum wage every year. I know the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) is proud of The Green Team members out there. I know the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) is proud of his green teamers. I know the new member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) is proud of the work green teamers do every day to make their community safer, healthier and more beautiful.

The Premier and his Cabinet gave themselves a wage increase.

Will the minister stand with his own colleagues and support a minimum wage increase that will help those young people like the ones that work hard every day as part of The Green Team program?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I thank the member for the question.

For too long in this province the former government tried to have a one-dimensional conversation about real issues of complexity related to affordability. We're getting that conversation right. We're understanding that Manitobans need to live in

a jurisdiction where they can afford to live, and you don't do that by expanding a retail sales tax to include everything and then jacking it up the next year, perpetrating that kind of tax hike on all Manitobans.

I'm surprised that this member would even reflect on a question like that in lieu of his own record.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Chief: Madam Speaker, young people and green teamers think a minimum wage increase is about affordability, and that's what I'm asking the question about.

Manitoba's rural constituencies rely on programs like Green Team to provide meaningful employment opportunities for young people in their home communities. I was proud to work with the AMM and the member for Agassiz (Ms. Clarke) who supported and recognized the value of work done by Green Team.

Does the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke) think it's fair that her and her colleagues got a wage increase when young people like the ones that work for The Green Team did not?

Mr. Friesen: —the question.

Of course, affordability matters, and, Madam Speaker, that's why we were proud, as a government, in Budget 2016, to bring real measures that go down the road on reducing the tax burdens for Manitobans.

Not only do we not introduce new taxes for Manitobans, but for the first time in this province, we're raising the basic personal exemption. We are taking that lowest level at which tax is starting to be assessed and we're raising it up, immediately removing thousands of people off of the tax rolls.

That is work that was never undertaken. That is work that is fair. It is principled. And that's the way a tax system should really be addressed, to make fairness for all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Chief: Madam Speaker, last week the Premier (Mr. Pallister) asked us to go do some research. So we took his advice and we went and did some research.

And here's what the research told us: that he gave himself a 39 per cent wage increase. We also found that a 50-cent minimum wage increase would only be a 4.5 per cent increase. Researchers also told us that he froze minimum wage seven times while he sat at the Cabinet table.

So, Madam Speaker, researchers and low-income Manitobas, Green Team members, young people and seniors working hard every day on minimum wage, they want to know: Does he think that's fair?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, affordability matters in the province of Manitoba.

Here's some other data that the research bears out: that when a government leads by example and reduces the number of ministers from 18 to 12, it saves \$4 million per year in the cost. That is work that was never undertaken by our opponents across the way.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans have understood for a long time now that a government that reaches into their pocket and takes the most taxation, a government that runs \$1 billion in deficit, a government that never wastes an opportunity to raise taxes, this is not a party that cares about affordability.

But I assure them that the new government of Manitoba does.

New West Partnership Agreement Educational Programming Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Madam Speaker, Fort Rouge School has a great community garden initiative where students learn how to plant and grow their own food. Someday they want to build a living playground that can be used for both educational programming and to teach about active living.

But now we're hearing from school administrators in Manitoba that the New West Partnership is putting these things at risk.

Will the Education Minister guarantee today that school boards who pursue green initiatives will be protected from added costs, bureaucratic red tape and lawsuits they may be exposed to thanks to the New West Partnership?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

We're currently in the process of notifying school divisions, schools, school administrators, students and parents the decisions that have been made regarding funding this year. So we're certainly not in a position that we want to make announcements here in the House about where money will be spent.

But I can tell you that we value education very highly. And we have invested in the future of education much better than the opposition ever did.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Rouge, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is when you talk about procurement, the best deal isn't always about the bottom dollar. Sometimes you also have to take into consideration the environmental and the social impacts of your budgeting decisions.

Will the Minister of Education commit to negotiating new exemptions to the New West Partnership to ensure that they can pursue important social 'goals' at the school division level like protecting the environment and creating good local jobs?

Mr. Wishart: Madam Speaker, well, I can tell the member opposite that results do matter. And the investment that they made in education did not yield the kind of results that Manitobans wanted, certainly not for Manitoba students, who went from very high in the national standing to dead last in national standing.

* (14:30)

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Rouge, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I didn't hear anything about the New West Partnership in the answer, and that's why I'm concerned that this is another example of the sign-first, ask-questions-later approach to trade agreements that this government has.

The Winnipeg School Division wants to go green, but it's not at all clear from the language of the existing New West Partnership Agreement that they wouldn't face lawsuits based on environmental impacts being challenged by suppliers.

Is the minister responsible prepared to walk away from the New West Partnership if school divisions' important social objectives aren't protected?

Mr. Wishart: Madam Speaker, there is nothing in the New West Partnership that will require school boards to walk away from any relationships, so I think perhaps the member needs to borrow some of the research that his colleague has obviously made too much use of, of late.

Sale of MTS to Bell Impact on Cellphone Bills

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Premier (Mr. Pallister).

I recently witnessed—we witnessed the spectacle of this Premier acting as a shill for Bell Canada in supporting the sale of MTS. This is a sale that will lead to a significant increase in cellphone rates because of reduced competition. Perhaps the Premier, with his 39 per cent increase in Cabinet salary, can afford to pay the increased cellphone rates, but everyday Manitobans can't afford to pay \$40 or more per month.

Why won't this Premier stand up for Manitoba consumers and say no to this bad deal for Manitobans?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, our government applauds the investments in the private sector, and this is what we have in respect of this MTS-Bell proposed deal.

We have already made an announcement in Morris, an important investment made there that will see dead zones taken out, that we're going to see cell strength strengthened in rural areas and remote areas. This is a net good-news deal for all Manitobans, and our government recognizes it as such.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Elmwood, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, independent analysis has shown that Bell Canada actually invests less in capital than what MTS has been investing in recent years. What would—the Premier's reaction, again, was his cynical and arrogant comments about you get what you pay for.

Now, last week a poll showed that 61 per cent of Manitobans oppose the sale.

The question is: Why won't this Premier stop siding with his insider corporate friends and ignoring the vast majority of Manitobans who are saying no to massive cellphone increases and job losses from the sale of MTS to Bell?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, speaking of cynical, Madam Speaker, I guess I have to reference the fact that the Auditor General for our province remarked in a report just a few short months ago that the previous government's tendencies to purchase without shopping at all were at epidemic rates and, in fact, that their desire to give business to their friends as opposed to let the market determine what was the best price for Manitobans demonstrated very clearly that they had no desire whatsoever to act in the best interests of Manitobans.

This, on the back of previous decisions to jack up taxes on Manitobans, demonstrated very clearly their disregard for leaving money on the kitchen tables of Manitobans and their regard for themselves and increasing their ability to spend more of Manitobans' money while trying to claim credit for doing so, Madam Speaker, makes them less credible in their observations in respect of protecting the best interests of the people of this province.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions?

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

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the budget motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and the amendment and subamendment thereto. The debate is open.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Prior to the member proceeding, I would like to indicate that the member for Fort Garry-Riverview has unlimited speaking time.

Mr. Allum: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues for that rousing reception that I received.

I'm honoured to get up today and speak to the budget. And I appreciate that you are going to listen very carefully. And I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that I won't be speaking for an extended period today.

I know that would make the Minister of Finance happy. I know that he's reeling from the criticism that he's received about his budget over the last couple of weeks. And I know that in order to spare

him I will try to keep my remarks relatively brief and so that we can make the point crystal clear, Madam Speaker, that we on this side of the House will not be supporting this budget, believe it or not.

And I know my friend from Steinbach, the Minister of Health, never misses an opportunity to join in debate, whether it's his turn or not, and so I welcome his comments. I hope he stays in the House for the next little while. Like, I really will enjoy having him here to listen so he can see, in fact, where it is that we think this budget should have gone and, in fact, where this budget fails the people of Manitoba so miserably.

I want to say, Madam Speaker, to begin with, that like the paper-thin Throne Speech, this was an unfortunately paper-thin budget. Now, the Finance Minister likes to say, well, he didn't have enough time to do it, that he wasn't prepared, that he really doesn't know the files, that he really doesn't understand what it is he's supposed to do as Finance Minister. And that's why we've got a paper-thin budget.

But, in fact, it's paper-thin, Madam Speaker, just like the Throne Speech was paper thin. And, in fact, we needed an alphabet-size list of amendments in order to just, in part, complete the serious, serious omissions that existed in the Throne Speech and then serious, serious omissions that existed in the budget speech as well.

And it's left Manitobans wondering, well, just what is this government about? They have a Throne Speech that lasted all of about 16 minutes, Madam Speaker; and then, poof, it was done. Then we had a throne—a budget speech that didn't last a whole much longer than that; and then, poof, it was done. And yet it missed out so much.

And there was so much to talk about, so many challenges facing the people of Manitoba, absolutely difficult financial decisions that need to be made, which the Finance Minister just abandoned and decided not to do this year.

And so we look for the budget projections to see what he would do in the years following. And remarkably, Madam Speaker, he didn't include budget projections in the budget.

An Honourable Member: What?

Mr. Allum: No, they weren't there.

My friend from Fort Rouge, new to this House, came in with the expectation that he would be

provided a full and complete amount of information as you would find in any public institution, he reminds me, and yet he gets to the House and here he finds out there's no budget projections. It's just a one-year thing.

Now, I believe their mandate is, in fact, for four years. Perhaps they're afraid that they're going to lose many of their backbenchers and we'll be within an election period within a year because that's all the budget provided for us.

But it was a remarkable thing, in my view, what the media has since called a glaring omission, that you won't find anything, any kind of budget projections in year 2, in year 3 or year 4, so that the—not only members in this Chamber but, Madam Speaker, the very people that we're elected to serve, the people of Manitoba, can have a reasonable indication of where the government—it's going, how it a get—and how it intends to get there.

* (14:40)

Instead, we got was a one-off, a one-year one-off with not the sufficient information for the people of Manitoba to be able to judge, not only what the government has in store for it for one year, but for year 2, year 3 and year 4. So I regard that, Madam Speaker, not only as a glaring omission, but part of a deception on the part of this government in the budget, and that's the theme that I'm going to return to over the course of my remarks, a deception at the heart of this budget that not only betrayed the interests of the people of Manitoba, but resulted in a sizable manipulation of every single backbencher in the Conservative caucus who went out on an agenda, knocked on doors and then found themselves saddled with a budget that lasts only for one year, isn't projected out into the future and was not at all—not at all what they campaigned for during that election and it's that theme of deception that I want to return to over and over in the course of my remarks.

Madam Speaker: Order please. I would just caution the member on use of the word deception. While it is not unparliamentary, it is becoming a word that is not of particularly—useful in a debate as it does have a tendency to be an inflammatory word. So I would just caution the member on the use of that word.

Mr. Allum: Okay, of course, I always want to be within the boundaries of proper parliamentary tradition, although I have to admit in saying that, Madam Speaker, you leave me at a loss to find appropriate terms to be able to describe the kind of

thing that was perpetrated on the people of Manitoba in the course of this budget. [*interjection*]

My friend from Fort Rouge said, well, I could use the word inaccurate, but that doesn't properly convey the nature of the misdirection, if that's okay, that was perpetrated by this government on the—not only this Chamber during their budget presentation, but on the people of Manitoba. I actually had a few other adjectives to describe the word, but I don't think you're going to like it either. I think that there's a fraud at the heart of this budget, Madam Speaker, but I heard you loud and clear that that's not a term we want to use so I won't return to it except to make sure that it's crystal clear what we're trying to convey on this side of the House when it comes to the nature of the budget that we were presented with because it—frankly, if it's—if it was a misdirection that doesn't quite convey exactly the critique that we have on this side of the House about what was presented from the other side of the House.

But what I did want to start off with, Madam Speaker, just talking about the serious omissions that existed in the Throne Speech and that was carried out in the budget in the first place, one, of course, is my sister from Logan, our very, very fine interim leader pointed out day after day in question period since we've returned to the House, was the absence of the government to recognize diversity—the diversity of this great province and didn't promote an inclusive, positive, vision for all Manitobans. You won't find that in the Throne Speech and you're sure not going to find it in the budget as well.

In fact, this was a Throne Speech and a budget for the very few at the expense of the very many. It was kind of reverse utilitarianism, Madam Speaker. [*interjection*] Yes, it—well I would love to have—my friend from St. Boniface wants to know more about reverse utilitarianism, but really effectively what that describes, and I know the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) is familiar with the concept because he left so many people out of the budget, it actually serves the few and not the many, the very reverse of what John Stuart Mill would've had in mind when he talked about the nature of utilitarianism.

But it's not all—it's just not diversity that was left out of the Throne Speech and the budget, Madam Speaker. The most egregious omission from the budget was the—from the Throne Speech and from the budget—was the absence of any reference to implementing the recommendations of the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission. I have a hard time understanding how my friend from Morden-Winkler, who I know to be a caring individual, I know he's—as a—is a very smart individual, I grant him that. I like him very much when we meet outside the—in the hallways of this Chamber. I think he serves his constituency very, very well. So I'm left with a—left failing to understand how my friend from Morden-Winkler, who I've just complimented in any number of ways, and I mean all of those sincerely, how he can present a budget that doesn't talk about implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Madam Speaker, I know that you know that this is—that reconciliation is the central issue of our time, and so it's incumbent upon the Finance Minister, the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), to stand up in this Chamber to describe and elaborate on the resources that are going to be put in place by his government to support the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And, sadly, he didn't do that.

He failed Manitobans, he failed indigenous Manitobans, and he failed Canadians dramatically in not doing the kind of important central work in ensuring that the rights—the wrongs that we have been perpetrated on indigenous peoples over generations are now, finally, going to be righted, that we're going to make a difference in our society, that in the year 2016 we're no longer going to tolerate indifference or lack of inclusion or persecution, if it comes to that, or division or discrimination, that in 2016 we're no longer going to do that. And the member for Morden-Winkler, the Finance Minister, had within his grasp, as he has his hand on his pen, for the budget to actually address the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to put in place the very resources that are necessary for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and he didn't do that.

And, on this side of the House, we not only consider that a glaring omission but, frankly, a very, very profound failure on the part of my friend from Morden-Winkler. I had higher expectations for him—not all members of his government, I have to admit, but for him I had higher expectations, and I was sorely, sorely disappointed—sorely disappointed that he would fail indigenous Manitobans in such a clear and brazen way.

And then my friend from St. Johns, who has done such extraordinary work in her professional life

and in her personal life to address the important issues around missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, raised that issue from the moment she arose from her chair in this Chamber for the very first time, has kept at it day after day, that we need to make sure that we're on top of this issue, that we're leaders in this country on this issue, which, in fact, this government was right from the get-go, that when it came to MMIW and girls—MMIW and G, missing and murdered indigenous women and girls—that there would be no stone left unturned, that every possible resource that was available would be utilized to show that Manitoba which was a leader will remain a leader and continue to be a leader for years to come.

And, again, Madam Speaker, what we were presented with in the budget was a massive failure on the part of my friend from Morden-Winkler, a man I know to have a good social conscience, not to include any resources in that regard. I have to tell you, as a member of this Chamber, I'm disappointed by it.

As a Manitoban, I'm disappointed by it, but I have to say, as a Canadian, I'm embarrassed by the failure of this Finance Minister and that government to provide the appropriate amount of resources to support the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and to provide the resources that are absolutely essential for Manitoba's participation in a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. And for that, I think the appropriate term in this House is shame on the government.

*(14:50)

There were so many more elements of—in the Throne Speech and in the budget that were missing, that, and were omitted, that it's really a travesty in many ways—nothing about protecting and enhancing the rights of workers.

It was only because on this side of the House last Friday, talking about the fertility task—tax credit, putting that question to the Health Minister, that anything related to the LGBTTQ* community would be addressed by this government.

And I actually have to tell you, the question period was quite interesting for us on Friday. We asked about the fertility tax credit. I asked if it was maintained in the—would be maintained, in the first question. The Health Minister got up as he usually does, with his extraordinary amount of bluster, and didn't really offer an answer.

So we, in the second question, we asked him again about the fertility tax credit. And he gave a qualified yes. So we took that on faith.

And so we asked him, would he follow our lead and improve the fertility tax credit up to 50 per cent, Madam Speaker? And, if you read very closely in Hansard, the Health Minister got up, with all of his usual thunder and bluster, and gave an unqualified yes to that. So I can only assume that the fertility tax credit will go up to 50 per cent, as amended by the budget.

And then I know my friend from Morden-Winkler will listen to his friend from Steinbach, and they will do the right thing, as we had proposed during the election campaign, to make sure that what is a very, very expensive proposition is affordable for all Manitobans, because, frankly, Madam Speaker, that's who we always governed for, was all the people of Manitoba, all the time.

The failure of the budget to address anything in relation to the rights of workers, I think, is one of the most shameful aspects of this budget. It's quite clear to me, Madam Speaker, as we listened to the government unveil its very minimalist agenda, that they are preparing what can only be described as a war on organized labour in this province. And it's a, as a result and as a consequence, be a terrible chapter in Manitoba's history.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Already there are chapters in that particular history book in relation to labour that are not very happy. And so the new government could have followed our lead with 16, 17 years of unprecedented labour peace, of unprecedented collaboration between organized labour and the government of Manitoba, to ensure that working people get the very best benefit out of being citizens and workers in this province.

And yet already the new government, from election night onward—in fact, it preceded—I was at a debate at the Chamber of Commerce, where our premier at the time stood shoulder to shoulder with labour, and the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), the opposition leader at the time, got up at the end of that particular debate and declared war on organized labour.

And, again, Mr. Acting Speaker, I have to tell you that not only was I ashamed by his conduct that day, not only was I ashamed by his words, I was embarrassed, not only as a member of this Chamber,

but as a Manitoban, to hear person who was on the cusp of becoming Premier of this province declare war on organized labour. And that, to me, was maybe one of the worst things I've heard in my 20 years of living here in Manitoba.

We know that there was nothing in the Throne Speech or in the budget about actually addressing issues on child care. It is true that the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), unsure of what to do, at a loss as to what he might actually try to do, said, okay, well, we're going to do what the NDP did. That's true. We're going to keep funding at the same sort of level for now. But, in terms of a plan to address the very, very significant needs for child care in communities, in homes, in families all across Manitoba, he had nary a word to say about it.

If we're embarrassed and ashamed by the absence of any respect on diversity, if we're embarrassed and ashamed by any sort of wording around a commitment to truth and reconciliation, if there's no substantial budget numbers for supporting a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, if there was nothing in the—for the LGBTTQ* community, if there was nothing for people living with disabilities, the worst part of it—and this is a long list of terrible omissions, Mr. Deputy Acting Speaker—the absence of a plan for child care, one of the most important things to families of all sizes here in Manitoba, the absence of any commitment for publicly accessible child care.

We had a child-care commission; we had recommendations. Our government had already committed to implementing those recommendations. And yet you won't find anything in the budget about that, Mr. Acting Speaker.

And I—and so that sense of neglect of the real needs of Manitobans is something that I think is profoundly disturbing in this budget and one that Manitobans may live to regret for generations to come because I think the implications of the absence of support for some very good causes in this budget is really something that may have severe and profound consequences not only in this year and years to come but for many, many years to come.

So what I've tried to do in the first part of my remarks is simply to articulate for the House the glaring omissions in the budget, and I want to talk about some in more detail, but first I want to just spend a few minutes talking about the public reaction to my friend from Morden-Winkler, from his first

budget and the public reaction to the first budget from this Premier (Mr. Pallister).

And the public reaction to this budget 'frad' includes all 40-odd members of the new government. Because the fact of the matter is that public reaction, and you know yourself, I'm sure, Mr. Acting Speaker—you've had probably several calls to your constituency already complaining about any number of omissions or other aspects of the budget. But the public reaction has been, in a word, terrible, and for that, I actually think that that's an understatement. We could probably find other words to describe it.

But my favourite—my favourite—of all the media reactions to the budget was the front-page news on the Winnipeg Sun, and I have to admit, I rarely read the Winnipeg Sun, although I think they have a good sports page every once in a while. But there it was, and this was pointed out to me. Someone called me, Mr. Acting Speaker, and said, you ought to look at the front page of the Winnipeg Sun, at least online, immediately following the presentation of the budget because it said, and I quote, the new budget was worse than the NDP—worse than the NDP.

Now, my friend from Morden-Winkler, I think, might want to reflect on that particular headline. And I—because that's quite something that—coming from the Winnipeg Sun, which we, frankly, on this side of the House, don't agree with their agenda at all or very rarely. We have nothing particularly in common. Manitobans know that the Winnipeg Sun has been one of our loudest if not one of our most accurate critics, and yet on their speaking about the Conservative budget, said it was worse than the NDP. Now, that's really, really bad, for the Winnipeg Sun to characterize the very first budget from the new Conservative government as being worse than us.

I think that says it all because what it reminds us, and what those of us on this side of the House realized during the election campaign because we saw their paper-thin election platform and we said, well, I guess they don't really know what they're doing. And then we got the Throne Speech, and it kind of confirmed, I guess we were right. They don't really know what they're doing. And then we got the budget, and it became crystal clear: government, Premier (Mr. Pallister), Finance Minister, really no concept of what they're doing. So what did they do? Adapted our budget.

* (15:00)

They said, you know, we're going to—the NDP's actually doing a pretty good job, as it turns out. People are working here. Growth projections are great. There's a stimulus investment program in place to ensure not only that renew what—we renew our infrastructure but to create jobs for Manitobans, create good, solid, well-paying jobs for Manitobans, while, at the same time, protecting those very important services in health care, child care, environmental protection, in education, in health care. That's what we set out to do. And what happened in the budget was, in fact, something akin to pickpocketing; I think I can say that. They picked our pocket of our agenda, and then they ran with it in the budget, and then came to the conclusion: In fact, they don't know what they're doing; we might as well at least follow the NDP, because they did have a grasp on what they were doing.

They did have a grasp on the needs of Manitobans. They did understand what needed to be done to address the significant needs of Manitobans, and, more importantly, on top of all of that, what our budget, what our financial outlook did in March and what all of our budgets have been prior to 1999 had really provided hope, optimism and opportunity for all Manitobans—no matter where they come from, whether they've lived here for a few years, many years or for generations, that everybody would have a place. Everyone would have opportunity and, in particular, young people would have the opportunity in order—to not only build their own families but to find a good job, get a good profession and continue to build this beautiful province generation by generation.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to say that the interesting thing about the budget was not only was it paper thin, it had so many omissions that didn't address so many issues, that didn't take advantage of all of the many opportunities out there. But then, at the end of the day, it was given an F by the very people who support that government. They failed. They failed this Chamber. They failed Manitobans and, at the top of the media report card, on the budget was a grade of F, a failure and a profound failure at that.

So I want to be clear that I'm using the proper terms in the House and following proper protocol and parliamentary tradition. So I'm going to use the word misdirection for the remainder of my remarks, because I think there was a significant misdirection in the budget. And the first of these—the first misdirection was this overwhelming sense that we

heard, from time to time, that Manitoba's economy wasn't doing that well. And, in fact, what we know, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that the fundamentals to the Manitoba economy were actually very, very strong. We had among the lowest unemployment rates in the country, almost a percentage point, I believe, lower than the national average, so people were working here.

We know from the past, in the Great Depression, anytime before that, anytime after, that joblessness is misery. That wasn't happening here in Manitoba, Mr. Acting Speaker. People were working and that was reflected in the unemployment rate, one of the lowest in the country if not the lowest. And then, on terms of job creation, not only were people working, but because of our investments, because of the courageous decisions that we had made to invest in the economy, new jobs were being created as well.

And that's the thing; it's not only were people working, but there was going to be opportunity for people entering the labour market. There were good jobs out there, and we wanted them to take advantage of it.

So we had ensured that we had an education system that responded to the very needs that people in need of training have in order to enter the labour market in the first place. So we had low unemployment. We had a great record on job creation. We had a very, very strong education program in order to ensure that our children had the skills and the knowledge they needed to enter the labour market and then, on top of all of that, we also had the projected best growth rates in the country.

That's not me saying that, Mr. Acting Speaker; that's the Conference Board of Canada saying that, the Conference Board of Canada making that projection that our fiscal House was actually in order, that Manitobans were working, that job creation was happening and the projected growth in the economy for this year and next year and years to come was going to grow and lead the country. What else do you want?

So I have to say it's quite alarming to hear the opposition in the election campaign and since they've come into government to say that they've got work to do to create—make Manitoba the most improved. How are you going to improve on the lowest unemployment rate in the country? You're not; you're only going to take it backward. That's going to be failure No. 1.

How are you going to improve on the best job creation rate in the country? You're not; you're only going to take it backward.

How can you improve on the best growth projections in the country? How are you going to do that? You're not; you're only going to take it backward.

And that's what's awaiting Manitobans in the years to come because, as we head toward years two, three and four, which will be the years of austerity, that's what the failure's going to be. Instead of the most improved province, this government on the other side of the House is quite likely to leave Manitoba in a worse position, with Manitoba families in a worse position, with Manitoba kids in a worse position, and for that we're going to stand up every single day, hold this government to account for the great fiscal record of this government over our 16 years, which was set, not by just us, but by relevant, important, professional research organizations all across this country, but including the Conference Board of Canada, which I know that every Canadian listens to—*[interjection]*

Now, it's interesting, my friend from Lakeside says, it's not what the bond raters said. But we know about the bond rates. In fact, over our term in government, and my friend from St. Boniface is here and he'll know this, our credit rating improved not once, but twice, but three times—three times—up, up, up. Admittedly, in the face of the great recession, it came down one, but we're up two—two bars. So if they're going to make Manitoba the most improved, they're going to have to ensure that it doesn't come down and fall and fall. But that's likely to be the outcome of the Harper-style austerity that we're going to find from this government in the years to come.

And, I have to say, that that first misdirection, this notion that Manitoba's economy wasn't humming on all cylinders, was, in fact, untrue. It was wrong and it was a misdirection perpetrated by the members opposite in their lust for power, but they did Manitobans a great disservice by getting that kind of information out.

I talked about unemployment rates. I talked about projected growth, but the next great misdirection in the budget, Mr. Acting Speaker, was around the deficit itself. What a terrible debacle, that circumstance was down in Room 50—something in the basement when the member for Morden-Winkler, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) has a press

conference and he invites all the members of the press gallery to come and he says, oh, my God, the debt—the deficit's a billion dollars. And they said, prove it. And he said, well, actually, I don't know; I don't have the information. And they said, well, can you give us the backgrounder—which our government included with every press release so that there would be sufficient information. And the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) put up his hands, he said: I don't have a backgrounder, I don't have the information that's required, I just—and so what he was saying to the people of Manitoba in that debacle of a press conference was that he'd actually invented a number, that he didn't actually know if it was a billion or \$800 million or 1.2.

*(15:10)

What he should have done is gone to the economic and fiscal outlook from March, 2016, that we published on the eve of the election. He would have saw what the deficit numbers were. It was very clear, and they were defensible, and they were put there in black and white so everybody can see it, and they were put there in a way where people could understand exactly why the deficit was the way it was under our government.

Not this Finance Minister, no, he holds a press conference, invites a ton of people to come, a bunch of media people who are very, very busy in their life, and then he doesn't have the information. And why is that? Because he just made it up, it's a fiction and a fantasy of his own making, and the most obvious aspect of that was that included in that bogus deficit number was \$143 million owed from the federal government to the provincial government.

Like, I don't know about anybody else in the House, but when I think of a deficit, it's the money I owe—the money I owe, maybe the money I'll owe you someday, Mr. Acting Speaker, but what's not part of a deficit is money owed to us by the Government of Canada to the people of Canada—or to people of Manitoba. That—could there be a more colossal misdirection on the deficit than that particular number that says \$143 million are owed to the people of Manitoba from the Government of Canada, that should be in their debt, not ours— money owed, not money owing. And that's a terrible misdirection to perpetrate on the people of Manitoba.

It's one thing to come into this House and play politics and that kind of thing. That's not right, but it's one thing to do that. It's another thing to mislead the people of Manitoba so profoundly on such

a critical question as the actual real deficit in Manitoba, and then on top of that 143 million was another \$66 million. So we're almost two thirds of the way through that, and that was for the regional health authorities, which, of course, belong in the summary budget, poof, moved over to the core budget, just so you can pile on the deficit. It didn't belong there; it wasn't right. It wasn't proper accounting procedures.

If anything, it was an accounting trick, and that's not what we do here in Manitoba, Mr. Acting Speaker. We don't perpetrate tricks on the people of Manitoba. We have to go forward with an open and honest and transparent articulation of what the numbers actually are. And so, much to the great embarrassment of the Finance Minister, of the member for Morden-Winkler, all he did was put a bogus deficit number out there. He misled the people of Manitoba on the strong financial foundation upon which we entered the last election, and then he created a crisis, which is known to do by Tory governments since time immemorial.

You'll know I'm from southern Ontario and I bolted southern Ontario just after Mike Harris was elected because I know that he had his guns out for the likes of myself and families like me because we're teachers and nurses and, well, those are the people that are generally on the firing lines of right-wing governments. And I remember Mike Harris in the very early days creating a crisis in the economy of Ontario in order to implement his austerity budget, and that's not right, Mr. Acting Speaker. That's—frankly, it's wrong. It feels wrong; it is wrong. And that never should have happened.

But not just in terms of the bogus deficit number that was put out there, but there are two other elements about the debt that we need to understand. One, of course, is that our debt servicing charges were in order. In fact, once upon a time when these folks were in government they were—paid 13 cents on the dollar through debt; ours was a little over 5 cents on the dollar—[*interjection*]—5.5, says my friend from St. Boniface. That tells you, and what all reputable economists tell you, is that, in fact, that the debt, as it existed, the deficit as it existed, was within the range of manageability. It could be managed.

And so we didn't perpetrate that kind of misdirection on the people of Manitoba. We said, yes, there are colossal needs out there; we do need to invest in the infrastructure and in the people of Manitoba. We do need to make sure that there's

opportunities available and that core services are protected. But we never went out and said—gave bogus deficit numbers or not to explain the reality of what actually happens when it comes to servicing the debt. And, for that, I find that just incomprehensible, Mr. Acting Speaker, because I just don't know how members in the government can get up out of bed every day and go to work knowing full well that they've pulled one on the people of Manitoba, both in relation to the very strong economy that we had and also our—also the nature of the deficit that we had and also around the manageability of the deficit as well.

And then there was something else, another misdirection in the budget that is, frankly, inexplicable, but the whole chapter on affordability, poof, gone from the budget. Poof. It was though as they were practising some really, really bad magic, where the government said, you know, we don't want to talk about affordability in Manitoba because the NDP had done such a good job on affordability. And so what we're going to do is we're just going to take it out of the budget completely. We won't talk about it. We'll hope that no one notices. And with any luck we won't talk about it.

Well, guess what, Mr. Acting Speaker? We noticed. We saw it. It wasn't there. And what's done in relation to affordability is to ignore one of the most—one of the strongest elements of our economy was the very affordability in Manitoba.

I know my friend from Lakeside, I would get to answer questions from Hydro from—on Hydro from time to time, and he'd get up and he'd talk about, oh, a couple of percentage-point increase in Hydro rates as though, you know, his MTS bill wasn't going up—and, by the way, it's going up a whole lot more going in the future—but he would get up in some high dudgeon about a couple of dollars more on the Hydro rates. And I would have to remind him every single day that not only did we have among the lowest Hydro rates in the country, but we had the lowest home heating rates and the lowest car insurance rates, meaning that we had the lowest bundle of utility rates in the country—

An Honourable Member: But you got the biggest bunglers.

Mr. Allum: Now, my friend from Emerson, of course, takes issue with that. Instead, as he normally does, he—instead of providing any kind of substantive debate on policy, what he does is he engages in personal insults. He's done it repeatedly since

he and I have had the rare pleasure of sitting beside each other. It's a running monologue, a stream-of-consciousness set of personal insults that he's still carrying on with as I try to give my budget speech. I would ask him to have the decency to let me have the floor and not to engage in the very kind of bullying tactics that don't belong in this Chamber or outside of this Chamber in any place in Manitoba.

And still, as I ask him for some respect, he still keeps talking as though someone pulls a string out of his back, Mr. Acting Speaker, and continues a stream-of-consciousness set of personal insults that have no place, when, in fact, in this House, we're all honourable members. And I would remind the member from Emerson to act like we're all honourable members and not just continue on his personal vendetta and his personal insults.

So what have we got so far? We've got a budget misdirection related to the strong foundation of the economy. We have a budget misdirection on the nature of the deficit, its actual number or our ability to manage it. We have a misdirection on affordability and the Manitoba advantage, which, on this side of the House, we're extremely proud of, which will soon become Manitoba's disadvantage, in short order.

And so what we know for sure is that the government really didn't understand what it was they were doing. When they were members opposite, were out on doorsteps and they were criticizing us through the roof, and they'd go knock on a door and they'd say, oh, shame on that NDP for this and shame on them for that. And then they get in here, they get elected, and what's the first thing they do? They basically adapt our agenda but misdirect people of Manitobans on the strength of our economy, on the strength of our fiscal fundamentals and on the strength of Manitoba in general to keep growing, to keep building, to address all of the needs in this province.

* (15:20)

And then we had—on the deficit, just one final point I should make about the deficit. And this is really quite startling, Mr. Acting Speaker, because my friend from Morden-Winkler, God bless him, got up as an opposition every day and did actually lecture us about balancing the budget; he said it every day. I bet, if we looked in Hansard, we could find 5,000 references of his sanctimonious need to balance the budget. And then, in his first budget, what does he do? He stands up and he says to the

people of Manitoba, we're going to balance that budget; wait for it. Year two? No. Year three? No. Year four? No. Year five? No. Year six? No. Year seven? No. No, we're going to do it over eight years.

Well, that—if there was ever a greater misdirection perpetrated on the people of Manitoba, it's the eight-year retirement plan for the Premier (Mr. Pallister) not to do—not to address that particular issue, but to take their time in getting to it when, in fact, in his sanctimonious manner than the member from Morden-Winkler sometimes has, he talked about balancing the budget. He just has no intention of doing it, or, if he is going to do it, the people of Manitoba, the people that really matter, are going to pay the price for it. And we're never going to let that happen; I can tell you that, Mr. Acting Speaker.

And then we get to this situation with the minimum wage, and I know that this has been one of the most sorrowful moments in the very, very short history of the new government has been the profound and profoundly disturbing contrast between saying to those who earn the least in our community—*[interjection]* My friend from St. Johns points out, quite rightly, that about 70 per cent of them are women. That the—those who earn the least in our economy don't deserve a raise this year. And this government, this side of the House, every single year. It's an important tool in addressing poverty. It's one tool but an important tool. And what the members opposite, what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) said, what the Premier said, is that they don't deserve a raise this year. It's going to be frozen.

And then the Minister of Finance—I don't know where it came from—out of nowhere says, you know, we're not going to give those who earn the least a raise, but you know what we are going to do? We're going to give the chosen 12 a huge raise. *[interjection]* The disciples, the chosen 12. They're going to get a raise. I thought they were just here for the car; I didn't know they were going to get a raise on top of it. That's quite astonishing.

And I have to say, Mr. Acting Speaker, very, very disturbing for those of us who fight on behalf of those who have the least in our community, are motivated to enter this Chamber to fight for those who can't or won't speak for themselves, and to see the very first action is to the chosen 12—give themselves a raise for having delivered absolutely squat to those who have the least in our society. Shame, if there ever was one, a shame on that

government, Madam—Mr. Acting Speaker, for that particular policy omission.

I'm embarrassed by—that the member from Morden-Winkler, who I know to be a conscientious individual, and yet he wouldn't do anything on Truth and Reconciliation Commission, wouldn't do anything on missing and murdered indigenous women, wouldn't mention immigration at all and won't give Manitobans who need a raise, who need some support from their government, won't give them a raise and yet can turn to his 11 other brothers and sisters in his Cabinet and say, but you know what, you haven't done anything, but you're all getting a raise. It's a shocking, shocking element.

And I know, on this side of the House, we're not giving up on the minimum wage. We're going to talk about it each and every single day, one way or another, until the Manitobans who earn it, who deserve it, get the minimum raise they deserve. And I'm talking quite directly through you, to the Minister of Finance, right now. He ought to do the right thing: amend the budget and ensure that Manitobans are on the way to a living wage in this province, not just an increase in the minimum wage.

But, you know, the absence of any discussion on the minimum wage was a reflection of a plan to address poverty in any possible way. In our fiscal outlook, I think, the report on poverty lasted something in the order of about 20-odd pages, maybe a little more, maybe a little less, but approximate.

An Honourable Member: Robust.

Mr. Allum: Robust, says my friend from Concordia; he couldn't be more right about that. And yet, at the same time the budget comes out, how long is the report on poverty in the poverty plan? There's a page and a half, yes, triple spaced with size 17 font and why is that? Because they don't know how to plan. They don't know how to plan to address poverty. They won't raise the minimum wage. They won't address child-care issues.

My friend from Point Douglas asked very clearly about Rent Assist. I think we got an answer on that, although as our topnotch researchers begin to quarrel, to borrow a word from my friend from Morden-Winkler, to unpack the budget. We're learning more and more about how Rent Assist might actually be undermined, might not live up to what we had expressed in the economic and fiscal outlook or in budgets previous, and so for that to not—to be a government, to say you're going to get

out and govern for all the people of Manitoba and then not have a plan to address poverty is really, really, not only depressing but disappointing and an abdication of the very responsibility of governing in the first place, Mr. Acting Speaker. And I just—I'm almost at a loss of words, almost, un peu [*somewhat*], almost at a loss of words. Woke the translator up just briefly there for my limited amount of French.

But a poverty plan, where is it? It doesn't exist. And then we had—even before the budget was tabled but it's part of the whole budget rollout—the very, very unhelpful part—[*interjection*—I'm so pleased that my sister from St. Johns is standing up for me. I appreciate that very much.

As I say, the member opposite continually—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I'd like to remind the House that the honourable member from Fort Garry-Riverview has the floor, if we could keep the chatter down a little bit, please.

An Honourable Member: Good job.

Mr. Allum: It is a good job, thank you for that support. We have much to say about a budget that's said so little, and I'm just trying my best to get it out for you, Mr. Acting Speaker, because I know, if not members opposite, you're interested, as you always are, you have a keen intellect and a very caring individual and I know you care about what we're trying to say here.

But part of the budget rollout—and actually it happened I think it was their first day after they were sworn in, we had the sheer spectacle of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) going down to be a sales person for Bell telephone. I have to say, you know, I'm a lifelong political—I was going to say junkie, but I better be careful about that—long—all my life been interested in politics, and I had never really seen that ever before, Mr. Acting Speaker, where on the day a government—was it the day they were sworn in? [*interjection*] Yes, it feels like a lifetime ago already—that that announcement would be put out there, you know, it wasn't put out during the election because they know that we would've said, well, you're the same folks that sold the film company more than 18 years ago, and here you are now, not only watching as bystanders as MTS gets sold to a Canadian conglomerate, but you're actually there applauding it even though cellphone rates for average Manitobans are suggested to go up by \$40 a shot—[*interjection*—and he's offering more money for

it to boot, says my friend from Tyndall Park. That's what he said, and so I—that was an astonishing—quite astonishing way for a government to start, not only to remind Manitobans that they had sold out the people of Manitoba two decades ago when they sold a profoundly important government asset to their friends who all made money out of it, but then they stand idly by, in fact, they weren't just bystanders, the Premier was there clapping, applauding, as a proud Manitoba company sees its assets, its head office and the infrastructure we need all move somewhere else, and then not to care, in fact, not only that they didn't care, they applauded it.

* (15:30)

I find that yet another shameful page in an already long book of shameful pages of this government, and they've just got started. I've never seen a sellout done quite like that, and I hope never to see that again.

And then, Madam—Mr. Acting Speaker—sorry; I'm already used to saying Madam Speaker, and I'm pleased about that point—we had the—had this press release that came out from the government on budget day that says—and wait for it; you can clap if you want—they didn't raise any taxes. [*interjection*] And my friend from 'cordia—Concordia, I think, being sarcastic, says, yes, right. And that's exactly the right tone to be put on it because, in fact, they did raise taxes. They—and they not only raised taxes on seniors and were not only going to hit the most vulnerable seniors in the pocketbook and take—claw back 44—an astonishing \$44 million from our seniors. But not only that, they were going to every mailbox, the member from Morden-Winkler, it's going to reach right in the mailbox and take the cheque out of the mailbox. We said, the cheque's in the mail, and he said, no, it's not. No, it isn't. I was already at your mailbox; I took it out.

And you know why? Because it was a misdirection and we didn't say anything about it in the election. We didn't want to talk about much in the election. In fact, I think this one piece of paper that I'm holding weighed more than their whole platform in its entirety.

But they didn't mention a word about raising seniors' taxes, but that's what they've done, to the tune of \$44 million. And they reached right in the mailboxes of seniors and took the cheque right out. [*interjection*] And that—and my friend from Emerson just agreed with me; he just said, yes, that's exactly what we did. Yup, that's exactly what we did. I think

we'll have to make sure that the people of Emerson understand exactly how he subscribed to the view, that he subscribed to the manner in which the Finance Minister went door to door opening mailboxes and taking the cheques out from seniors.

And I found that—I'm at a loss to have the full arrange of adjectives I needed to describe this budget. But I was both amazed and profoundly disturbed by that cheap shot at the seniors of our province who built this province, who made a significant contribution to the well-being of our education system. *[interjection]* And, as my friend from Tyndall Park quite rightly characterized it—characterizes it, it was a dose of indifference. And I couldn't have said it better myself. I'm so pleased that he's sitting beside me because between the two of us, we're going to be able to nail the full critique of this budget.

I already mentioned child care, and so I won't make an extended commentary on that, except to say how sorrowfully disappointed we were that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) didn't get up in his place on budget day and say that he believes in publicly accessible child care for every Manitoba child who needs it. He didn't do that. And I don't know why he would abandon Manitoba families and Manitoba children in that regard. He shouldn't have done that. He should have said to them: Don't worry. We have a plan for child care. There's 12,000 people who may need child care. We're going to use the child-care commission that was set up by this side of the House; we're going to implement the recommendation that had the support of the child-care community in Manitoba.

In fact, we worked with them because I was in the meetings working with them on it at the time. We had their support. We were going to move forward.

He didn't know how. Maybe it was indifference, as my friend from Tyndall Park said. But such a glaring omission from the budget was something that we're going to continue to talk about in the days ahead.

And then we move on to education. And I think this is really the quite interesting part of the budget from my point of view, and it—just I guess because I had the great privilege and great honour of being minister of Education and Advanced Learning for a number of years. And, by the way, I'm still very curious about the name of that department, which is now just the Department of Education and maybe Training and then a bunch of stuff in there.

Apparently, our colleges and our universities—advanced learning, in our department—don't count for anything, don't even belong in the name of the Education Minister's title of his portfolio.

Well, I think that's—I know, having spent many, many hours in great collaboration and great discussions with the college and university community, I know they would be very upset by that. And what it was was a—it was a slight, an intended slight to say you don't count; you don't matter. We're just going say it's education and a bunch of other stuff, and we're really not going to say—give the kind of credit and credibility to the post-secondary sector that they deserve. So I find that very disturbing as well.

But on the Education budget, we weren't sure, and my friend from Fort Rouge, I know, would agree with me on this one, sure what was going to come in the Education budget. And so the Education Minister, he said to us, I think on budget day, asked a very important question by my friend from Fort Rouge, and he was told in question period that day, wait for the budget.

And we're still waiting, and it's likely we're going to wait many, many weeks and months more because there was no real information forthcoming on Education. There was certainly no mention of students, no mention of affordability for students, and I know the reason for that was that my friend from Lac du Bonnet, the former Education critic, probably should have been Education Minister but I don't want to get into the middle of divisions in their caucus. That wouldn't be right for me to do; they had no problem doing it for us, but I won't go there. I'll resist that temptation, to bring out divisions and divide.

I can hear the Attorney General, who has yet to do one thing as Attorney General, and now figuring to enter the debate, even though she's contributed nothing to the well-being of justice in this province, not a word in the budget on restorative justice, not a word in the budget on very important courts that we have—mental health court, drug court, whether they would do something on that. She's barely been Attorney General for more than a couple of weeks and she's already asleep at the switch, Mr. Acting Speaker. That's a very dangerous place for the high-person holding the highest legal authority in our province.

Well, she's suggesting that she has contributed something to the budget. Maybe she will delight us

with her own budget speech and articulate all the things in the budget on justice, on restorative justice, on mental health courts, on drug courts, on making sure that young kids have a chance for a productive, positive life. Maybe she'll get up and talk about that but to date we've heard nada from her, and I expect that's exactly what we're going to hear.

But, in the Education budget, not only were the post-secondary institutions utterly ignored, not only was there nothing on student affordability, because my friend from Lac du Bonnet blew it in an interview to *The Manitoban* prior to the budget when he went out and he told *The Manitoban* that they were headed for the national average on tuition rates, which would raise tuition in this province by almost double, almost \$3,000. It's no wonder they didn't have that news to share during budget day. That's one of the untold secrets that's yet to come from this government. It's going to hurt families; it's going to hurt students and while we were breaking down the barriers to ensure that every kid had the right to a good education and a good post-secondary education, you know what they're doing? They're already building walls before they even start, and that's a shame, Mr. Acting Speaker.

But the other interesting thing and—about the budget, when asked about would school divisions receive less money this year. And the Premier (Mr. Pallister) as he often does, gets up and he buttons his jacket and he puts his hands in his pockets and he delivers some homespun wisdom the likes of which I know is quite tiresome to us, so it must be to you folks, but he was asked about it, and he said there won't be any decline in the—to school divisions unless enrolment goes down.

*(15:40)

But that misses a very salient point in our budget. We'd given a guarantee in our Education budgets that said even if your enrolment declines, your kids matter so you're never going to receive less than you did the year before. Even if enrolment went down, you're still going to receive the same because your kids count that much. And that happened in many rural constituencies, by the way, where they were—that was called the guarantee. We kept that guarantee in place.

I suspect, and I'm sharing this for the first time with my friend from Fort Rouge, that that guarantee no longer exists in the Education budget. Of course, you wouldn't have heard it from the Finance Minister. You wouldn't have heard it from the

Premier. You wouldn't have heard it from the Education Minister. Because they don't want to tell. They don't want to share what their agenda is for Manitobans. They want to keep it a secret.

But I'm telling you, we're going to peel the—away the layers of that onion until we get to its stinking core, no matter how bad it is, because, if they won't be transparent with the people of Manitoba, we intend to be. I can assure you of that. *[interjection]* Thank you. Thank you so much.

And then we get through to questions around the environment and environmental protection. I don't know what can be said about the budget for that.

I think one of the really interesting things is they told us, when we were on that side of the House in government, to stop talking about the '90s, right. They said, could you stop talking about that.

And then the first thing they do is, in naming their new environment portfolio, they reach back into the '90s and pull out that term, sustainable development—yes, kind of out of touch, kind of not relevant anymore.

I know the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen), who has demonstrated an inability to be connected to anything—he, certainly, doesn't know about building roads. As my friend from Fort Rouge says, he's very helpful as a bingo master, but that's about it.

But there was nothing in the budget to give Manitobans comfort that there will proper measures put in place and resources, not only for the purposes of environmental protection, but to address the other great issue of our time, climate change. Why is that?

And I said, in my Throne Speech, which I know is—you're still thinking about right now, Mr. Acting Speaker, I said the relationship between reconciliation and climate change is profoundly connected. They belong together. Our inability of my community, and I admit it, to respect Mother Earth, has been the source, not only of colonialism in our province and in our country for generations upon generations, it's also resulted in environmental devastation at the same time.

You won't find anything about truth and reconciliation in the budget. And you find very, very little about environmental protection and climate change, meaning that this side of—the other side of the House doesn't get that important connection. We

do. That's why we're going to continue to ask questions about it.

My friend from Wolseley has done an excellent job already. He asked about The Surface Water Management Act, which, of course, as you know, because I know you were interested in it, Mr. Acting Speaker, restores wetlands and protects wetlands. It had, at its heart, a surface management water administration that was to get us back on to the right course in how to deal and address water issues in the 21st century. And we haven't seen hide nor hair of that bill.

We heard the Health Minister, who doubles as minister of everything when they can't give an answer—he just gets up and—[interjection]—yes, and slam—tries to slam dunk us, but when he—there was nothing—he said that they begged us to do it. No, they didn't. They stalled. They filibustered. They weren't interested. I think we had 19 pieces of legislation on the order paper before the last election, things that—of critical importance, including The Surface Water Management Act, which they didn't want any part of then and they still don't. And that's quite clear in the budget. I'm sorry about that.

But more than that, we had been the first provincial government to sign onto the David Suzuki Foundation's Blue Dot campaign. And I know, for members on this side of the House, that was a very, very proud moment. I had the great honour of being the emcee for the press conference in which the premier was joined by Dr. Suzuki himself, as well as a number of outstanding academics from the University of Winnipeg, because we put \$350,000 into the climate change centre at the U of W and the adaptation centre at the University of Winnipeg. And one of the things that we committed to, another important piece of legislation that we had on the Order Paper, was an environmental bill of rights.

Where's that? Does he mention that in the Throne Speech? Can't find it. See it in the budget? Ain't there. Why is that? Because they don't believe in an environmental bill of rights. They don't believe in the David Suzuki Blue Dot campaign. They don't believe in the kind of actions that need to be created to create a healthy environment, a healthy economy that will deal with the well-being of Manitoba and Manitobans not only now and tomorrow, for days and days to come, and the government, in its budget, certainly ignored that critical—critical—policy agenda that needs to be followed. In fact, Mr. Acting Speaker, circumstances are going to overtake them,

and they're likely not going to be prepared. But you know what? We're ready. We'll step in. We know how to do the job, and if they can't do it, get out of the way, and we will.

Now, Madam—Mr. Acting Speaker, then there was the commitment to infrastructure, commitment—the commitment to infrastructure and to critical—and the critical infrastructure projects. And we've asked any number of questions about the status of infrastructure projects, whether it's roads in the North, whether it's really important health-care facilities in all parts of our constituencies. We asked the Education Minister about a school in Brandon. We don't know if that's happening either. So what we know for sure is they're not only spending less in their infrastructure budget, but they're not actually going forward with projects that Manitobans want, and then worse than that, what we know what the end game will be because this is what the Harper government practised so well. They would say in the budget, we're going to spend X amount of dollars on a particular issue, let's say, oh, I don't know, Veterans Affairs. Harper would stand up and say, we're going to spend this much, and then when the budget year rolled around and it came time next year to look at the numbers, they will have underspent.

No governments underspend more than Conservative governments, whether it be the federal Conservative governments or be they provincial governments. They pretend that they're going to invest, but they don't actually follow through. That's a little piece of the bad magic that the Finance Minister's going to play on us next year. He's going to pretend that he's somehow pulled a rabbit out of the hat: the budget—deficit numbers are way down. Part of the reason will be because he underspent on a critical number of issues, but infrastructure will be one of them. And Manitobans will pay the price because the critical projects we're waiting for in our constituencies aren't going to happen, and the people of Manitoba are going to suffer as a result.

And then there's the East Side Road Authority. East Side Road Authority, just gone; at the stroke of a pen, it's gone. The Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen) gets up and he says something about—

An Honourable Member: Infrastructure's important.

Mr. Allum: Infrastructure's important, and he consults stakeholders and something about predictability, but the fact of the matter is—the fact of the matter is—is that no commitments have been

made to the East Side Road Authority at all. They've taken it away, and, ultimately, it leads the east-side road in doubt. It leaves Freedom Road in doubt. It leaves community benefits agreements in doubt. It leaves hundreds upon hundreds of jobs for indigenous northern Manitobans in doubt. What kind of government is that? Who does that to people? Who gets up one day and says: You know what? I'm going to cut jobs. I'm going to cut it—infrastructure. I'm going to cut community benefits agreements. I'm going to cut things that matter to communities that desperately, desperately need them, and then don't do it. What—

An Honourable Member: Tories do.

* (15:50)

Mr. Allum: Tories do it, says my friend from Minto, and he's absolutely right. They abdicate their responsibility to govern on behalf of the people of Manitoba and all the people of Manitoba when they fail to come through on something as important as the East Side Road Authority, the community benefits agreement that went with them, the jobs that went with them, the skills training that went with them and the community assets that went with them, and all in a blink of an eye, snap, they're gone. And that's not a good thing, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I know that you would think the same.

And then we have housing and I'm a little concerned about housing. It seemed to have a little bit of an increase in the budget, although a very vague—[interjection]—very unclear, says our very right interim leader of—

An Honourable Member: Call it intentional ambiguity.

Mr. Allum: Hey, as my friend from Tyndall Park says, intentional ambiguity on the part of the budget and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) when it came to housing. So it appears to have a little bit more money in it.

And my suspicion—it's only a suspicion. I may prove to be wrong, but the former Housing minister, the member for Maples, is on the same brainwave that I am: this is a setup for privatization of public housing in Manitoba. Could there be any other explanation? They've never built any affordable housing before. They have never shown—never asked a question about it, never shown any indication that they were interested in it. Suddenly, we see all this slight increase; maybe we'll ask a question of the Finance Minister about that. Maybe we'll say, you

know, you had this little increase. Is this just the polish around the edges so that you can sell it off and privatize it?

Time will tell—time will tell, but mark the time and date, Mr. Acting Speaker, because we talked about it in this House on June 6 at 3:50, and my guess is that that's something we're going to see, if not in immediate following months, but in the years to come.

And then we have the very, very strange issue around Crown corporations where my friend from St. Paul, God's country, St. Paul. I know the member from Lac du Bonnet thinks he's from God's country, so I don't know how they get along there. But it's all fair; all of Manitoba is God's country. All of Canada is God's country. That's something on this side that we uphold and care about, but we have a minister of Crown corporations without a department. Turns out he's the junior minister of Finance, the junior—maybe not even junior. Yes, maybe he even doesn't get that august status, Mr. Acting Speaker, and so he gets up in question period, and what does he talk about? He says, you know, we're never going to 'infere'—interfere with our Crown corporations, and what's the first thing you do? He fires all the boards and puts in his own folks in a blink of an eye just like that. Barely had time to blink before they were paying off debts to their own buddies.

The absence of diversity on those boards, it's quite astonishing. What kind of a minister makes those kind of appointments?

An Honourable Member: A minister of privatization.

Mr. Allum: The minister of privatization, maybe that would be a more accurate term for him from now on. So he's not only a junior member of Cabinet, I hope they refer to him as junior from now on; it's a badge of honour. But he's also—he also says he won't do any political interference, and then he fires all the boards and then he writes them a letter, something this weird mandate letter thing they have going, as if we never talked about our roles and responsibilities, sends them a mandate letter telling them what to do. But there'll be no political interference, says the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Schuler), no political interference, but here's the letter and here's what you have to do. Really the doublespeak there is really quite astonishing; there's an incredible double standard that comes with this budget that is reflected in everything I talked about.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm not even done yet; there's so much more to talk about.

I asked the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) today about budget projections. Where were they? How is it that you can table a budget and not only say what you're short of doing vaguely, kind of, maybe, in year one, but in year two, three and four, that's a secret? Nobody's going to know, not going to share that, not going to let anybody know. That's only the Minister of Finance's business, and nobody else's. The people of Manitoba are to be left in the dark when it comes to what's waiting for them, and we know what's waiting, Mr. Acting Speaker. This is the other part of the shoe to drop. This is the value-for-money audit that was tendered by the Finance Minister about a week into his new job, and what are the words that had come out in neon in that tender? Private and confidential recommendations to the government. It's in neon. I had to put my shades on, my sunglasses on to read the tender, so glaring was the notion of private and confidential recommendations to Cabinet—nary a word to be shared with the people of Manitoba on the austerity measures yet to be taken.

Now, as a New Democrat, I like to think I'm on the left wing of the NDP at that. I have to tell you, I find it disturbing that we have the private sector fox inside the public sector henhouse, because I don't think that's appropriate. Those folks in the private sector have a wide array of skills. I'd be the first to admit it, skills that I quite likely don't have; I'd be the first to admit that. But they don't understand the complexity of government. They don't understand the nuance involved in public policy. They don't understand the kinds of things that need to be done even if it doesn't fit with the bottom line, because it's the right thing to do to ensure fairness and equality in our society.

Public sector guys, private sector guys don't get that. They don't do it. It's just strictly a bottom-line calculation that leaves people out and only is the raw numbers on the page. That's not right. That's not right.

And so are these private sector consultants, are they going to go out and talk to average Manitobans about their needs? I bet they don't. I bet what they'll do is they'll walk into department X or department Y or department Z, scare the bejeebers out of our valued public sector workers, because they might not have a job the next day, because somebody who doesn't know what they're talking about is going

to go in and say, well, we could do that more efficiently.

Well, how do we know? How do we know? Won't share those recommendations with the people of Manitoba, won't be open and transparent like they promised to be. Instead, they'll just keep it a big secret. Somebody's going to lose their job.

Let's be clear, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the Finance Minister's waste and duplication, the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) waste and duplication is somebody's job, somebody's family, somebody's mortgage payment, somebody's contribution to their community. And he doesn't think that that matters. To him, it's just a raw number called duplication and waste. And make no mistake—Manitoba families are going to be hurt by that kind of mathematical and private sector analysis of the public sector.

You know, Mr. Acting Speaker, as I often say to people, we ain't making widgets here; this is complicated stuff, and you better have a handle on what you're doing and, if you want to serve the people of Manitoba—and what we've seen from a government already is that they're ill-prepared; they're not sure of what to do; they actually don't know what they're doing. And that's very, very disturbing.

So, I—I want to end off, and I know that'll please my members. Go ahead. I want to conclude—I want to conclude—come on. I know it's not easy to listen, but it's important that you do all the same, because I'm going to end by talking through you, Mr. Acting Speaker, to all of the new members of the government, be they a Cabinet minister or be they a member of one of the benches, and I know that they're very happy to be here. We're glad you're here too. We know you care about Manitobans. We know you're here to fight the good fight. We know that you have values that are moderately in accord with ours in terms of caring about people. You might get to it from a direction that is one that we don't possibly understand. We have a different GPS for how you serve the people of Manitoba.

But it's through you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that I want to talk to the new members of the Legislature and, in particular, the new members of the government, because I know that they will feel a sense of betrayal with this budget. I know that they didn't go out knocking on doors talking about this kind of a budget. I know that they were not one door—I know all of them were not one door where they went to a door and said, guess what? The first

thing we're going to do, we're going balloon the deficit by \$200 million.

Did anyone—I ask for a show of hands—does anyone say, did they go to a door, Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm asking through you to them, by a show of hands, did they go and say, we're going to blow the deficit by \$200 million? No? No hands came up, because that's not what they campaigned for. We know they campaigned for austerity. That's not what they got.

* (16:00)

So then they go to the next door, and did they say—did any member of the opposition say that they were going to raise taxes on seniors right off the hopper? I'm guessing not one of them went to the door to say that.

Did they go to the—I bet they didn't go to a door and say we're going to ignore Truth and Reconciliation Commission entirely; we're never going to mention it. Did they go to the door and say that? I bet you they didn't.

Did they go to the door and say—well, I think they were going to the door saying they were going to privatize child care. That seems to be missing entirely from the plan right now. Stay tuned; more to come. But I bet they didn't go to the doors and say, you know, we're not going to do anything on child care. We're going to leave those spaces open. I bet you they didn't do that.

So I don't blame them a little bit, none at all, if they're feeling—and we know this feeling because all of us have sat in the backbench at one time—that feeling of alienation and disappointment that comes over you when you realize you're a backbencher in a government that has failed you profoundly and has kind of made you a laughingstock in your community because that's what—not what you're about.

So I'm giving them the opportunity today, Mr. Acting Speaker. They have the chance. They have the chance to do the right thing and to say nobody expected this mish-mash, 'schmorgasborg', vague, ill-defined, poorly conceived, poorly constructed budget, and they have the opportunity to do one of two things. One, they can vote with our very fine amendment that will hopefully stop this budget in their tracks or at least improve it a little bit. They can do that; they're going to have that opportunity, I believe, tomorrow, to stand up and vote with our amendment because they

know in their hearts—when they visit their constituents they'll know in their hearts—you know it, sure as the day is long, that the budget you got is not the one you campaigned on. The budget that you got wasn't the one you campaigned on.

And I think the only right thing for them to do, if they really feel right about the role and responsibility that they have as an independent MLA who was just elected by their constituents to do the right thing and say, yes, you're right, this wasn't the budget I campaigned for. But, mind you, that budget might have been worse. But this isn't the budget that I campaigned for, so I can't, in good conscience, vote for it. So the honourable thing to do as my first action as an MLA in this House, to show that I have the backbone to do what it takes to be an MLA, is to stand up and say, you know what, I'm going to vote with that NDP amendment because that's the right thing to do.

And it will be so much easier when you go back to your constituents and they say, you know, you came to our doors and now your budget's nothing like what you said it was going to be. You can say, you know what, you're right but I did the right thing; I voted with the NDP amendment to try to correct the course in the right way, not in the wrong way.

But I don't blame them, Mr. Acting Speaker, that they don't want to do that. I get that. I can understand that that's—you don't want to side with the NDP. I get it. You don't want to do it. I understand that completely. So after that budget—vote on the amendment happens, then we're going to vote on the budget. And this is the time to actually deliver the blow that needs to be given to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and to the Finance Minister and the chosen 12 who separate themselves apart from every single member of this House and give them a huge raise, even though they've been on the job for two weeks. What they can do is do the right thing and vote against this budget and go back into their constituencies, have their held—head up high, their chin high and say, you know what? I'm part of a government that doesn't really know what they're doing but, thanks to me, I did the right thing and I voted against that budget.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I want to thank all my colleagues on this side of the House for that warm welcome here today.

It's always a pleasure speaking after the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum). We know that he is a very passionate member in this Chamber, that he has many things that he believes very passionately in, and we have great respect for that, for his passion. But I will say, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that he and I disagree on pretty much 99 per cent of everything that he just said. And, of course, it's important now to take this opportunity to put some facts, on the record, with respect to this budget that was recently introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen).

And I want to thank him. I want to take the opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance for all the hard work that he has done, and his department, and the Premier, over the last little while, to put this document together.

We know we were—it was going to be a challenge, based on NDP spending sprees of the past. We knew it would be a challenge to put it together, but it was important that we find out where we're at so we can start to move Manitoba forward. And that's exactly what this budget does.

But, before I get into speaking about some of the details with respect to the budget, I—Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I didn't have the opportunity at the time to welcome you back to the Chamber but also to welcome all members of the House, those new and those who are returning. Welcome to the Manitoba Legislature. I hope you've enjoyed your time thus far. It's a great experience. And I know I've had the opportunity to be here for some 15 and a half years already, most in opposition, obviously. But I'm really looking forward to this opportunity to work with a government that is finally going to start moving Manitoba in the right direction.

Because I didn't have the opportunity, Mr. Acting Speaker, to welcome our new Speaker to the Manitoba Legislature, I didn't have an opportunity to speak in the—to the response to the Throne Speech at the time, I just wanted to welcome her to her new role. I think she is going to be a fantastic Speaker for this House. I know that she is passionate about many issues. And she will bring, though, that passion to her new role. And I just want to congratulate her on that role.

I also want to welcome the table officers back to the Legislature, also our pages, as well as Hansard and translation services and all officers who help us be able to do our job in the Manitoba Legislature. They help us be able to have the kind of debates

that we have in this Chamber. And this debate—these debates are very important. We're debating something that is extremely important towards the future of our province right now. And, I think, it's very important to have them here to help us be able to do our job.

I just want to say, I know that there was a quote from my colleague, the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), the minister for Crowns, and he said, Mr. Acting Speaker, he said, you know, finally, we have a budget that is tabled in this Chamber that we can actually vote for, because this is a budget that takes us in the right direction for our province. And, again, I want to thank the Minister of Finance and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and all the staff that have worked so diligently, over the last little while, to make that happen.

We know that, of course, this is a start, in a new direction, on a path that is going to be a lengthy path on the road to recovery for our province. We know that we inherited a bit of a mess from members opposite. After 17 years of overspending their budgets and spending beyond the means, almost at double the rate of inflation for the last number of years, we know that that was not sustainable and Manitobans knew that that kind of a spending spree was not sustainable. And that's why they voted that government out in the last election.

And we think it's important to just know and understand that it's very important that we do get Manitoba back on track. And, I think, that that's what we have done. We've sent a signal to the bond rating agencies. And I know the Premier and the Minister of Finance, at their first opportunity after the budget, they realized the importance of going and speaking to our bond rating agencies to make sure that they understand that we are turning the corner here towards better fiscal management for our province. And that is a very important signal that we needed to send to them. And that was—those were very important meetings, in Toronto, that the Minister of Finance and our Premier took and that they met with.

* (16:10)

Also, what's very important, and what we've heard over many, many years, and I can hear—time and time again, I can recall in previous elections, members opposite have made promises after promises after promises that they turned around and broke right after getting into an election. And I—we only need to go back to, you know, members opposite like to talk about seniors. We only need to

go back to the previous election, back in 2011, when members opposite went door to door and promised not to raise taxes. And we know, of course, that they did raise those taxes. The first available opportunity, they expanded the PST, and then the next year, they raised it from 7 to 8 per cent, a 14 per cent increase to seniors, to all consumers in our province. And that was something that they promised not to do, yet they turned around and did that. And that was money straight out of the pockets of seniors in our province.

They also—they made some changes to the dividend tax credit. And we know that seniors are on fixed incomes and that they relied on those dividend tax credits as well, but they did away with those things.

There's a whole host of things over the last 17 years that the NDP government at the time did that was—that had a negative impact on seniors. And I think seniors remember that and that, you know, and now, Mr. Acting Speaker, we know that it's too bad that they are suffering as a result of many of the initiatives that were taken, derogatory initiatives that were taken by the NDP government over the last 17 years.

But, in particular, Mr. Acting Speaker, if we look at the last 10 years, if you look at what was actually budgeted, so in the budget for the last 10 years from this NDP government, for the last 10 years, they overspent their table budget every single year. And the aggregate overspending is in the billions of dollars.

So, in other words, Mr. Acting Speaker, what they did is they tabled a document that meant nothing. It was a document that was full of empty promises to Manitobans. It was a document that they never had any intention of keeping their promises to or sticking to those numbers because they showed year after year after year for 10 years that they could not live within their own budget that they tabled in the Manitoba Legislature. And that was a signal that was sent, a strong signal that was sent to the bond rating agencies in—and, subsequently, we had the first downgrade in Manitoba history in 30 years under the NDP government.

Those bond rating agencies are very concerned and we know what this means to Manitobans. It's going to cost Manitobans a lot more money if our bond—if our ratings go down. We know that that, in the future, that that will cost us more in terms of the money that—our borrowings. And so, Mr. Acting Speaker, it's very important that we send a signal

to those bond rating agencies and, indeed, to all Manitobans, that we are turning the corner towards getting our fiscal house back in order in Manitoba. And so that's the message that we are sending to not only the bond rating agencies because that's one part of it, but we know if we send that signal to them, we hope that it's sent—that it will save money for Manitobans down the road.

We know that over the last number of years, the cost of servicing the debt alone in our province on an annual basis was over \$800 million, and this is at a time when interest rates are the lowest that we have seen in recent history. And members opposite, you know, these were good times. This—these were—should have been times of saving towards, you know, to help us save towards the tough times, Mr. Acting Speaker. But, unfortunately, members opposite spent way beyond their means, and now they jacked up the debt of our province, and now just the cost to service that debt alone is the equivalent, I think, of almost the—I think it's the third or fourth largest government department in Manitoba. That's money that could be spent on front-line services and health care. That's money that could be spent in education, family services, helping families in Manitoba. That's money that could be spent elsewhere but, unfortunately, because of the mismanagement of the previous NDP government, Manitobans are being forced to pay that money in the way of servicing the debt rather than it going towards the front-line services that Manitobans need, want and deserve.

So I talk, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, about health care, and I want to touch on health care for a little bit. We have among—under the NDP government, up until now, we've had among the longest wait times in Canada to seek emergency room health care in our institutions here in Manitoba. So, again, we spend among the highest per capita, but we get the least results. And that is not where we believe that Manitobans want to go. They want and need those services so that—those health-care services for their loved ones, but they're not getting it because of the mismanagement of the previous NDP government.

I think we need to look to education. We know that we spend, again, among the highest per capita in our country on education in this province, and members opposite used to stand up and crow about how much more money they're putting into education. But it's not about how much money you spend in something. It's about the results that you

get, and the problem is that we were among the worst results all across this country when it comes to the education of our children.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

So it's not about the input; it's about the outputs. It's not about how much money you spend; it's about what is it actually doing for the education of our kids. And what we know from various reports is that our kids are dead last in the country. So that's why, in this budget, we've announced we want to be the most improved province across this country when it comes to education. We want to be the most improved province in Canada when it comes to health-care services and providing those services to Manitobans who need, want and deserve the delivery of those services.

We also want to be the most improved when it comes to kids in care and families in Manitoba. We want to ensure that—that all Manitobans are safe and can live the kind of life that they deserve, and right now there are so many children across this province of ours, and many of them, indigenous young women, who are suffering as a result of things that have taken place over the last 10 to 17 years under this NDP government. It has to stop, and I think members opposite—I know some of them have spoken very passionately about this, but it's time to take action to make sure that those people—all Manitobans—are safe and secure in their homes and that their children are safe and secure in their homes.

And that is exactly why we have announced in this budget that we want to be—we want to work with various stakeholders in the communities to ensure that we take a collaborative approach to this to make sure that we consult with all Manitobans about how we can make this situation better, and that's—that has been our approach in all areas, Madam Speaker.

And I did say earlier, Madam Speaker, now that you're here, I—oh, I shouldn't say that; I just wanted to say congratulations to you on your role. I think you're going to be fantastic. I know you've been an advocate for women in politics your whole career. You've been passionate about so many different issues, and I think—I really look forward to working with you in your new role. I think you're going to be fantastic, so just congratulations to you in your new role.

And just on that, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to say what an honour it is to have been chosen to be the Minister of Justice and Attorney General for our

province. I'm really looking forward to this role. I know there's only been one other woman in the history of our province who has had the opportunity to serve in this role, and I know that that was under a previous Conservative government, and I'm very proud of that—Rosemary Vodrey. And I look forward to bringing a different approach to this, not the previous Minister Vodrey, but a different approach because I am not a lawyer. I don't have that background, but I do bring, I believe, what is a common-sense approach to the job and some of the things that need to happen in our justice system.

* (16:20)

And I look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure the safety of all citizens, not just in Winnipeg, but, indeed, all across this great province of ours. And I know that that's why, in this budget, we, in fact, we want to recognize the importance of victims and their families. And that's why we have announced an increase for—in victim service grants. And I'm very, very proud about that. I'm happy that that is part of this budget. It's important that we support victims of violent crimes and victims of crimes in our province. And I'm very proud of our government for making that a priority in this budget.

So, Madam Speaker, I just want to close by saying that I'm so proud to be part of a new government, a government with a common-sense approach to where we need to take our province, a province where I believe so passionately that we have huge opportunities. And I look forward to working with each and every one of the MLAs in this Chamber, and our Cabinet colleagues, and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) towards making sure that, as we said in the election, we want to work towards making Manitoba a better place to live, work and raise our families.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I would like to put a few words regarding this budget.

The PC's inaugural budget did not provide necessary supports to families, seniors, students, women and low-income Manitobans.

Manitobans voted for change, but we are not convinced the Premier is committed to the kind of change Manitobans care about. This is not an open and transparent budget.

Based on the numbers provided, families should not expect any new child-care spaces from this government this year.

And there was no commitment to keep our NDP government's increases to the minimum wage, even though this helps hard-working Manitobans working to support their families.

They have also cut \$40 million from the Seniors' School Tax Rebate, even after promising—promised Manitobans that they would continue this important tax break for seniors.

We will have to keep a watchful eye on what happens next.

The Harper government used to say they would spend money in certain areas, like veterans' services or First Nations housing but then completely fail to follow through, leaving families without the critical supports they need.

We expect that's the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) real hidden agenda here, especially since they have consistently been vague about what they will cut. Manitobans are still waiting for the other shoe to drop.

As New Democrats, we always choose to put the people of Manitoba first.

Madam Speaker, let me start first talk about Seniors' School Tax Rebate.

After my election—2007, when I was going to house to house, and seniors asked, we pay the school tax all our life, why we cannot get break? At least we can afford to stay our houses longer, and it won't cost the government that much, because, behind the scenes, you don't have to provide that many services.

So I said, okay, I will try. What can I do? And then I discussed with the premier at that time. And, at the end, our Cabinet, our caucus agreed that seniors should get a school tax rebate and should get that break.

But, you know, it was kind of slow, which I was not myself that much satisfied. But, at the end, I was able to convince others than whatever is low-income seniors get a break in the income tax. Otherwise, we should add another \$235 break; next year it was added \$470 break. And we were in plan to give this rebate after two twenty three hundred dollars. With that \$2,300, almost 98 per cent of seniors could have got that rebate, and their school tax could have been eliminated. And seniors were enthusiastic about that.

They used to come to my office and pick up seniors' school tax rebate; we would download for them. Even we helped them to fill out the forms.

Now, after this election, they're still phoning us: When we can pick up those forms? When we can go—get our school tax rebate, \$2,300? I told them, unfortunately, government has changed, and you guys have lost. Sorry about that. We cannot do anything about this.

Then they said, yes, we knew. What will we get from the PC if they come in? I said, don't worry about that. In my old country, there's one saying that belongs to agriculture side because I am a critic of that: after 12 years, even a heap of manure is also recognized. So don't worry about after 17 years they got this opportunity, but we will be back and we will help you.

Let everybody think about that \$2,300. Take away the \$470 senior—they're not talking about that \$2,300; they only talk about that we are keeping those \$470 rebate and we did not change anything. But they did not tell them they lost \$1,830; every senior lost that amount per year.

When they talk about PST, and when I was talking to them, I said, listen, how much you will spend for—per month? If I am a senior, I would not be able to spend more than \$2,000. Out of that amount, there should be at least \$500 to \$600, which is not—does not have PST on it. So only you will be losing around about \$12 to \$15. But would you like us if you go to doctor to pay fee for you over there? You don't have to pay that 1 cent extra. Would you like if you go to hospital and you have to get an operation and pay some amount—maybe you can get insurance from somewhere, but those people are not going to lose money to tell you how to pay maybe more than 1,500—or \$15.

So they say—I said, okay, maybe you don't have to pay that. Your sons or daughters, they will keep you in their home; then I talk about you are living in the—this senior residence, and you might be getting some subsidy. We can cut down that subsidy, and would you be able to go back to your sons and daughters and stay with them? No, they're not going to have us in their houses. And I say, well, you know, that's somehow we have to balance have it there. The senior told me, he said, why you guys are not explaining to people out there? That's really make sense. I said, well, we are a party of the people, ordinary people; we don't get that much funds as

compared to elite people. Party of elite people, they can get funds; they can spread all around rumours.

* (16:30)

So I said, okay, I will be going to talking to the seniors, talking to the—in the summer I talked to people that what 1 cent will cause any harm on you or you can get some benefit. And also, in 2008, the economy everywhere was slowing down. We kept this keeping—going down. And we needed money for that. And also, that's not the only thing we did. We had to do flood mitigation. It cost \$1.2 billion. But that \$1.2 billion, if we have not spent, half of Winnipeg could have been under water. People don't know about that because it did not happen. Check in Calgary; they were supposed to do that in 2006. They did not do it, and they ended up with doing that cleaning, and it cost them about \$4 billion. Still they have—don't have that flood mitigation program or infrastructure over there. It could happen again. So we did, proactively, but we needed money.

There, again, I was—when I was minister of Housing, but that department disappeared. I don't think the PCs think that's really important. And they will give that—all benefit to their rich friends, and they will have a privatized housing program, and so they will make money on that, at the low-income people's backs.

And I—my plan was that I hope still whoever covered that housing—I don't know who is, because the department is not there, apparently, and whoever over there, I—what I was thinking of doing, at that time, maybe we should encourage people who are in social housing, who are in affordable housing, if they are willing to take some courses—I would not say one-year course; I would not say two-year course—just about a 40 hours' program. If somebody say, I want to be a mechanic, give him basic instruction in 40 hours. Then put them somewhere in the garage where they can learn the basics of the trade. They might start to like it. If they like it, then perhaps we can send them to the school for one year or two, whatever course it takes. So there, those people will get out of poverty, so we don't have to pay them Rent Assist, and we don't have to spend that money. And we don't even have to make up—build that many houses.

Similarly, new immigrants, when they come over here and they have training from back of their country, when they come over here, if we don't immediately give them a chance, they might start doing something else. They might go drive cab. They

might go drive truck. They might go do something else. Two countries lost: one, the country who trained them—they spent money on them; other country, we did not take advantage of them.

So I was in the planning, and I was discussing with—in the Cabinet, that we should at least, as soon as those immigrants come, send them for three months, four months, and our government should pay for that and on minimum wages. So they will be exposed to that trade.

Similarly, I was thinking, on housing. We should pay—Housing Department should pay for minimum wages, for three, four months, but make sure the business, they trained them properly. And that way, we will get those people out of the poverty. Similarly, we will keep those people in the trade where they were trained before.

So that was the planning. I hope, in this budget, they have some kind of planning to do that.

Now, the government talks about indexing the personal income tax bracket. So, even some seniors, they were really very enthusiastic. Well, anyway, we were getting the same kind of credit: what you are going—you know, bring in a school tax rebate. But they are really disappointed with a \$10 per year, up to \$67 per year; that's what they are going to end up.

The other thing which I reported on that was in the last few years' Throne Speech, one was culturally appropriate personal-care homes. Culturally appropriate personal-care homes help people go where they have the same kind of culture. They can speak the language; at least they won't get bored. If they cannot speak the language, everybody is speaking English, they are speaking some other language, and they will die before their death. So, it's very important we have culturally appropriate personal-care homes.

The other thing I was emphasizing to have senior centres, senior drop-in centre. Those centres should be everywhere in every corner of the city and in every city so seniors go there and socialize with each other and that way it will be healthy for them. They won't get bored. They will stay healthy. They will enjoy their life and that's what it was all about. But this cutting budget would not help them and I don't think they are going to pursue for that.

Talking about my own constituency, we promised—we have the smallest community centre, although we have 'diversability' we need—our need is more than maybe than the other communities. We

promised we will fund about one-third of the total cost, maximum \$7 million.

And I—now, I am worried whether this government will keep its promise or not. So, I don't know with the cutting of this budget, and with all this hidden agenda, where we will go. Our community centre organization, they are nervous. They are asking what's going to happen now. We don't know because the problem is that even if we don't have proper contact phone numbers we are to call and to find out what is going to happen.

Similarly, in the immigration, people are asking about their cases. They used to come to phone us and ask for requests so we can find what's happened to their applications. Now, even there's no phone number over there. One thing, Immigration Department has been disappeared, has been hidden under other departments, but even they don't have their phone number; they don't have their contact number. So people are frustrated.

And there are other issues, I think, which I was working on. That issue was EOI, expression of interest. If you want to apply for immigration, first you report your—express your intention to come over here, put your—all qualifications or experience. When you have put that experience, then they will pick up your application and if you come under the—have that many marks, they will say, okay, you apply here.

If one year you have not—within a year they have not picked up your application, you have to reapply it, which is, in my opinion, is a wastage of time and puts these people on hold. Actually, there should be two kinds of categories: one should be quasi-professional, and ask them to—they have to have up to a certain level of English, say, 6.5 IELTS. *[inaudible]* they have different criteria, so in that way, application numbers will go down because of a higher English requirement.

* (16:40)

But, you know, these—they created such a backlog, and I hope the new minister will look into it, and I'm willing to sit with him and give him kind of input, because I've gone through immigration, through many steps, since I came over here. I came as a visitor, applied for immigration, then I got rejected, then I had to appeal, then I got—become permanent, then I used to help other people. So I think I can be useful.

Irrespective of which party you come from, we want to make this immigration system work better. And, for sure, I think, I will be helpful there.

There are some other concerns, but I don't think I have time to go into it. And I don't have unlimited time. But I also don't have liberty to speak in Punjabi and, otherwise, I can enjoy this speech. But I think I fulfilled my commitment.

And thank you very much.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity today to address you as well as all the colleagues, in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

The past few weeks, I find myself reflecting on my life's journey, and the paths that I have walked to reach my current destination. I've lived a fulfilling life, not one that was given to me, but one that I have worked hard for from an early age.

I thank my parents for their constant support and for teaching me the values to put others before myself and not to expect anything to be handed to me throughout my life.

As a student, I always had a job and often more than one at a time. I was an independent child, and I've always picked myself—prided myself on my strong commitment to family, community and country.

The Agassiz campaign was enjoyable and educational, because I had the time to do the—to the—the time I needed to fulfill my goals.

The strong support shown to me at the polls was so encouraging, although it's always been 'sumed' that Agassiz is an easy win and it could be won by absolutely anyone, I didn't ever take this for granted.

It's a little different working in the rural areas doing a campaign than it is in the city. And I realize that I had the opportunity to really connect with my constituency.

I spent all of my time meeting with businesses, ag producers, residents in all areas, as well as the 18 Hutterite colonies and Sandy Bay First Nation. I wanted them to know who they were supporting and give them the opportunity to ask questions and for me to fully understand the diversity of the constituency and their issues.

I want to sincerely thank all those who took the time to meet with me to discuss their project or their concerns.

I was often envious of how my city colleagues, as they campaigned together, and the teamwork that displayed was unbelievable. I was able to follow them on Facebook, and every day was an exciting day.

Campaigning in rural areas is quite different than the urban experiences—I indicated. But the weather co-operated, and I, literally, put on thousands of kilometres within my diverse 'constuechinsy.'

I want to thank my fellow candidates, Damian Dempsey, independent candidate, and Robert Smith, from the Green Party, for a respectful and a positive campaign, and for their kind wishes following the election. It was truly an incredible experience.

Also, a big thank you to my Clarke-for-Agassiz campaign team. It was a very diverse group. I had young adults and I had very experienced seniors. They included Kelly Wilson, Julie Sigurdson, Mike Mally [*phonetic*], Karen Kruk [*phonetic*], Jody Byrom [*phonetic*], Leah and Mike Hamm [*phonetic*], Darrell Young [*phonetic*], Gary and Jeanette Henderson [*phonetic*], Gladwyn Scott [*phonetic*], Norman Shineton [*phonetic*], Christine Waddell, Darlene Gillies [*phonetic*], Jim Pollock [*phonetic*], Stu Briese, Ray Byrom [*phonetic*], Bob Clarke, Earl Farmer [*phonetic*], Donna Allan [*phonetic*], Misty Luxworth [*phonetic*], and Lorne Stevens [*phonetic*]. It was a diverse group. I had a new—not a new Canadian, but a new immigrant from England who had lived in our community for less than six months, but wanted to contribute even though she was not able to vote, and she did a lot of work behind the scenes.

I had within this team, what I called my political advisers. They were people that have worked tirelessly on many campaigns over their life. And the one that stood out the most, his name was Norman Shineton [*phonetic*], 94 years old. Called me literally every other day of the campaign, offering to help. Travelling with him was a true delight, and he shared so many experiences of past elections with me, of all the candidates that he had helped, including past premiers of the province of Manitoba. When I asked him how many campaigns and how long he'd been committed to the PC party and the province of Manitoba governance, he said long before there was ever politics.

It was a great experience. Another of my advisers was Gladwyn Scott [*phonetic*], a retired school teacher that also called me regularly, offering support, and his contribution to my campaign was me sitting in his living room and him recalling where he had been in the past with candidates and also giving me checkpoints and information that he felt was going to be valuable.

The one I want to most emphasize is past MLA Stuart Briese. As the candidate and MLA for Agassiz for eight years, he was truly a tremendous support. Following my nomination, he made every effort to start training me, mentoring me and telling me what the life of an MLA would be like. Of course, he always sat on the opposition, and now I'm in a different position than that, but his information was invaluable, and he was truly committed to the people of Manitoba.

I have great respect for Stu Briese, and I can't thank him enough for the help that he gave me not only during my campaign but in the years that I was mayor of the town of Gladstone and he was my MLA. He was always there if I needed him, and we spent many times together at social events within the constituency learning from each other and sharing examples of what needed to be done within this great province.

I also want to thank all those who displayed signs and supported me in any way. The young adult volunteers I had was an experiment. It's been said so many times that we need to include our younger generation, and that's exactly what I did. However, most of our discussions were over emails and texts, and I had to allow them the time to work when it suited them, and that was often done in evenings and weekends. There were challenges, but they were such an inspiration because they were so eager. For all of them, it was their first campaign ever, and we learned together, and it was an incredibly exciting time.

The generosity of Agassiz residents and beyond; I want to thank for their financial donations to my campaign. It was overwhelming. Every day in the mail there was more cheques coming. I want to thank them for their amazing support. I also want to thank my family who have endured so much during the past months and years and not only supported me but encouraged me to take this next step in the political world.

A sincere thank you to everyone who attended our election appreciation night to watch the election

results. What an exciting night it was in the Agassiz constituency watching the PC victory. I don't believe there ever has been an election night held in our riding, and a great time was had by literally hundreds of people.

The messages of congratulations from across the province and beyond since the election have been humbling and so much appreciated. I am honoured to represent the residents of Agassiz as well as the province of Manitoba. It's been a great experience that was made possible only because so many people that have influenced and enriched my life for the many years. I am truly blessed.

* (16:50)

I want to thank the people of my community, not just for the past election, but the support that they've shown me through my business years as well as my political years since 2006. It's a community that's very accepting of immigrants and all cultures. It's a community that embraces all faiths and is caring and compassionate to the vulnerable and the less fortunate. I've always shared that caring compassion, and I bring that with me to this Legislature and to the people that I serve across Manitoba now. It was a progressive community with a bright future, and I was always proud to represent them as their mayor.

The provincial election is now history, and it's time to move forward in a new political world. The possibilities are endless, and I will work hard to meet the expectations that the people of Manitoba have placed in me. I thank Premier Pallister and the transition team for all the hard work that has taken place over the past months in an effort to have our new government up and running and the business of Manitoba back to work as soon as possible.

The appointment as Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations was a humbling experience. The pride that is shared by my parents, my family and friends is an experience that I have yet been able to find words to describe. I look forward to renewing a strong working relationship with our Manitoba municipalities as we embark on a new Fair Say strategy to ensure our municipalities and Province strive for productive and positive outcomes.

I'm excited to begin a new journey with our indigenous chiefs and councils and working groups locally, provincially and federally, forging new partnerships that will encourage inclusive communication and new opportunities for strong social and economic growth and development,

especially in the northern regions of our province. I want to thank the First Nation groups that I've already met with for all the information they've 'promided' me with as well as the respectful and encouraging conversations that we have had. Their willingness and commitment to work on new strategies in good faith with our government is creating a strong foundation for success throughout the province of Manitoba.

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities, Manitoba Capital Region, cities of Winnipeg and Brandon as well as many others have also committed to building a strong relationship with our indigenous communities, one that's built on trust and respect in an effort to make Manitoba the most improved province in Canada within our first term and a Manitoba miracle by our second term. This can only be achieved by all levels of government and our First Nations working together.

The 'challenges' of the North are significant. Yes! North will focus provincial economic investments to create partnerships in the priority sectors, including tourism and natural resources. We all agree that we can accomplish so much more with all stakeholders at one table.

We're also committed to addressing the social issues that are affecting the lives of our indigenous families and communities, leaving them frustrated and looking for answers. It's almost impossible to live a healthy and fulfilling life when there are deep scars that need to heal in order to move forward. There are many working groups that our government supports, and I will ensure that they continue to receive our commitment.

We will continue to be involved in both intergovernmental and interdepartmental work to help address issues related to murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. We have supported work in the lead-up to the national inquiry on MMIWG and will stress the nature and extent on continued involvement as the national inquiry is implemented. I also thank all those who have met with me to update me on past efforts of so many caring and compassionate individuals who are feeling loss and pain but still continue to work for positive solutions.

'Stong' communities protect their most vulnerable. Our government is focused on creating economic opportunity and improving social supports for the residents of Manitoba's North. We are taking steps to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children

are put first, reducing barriers and promoting collaboration among those responsible providing health, education and social supports to Manitoba's families and children.

Teamwork and partnerships are 'essential' to prosperity and the progress of all Manitoba communities. We recognize that there's much work to do, and we know this government cannot do it alone. We are committed to partnering with educators, social workers, health-care workers and other front-line workers to ensure the innovative ideas are heard.

Today I'd like also to take the opportunity to acknowledge the sitting as well as former members of the NDP for the respect that they showed to me while serving as vice president on the Association of Manitoba Municipalities from 2010 to 2014. I also 'appreciated' your sincere words of congratulations and warm welcomes on my first day in this Chamber.

I appreciated the opportunities I was given to sit on provincial and federal committees and round tables, to work collaboratively for the people of Manitoba, allowing me to bring forward a municipal perspective. I look forward to the coming months as we continue to build strong relationships with our municipalities and indigenous communities.

I appreciate that our government has 'mandate'—mandated all of the new ministerial departments to work together in achieving our goals as a team and that our whole caucus is committed to a strong and sustainable future for the residents of Manitoba.

I'd like to take time to talk about the budget our new government introduced on May 31st.

It is a commitment to get Manitoba back on a responsible fiscal track and to protect front-line workers while eliminating wasteful government spending that currently has put us at risk.

We're setting a new course for Manitoba, a course that will lead to a balanced budget, less debt, lower taxes, better services and a stronger economy overall.

As we now know, we inherited a deficit of over \$1 billion. This is a staggering amount of money that has been added to our overall debt, which our children and children's children will repay with interest.

While there are pressures to cut spending or raise taxes to reach balance sooner, we have opted for a more pragmatic approach to protect front-line workers, essential services and our province's most vulnerable. The days of throwing more money at the same issues year after year is dated and it's not working. It's time for a new way to govern.

As I spoke earlier, I'm passionate about the indigenous side of my portfolio. I understand that there are differences between indigenous and municipal sides of my portfolio, but there are also common grounds and synergies. I'm committed to bringing these stakeholders together, as it is critical for us to reach our goals.

I'm pleased our 'budget' outlines commitments to support our full 'implementation' of the master's of social work based on indigenous knowledge programs at the University of Manitoba.

Our budget also states we will commence discussions with indigenous leaders on the best path forward to a 'respectful' and collaborative consultation process.

As a former municipal official and AMM executive, it was important to me that we had predictable funding sources in allowing local governments to identify their priorities.

We are committed to investing no less than \$1 billion in strategic infrastructure funding per year, along with providing the City of Winnipeg and municipalities with a fair say and basket funding models to reduce the red tape for infrastructure funding. This year, the level funding of—is near \$1.8 billion.

This budget also addresses the needs of our most vulnerable Manitobans, with the indexing of the personal exemption and the Rent Assist program. Instead of cumbersome programs, this will help keep more money in Manitoba pockets, as they know best how to manage their households.

This budget acknowledges that there is much work to be done to address the chronic rates of poverty that have been made worse over the past 17 years.

The budget addresses waste reduction, as reducing the size of Cabinet and staff, resulting in \$4 million in saving; the dissolution of the East Side Road Authority, essentially refocusing funds into the road itself and not a self-promoting bureaucracy;

the elimination of per vote allowance for political parties; the reduction of self-serving government advertising, where funds can be redirected into the promotion of Manitoba nationally and internationally.

This budget will not draw from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to artificially make the numbers look better. It also provides Manitoba with a permanent tax break by ending bracket creep and indexing income tax brackets to the rate of inflation.

It protects education tax relief for seniors by maintaining Seniors' School Tax Rebate at its current level of \$470 and will be income tested to ensure the benefits to—is realized by those seniors who need it the most.

The budget supports Manitobans and their priorities. We recognize there is more to do, but it will take time.

Myself, along with my team of dedicated MLAs, are committed to a brighter future for Manitoba, and this being the first step. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I understand that the minister had concluded her remarks, so tomorrow debate will be open.

I would also indicate and ask that, when making reference to another person, that you use their constituency name or their ministerial portfolio name and not specifically personal names.

So the hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

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