

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

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
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HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
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IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
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NEVAKSHONOFF, Thomas, Hon.	Interlake	NDP
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WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Monday, May 11, 2015**

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 20—The Architects Amendment Act**

**Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Nevakshonoff), that Bill 20, The Architects Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les architectes, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Ms. Braun:** I am pleased to introduce Bill 20, The Architects Amendment Act. I want to recognize the Manitoba Association of Architects, who have joined us here today, and thank them personally for all their help and assistance and co-operation of their organization in putting forward this legislation.

This bill re-establishes architects' scope of practice in the act by setting out detailed restrictions on who is authorized to perform architectural work for a given type of building. For some buildings, only registered architects can perform this work, while for other buildings, professional engineers and/or the general public may do so.

Since 2005, architects' scope of practice has been contained in the Manitoba Building Code regulations under The Buildings and Mobile Homes Act where it was placed in a—in—as a temporary measure. Over the last decade, both architects and engineers have advised us that these temporary provisions have been working well and resolve the issues that existed with the previous legislation. Given this, it is proposed to

move the scope-of-practice provisions back into The Architects Act, which is a more appropriate place for them to be located. In addition, a number of administrative improvements are being made to better allow the Manitoba Association of Architects to carry out its mandate.

We have worked closely with the Manitoba Association of Architects in developing this—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I think the minister, perhaps, would want to save some of those comments for debate on second reading of the bill.

Just—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Any further introduction of bills?

**Bill 21—The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act**

**Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship, that Bill 21, The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ingénieurs et les géoscientifiques, now be read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Ms. Braun:** I am pleased to introduce Bill 21, The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act. Again, I would like to recognize members of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Manitoba, who have put tireless energy into their consultations and ideas for this bill. I'd like to thank them for being here today.

And this bill makes a number of changes to the act that will improve the ability of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Manitoba to issue specified scope-of-practice licences to individuals who do not meet the requirements for full membership but who are qualified to practise engineering or geosciences within a limited scope.

The association has been consulted carefully in the development of this bill and both architects and engineers fully support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

### PETITIONS

**Mr. Speaker:** Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

#### Rights of Manitoba Children

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government should uphold the rights of children set forth by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by Canada over 20 years ago, to better protect and promote children and their rights to ensure the voices of children are heard.

Instead, many children in Manitoba, especially those in the child-welfare system, reveal they sometimes feel they have no say in what happens to them.

Under this provincial government, Manitoba's children and youth are falling behind on several indicators of well-being and in areas that would prepare them for better outcomes in life.

This year, the provincial government's education system was ranked last of all Canadian provinces in science, reading and math.

Under this provincial government, Manitoba has also—has the second highest percentage of children using food banks of all Canadian provinces and the highest child poverty rate.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the minister of child—Children and Youth Opportunities to ensure that the rights of all Manitoba children are respected and that the opinions of children are taken into consideration when decisions that affect them are made.

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities to correct the tragic systemic flaws that have failed Manitoba children in the recent past.

This petition's signed by P. Burns, K. Cuff, A. Hildebrandt and many more concerned Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

#### PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Every day, hundreds of Manitoba children walk to school in Oakbank and must cross PTH 206 at the intersection with Cedar Avenue.

(2) There have been many dangerous incidents where drivers use the right shoulder to pass vehicles and have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hot spot of concern for the safety of schoolchildren, drivers and emergency responders.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by S. Plaza, R. Owens, H. Penner and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you.

\* (13:40)

#### Beausejour District Hospital—Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The Beausejour District Hospital is a 30-bed, acute-care facility that serves the communities of Beausejour and Brokenhead.

(2) The hospital and the primary-care centre have had no doctor available on weekends and holidays for many months, jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of those in the northeast region of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

(3) During the 2011 election, the provincial government promised to provide every Manitoban with access to a family doctor by 2015.

(4) This promise is far from being realized, and Manitobans are witnessing many emergency rooms limiting services or closing temporarily, with the majority of these reductions taking place in rural Manitoba.

(5) According to the Health Council of Canada, only 25 per cent of doctors in Manitoba reported that their patients had access to care on evenings and weekends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to ensure that the Beausejour District Hospital and primary-care centre have a primary-care physician available on weekends and holidays to better provide area residents with this essential service.

This petition is signed by K. Wilgosh, B. Frith, B. Grant and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**Mr. Speaker:** Committee reports?

#### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance):** I'm pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Department of Finance, 2015-2016 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

**Mr. Speaker:** Further tabling of reports?

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services):** I'm pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Department of Manitoba Family Services, 2015-2016 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

#### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Seeing none, we'll move on to guests.

I'd just like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today the Hindu Society of Manitoba and the Nepali Cultural Society of Manitoba, who are the guests of the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha).

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

And also seated in the public gallery we have with us from St. John's-Ravenscourt School 20 grade 9 students under the direction of Diane Brueton, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum).

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

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Former NDP Political Staff Reasons for Leaving Positions

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Two thirds of a million dollars, Mr. Speaker, a considerable amount of money and a better example of NDP waste the Premier couldn't come up with the other day. Two thirds of a million dollars to pay former staffers to become present-day staffers in the province of Alberta, it seems.

A simple question for the Premier: Were these staffers fired or did they want to leave?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I gave the member an example last week of an expenditure of \$4 million for a consultant from the United States to come here and make recommendations to lay off hundreds of nurses. That was a very concrete example of \$4 million that was spent that wound up with less nurses in Manitoba.

Today we're celebrating Nursing Week, Mr. Speaker, and we've had, since 2011, over 2,400 more nurses hired in Manitoba. That is a very, very significant increase in the number of people working in Manitoba.

Mutual separation agreements were negotiated with the advice of lawyers and professional HR people, Mr. Speaker, and that has been reported to the Legislature in terms of the amount of money that was put into those mutual separation agreements.

**Mr. Pallister:** So we've got to find an anonymous lawyer to make the anonymous lawyer accountable for a decision to clean house. Is that the deal,

Mr. Speaker? It seems a strange way to represent accountability to Manitobans.

Interestingly, these seven staffers have something in common: none of them supported the Premier in the NDP leadership race.

So would he tell the House: Was the reason that these people were fired and that they're now out of the province working somewhere else that they failed to support him in the NDP leadership race?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, mutual separation agreements have been negotiated.

I also indicated that there are examples of a very egregious amount of money that has been spent, such as \$4 million for an American health consultant which resulted in hundreds of nurses losing their employment in Manitoba.

If the member wants to talk and explain rationales for why staff have left staffs, perhaps he could explain why so many staff have left his office in the last year and a half.

**Mr. Pallister:** HR is the hardest part of running any business. The Premier knows that, Mr. Speaker, that's for sure. But not a dollar went to severance payments from the people of Manitoba as a result of any staffer leaving our employ. We're talking about something that happened in this millennium right now, and I'd encourage the Premier to get into this thousand years.

Manitobans are asking and they deserve answers, and he's not giving answers. Now, what did he say? He said, quote, we believe—this he said before Christmas last year—we believe everybody should be able to exercise their civil rights as citizens to participate in an electoral leadership contest and they will be respected. So much for respect, Mr. Speaker, so much for keeping promises.

Would the Premier admit that these statements he made before Christmas last year were totally false and that he broke his word to these staffers?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, mutual separation agreements have been negotiated. All parties have signed off on them.

And when he refers to this century, Mr. Speaker, the several staff members that have left the Leader of the Opposition's staff are all very recent, within the last couple of years. So if he wants to explain why personnel have left the Legislature, perhaps he could start with his own members.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

### NDP Leadership Race Pre-Election Comments

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** That is truly a pathetic and arrogant response. Zero tax dollars involved in those staffers he represents—of our party, yet three quarters—or two thirds, I'm sorry, of a million—maybe it's going to be more, I don't know—two thirds of a million dollars. I'm asking him to be accountable. He's dodging it, Mr. Speaker, and it's embarrassing, I think, for even his colleagues to see that.

Now, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) before the leadership issued a statement saying that all government staff are free to volunteer for any leadership candidate. Now, Mr. Speaker, I emphasize that was the MLA for St. Boniface who did that. No premier would ever do that. No premier has ever done that. No premier would ever encourage staff disloyalty. That would be an admission of total dysfunction. So that statement was issued by the MLA for St. Boniface.

Will he admit that the statement he issued guaranteeing impunity for all staff to support members other than himself in a leadership race was a statement that was not issued by a premier at all? It was issued by an NDP leadership candidate.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the member asks a question about a statement that was put out in terms of the leadership contest. Those statements were put out to allow people to participate if they wished.

If somebody leaves and they do it by a mutual separation agreement where all parties have signed off on it, that is another matter.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member himself has indicated very clearly that he has lost several staff members in the last while. I count six that have left his office during the term of his leadership.

**Mr. Pallister:** People go on to better opportunities, and clearly the Premier has lost a number of people, but the problem isn't that they went on to new opportunities in Alberta. The problem is Manitobans paid them to leave. That's the problem here.

Now, when the MLA for St. Boniface issued that statement guaranteeing impunity of his staff, which he then went back on later, NDP delegates were the only thing he really cared about. They were key to

him, key to him hanging on to his job. He was desperate to appeal to them. And before the vote, he wanted to appear kind, considerate, thoughtful. After the razor-thin victory, he could return to his customary way of doing business, Mr. Speaker, and he could clean house. And the problem for Manitobans was that the promise he made assured people that they wouldn't have to leave the House.

Now, would he admit that this ridiculous, obscene departure tax of two thirds of a million dollars that he used taxpayers' money to pay to his former staffers was made necessary by him breaking the promise he made to those same staffers as the MLA for St. Boniface?

\* (13:50)

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, when somebody leaves the public service, there's a severance policy that attaches to that. That is a part of the normal proceedings that go 'ron' in the Legislature. When a mutual agreement is arrived at, that ensures that all parties have signed off on that agreement, and that is what has happened in this case.

#### **NDP Political Staff Severance Packages**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** What passes for standard practice in the mind of that desperate member of the Legislature is not standard practice in any government elsewhere in our country, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, let's recap. The MLA for St. Boniface makes a promise. No retribution, he says to staff, safe in your jobs, he says. And then, right after his leadership—successful leadership battle, six figures, two thirds of a million so far, and then last week, he goes into hiding. And now he says severance a normal part of government. Well, under the NDP, it may be normal for people to leave Manitoba and go to look for work in Alberta, but there's nothing normal about ripping taxpayers off—working families, seniors—taking their money and then paying it to people to leave, nothing normal about that.

Will the Premier admit that today, Mr. Speaker?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** The member expresses a great deal of indignity about severance payments with respect to this Legislature. At the federal level, the National Post has reported that in the federal Prime Minister's office, \$4.1 million in severance was paid out for departing political staff. I

wonder if he's as indignant about that when it's in the order of seven times more than any severance that was paid out in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Government Election Promises Severance Package Costs**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, this whole mess, this whole mess that's going to cost Manitoba families nearly \$700,000 at least, is because the Premier made a promise as a leadership candidate and then failed to keep that promise. Now, it's questionable whether any staff should've believed his promise, given his track record with promises, but nonetheless, they relied upon it. And as a result of this Premier breaking his promise, now Manitoba families are going to have to pay at least—and it could be more than—\$670,000.

All we're asking for is this Premier to take some responsibility in this century, in this promise, and admit that his broken promise is costing Manitoba taxpayers more than \$670,000, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, it's been very clear that a mutual agreement was arrived at with all parties that allowed for the severance to be paid out. There is—there are severance payments that are made when people leave government. The member full well knows that.

And if he wants to be indignant about these things, I ask him to make his comments on the \$4.1 million that was paid out at the federal level. That seems to be completely okay with him. And on the other hand, he has a concern of what's happening here in Manitoba when mutual agreements are arrived at.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, I actually do have concerns about what's happening in Manitoba because this is the Manitoba Legislature, Mr. Speaker, and he's the Premier of Manitoba.

The fact is these were extraordinary severance payments, and there's no doubt that they were negotiated. They were probably negotiated right off the desk of the Premier's office. And the reason that they were extraordinary is because the Premier made a promise and then broke it. And had he not given them extraordinary severance pay, he would've ended up, probably, in court, and he needed them to go away and go away quietly.

Won't he admit that the reason he had to pay extraordinary severance pay going-away packages is because he made a promise and broke it and he

needed these staff members to go away quietly and not end up with this in court, Mr. Speaker?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, let's put on the record that severance pay, when people leave employment, is a standard practice. It is standard in terms of legislation. In fact, every member of the Legislature is eligible for severance pay. So let's start with that point.

The second point is even Stephen Harper has provided severance pay to departing political staff: \$4.1 million. In Alberta, prior to the election, Mr. Speaker, more than \$2 million was paid in terms of severance pay. There may be some further changes in Alberta with the election that took place last week.

So for members opposite to suggest that there's something unusual about paying severance pay when people depart positions, I suggest to the member opposite, I know he's a lawyer by background, but he might want to check legal precedents in this country, because it's standard practice.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And I thought that member was running to be premier of Manitoba, not the prime minister of Canada. And he would have been no more successful at that than he was at the recent leadership, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that at the end of the last session, the end of the last day, this Premier (Mr. Selinger) had a choice. He decided to scurry out the side door and avoid the media. That was not transparent. In fact, media had to run down the hall and try to catch him so he could answer some questions about a very important thing in Manitoba in this Manitoba Legislature.

So today he's going to have another chance. He can choose to be transparent and go out that door and actually talk to the media, or he can go out that door and try to run and hide again from his responsibility as the Premier of Manitoba.

I want to ask him: Which door is he going to choose today, the one that leads to some transparency or the one that leads to him running down the hall and hiding from media again?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, there's one thing that's unique about the parliamentary system, and that is that the First Minister and ministers stand in this House and are transparent and accountable every single day we're in session.

And to the Leader of the Opposition, the MLA for St. Boniface is the Premier of this province and I do believe that members opposite should respect that.

And I'd add, Mr. Speaker, that before the member opposite continues to rant and rave, I point out again that severance pay is standard when one leaves employment. In fact, the day that member leaves as member of the Legislature, he'll be receiving severance pay. So members opposite should perhaps huff and puff a little less and focus in on the real issues facing this province.

### **Manitoba Affordability Saskatchewan Comparison**

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, it's clear that they are a long, long way from standard practice when they talk about \$700,000 of taxpayer money to severance payments.

Mr. Speaker, in this province the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is issuing a note entitled Manitoba's affordability myth debunked in which they state that a two-income Manitoba family of five pays \$3,200 more in taxes and utilities than the same family living in Saskatchewan. And they state that Manitoba has lost its competitive edge because of high income taxes and high provincial taxes. In fact, they say that the affordability gap with Saskatchewan is getting wider.

Mr. Speaker, will the Finance Minister just admit that under his NDP government, hard-working Manitoba families are just paying more?

**Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance):** I just want to remind the member and all members of this House that our economy is posed to outperform Saskatchewan both in 2015, Mr. Speaker, and 2016. We are one of the strongest economies in Canada. We're creating jobs, and those people are paid more. In fact, four out of five new jobs created in the private sector.

I want to remind the member that if he was to look into the—our budget document and compare it to the one that was put out by the province of Saskatchewan, you would see, Mr. Speaker, that Manitoba does very, very well when it comes to affordability in this country.

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Speaker, we are looking exactly at those comparisons in the budget, and it's very clear that the family—Manitoba families have to pay their

whole tax bill, not just the particular measures that this government picks on.

Mr. Speaker, according to StatsCan, a two-parent family in Manitoba has the second lowest after-tax income in all of Canada. Now, the Finance Minister doesn't seem to recognize the struggles of hard-working Manitoba families to make ends meet. Imagine what Manitoba families could do with the money if they weren't having to pay for this government's high-tax, high-deficit, high-debt environment.

Mr. Speaker, will the Finance Minister just admit that he's not focused on Manitobans and creating the conditions in which families can pay their bills and raise their kids?

**Mr. Dewar:** Mr. Speaker, again, as I tell the member opposite, I'll explain it again that Manitoba is a much more affordable place to live than Saskatchewan. I want to talk—refer him to page C38 of The Manitoba Advantage: single parent, one child, \$30,000 income, here in Manitoba your cost of living is \$13,134; province of Saskatchewan, \$15,667.

When you look at affordability, you just don't look at taxes, you look at the whole package. As I said, you could go to the Saskatchewan budget and they'll confirm my numbers.

**Mr. Friesen:** Last weekend, I spoke with Scott. Scott's an accountant. He's frustrated with the high-tax and high-spend policies of this NDP government. Scott and his wife have two kids; one lives in BC, one lives in Brandon and studies at BU. He told me he has a new retirement plan. He's going to move to Moosomin, Saskatchewan; he's going to quit paying more, pocket the tax savings and use the money to pay for trips to visit his kids.

\*(14:00)

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not content to hear stories like Scott's and hear about a—hard-working families who are contemplating moving to Saskatchewan for affordability reasons.

What does this Finance Minister have to say to Scott and his family about his family having to pay \$3,200 more each year just to live here and pay his tax bill?

**Mr. Dewar:** Again, Manitoba is one of the most affordable places to live in the country, and the member referenced the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They've called upon the government of Saskatchewan to do what this

government has done, Mr. Speaker, and that is to eliminate the small-business tax. And not only did we eliminate it here in Manitoba, we've also taken another 2,000 businesses off the payroll.

I think Manitoba—or Saskatchewan would look to us for an example to how to lead the province in affordability, Mr. Speaker.

### **Funding for Education Severance Package Costs**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has spent \$670,000 on seven NDP staffers. At the same time, Manitoba students, under this minister, ranked the worst in Canada in reading, math and science.

Will the present Minister of Education admit that the \$670,000 paid in severance would be better spent on providing essential resources to our students?

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** I thank the member across the way for the question.

You know, since we've been in government, we've invested in our education system in any number of ways. We have smaller class sizes now from kindergarten to grade 3 so that we can create that important one-on-one time between a teacher and a student. We are also focusing on improving fundamental skills in math and English and science. We're providing supports for parents, and we're creating skill-building opportunities for our young people so they can go on and get a good job after their academic career is finished.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if the member really wants to improve the educational quality in Manitoba, he should vote for the budget.

**Mr. Ewasko:** On March 27, 2015, the previous minister of Education, the member from Gimli, stated there is no cap on special needs funding. As a teacher myself, who had worked within student services for many, many years, the reality is that our number of students requiring special needs resourcing has gone up.

Will the Minister of Education admit that this NDP government's wasteful \$670,000 paid in severance to NDP staff would be better spent on providing essential resources to our special needs students, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Allum:** You know, special needs are a very important part of our schools. Every kid—every child

deserves our support and, of course, we give it to them, Mr. Speaker, that's for sure.

The member, however, is quite misinformed, Mr. Speaker. There are no caps. There have been no cuts on special education funding. We continue to invest in that very important program in our schools and will continue to do so into the future.

**Mr. Ewasko:** The rankings show that under this minister, Manitoba students are last in Canada in reading, science and math. Special needs funding has been capped, but according to the old minister of Education it hasn't, but in reality it has.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government feels that \$670,000 severance is a well-spent Band-Aid to a wound it has created itself.

Will the minister admit that his NDP government's wasteful spending of \$670,000 in severance would have been better spent on our most precious assets, Mr. Speaker, our students?

**Mr. Allum:** Well, our students are our most precious assets, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've continued to invest at the rate of economic growth every year since we were first elected in 1999. As I said, we've focused on small class sizes. We've hired more teachers. We've renovated science labs. We built more gyms. We've built 35 more schools across the province. In every conceivable way, this government has been there for students and their families.

On the opposite side of the House, they have one plan and one plan only, and that's to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget and send our—make classes bigger, fire teachers and leave our education system in tatters.

Mr. Speaker, I quite prefer our approach to education.

#### **Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry Recommendations Social Worker Education Requirements**

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, recently the Minister of Family Services, in defence of her department's placement of children in hotels, referenced her department's professionalism, and we certainly want to recognize the staff for their professionalism in increasingly difficult situations.

The minister, on the other hand, failed to implement the recommendations from the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry that states that, at a minimum, a bachelor of social work or equivalent degree recognized by the Manitoba College of Social

Workers be hired by the department of agency—and agencies to deliver services under the act. Despite openly supporting the recommendations, the minister changed all of her department's job descriptions to avoid complying with the act.

Exactly how is this 'performing'—supporting, rather, the professionalism for social workers?

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services):** Mr. Speaker, we know the vital role that social workers play with—throughout many systems in our society, whether it's health care, education, family services or the justice system.

We have been working since 2009 with many partners to implement the social work professional act, and we were extremely pleased when we were able to proclaim the entire act last spring, and on April 1st we were able to fully implement that act. We continue to work with all of our partners.

We respect Commissioner Hughes' recommendations. We respect the workforce in Family Services that work every day to ensure the safety of Manitoba children.

**Mr. Wishart:** Well, Mr. Speaker, since 2010, this government has had three different untendered contracts totalling \$67,000 with new NDP party president Ovide Mercredi to consult on draft regulations and bylaws to move The Social Work Profession Act forward. Despite all this work and expense, it appears that the minister wants to ignore Judge Hughes' recommendations to bring professionalism standards up in this public service.

Why is this minister acting on—acting against—sorry. Why is this minister against acting on this very clear recommendation from the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry?

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** Mr. Speaker, we received 62 recommendations from Commissioner Hughes. We have been able to make progress on 23 of them, and we continue to work on the further implementation of all the rest of the recommendations, I am very proud to say.

We have been in contact with Commissioner Hughes; we have discussed The Social Work Profession Act. We are working together to ensure that we are able to have a workforce across this province in the rural and the northern areas that are able to support families, ensure that they have the supports they need to support their children and

continue to grow and flourish. We will work with all partners as we implement this act.

**Mr. Wishart:** Well, that's little progress 10 years after the incident.

In case of my—sorry. In response to my colleague from River East's question the other day, the minister stated very proudly, we've hired 500 more social workers. By the minister's own admission, these are no longer social workers. The minister can designate her staff as she sees fit, but by taking away the recognition of these professionals, she hardly seems to respect her own staff.

The minister is avoiding the Phoenix Sinclair recommendations. Is she, too, avoiding her obligation to make children in her care safer?

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** Mr. Speaker, I, like every member in this House, we take our responsibilities very, very seriously, and we want the best for all Manitoba children no matter where they live. So we will continue to make those important investments to this budget that support families with affordable housing, good child care, prenatal benefits for mothers. We will continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I have the utmost respect for Commissioner Hughes. I speak with him on a regular basis as we work towards implementing his 62 recommendations. He recognizes the challenges that we face in the rural and the northern areas around hiring professionals to work within the system. We are working with the authorities and with the agencies to ensure that we have a strong workforce that can meet the needs of all Manitoba families.

### **Manufacturing Industry Saskatchewan Comparison**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, since January 2008 the increase in manufacturing output in Manitoba has been 3 per cent. Compare this with Saskatchewan's 49 per cent increase.

One has to scratch their head at what today's NDP must be doing wrong for Manitoba to struggle while Saskatchewan's manufacturing sector has done so well. The Premier has an excuse a day for the issues of Manitoba.

\* (14:10)

Can the Premier tell us what today's excuse is for why he let Manitoba's manufacturing fare so poorly as to fall behind Saskatchewan's? And I table these.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** The member from River Heights' question asks to compare Manitoba's performance versus Saskatchewan.

The forecast shows the following, Mr. Speaker, that the Manitoba economy will outperform the Saskatchewan economy in both this year and next year. It shows that Manitoba has—had the best job creation record over the last 12 months, the best in Canada. It shows that Manitoba has seen wage increases, leading the country, of over \$40 a week and \$2,000 a year. It shows that Manitoba has had very significant population increase, a net increase of over 16,000 people, leading the nation on a per capita basis.

Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba economy is performing very well. Our manufacturing sector is the largest in western Canada and shows a very significant increase in exports in the forecast budget this year.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier should stop trying to be a fortune teller and stick to the facts.

Mr. Premier—Mr. Speaker, the Premier should know that what was in his budget fell far short of an adequate economic strategy to address the needs of Manitoba's manufacturing sector to be competitive with Saskatchewan. Today's NDP started in 1999 with Manitoba far ahead of Saskatchewan, but now Saskatchewan has caught up, has passed Manitoba and is continuing to gain.

Why has the Premier been asleep at the switch when it comes to ensuring Manitoba's manufacturing sector is successfully competitive?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, manufacturing in Manitoba is the largest manufacturing sector in western Canada. It has done very well. It's—it went up 9 per cent just over the last month.

We have the—for example, we have the largest intercity bus manufacturing company in North America. New Flyer Industries produces and manufactures 40 per cent of all the buses in North America. They have leading-edge technology on hybrid buses. They brought out one of the first electric buses in Canada. We have Price Industries, which is expanding in Manitoba as well as the rest of North America. Motor Coach is expanding. Our aerospace sector has continued to expand, and moving into the field of composites, and we have other announcements that will be forthcoming about new jobs being created in Manitoba.

Best job creation record, best economic growth forecast, one of the top performing economies in the country over the last 10 years, in the top three: Any time you can have a record like that looking backwards and a forecast like that looking forward, you know the Manitoba economy is doing well.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's claims of economic improvements are also not reflected in Manitoba's export numbers compared to Saskatchewan, and more exports means more jobs. I table this data.

In February 2013 the Premier travelled to India, saying he was going to improve trade between Manitoba and India, and yet the information I table today shows that Saskatchewan has a whopping 12 times larger export of goods to India than Manitoba. Under today's NDP, Manitoba is falling drastically short of Saskatchewan in all exports and in particular exports to India.

Can the Premier explain why he is steering business in this province backwards while Saskatchewan moves forward?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, in the end of 2014 Manitoba's manufacturing sector ended on a high note. It sold \$1.37 billion of goods in December. That was a 6 per–6.2 per cent increase.

The manufacturing sector of Manitoba sells all over the world. It sells farm equipment all over the world. It sells value-added food products all over the world. And I can tell you, when I was in countries like India and China, our food security system, our value-added food products in Manitoba are considered among the finest in the world, and that technology is being adopted in those countries in a very significant way.

So the reality is every province has its own markets where it sells products. Manitoba's manufacturing sector does well throughout the world, particularly in areas where it has a competitive advantage, such as farm equipment manufacturing, such as value-added food products, such as services in the area of hydro development, Mr. Speaker.

We make a real difference around the world, and our manufacturing sector will continue to do that with one of the strongest economies in the country, with one of the best job creation records in the country, with an increase in wages–

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable First Minister's time on this question has expired.

### **Nursing Professions Manitoba Numbers**

**Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park):** Mr. Speaker, on this–I'll say that again. On this side of the House we recognize the importance of nurses to our health-care system. When I was a patient at the St. Boniface hospital, my interaction was more with the nurses than with the doctors. And more nurses at the bedside means better and faster care for patients when they need it.

We have made real progress since the 1990s when the Conservatives fired 1,000 nurses.

Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Health please update the House on today's good news about nurses in–

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

**Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. He and I and other members on this side of the House know the value of nurses to Manitobans. They're the folks that are there when families need them most. And during National Nursing Week, I would like to acknowledge and thank the province's thousands of dedicated nurses for the care that they provide.

And I'm proud to say that our–the investments that this side of the House has made in training, recruitment and retention of nurses means there are more nurses working and training in our province than ever before, which is good for patients, good for nurses and good for our health-care system. The newly released statistics from Manitoba's independent nursing colleges indicate that the number of nurses has reached an all-time high of 17,806 nurses, a net gain of 3,714 since 1999.

And, again, in our commitment in 2011 to hire 2,000 new nurses, well, it turns out we've exceeded that–

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has expired.

### **Illegal Moose Hunting Aerial Night Surveillance**

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, this winter, conservation officers discovered the remains of 15 moose that'd been killed from provincial trunk highways and within protected wildlife corridors in

the region. I had previously brought the issue of big-game crisis in the province of Manitoba to the NDP and, not surprisingly, they've treated the situation as a joke.

Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling pictures of the remains of one female and her two fetuses.

Aerial night surveillance is very helpful in identifying illegal night hunting.

Can the minister advise how many flights occurred in 2014?

**Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** I thank the member for the question.

Our natural resources are of great importance to all Manitobans, urban and rural combined, in particular the big-game species, such as the woodland caribou; such as our moose; the elk in the Interlake, a unique subspecies, I might add, Mr. Speaker, *manitobensis*, a very rare species unique only to Manitoba; and, of course, our white-tailed deer. All of them experience pressures. Extreme winters, for example, have reduced our white-tail population by almost a third a couple of years ago. So management, good management techniques, are critical to the survival of these species, something that we take near and dear to—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has expired.

**Mr. Martin:** Since the minister is unable or unwilling to tell the House, I can tell them. The answer is zero.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP can find \$670,000 for political payouts stemming from their family feud. But, quote, aerial surveillance was not undertaken in 2014, end quote, according to the director of the Wildlife Branch, due to a lack of resources.

Can the minister explain to Manitobans how we can find \$670,000 for political payouts but not a single dollar to deal with illegal night hunting activity?

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** You know, all departments are under financial stress—sorry—all departments are under financial strain. And I'm a little surprised that the member opposite, former member of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, an organization so keen on austerity, on governments managing their finances in a fiscally responsible way, should take such umbrage when departments

such as the one that I represent have to look carefully at the resources that they have.

\* (14:20)

So we will do our utmost in focusing on this issue, and we will ensure that our wild game population survive so that future generations can benefit from them as well.

Thank you.

### Conservation Department Funding Reduction

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** The Manitoba chapter of the Safari Club International donated—donated, Mr. Speaker—a very expensive mechanical moose decoy to the department more than a year ago. The decoy was used twice in 2014—twice. Conservation officers advised that the NDP budget reductions, 10 per cent in conservation alone since the last election, is the reason.

Can the minister explain why the wildlife associations and Manitobans are paying more but—getting less results from this NDP government?

**Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** Well, Mr. Speaker, once again I thank the member for the question.

In terms of spending on resources, if you look at the record of members opposite, what they invested in parks in the last five years that they were in office, less than \$10 million compared to the 60-plus million dollars that we've invested in the last—and our commitment to \$100 million over the period going forward.

And just as a matter of a case in point, the announcement that I made last week, a correction I want to put on the record. I said it was a \$7-million investment in the regional forest centre in Lac du Bonnet; actually it was a \$9.3-million investment, something that will go to serve to protect our natural resources for all people in our parks, our cottagers, everybody that—

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

### OR Services (Altona) Hours of Operation

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health why the Altona OR is closed.

**Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health):** I'd like to thank the member for the question.

I can assure the members opposite that we are in fact investing in rural health care. In fact, I was pleased to be joining the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today where—as we turned the sod for the Notre Dame de Lourdes health-care facility, and it is nice to see the community out there.

I can assure members opposite that we are making investments in rural Manitoba and partnering with all of our partners in the rural health regional authorities.

It's these kinds of investments that are being made, and I can assure members opposite that, unlike them, we will not fire nurses, we will not freeze health-care capital projects, we will not introduce user fees, we will not privatize home care and we will not cut the number of medical school spaces that are available or—

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

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health confirm that the Altona operating office is closed—operating procedure is closed in Altona? Can she confirm that today to this House and give us a reason why?

**Ms. Blady:** Again, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

Again, I'm happy to see that the number—the increased number of nurses we have in the province, and especially like to thank all of the OR nurses for the work that they do throughout the province.

And so, again, thank the member for the question and like to thank nurses for all the hard work they do in our province.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The time for oral questions has expired.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

**Mr. Speaker:** It is now time for members' statements.

#### Earthquake in Nepal

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** I'd like to ask for the leave of the House to attach a letter from the Hindu Society regarding the fundraiser for the Nepal disaster.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to attach the letter that the honourable member for Radisson has referenced? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Jha:** Today I share the devastating story of a 7.9 magnitude earthquake that hit the village of Barpak, the Gorkha district of Nepal, on April 25th. This earthquake has affected hundreds of thousands of people. Over 7,600 people have died either in the earthquake or aftershocks that have followed. Many more have been injured and lost their lives. Many people are now in urgent need of food, shelter and medical supplies.

Today I would like to express the grief and sympathy for the Nepalese community of Winnipeg, Manitoba, some of whom are sitting in the gallery along with the members of the Indo-Canadian community. We are all equally saddened by this tragic event.

Given the vast amount of recovery work that must take place now, I'm happy to see that so many are offering assistance, Mr. Speaker. Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is currently collecting donations for the red—Canadian Red Cross Nepal Region Earthquake Fund. They will be matching all customers' and employee donations up to a maximum of \$50,000, and I'd also like to thank our Premier, for \$200,000 that our government has been donating to the—for the immediate humanitarian assistance.

The Nepal cultural society is working hard to collect donations for the relief effort. The Nepali Cultural Society has been—preserved Nepali culture here in Manitoba, and the Hindu Society of Manitoba is having a fundraiser at the Hindu Temple on Saturday, May the 30th. Details are attached herewith.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all the members here—join me in recognizing the work of the Nepali Cultural Society and the Hindu Society of Manitoba. Nepal is a beautiful country that has a tourist heaven; thousands are homeless now. We wish for a swift recovery in Nepal.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before I recognize the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), I want to ask our guests in the galleries to understand that no photography is permitted, and I'm asking for your co-operation.

### National Nursing Week

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I rise before the Manitoba Legislative Assembly today to recognize National Nursing Week this May 11th to 17th. Florence Nightingale's birthday was May 12th, and the week is an opportunity to reflect on the value of the work nurses do every day in hospitals, clinics, workplaces and social agencies.

National Nursing Week provides us with an opportunity to celebrate nurses for their provision of patient-centered care and their dedication to ensuring the health and wellness of individuals, families and communities.

Nurses are an integral part of our health-care system here in Manitoba and are truly there for patients every step of the way, as this year's theme so accurately captures. I am proud and honoured that I was part of that for 23 years as a registered nurse.

Through countless hours day and night, nurses form truly special relationships with the patients they care for and work hard to get to the heart of a person's struggle and journey to recovery. Our nurses in Manitoba provide care diligently, all the while unfortunately facing obstacles and challenges in the front lines of health care.

Earlier this year we learned that Manitoba has the longest ER waits in Canada, and today we hear that the Altona operating room is closed due to a nursing shortage.

Mr. Speaker, our nurses come to work every day committed to providing the best possible care to their patients. It is not fair for them or their patients that this NDP government has failed to find the solutions to fix this problem as well as many other problems. Not only does it affect patients, it affects the nursing staff that are there trying so hard to do their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the PC caucus recognizes the essential role of nurses and acknowledges the contributions and leadership nurses make in our communities and for our families, for our patients, every minute and every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital):** Mr. Speaker, nurses are some of the hardest working individuals in the health-care field. They provide quality care at the bedside so many of our loved ones during some of our most challenging times—some of our most challenging times. Nurses work in hospitals,

long-term care facilities, QuickCare clinics and in many other environments. Their work touches so many lives in our families and our communities.

Today marks the start of national nurses week. It's a time to recognize and celebrate the crucial work that nurses do every day.

In St. Vital, we have an amazing QuickCare clinic on Dakota Street. Like other QuickCare clinics in Manitoba, it is staffed by registered nurses and nurse practitioners who assess patients' needs and provide the best possible remedy. This clinic is an indispensable resource for community members, and it is entirely due to its staff. The nurses are skilled, efficient and attentive. They help families get the care that they need in the easiest way possible.

\*(14:30)

Our government has worked diligently to grow our nursing workforce to where it is today. As a result, there are over 3,700 more nurses working in Manitoba today than there were 15 years ago. We are continuing to build on that growth by hiring more nurses, training more nurses, and we're taking new steps to make sure nurses are happier and safer in their workplace.

Having nurse practitioners working in our province also greatly increases our ability to provide quality care. Our practitioners fulfill a unique role in our system, and their ability to identify illnesses and prescribe certain medication is helping families all across this province.

I'd like to thank the nurses of St. Vital and nurses all over Manitoba who work so hard to make sure that we get the care that we need, and the care that we need closer to home.

Thank you.

### United Way of Winnipeg 50th Anniversary

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Part of what makes our province so special is the willingness of Manitobans to volunteer their time and money to make their communities stronger. One organization that has been leading the way in Manitoba has been the United Way of Winnipeg, and I rise today to congratulate them on their 50th anniversary.

Fifty years ago today, the United Way of Winnipeg was formed through a partnership between the Winnipeg Labour Council and the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. In its first year of operation, the United Way raised \$2.8 million in support of

50 agencies. This past year, the United Way raised a record-breaking \$20.1 million in support of 126 agencies.

These agencies provide a variety of programs that last year saw over 291,000 participants. These programs include after-school programs that last year provided over 90,000 children and youth a safe place to go. Almost 40,000 seniors are assisted by programs and services that deliver meals, companionship and recreation that help them remain independent. As well, over 3,000 Winnipeggers receive job readiness training and employment counselling through programs the United Way supports.

All these programs would not be possible without the contributions of volunteers. Over 5,000 people volunteer with the United Way and the amount of hours they put in is simply staggering. Last year the number reached 50,000-plus community-volunteer hours. The commitment these volunteers have to making their community stronger is an inspiration for all of us.

The contributions the United Way has made in our community over the past 50 years are immeasurable. I think I speak for all Winnipeggers when I—and all Manitobans when I say that we are all very appreciative of the work they have done and continue to do.

Congratulations again on 50—on the 50th anniversary to the United Way, and best wishes on the next 50 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Statement of Friendship**

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas):** Last month something very special happened in my constituency. The student councils from Oscar Lathlin Collegiate representing the youth of Opaskwayak Cree Nation and the student council from Margaret Barbour Collegiate Institute representing the youth of the town of The Pas came together to sign a statement of friendship. I was honoured to be invited by Dion Sanderson, OLC student council president, to witness the event.

This historic accord was also signed by OCN's junior chief in council, which is a much-needed first step to building new relationships between OCN and the town of The Pas. It's also an excellent example of how to bring different communities closer together and of how young people can lead the way.

As signatories of the statement, the students have set important goals for themselves and our communities. These include fostering sustained communication, building stronger and more positive relationships between the two communities, promoting cultural awareness and understanding, eradicating negative stereotyping, promoting student leadership and empowering youth to take positive action.

As a symbol of the communities coming together, the two student councils met in the middle of the Chief Cornelius Bignell bridge so that they could take a photo on the bridge that connects OCN and The Pas.

Young people are our future, and it's inspiring to see them take action and work towards a better tomorrow. And it's not just up to them, but we all need members of both communities to recognize the similarities that bring us together and respect the differences that make our society diverse.

A huge thank you to the students of Oscar Lathlin Collegiate, of Margaret Barbour Collegiate Institute and the OCN junior chief in council. You are helping us all build a better future.

Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** That concludes members' statements.

#### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

#### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

#### **BUDGET DEBATE**

#### **(Seventh Day of Debate)**

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll now proceed to orders of the day, government business.

And to resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for La Verendrye, who has 28 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** I believe I left off the other day in welcoming the new member from The Pas here. I wish her the best in her new career.

There are a number of MLAs who have announced that they won't be seeking re-election in the next election. I would like to thank them for all their years of service that they've done for the people of Manitoba. It's an important job and I'd like to thank them for everything that they have done.

But I do wonder how many more NDP MLAs will be calling it quits. After all, it's got to be tough to work with a group that doesn't trust each other. I mean, this is very clear when you read some of the quotes made by the NDP MLAs during the leadership race. These divisions will not be fixed easily. I believe there are a number of NDP MLAs across that are tired of their own broken promises and have had enough and are looking to pull the pin because they just can't handle any more of it themselves.

Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2015—it's not a budget to help Manitobans. It is one that was crafted to try to get the NDP re-elected. It does not have the interests of Manitobans in mind, only the self-centred interests of the NDP and wanting to stay in power.

I have done a lot of travelling across this great province of Manitoba in the last year listening to many concerned Manitobans. Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are tired of the same NDP broken promises. They want a change for the better. They are tired of paying more and getting less.

This is the seventh consecutive deficit budget delivered by this NDP. Budget 2015 projects a deficit of \$422 million, up from the \$357 million projected last year which—we know that they—this is going to be higher than what they did. This will bring the Province's total debt to \$36 billion, or \$30,000 for every man, woman and child in this province, and who knows if that \$422-million number is right? The NDP's forecasting has not been very accurate, and according to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), budget numbers are arbitrary. That is not what I want to see my children, grandchildren and their children saddled with. They are our future, and they should not have to pay for this NDP's mismanagement today.

In 2011, the NDP's platform was a five-year plan to bring the budget back to balance by 2014. In 2012, the Finance Minister committed that in this budget we are on track—we are on track—to balance this budget by 2014. Suddenly, in 2014, it all changed when the Minister of Finance announced we are on track to return to balance in 2016-2017. Now, in Budget 2015, it seems they have no clue as to when or how they will balance the budget. The Minister of Finance says—now says we've decided that rather than meet this arbitrary target the budget will remain in deficit until 2018. Since when are budgets arbitrary?

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2015 demonstrates that the NDP is a government that Manitobans can't trust. This government's inability to reduce waste and balance the budget is one of the reasons why the NDP can't be trusted. Missing their target of balancing the budget as many times as they have shows that they don't have the ability to balance the budget or they are being careless with their truth to Manitobans.

I would like to remind all the members opposite that it was them who went door to door, told Manitobans that they would balance the budget by 2014. They were the same ones that went door to door and promised no tax increases in election 2011. We all know what a lie that turned out to be. Nonsense, said the Premier (Mr. Selinger). We won't raise the taxes. Right after promising not to raise the taxes, what does the Premier do? Saddles Manitobans with some of the highest tax increases in decades. Why should Manitobans trust this NDP government?

\*(14:40)

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2015 is projecting a deficit of \$422 million. But that is not the only bad news. With all the increases in fees and taxes in Budget 2015, and raining—raiding the rainy day fund, that is close to \$1 billion that this NDP government is overspending. This government does not have a revenue problem. They have a spending problem that is out of control.

Mr. Speaker, last year, the NDP spent \$872 million to service the province's debt. That's more money than was spent on infrastructure, housing and conservation combined. Just think all the good that could be done with \$872 million extra in health care or education. Servicing the province's debt is Manitoba's fourth largest department. Just think what would happen should interest rates go up one, two or three points. And this is going to happen. Could servicing the provincial debt get to be Manitoba's largest department?

When will the NDP government wake up and start listening to experts? Last year, Moody's reviewed Manitoba's fiscal position and concluded that a loss of fiscal discipline leading to a continued and sustained increase in debt and debt service ratios beyond projections could exert downward pressure on the rating if nothing happens. It is only a matter of time until Manitoba's credit rating begins to fall.

This budget shows no fiscal discipline. This target is one that does not have Manitobans' best interests in mind, only that of the NDP and their self-centred interest in themselves and getting re-elected, no matter the cost. No wonder Greg Selinger retained the title of least popular premier in Canada—oh—the Premier (Mr. Selinger) retained the least popular premier in Canada.

It took Manitoba 137 years to accumulate \$18.1 billion of debt, but it only took the Premier eight years to double that to \$36 billion. How can Manitobans trust the NDP with their future? The NDP have lost all credibility with Manitobans. The ballooning debt in Manitoba is threatening the ability of government to deliver front-line services. And, as a result, Manitobans are paying more and getting less.

Small business is important to Manitoba's economy. Over the last number of years, I have talked to a lot of small businesses. They all feel that this NDP government is nickel-and-diming them to death. In the budgets that have been brought forward since I've been an MLA, not one of them have been small business friendly, adding PST to insurance, increases in the tax on gas, increases to all kinds of fees and then increasing the PST from 7 to 8, which is actually a 14 per cent increase.

This government tries to justify itself by saying they have lowered the tax on small business. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter what the tax is on the end when all the other taxes and fees on small businesses keep taking every penny of profit they make and there's no profit left at the end to pay the tax. You can have a zero rate or whatever you want, there's still nothing to pay because it's been stoled during—before they have a chance to pay any tax.

We've travelled to all parts of this province and have met with hundreds of groups, organizations and individual Manitobans. We've had some great discussions on areas that Manitobans feel are important to Manitoba. One thing that was loud and clear was that they are tired of all the NDP broken promises. Manitobans feel that honesty, integrity and transparency are important in government. They feel the NDP government is lacking these qualities.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are concerned about the state of our health-care system, education system, family services and justice. These are all areas that Manitobans have been paying more in taxes and fees and getting less services.

Health care, Mr. Speaker—when the NDP were elected 16 years ago, they promised to eliminate hallway medicine. Well, hallway medicine is still alive and getting worse. We have hallway medicine, highway medicine and now parking lot medicine, where paramedics are waiting in ambulances outside ERs to unload patients. These wait times have increased from 66 minutes in 2011 to 78 minutes in 2014. Time is very critical in emergencies; even that extra 12 minutes could make the difference between life and death.

In Manitoba, we have 20 rural ERs that are currently closed or operating under reduced services. The ER in my town has been closed since October 2012, and that's a long time, Mr. Speaker. What was going to be a temporary closure lasting only a few weeks has lasted more than two and a half years and three Health ministers. According to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority's own official, we failed on ER fixes. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Manitoba consistently has the worst ER wait times in the country.

In 2000, the NDP budgeted \$2.35 million for health care; in Budget 2015 a little more than \$6 billion for health care, and yet Manitobans aren't reaping the benefits of the extra spending. Again, spend more, get less. Manitobans have the worst access to after-hours, primary-physician care in Canada. The Premier and his revolving door of health ministers have broken their promise to ensure that every Manitoban would have access to a family doctor by 2015. The Premier stated that all Manitobans should have access to health care no matter where they live—another broken promise. According to the Canadian institute for health-care information, Manitoba has one of the lowest doctor retention rates in Canada. In the last five years 640 licensed doctors left Manitoba for other jurisdictions. Since the NDP took power, 2,300 doctors have left Manitoba to practise in other areas.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is the NDP have had 15 years to address the shortage of family doctors, 15 years to end hallway medicine, 15 years to make changes for the better, but all we hear is how hard they're working while our health-care system is deteriorating and Manitoba is losing ground to other provinces. They should let someone else work hard and fix the problem so we can have something better in Manitoba.

Education—we all know how important education is for the future of our youth. It is also important to

the future of this province. We need highly educated workers to fill the jobs needed for the future. Unfortunately, under this NDP government, Manitoba's quality of education is falling behind other provinces. The 2013 Pan-Canadian Assessment Program—which measures the performance of grade 8 students in math, science and reading—ranked Manitoba last amongst all Canadian provinces in science, reading and math.

*Ms. Jennifer Howard, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

In 2012, the Program for International Student Assessment released this past year places Manitoba second lowest in reading and science scores in Canada. In addition to being some of the lowest in Canada, Manitoba's scores in reading, math and science have—fell lower than in previous years. Manitoba's PISA scores in reading have declined while the Canadian average has gone up. Manitoba students are now reading below the international average while Canadian student is well above the international average. Every time these negative results are brought forward to the minister we get the same answer, that they're working hard to fix the situation. But it seems the harder the minister works, the worse it gets.

While we are talking about the future of our youth, let's take a look at Family Services. The number of children in care continues to rise in Manitoba at an alarming rate with close to 11,000 kids currently in care. Manitoba holds a number of other Canadian records this government can take credit for. In 2012, Manitoba had the highest child-poverty rate of all the provinces. In 2014, Manitoba had the second highest rate of children using food banks, and Manitoba has witnessed the highest increase in food bank usage in Canada between 2008 and 2013, double the national average. There are kinds of mismanagement examples all over the place.

\* (14:50)

Time and time again the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Finance 'minister' keep saying Manitoba has the fastest growing economy when they're looking for a positive spin. But, when they're looking—but when you ask a question about their wasteful spending, they blame the world recession for the falling oil prices.

But wait, did the Conference Board of Canada not say that Manitoba would be one of the provinces that would benefit by the falling oil prices? Lower oil

prices would help our manufacturing sector. Has Captain Asphalt calculated how much money Manitoba will save with falling oil prices or is the NDP government locked into last year's oil prices?

Manitoba's roads and bridges need a lot of repair, but who is at fault for that? The NDP's mismanagement is to blame. Where was their road maintenance program over the last 15 years? Why did they wait so long to do repairs?

Since 2009, the NDP have underspent by \$2.2 billion on capital and infrastructure. Mr. Speaker—sorry, Deputy Speaker, my apologies. The only thing that is important to this government is a photo op. That's why they can't—can keep reannouncing the same project over and over again.

During the member from Burrows' rant the other day, she mentioned more than once, and I quote, because there is a difference in philosophy. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I agree there is a difference, but I would ask her if her philosophy that made her—if it was her philosophy that made her go door to door in the election of 2011 and promise no tax increases, then break that promise. Was it her philosophy that, shortly after she made that promise, the NDP introduced some of the highest tax increases in decades? Was it her philosophy that agreed to increase the PST without a referendum? No wonder Manitobans feel that this NDP government has no integrity, no credibility, and will say anything to get elected.

If the NDP are looking for ways to put more money into front-line services, they should quit fighting amongst each other. This last battle royal they had to see who would be the leader is going to cost Manitobans close to \$700,000 in bonus bucks—again, money that could go into front-line services. Why should Manitobans be paying for the NDP and their fighting? They could eliminate the vote tax—more money for front-line services. The list goes on.

No matter how hard I look at this budget, I cannot find a reason to vote for it. This budget is not made for Manitobans; it is made for the NDP. It is a vote-buying budget and it will hurt Manitobans. A deficit today is a tax tomorrow. This NDP budget and their reckless spending will hurt front-line services.

I will not be supporting this budget but will be supporting the amendment brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Fort Whyte, and I look forward to April 2016. Thank you.

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** I'm very proud to be standing here today to talk about this budget—a budget that's not about cutting; a budget that's about investing and building. And I reject the Leader of the Opposition's motion that we're going to be going down the road of cuts.

In other jurisdictions right now across the country, we see that deep cuts are going on to education, health care, infrastructure. Happily, though, the experts said that Manitoba are—is bucking the trend. We are there for the people and we are continuing to protect for the future of Manitoba.

Investments like the floodway and the new \$9.3 million regional fire operations centre in Lac du Bonnet that's going to enhance our first response—protection for firefighters, for all of our lovely parks and all the cabin owners in the Whiteshell and Nopiming provincial parks.

Now, across the way, we hear the Conservatives talk a big game about balancing, but let's look at their record. When they were in, they used up the fiscal stabilization fund. That was the surplus that was left to them.

Then they sold off MTS to create another Fiscal Stabilization Fund, but they burned through that before they finally got voted out. They tied up MTS workers' pensions in court for almost 20 years before a judge finally ruled that they could have them back.

Is that how their vision of Manitoba is? To mistreat employees and take their pensions? We see their priorities loud and clear: sell off assets, 'punish' the—punish the pensions of workers. All we have to do is look at other provinces and we see teachers that are being fired or laid off, just like the Leader of the Opposition did when he was in charge. Seven hundred teachers were fired. He put on record he would do this if he had his hands on the wheel again—big cuts, over \$600 million worth of cuts.

Look at the Conservative government that's in Newfoundland right now, and Labrador. They are paying higher taxes and fees, and despite those measures, the government there is still projecting a \$1.1-billion deficit for this year, and plans to return to surplus in about five years. And yet the Conservatives here complain about our plan which is actually a lot less than that.

The Conservatives also would cut the public workforce, and they're shrinking it by 1,400 in Newfoundland and Labrador. Is that what their plan

would be, more cuts, more people being fired and laid off? Well, what else would they do? How about the harmonized sales tax in Newfoundland and Labrador? They jumped it by 2 per cent. And, because it's an HST, it actually encompasses way more than what a PST does. So it's more like having a 3 per cent jump in the PST.

How about New Brunswick; let's look at New Brunswick. They have higher rates on fuel, taxes, gasoline, diesel, and they're eliminating 249 teacher positions and increasing premiums for the seniors who use the prescription drug program. Is that the kind of change that the members opposite are talking about bringing to Manitoba? I sure hope not, because we won't allow that to happen, on our side of the House.

How about the former Conservatives—luckily not anymore—in Alberta—how about their budget? Madam Speaker, \$1.5 billion in hikes and new levies that outlined a new tax model. Fuel taxes went up and they also did the escalating basis for health-care costs. They charge you for your health-care card with a cap of about \$1,000 a year per family. So those families who are making minimum wage had to pay \$1,000 a year for their health-care card. Now, you'll hear them say they won't raise taxes. You're right, they'll do what all Conservatives do: backdoor fees and levies on those people who can least afford them, like a levy on health-care cards when you cannot afford to have it.

The Province says that the average Alberta family with two working parents makes a combined \$120,000, will pay an estimated \$288 more this year and \$480 more next year in tax. In 2015-16 the budget tabled, with all the tax increases virtually across the board, and it's still going to run a \$5-billion deficit. And yet they don't think that that's a bad thing in Alberta. But in Manitoba we decided to do it a different way and we're running a much smaller deficit and we're investing in services and not cutting, and all they can do is complain.

Now, we invest here in Manitoba at the rate of inflation or greater. In fact, we've hired over 200 more teachers to commit to our lower class sizes for K-to-3 initiative, something the Leader of the Opposition says he would cut—he would cut—with his \$600-million across-the-board cuts. My constituents have told me they want new schools and expansions of daycares. Underneath the opposition they would get neither. In fact, they would see higher class sizes due to all the schools being closed, just like the last

time the Leader of the Opposition was in power. He likes to say that past performance dictates future; that is what he did, those are his words, and that's what he would do again.

On May 8th, in the Winnipeg Free Press, the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Leader Brian—sorry, the Leader of the Opposition sang the federal government's 'praises'—praises, applauding the government's ability to balance the budget. He said, this is the budget that they should do here in Manitoba. He applauded a budget that raids people's unemployment insurance to balance the books. Really? That's what he applauded.

A backdoor tax, once again, fees and levies that were not meant for that, that's what they would do. They raided unemployment. They made it harder for people to collect unemployment and then they raided that fund which is supposed to be an unemployment insurance for those people who need it the most. They literally took from the poor and gave it to the rich with a tax break for the richest 15 per cent in Canada. That's what the Leader of the Opposition called for in this budget.

\*(15:00)

The Leader of the Opposition also applauded the fact that the federal government underinvested in young people. They underspent \$97 million on the disabled, literacy and youth unemployment—the largest lapse of spending in the five years since the 2008 economic meltdown. So you would see the Leader of the Opposition's approach during his budget. He would abandon the people who needs the most to save a buck or two during tough times. Not us; invest.

The biggest shortfall, \$30 million, was for the Youth Employment Strategy or about 17 per cent of that budget for the year. This total underspending comes at a time when Canada's youth jobless rate is 13 per cent. This is what the Leader of the Opposition touted as a good budget, allowing youth to have 13 per cent unemployment and not investing money that was set aside to help those very youth obtain skills and jobs. Not us; we have invested in the youth and we're investing in jobs and we're investing in skilled trades. Shame on them for even suggesting so.

The Leader of the Opposition said he would balance the books. How would he do it? He would balance it on the backs of our grandchildren. Much like the Finance minister federally said, Joe Oliver

said he would balance it on Harper's grandchildren; they can worry about it. This budget—this is the budget speech that the Leader of the Opposition applauded, in his own words. That's exactly what he said, that he thinks that that's a budget Manitoba needs to put the costs onto the—our grandchildren.

How about the fact that the federal Conservatives underspent \$1.1 billion on the budget for veterans? This hurts the very men and women in need when they have PTSD from returning from missions abroad. The Leader of the Opposition said he would glad—he applauds that and he would gladly make those cuts, too. That is unbelievable.

This budget also saw the RCMP not deliver \$2 million for the National Child Exploitation Co-ordination Centre last year. This is exactly how the Leader of the Opposition would balance the books here in Manitoba, by putting our children and policing at risk—his words.

On May 8th, the CBC reported there was a water security expert, Bob Sandford, who says climate change will have dire consequences on Manitoba's infrastructure and consequently its economy unless something changes. You see, there are larger changes to the hydraulic cycle causing more frequent flooding, greater storms, greater infrastructure damage. We are in—of the view that this could have serious economic consequences for the province, so in our meeting today we're talking about how to deal with those matters.

Well, what would the Leader of the Opposition do? He would cut the funding needed to fund flood mitigation and flood preparations like we've done in Brandon, like we're doing with the outlet for the lakes. That would all be cut underneath him because you know what? In his words, he would balance on the backs of our grandchildren. It doesn't matter; we'll save a buck now. We're going to cut right now and our grandchildren will pay for that when this economy is under water. And you can't have a good economy when the province is under water.

Without action, Sandford said, that some development in Manitoba will be reversed, and he said you might want to—you—we now realize that you might want to enjoy it, what we have in the future, we are going to have to rethink how we manage these events, which means we're going to have to rethink how we plan for it now, how we design and how we finance and how we think about sustainability of infrastructure in the future.

So would the Leader of the Opposition invest in that? No, he would cut \$600 million across the board just to pay—just to balance the books right now. Let our children and grandchildren worry about it. He wouldn't—wouldn't matter to him. He would cut right across the board. He would abandon these municipalities just like he did in the flood of 1997. When Grand Forks and Fargo were burning, he quit his post as EMO minister and ran away and left as an MLA in this Legislature. The day he quit, Grand Forks and Fargo were literally under water and on fire. His reckless cuts of \$600 million would surely see cuts to flood protection.

He will say, oh, no, I won't cut that and I won't cut that and I won't cut that. Well, then what will he cut? Let's hear his plan for cuts. He hasn't laid them out. He just says he's the government for everybody. He will cut here and he will cut there, but he's—he doesn't have an actual plan; \$600 million across the board is going to be something that we notice somewhere, whether it's in infrastructure, education or health care.

Well, not us. We're investing in record rates and partnering with municipalities to fix infrastructure, to build and add flood protection. We are building now for future generations, because we care about our children and our grandchildren. It will only become more expensive in the future to build; we all know that. The cost of everything goes up—costs of construction—so we are investing now.

You know what else that means? That means more jobs now, more retail activity, more homes purchased, higher incomes.

Investments in infrastructure and commitment to the front line has aided Manitoba to be ranked one of the top three provincial economies in Canada. Our projected growth is 2.5 per cent above the Canadian average. The Conference Board and the Royal Bank have touted Manitoba as one of the strongest economies.

Nonetheless, the media and the opposition will continue to fixate on deficits without putting any sort of context to it at all, and context does change the whole story.

Debt figures don't mean anything unless they're measured next to GDP, the amount of cost to service the debt. And Manitoba's debt ratio is projected to be 30.9 per cent or fourth best in Canada of all the non-oil-producing provinces in the country. Yes, the ratio is higher than it was before the great

depression—or recession, sorry—but that number is still one of the healthiest in the developed world. Debt servicing costs are far lower now at 5.6 per cent of every dollar of revenue than they were underneath the Leader of the Opposition when they were 13.2 cents on every dollar of revenue. He seems to conveniently forget that fact that our economy has more than doubled underneath our government and our debt-to-GDP ratio has actually dropped.

Not only are we in fine economic shape, but historically low interest rates make it a good time to borrow and invest in the future. If you look at David Dodge, who was the former bank of governor—head of the Bank of Canada, sorry—recommends that the government borrow now and invest on infrastructure to stimulate the economy. That's what we're doing. In fact, deterring the costs of unrepaired infrastructure and construction makes it even lower when you figure in the factor that everything goes up in the future because higher pouring costs and higher cost to do the job.

Now, I know all these reports and science and statistics are like pixie dust and fairy tales to the members opposite. But those are the facts. The facts are that my constituents will be better off with better roads so they don't have to replace their shocks and struts as often and their front-end damage doesn't need to be looked after. The facts are that with the recent announcement in infrastructure spending our commutes may be a little bit shorter and maybe we can spend a little more time at home with our families. The facts are that flood protections like we did when we doubled the floodway to one-in-hundred-seven-year floods, people saved thousands in not having to make flood claims. I know it's not important to the opposition. They're worried about cutting corporate tax rates or allowing financial industries to take more money offshore. But, for the rest of us normal folks, we need this protection and we need this help and that's what our government is doing. We're delivering protection and help to those who need it the most.

The spinoff argument for increased infrastructure spending is sound. The proof is that we enjoy the second lowest unemployment rate in the country right now, and we're well below the national average. Regardless of the type of project, it's simply the best way for governments to inspire economic activity. For the opposition to say otherwise is absolutely ridiculous because their federal counterparts said—and they're trying to do the same thing, but they're spending less across the entire country in

their infrastructure plan that starts next year than we are in our plan. The difference is the federal government is not investing the amount of GDP that all the experts are saying it should into infrastructure in Canada. In Manitoba we're investing like never before, record amounts of infrastructure being invested in.

All these things are an example of people living in Manitoba can know our government is here for them and that we're committed to jobs, committed to building the economy, committed to front-line services and all the things that we've come to know and expect in Manitoba. It's not just a given. Underneath the Leader of the Opposition and his reckless cuts that he calls for, all of these things would disappear. Unemployment rate was 10 per cent underneath them in the end of their term when they—before we took office. It is now just over 5 per cent, almost half.

Cutting front-line services would only hurt the people that need it the most, but instead we are building on those front-line services and moving forward in Manitoba and taking advantage of low interest rates to finance projects like a new school in South Pointe and to finance projects like the new ACCESS centre in south Winnipeg.

Now, the doom-and-gloom party over there, they say everything, that it's all bad all the time and that things are terrible. Well, our unemployment rate is 5, just over 5 per cent, a full 2 points less than the national average, which their federal cousins manage. So it's obviously not that bad here.

I'm saying things weren't always as good as they are now with all the cuts underneath the Leader of the Opposition, when classrooms were crowded, daycares were frozen and capped, schools had lack of funding, teachers were being fired, nurses were being fired, ORs had fruit flies in them—that was what happened underneath the Leader of the Opposition. He proposed—they proposed to close the Grace Hospital, and we saved it. We have more nurses and more doctors practising in Manitoba than ever before.

\*(15:10)

Now, the Leader of the Opposition likes to talk about past performance. Well, let's talk about past performance when he was part of the government that made health-care cuts or the—when he was a minister and then they sold off MTS. Unemployment was higher, nurses were laid off; that's his past

performance. He likes to say that it's the best way to dictate future performance. *[interjection]* Well, that's—exactly his words coming right out of his mouth that his future performance would be higher unemployment, less nurses, less doctors, less teachers, higher class sizes, because that's what his past performance showed us. A hundred and thirty per cent rocketing—sky-rocketing tuition rates. That's what he did. That's what happened underneath him and his government. Past performance dictates future—his words.

He also said something interesting: We all need—know we need to invest in core infrastructure. It's interesting because when he was in power they spent less on infrastructure than they took in on the gas tax, and they doubled the gas tax and then they raked in that revenue and they didn't even spend that amount fully on the roads. Not us; we're spending more on the roads than we take in in gas tax. We're investing, and those investments are going to create 58,900 jobs.

So, in his own words, the Leader of the Opposition admits that he would take in gas tax and spend less on the roads. He would spend more on core infrastructure than he did in the past? No, because his past actions didn't actually prove that. I'm very happy that he pointed this out because he admits in his own words that his reckless cuts are going to come back. Those are his own words. He is going to bring back the failed policies and the reckless cuts. I'm personally glad that we're moving forward.

Do you know why we're having to invest in rapid transit? Because Winnipeg is growing. We're a growing province; more people are coming here. Not like when they were in power and people were fleeing the province because the doctors and the nurses and the teachers being fired. People were leaving. The economy here was terrible, 10 per cent unemployment. We didn't need to build rapid transit because there was nobody here to use it. They were leaving in droves. Well, now we're seeing a growing city, growing population. And we're helping—with that population, we're helping build the rapid transit system that is helping people out.

Now, I've been out in the community and around the province, and I hear two things, that health care and infrastructure are very important to people. But the Leader of the Opposition wants to ignore both with his plan and his amendment to this budget to cut \$600 million out of this budget. He wants the rich

people to be able to jump the line. We just saw this recently in Saskatchewan where they said now you can start to pay for your MRI. So the people who are rich can jump ahead and the people who are poor will have to wait longer for health care. That's what he would like, two-tier health care. He'd like to see the home care privatized, just like they tried to do when they were last in government. They tried to privatize home care.

We are ensuring that we hire and train more medical professionals. We've added more doctors' seats at the universities. We're hiring more nurses; we're training more nurses. We're investing in our youth, in their education—60 per cent tax credit for their tuition rates.

What did they do? They cut bursaries and raised tuition when they were in government. They would take the short-sighted austerity measures and cut deeply into spots, driving people away from the province yet again. Our government has made it a priority to look after Manitobans and to do things for the people of Manitoba.

Families in St. Norbert benefit from taking another step forward and expanding high-quality, affordable—or child-care spaces. The new South Pointe school that I was recently at the announcement for will employ hundreds of people during the construction and operation, and it will have a 114-seat child-care facility for those people in my area who need child care. They're not asking for cuts. They're not asking for the \$600 million of reckless cuts across the board by the opposition. They're asking for more child care; they're asking for smaller class sizes; and they're asking for a school in their area. And we are delivering that.

The lower class-size initiative is about providing a positive learning environment for students, and that's what we are doing. We're not ramming 30 and 40 students in like when the Leader of the Opposition was in power. We're not putting that many students in a classroom. We're creating a better learning environment for them.

The Leader of the Opposition wanted to talk about past performance. Well, we all know that Hydro is in his sights. He wants to stop the development of Hydro dead in its tracks, he said, which would make it flounder and ripe for the sell—the sale of Manitoba Hydro, just like they did with MTS, where they underfunded it, let it struggle and then sold it off. And all of their buddies made big

bucks on that transition, and we went from the third lowest rates to the third highest rates in this country.

Now, the reason I became an MLA is because I wanted to do good things for my family, not to slash and burn the budget. I wanted to make sure that my families have access to a doctor. In my area, I see signs everywhere saying that—there's two or three clinics right now accepting new patients. Well, those clinics weren't there underneath them. Those clinics wouldn't exist underneath them, because there's more doctors now.

We have an ACCESS centre that's being built in our area. Well, that wouldn't exist underneath them because they would cut that. We have a new CancerCare wing on Victoria hospital which wouldn't exist underneath them. Those are the things that the people of my area have asked for and we're delivering. The new school, we are delivering. More child care, we are delivering. They would only deliver reckless cuts across the board all in the name of balancing.

Over and over you'll hear from them again and again that it's just about balance. Well, just hope you don't get sick. You better hope your kids don't want to go to university because you won't have to—you won't be able to pay for it; you'll have to remortgage your home to help them pay for university underneath them and their 130 per cent tuition increases. Pay more for hydro? Sure, they could afford it. The rich people who have seven-car garages, they can afford to pay more for hydro. We look after the people who need our help and need to pay the lowest hydro rates in this country. That's what we do.

How about cuts to safety? You know what the Leader of the Opposition and their party stand for? They stand for self-policing of companies. You know what we did? We increased inspections. We've increased safety officers and we've increased safety in all the companies across Manitoba. They think companies should self-police. That's what they think. And last year they had the audacity to march in the walk, and they did it again this year on—and yet they voted against and held up a bill that was designed to protect workers on the road, and they think that they're the champions of the people? They would cut funding so deeply that we'd all have to drive in horse and buggy because there would be no roads to drive on. That's their past record. That's their past performance. We've refused to cut health care like that. Everybody should have dignity.

Now we see the CFIB saying that, oh, it's a little more—it's more expensive here. But they don't take in everything into account. They don't take in the basket. I was talking to the MLA from Flin Flon this morning, and he said I was free to use his example. He lives very close to the border of Saskatchewan, and the people come to him and they say, well, I don't get paid mileage to go get treatment; I don't get paid for my cancer-care drugs, how come you do? Because when he had to undergo treatment, it didn't cost him a thing. He got help from our government to undergo treatment and he beat cancer, and you know what? They have to take that into account when you live in Saskatchewan because people do get sick. People need help, and that's why our government is governing the way we do. It's not about cuts. It's not about the bottom line. It's about helping people and ensuring that they have the things they need in life to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle and to have the health care that they need.

I refuse to believe that my kids and your children and all the future generations of children can't go to university because it's too expensive. That's why we fund universities and have a 60 per cent tuition rebate. We've refused to sell Hydro and we refuse to have it at market rates. The Conservatives cry about the rates when they go up, but we're still the lowest in Canada and they still go—and they go up by less than the rate of inflation if you look at it. Has anything else remained less than the rate of inflation in Canada? Cars, houses? I think not. They're just—they like to cry about it, but we know what they would do when they get their hands on it because the Leader of the Opposition has said it: past performance dictates his future, and he would sell off Manitoba Hydro and our rates would go from the lowest to among the highest in Canada.

In closing, it seems that I have to agree with the Leader of the Opposition on something. He says that his past performance would dictate his future actions, and if he had a chance he would sell off Hydro, slash and cut recklessly for health care and education, hurting families, children and workers across this province. Manitobans have put their trust in us because we have a decent minimum wage, great child care, affordable education, free cancer-care drugs, low unemployment and a strong economy, all this while looking after front-line services. Our path is about services that Manitobans need and want. We look after the people of Manitoba, not just the bottom line.

Thank you very much.

\* (15:20)

### House Business

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** Madam Acting Speaker, on House business.

**The Acting Speaker (Jennifer Howard):** On House business.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I'm reasonably optimistic that Estimates will start fairly soon, and in accordance with recent tradition, I'm asking for leave of the House that when the Estimates do begin that those Estimates that are held in the Chamber, that we allow for a table and for the staff of the opposition to join those critics who are doing their Estimates in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Jennifer Howard):** Does the honourable member have leave that when Estimates begins in the Chamber they can have staff join the opposition critic for Estimates? *[Agreed]*

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**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** I'm pleased to rise to put a few remarks on the record on the budget and the amendment to the budget.

First, I would like to welcome everybody back that keeps this Chamber running. It's certainly a necessary chore; we need these people that work in here every day. It's what keeps this place working.

I want to welcome the new member from The Pas. I hope she enjoys her—I hope probably a lengthy stay in here, but we'll see how things go. I know she's just came through one election and has to go back into another one next spring, so she's going to be election tested very quickly. But I do welcome you here.

There's a number—and I won't go through the list, but there are a number, including myself, that have decided not to run in the next election and—*[interjection]* In my case, it's too late—and decided not to run in the next election and I wish them well. There is, I'm sure—I'm convinced myself that there's life beyond politics and I'm quite sure there will be and I look forward to actually getting to spend a little bit more time at home, and so I wish all the ones that are leaving this place well.

I'll say right off the bat that I will not be voting in favour of this budget. I can't, in all fairness, vote on a budget that is raising taxes once again. We're seeing \$121 million, I think was the figure I saw, on

user fees and licence fees and things like that, that are—have gone up. You know, that just added another \$100 per capita to every man, woman and child in this province, on top of the last two budgets which actually added probably \$400 or more to every man, woman and child in this province.

We see these taxes continue to escalate. We hear the NDP pick out a small little basket and say, oh, here's our competitive advantage. Well, just this morning, I was looking at some figures from Canadian Federation of Independent Business and they talked about the advantages of tax systems in various provinces and a family of five making \$75,000 in Saskatchewan would have \$3,285 more in their pockets after taxes and utilities alone. And, in 2006, just nine years ago, we were ahead of them. We had more in our pockets after those taxes than they did. Now we're over \$3,000 behind them.

The lowest tax bracket in Saskatchewan goes up to just over \$40,000. In Manitoba, it goes to \$31,000, which means at \$31,000 here we start to pay higher taxes and so we're paying a lot more a lot earlier, and then, to top it all off, the basic personal exemption here is just over \$9,000. In Saskatchewan, it's well over \$15,000 before you have—pay your first tax dollars on income tax. The—and besides that, we've got 5 per cent sales tax—or 8 per cent sales tax. Pardon me. Lord knows a 5 per cent sales tax has been a long way away here. And they have 5 per cent; that's about a 40 per cent higher amount on sales tax that we pay on all those items that sales tax relates to.

You know, occasionally we read little sayings and I think they're somewhat interesting. One I read a while back was, you know, when you raise the tax too much, you possibly can defeat the tax, and I think that's exactly what's happened in Manitoba with the sales tax increase to 8 per cent. You now have cross-border shopping going to the south, going to the west, and you've actually raised the tax to the point where you're getting less revenue because it's impacting the economy.

You know, you can fail many times in governance—and I just heard a very arrogant speech from the member from St. Norbert—but you can fail many times, but you're not a failure until you blame someone else, and did you notice all through that speech he was blaming someone else? It was the Tories in the '90s. It was the federal government. It's always, always somebody else's fault.

It brings to mind another old saying that I heard at one time: It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you place the blame. And this is definitely a case of—with this NDP government trying to place the blame somewhere—anywhere else, desperately trying to place it anywhere else except looking in a mirror and placing it on themselves.

Taxes are high, debt is high and the results are low. We're seeing longer wait times at our hospitals, debt servicing costs increasing, CFS over 10,000 children in care. Obviously, it's a broken system. Education: reading, writing and math skills were at the bottom, and it just goes on and on and on.

You know, when you're blaming everyone else—we've seen, as I mentioned, blaming Filmon, blaming the feds. Even with the flood, the 2011 flood, the NDP government went so far as to blame the victims.

You know, one of the other things that was in this budget that—is a tax on the banks, and I heard the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) comment that, well, the banks could afford it. Well, the banks don't afford it. What the banks do is pass it on to the customers. It's you and me and everyone else that uses banks that pick up whatever extra tax you're putting on the banks. The taxes always, always end up back at the—at our level.

You know, I'm going to move on a couple other things, but I heard the Minister of Agriculture the other day, the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn), put on a fairly long rant about the Canadian Wheat Board, and it was interesting to hear. You know, the Wheat Board is done; it's gone. There's a new company out there that's Canadian Wheat Board. It's out in a competitive market. I grew wheat for 40 years. I marketed my wheat to the Wheat Board. I don't have a deep feeling for the Wheat Board or not the Wheat Board. I did what I—the only option I had was to market my wheat to the Wheat Board for all those years.

But the bottom line with the Wheat Board is they were an export agency. They were a marketing agency. They weren't interested in value added on that product, and that product was wheat, and barley to a degree. So they're not interested in value added. So you're—you've got an export agency; their job is to export. I heard them talk about paying demurrage on ships. We paid demurrage on ships. We paid it in many, many years, probably almost every year and some years at really high levels. I remember four-bushel quotas. If you had 500 acres, you get a

four-bushel quota; that's 2,000 bushels, and that's what we sat at. That was under the Wheat Board. That was our marketing system at the time.

\* (15:30)

So, when I talk to a farmer—I talked to a farmer not long ago who had marketed—and he's in the MacGregor area. He marketed 35 loads of wheat into the US. You know, I heard him talk about prices and stuff. He's conveniently leaving out some of the costs over there under the Wheat Board.

But, you know, in the years that I farmed, there were years that we took less than \$3 for wheat. There were years we took up to \$7 for wheat. Pick your year. Pick last year, and the wheat was selling for \$9. You picked this year, so it's selling for \$5—big deal. You know, like, it varies. I'm sure the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn) marketed—he probably grew canola, probably grew oats, may have grown a couple of other crops, and, certainly, beans, corn, rye, almost every other crop was sold on the open market. I don't hear anybody complaining about selling those other crops on the open market.

We saw the point coming with wheat that it became a filler crop. You only sold wheat to fill in between so that you weren't cropping every year with the same crop on the same land. In fact, the Red River Valley literally quit growing wheat. They got into growing beans and corn and all those other commodities, so they really—they quit growing wheat.

We've got two—two—Wheat Board elevators going up. That's new competition; that's great. There's reasons why we have one small—one very small flour mill in the province. There's reasons why we don't have flour mills. They were an export agency. There's reasons why we don't have pasta mills. But then there's other reasons why we don't have some of these mills, too, although canola—we do have some crushing plants, but the two closest new plants that went up were in Yorkton; because of our tax structure and because of government policy in this province they won't come here, and now I read the other day that there's another new one going up, I think, at Alberta, isn't it, a new canola crushing plant.

Why aren't we attracting these? Take a look in a mirror; you can find out why we're not attracting them. There's lots of times that we got \$4 a bushel for wheat. There's times that—there were times that

we got—I remember times I got six, seven dollars for wheat. I even got a dollar and a quarter for wheat.

You know, some of the things that are going on with the Manitoba Hydro are a little alarming, to say the least, and the most alarming thing, I think, right now, in my view, is the expropriation of the land from farmers for the Bipole III line. This isn't a common practice. I was told it was done once, I think, in the history of Manitoba Hydro prior to this.

A hundred and forty landowners had 3,500 acres expropriated. Now, that might not sound like a lot, but it's, like, these farmers own that property; somebody comes in, goes to the Land Titles Office, registers new titles on it, and decides the price they're paying. Now, that's the same if your house, your home or your car—if I came along and I said your house was worth such and such; now I'm going to go change the title—the same philosophy. Like, how would you feel? How do you think these farmers feel? Just walk in, walk over them—I wonder where the Department of Agriculture was in this, because when I was involved with planning district, if we tried to take land out of agricultural production—you know, for a subdivision, whatever you might decide to have—we tried to take it out, Agriculture was the first one there screaming, saying—opposed to it—saying that you can't remove land from agricultural production; that's a no-no. To which I somewhat agree, but that's—they were the first one opposed to every subdivision, and now we have—the Minister of Agriculture is signing off on expropriation on land that's being taken out of agriculture. It's hard to believe. It's—it seems to be pretty well self-defeating to me.

You know, over the years—[interjection] Got it. Over the years I've—that I've been in here, I've been quite frustrated with the—when I first—when I was involved with the Manitoba municipalities. And when the NDP government first came in, on almost everything that was going on there was a fair bit of consultation, a fair bit of discussion. I've seen that erode. I've seen it erode badly now, and it's getting less and less consultation on almost everything. And, if I had any advice, it would be to go out there and talk to the people.

I live beside the Whitemud River. My father lived beside the Whitemud River. I've lived there 70 years or 69 years. My father lived there for close to 90 years, and if you wanted to know the habits of that river, what went on there, where water went when things changed, wouldn't it make sense to talk

to the people there instead of an engineer sitting in an office somewhere—[interjection] Yes, my dad only had a grade 8 education, but he darn well knew what happened on the land and he darn well knew what happened on that part of the river. It—the consultation—talk to the people out there that are on the ground out on the country and get your information from them.

You know, there's been a—several things that have—just in the last couple of years that have—it really, truly affected me in lesser or greater ways. I—because of legislation of the province I was forced to put a septic field in at my house where I had a waste water ejector before. New laws and it changed. But, in my case, my house there's two of us. My wife and I live on a half section of land, 320 acres, and for some reason we're not allowed to have an ejector anymore. So it cost me \$9,000. That's what the guy that put it in said. It cost me an extra \$9,000 by a little—because of a little stroke of a pen, a little change in the regulation. And I don't think legislators think often enough about the impacts of that little stroke of the pen. It has a dramatic impact. It was \$9,000 out of my pocket on that.

One of the things I noticed just because I'm doing it—I'm just doing a subdivision on my house, and last year the subdivision fees—that's one of these fees that's in here. Last year they went up 18 per cent on the provincial fee on a subdivision. This year it's a lot better; it only went up 15 per cent. But that's a total of 33 per cent in two years—33 per cent. Like, you know, how do people keep up to that? Yes, it's a small fee, but it went up 33 per cent. A whole bunch of small fees going up 33 per cent, it's going to be pretty darn hard to keep up to.

\* (15:40)

You know, I've often—one of the things that also in my time here that's really impacted me was the 2011 flood. A good part of my constituency is along Lake Manitoba, and, you know, that was a terrible thing. It set that area back. They haven't recovered yet, and they're probably not going to recover for quite some time yet. And, when I saw some of the things that this government did to those people during that flood, they went out and they made promises, and I've often read part of the statement that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) made in Langruth, but I should read the whole statement into the record.

The member for Dauphin in Langruth that day said: We are working on a multi-year compensation

package. If it is two years down the road and nothing is happening, I want to know about that. I do want to underscore this is a compensation package that we have said very clearly is ready to come out very quickly. We are going to get cheques flowing as fast as we can, and it's going to be comprehensive.

You know, that was before an election. After the election, that was forgotten. I couldn't help but notice in the media somewhere this—just in the last couple of days, there's a Peace River that had the major fire, burned quite a chunk of the town four years ago which is about the same length of time since the Lake Manitoba flood. They had 374—[interjection] Oh, Slave Lake, pardon me, not—[interjection] Yes, it's Slave Lake, not Peace River.

They had 374 houses destroyed, a number of businesses, some of the town properties were destroyed. The mayor was in the media saying they're over 90 per cent recovered. The buildings are built, the businesses are back, things are up and running, and it made me to think here—by the way, they called it a billion-dollar disaster, and I do argue the figures that the Province uses, but they do say—they try to use the figure \$1 billion on the Lake Manitoba flood. Well, here's Slave Lake with pretty well total recovery four years later; here's Manitoba still dealing with the issues, still some 1,500 people out of their homes. The people of Slave Lake are all back in their homes. Like, what's wrong with this? What's wrong with this picture? Like, it's all talk, nothing ever gets done.

The same thing with the new outlet for Lake Manitoba—probably never going to happen under this government—under this NDP government. They'll have to have another couple of consultations and then a few coffee parties and a few signs up on a wall, but there's no intent to build it. It's just talk; it's just empty rhetoric. It's reannouncements, and we hear those reannouncements over and over and over again.

You know, Will Rogers said one time, never pass up a good time to—a good chance to shut up. So I think—I know there's a number of people here that want to speak to this, so I think I will take Will Rogers seriously; I'm not going to pass a good time to shut up.

So thank you very much.

**Hon. Mohinder Saran (Minister of Housing and Community Development):** Madam Acting Speaker, I am honoured to rise on behalf of my

constituents in The Maples to support our government's budget. I would like to start by thanking all the people of The Maples for their continued support. I want to say I owe a great debt of gratitude to you all for volunteering your time. Thank you for your dedication. I would not be here without your efforts.

I would also like to thank my wife and children who inspire me every day. Without them I would not be where I am today. They remind me of how important it is to keep Manitoba moving forward and make our province strong for our children.

I would like to take a moment to recognize my colleagues, member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) and the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), who are retiring. They both worked hard to represent the people in their communities. Their presence will be missed in the Chamber.

I will like to welcome our new member from The Pas to the Legislature.

Now, I would like to share a bit of my story when I came to Canada. I was born in a small village in India, and as a young man I moved to Canada to be part of one of the best countries in the world. At first I lived in Vancouver working on the farms. My friends eventually travelled east looking for more opportunities in this great country. While travelling out east, they stopped in Winnipeg and wrote back telling me of all the great opportunities. I got on a train and made my way out to Winnipeg in order to take advantage of economic opportunities offered here. I have settled in and made Manitoba my home.

Over the years I have spent most of my time as a community activist, giving back in any way I could. When I first arrived here, there were not many East Indian people in Winnipeg. I am proud to have helped build our community by establishing the first gurdwara in the province while I was president of the Sikh Society of Manitoba.

Today I still remain deeply committed to issues concerned with immigration. Over the years my office has helped hundreds of families fill out their forms and advise to help their relatives to move to Canada.

It is a great honour not only to live in the greatest country in the world, but to also be an elected representative in this country's greatest province. I remain committed to moving Manitoba forward and making our home stronger. We are making record investments in core infrastructure that

are driving growth in our economy and providing good-paying jobs in many communities. This plan is working, as we have seen from positive economy forecasts from the Conference Board of Canada and others.

As this budget demonstrates, our government has a plan in place to deliver on the priorities of Manitoba families. It meets the needs of people across the province and my constituency: supporting families by protecting front-line services; investing in education; and supporting our seniors. Our government continues to ensure that a good life is possible for all.

One of my top priorities is to support families in The Maples by keeping the—by keeping life affordable and protecting front-line services. While the economy continues to move forward, it's important that we do not introduce cuts which would ultimately hurt our economy.

Budget 2015 is helping keep Manitoba affordable for low-income families by increasing Rent Assist to 75 per cent of the median market rent. This will help ensure all families can afford better housing.

Our government is also going to increase minimum wage to \$11 per hour in October, moving us closer to providing a living wage for all Manitobans.

\* (15:50)

We are supporting families in Manitoba by investing in health care. Some governments across Canada have chosen to make cuts to valuable services. We have chosen to grow the economy and protect front-line services like health care.

Our Budget 2015—our 2015 budget supports new investments in health care that put patients and families first. As part of this plan, we are adding more doctors, nurses and health-care professionals, which mean faster screening, diagnosis and treatment for our patients. We have also announced that there will be two more QuickCare clinics scheduled to open this year, in Seven Oaks and Southdale, bringing the total to seven across the province.

We are also creating a new child and youth mental-health strategy to promote mental health, prevent mental-health illnesses and strengthen available resources. We will invest \$2 million in the first year of this comprehensive multi-year strategy to support child and youth mental health.

But protecting front-line services is far from the only thing that we are doing for the people of this province.

Budget 2015 continues to emphasize our commitment to moving education into the 21st century. We want to help meet the needs of young Manitobans by investing in education and training. This will allow them to take advantage of the opportunities offered by our growing economy for years to come. As part of our government's commitment to our children's futures we have a comprehensive plan that has investments in all levels of education.

As other provinces are cutting education funding, we are increasing funding in K-to-12 schools at the rate of economic growth again this year. This will be the 16th consecutive year we have increased the funding to ensure that our kids have the supports they need to succeed. We have rebuilt the educational system of the 1990s, when teachers were laid off and classrooms were overcrowded. Since forming government in 1999, we have built or replaced 35 schools. We are continuing education funding for public schools to hire more teachers and build new schools.

In Manitoba, some of the most in-demand and well-paying jobs are in the trades. Our government has recognized this and we are working to create more opportunities for young people to gain training and work experience in the trades.

Budget 2015 is creating a new youth job strategy that includes new funding to support more paid work and on-the-job training. We are doubling the Career Development Initiative to give more students an opportunity to explore different careers. We have also announced co-op education and apprenticeship tax credits and created 200 more apprenticeship seats.

We are also continuing our support of post-secondary education in the province. While most other provinces have been cutting funding for colleges and universities, we are increasing operating grants by 2.5 per cent for universities and by 2 per cent for colleges.

Moving forward, we are releasing our new post-secondary strategy, which builds on the major expansion of advanced education skills training our government initiated 15 years ago. We are continuing our commitment to post-secondary students by making Manitoba student loans interest-free for the

first time. This will allow more people to access post-secondary education than ever before.

Another one of my top priorities is taking care of our seniors. I worked with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and our government a few years ago to change rules to allow granny suites, secondary suites that allow seniors to live with their families and help care for their grandchildren while keeping their independence.

I am pleased Budget 2015 is supporting our seniors and is working to keep life affordable for Manitobans by increasing the caregiver tax credit and expanding seniors' school tax breaks.

We are increasing the caregiver tax credit by 10 per cent so people who care for friends or family members can receive benefits of up to \$4,200 each. This will help many new Manitobans, especially in the sandwich generation, who find themselves caring for aging parents and school-aged children at the same time.

This budget also doubles the Seniors' School Tax Rebate to \$470, meaning seniors will now be able to save up to \$1,570 on their property taxes this year, and is part of our commitment to eliminate school tax for seniors by 2016. About 17,000 senior homeowners already have their school taxes fully covered by the Manitoba government's Education Property Tax Credit and the Seniors' School Tax Rebate. This year an additional 6,700 senior households will no longer pay school taxes with the new Seniors' School Tax Rebate.

Madam Acting Speaker, our NDP government has a strong plan moving forward. Budget 2015 is a plan to deliver on the priorities of Manitobans: putting families first by protecting front-line services; supporting young Manitobans by investing in education; and making life more affordable for all Manitobans.

The Leader of the Opposition and the PCs also have a plan. Their plan involves making deep and reckless cuts to the front-line services and programs families count on.

It's clear this government is working for Manitoba families. We are committed to working for you and your family. Through our investments in front-line services, investment into education and supporting our seniors, we are supporting all Manitobans and building a better future for our province.

I also would like to mention about the new department I am responsible for. We completed 1,500 affordable housing units and 1,500 social housing units, and also we are committed to build 500 and 500 each in the future. This is making life safe, stable and affordable, a necessity prerequisite for individuals and families to escape poverty. Without such a foundation, individuals are unlikely to succeed in training and employment, to be able to have a healthy lifestyle or address other challenges they may face.

We also have program called other major—ALL Aboard initiative in the Budget 2015. The Manitoba government has taken additional action to better support EIA participants to transition into sustainable employment. These include extending the Rewarding Work health plan which provides drug, dental and optical coverage for up to two years to all EIA participants who leave EIA for employment and training.

I'd also would like to point out about our Early Learning and Child Care. Budget 2015 continues to build on Manitoba's five-year child-care plan by committing to 900 newly funded child-care spaces and to support higher wages for the child-care workforce. Budget 2015 also supports the Early Learning and Child-Care Commission which will investigate system redesign, including looking at ways to make the early learning and child-care system more universally accessible.

\*(16:00)

Budget 2015 continues to support the Winnipeg Boldness Project with their new investment of \$500,000 in support of the innovative Early Childhood Development Initiative for children and families in the Point Douglas community. With matching funding from the McConnell foundation, Budget 2015 also supports the development of new early childhood development hubs and the Lord Selkirk Park community and adds the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba as committed in the Province's early childhood development plan.

I can keep continue—we have so many commitments and we are succeeding, but I think I used my time that I'm supposed to use.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** I thank you for the opportunity to put some comments in relation of—

*[interjection]* There you go. I have more in reference to Budget 2015.

First of all, I obviously—I want to thank the people from Morris for putting me in this position to represent them in the Legislature. It is a honour I appreciate and undertake to the very best of my abilities. And it's those people that, obviously, we go—each of us and all of us in this House go to work every day to represent. I'd like to highlight a few of those individuals within my own community that I've interacted with of late that I think deserve value and deserve, actually, the public recognition.

Recently, I've had, actually, the—it was a—it was an unfortunate situation being in Rosenort, Manitoba, for the unveiling of the Cal's Cage. Earlier—or late last year, Cal Dueck, a 19-year-old constituent, drowned in St. Malo as a result of become entangled in seaweed. His family took that tragedy and decided that we needed to not—obviously, we didn't want to mourn Cal's legacy, but we wanted to celebrate his life.

Cal was a very active young baseball player, played in some premier leagues and took home a few championships, and it was always his desire that Rosenort—and he'd always said to his coach and coaches and dad over the years that if only had Rosenort had a batting cage that it would be that much easier for all of us to practice. Unfortunately, Cal didn't—as a result of his drowning, Cal wasn't there, except for in spirit, to the opening of Cal's Cage in Rosenort recently. But a great member—a great number of members of not only the community, but individuals that he played with over the years, coaches that had coached him since he was almost 10 years old, came as part of the 'unofficial' 'oveiling' of Cal's Cage. And what a phenomenal legacy for that young man and his family to leave to the community; a legacy that was donated through hard sweat and equity by individuals and by concerned and very community-minded companies.

Just last week I was able to attend the YM-YWCA Women of Distinction awards. Lauren Wiebe, a young woman from my constituency in Niverville, the—she attends and will be graduating from the Niverville Collegiate—was nominated in one, the prairie promise award, for her work that she does in her community, and part of it is mentoring colleagues to—within her class, peers, to attend the local seniors home and make those interactions and make those lifelong interactions to gain the wisdom of the seniors in her community.

She was—to say that her speech was authentic would be an understatement. She was clearly quite visibly caught off guard by the victory. In fact, she was saying to me afterward that she attended just with her mother because she thought it would be an interesting evening and she never anticipated to win, and I commented to her then that it's probably the reason why you won; it's because that you did it because you saw this as a genuine need in your community and that you saw it to fruition. And we wish her, obviously, nothing in the best. Unfortunately, like too many Manitobans, she's decided to go elsewhere after she graduates from Niverville Collegiate and she'll be off to UBC to continue her education.

Lorne Hamblin was recently—who is from the Morris—the community of Morris, was recently inducted in the Manitoba Curling Hall of Fame in the builder category for the work that he has done not only as a curler, but, more importantly, on the DEKALB curling series which has gone on for a great number of years in Morris and now entering—or taking in the town of—the community of Rosenort as well. This series has seen its pot grow in terms of the prize pot. It has seen the number of teams grow phenomenally. It has seen the number of teams grow phenomenally. It has been nothing but a success. So Lorne Hamblin and his wife, Chris, who was there by his side, and were really, truly recognized for their efforts by the Manitoba Curling Hall of Fame. And, of course—and I've mentioned Mr. Thiessen on a number of occasions, and he keeps doing things to be recognized for, but Dennis Thiessen, a Canadian Paralympic gold medal curler who represented Canada with honour at the Sochi Olympics and most recently in Quebec City at the Canadian national games bringing home gold, was recognized and inducted into the Manitoba Curling Hall of Fame as a curler.

As well in the community of La Salle, which is where I happen to reside, Tom Bell, just—who is an entrepreneur and a small-business owner, recently celebrated 15 years of having a—of the opening of Jeni's food fare in that community which is only—not only has the community grown, but his business has grown beyond his ever—his original expectations. And he is becoming a valued member of the community, supporting many, many causes, all without fail.

And last but not least—and, of course, this is only a sampling of some of the quality individuals that are within the Morris constituency—Avery Skog, a young

man about 10 years old from the community of Morris who initiated a Brick by Brick campaign in which he raised money, and raised, actually, over \$12,000 dollars to help build a school in Kenya, and he started it all by selling paper bricks that he would put on the wall and he would sell them for \$10 apiece. He sold—he had a garage sale where, actually, he sold his own bicycle at a garage sale in order to raise money. And as I had said, he had raised over \$12,000 to help build a school in Kenya, and his efforts have not stopped with that.

Before I get into my comments on the budget, I think it's worth making reference to comments made by members opposite who, during their coup d'état or attempted coup of the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province, made reference to a potential democratic change in the province of Manitoba as a quote, unquote, reign of terror. I found these comments actually quite ignorant and quite unfortunate that you would reference a democratic change—that you would reference the potential change in the province of Manitoba, a change initiated by the voters of Manitoba as a reign of terror.

Now, of course, the MLA and leadership candidate who made this comment didn't say anything within—I think it was within 72 hours we really saw and we continue to see true reigns of terror around the world. I think within 72 hours of the reference that a change of government was a reign of terror, would initiate a reign of terror. We saw a Jordanian pilot captured by ISIS, caged and literally set on fire, burned alive. I would suggest that would qualify as a reign of terror. There was no reference by this individual of al Qaeda's terrorist attack on the—Charlie Hebdo, resulting in 11 people murdered, 11 people injured. And who could forget that horrifying video on the news of the young police officer lying on the ground, begging, and to see the—one of the terrorists go up and literally shoot them in the head. That, I would suggest, is a reign of terror.

Who can talk about the video of ISIS throwing homosexuals off towers 30 feet in the air, and as their broken bodies lay on the ground, supporters of what is truly a reign of terror would throw stones at the broken bodies? Again, this, in my books, and I believe probably in most Manitobans' books, would qualify as a reign of terror. There was no reference in terms of quantifying, again, a democratic change here in Manitoba as a reign of terror in the beheading of British aid worker David Haines by ISIS, beheaded on video and that video sent out so that the world and his parents could see. That is a reign of

terror. No reference of Boko Haram's use of two 10-year-old girls as suicide bombers in a busy marketplace in Nigeria resulting not only in the deaths of the two young girls who had explosives strapped to their bodies, but of 300–three other individuals.

\*(16:10)

Again, my point is just to reference and to point out the absurdity and the obscenity of the comments by NDP members who reference, again, a potential change in the democratic province, in the democratic country—the province of Manitoba, the country of Canada—which has a nothing but a history of democracy. And, though we may not always accept the results, and I'm sure there's many Tories in Alberta that are still waking up with their own shock as the results there, but we do accept those results because those are the results of democratic change as suggested by the voters of a particular jurisdiction. So to suggest that in Manitoba that any kind of a democratic change in Manitoba is akin to a vote or is akin to a reign of terror is absurd, it's embarrassing and should be apologized for on behalf of Manitobans and the real victims of terror around this world.

I remember listening intently to a lot of the speeches by the NDP members across the way. I remember one, in particular, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell), would talk about how a vote against this budget is a vote against, you know, this, that and the other thing. And that's all fine, fine and well, and I accept that member's right to make those kind of comparisons. And I have my own comparisons.

And I would suggest, I mean, the reason why this side of the House will be voting against the budget, and again, this is only a sampling of that list, but by—for those individuals voting against this budget, a vote against this budget is a vote against a government that accepts 61,000 Manitobans attending and utilizing a food bank on monthly basis in order to provide that sustenance in their lives, a number that has simply exploded under the NDP's 16-year rule.

A vote against this budget is a vote against a government that accepts and endorses a 29 per cent child poverty rate, the highest child poverty rate in this country.

A vote against this budget is a vote against a government that has 11,000 children in care and

continues to warehouse them in hotels despite past promises by ministers of this government who set specific dates and specific times as to when that practice would end. And now we have, after a very tragic incident involving two wards of CFS and one whose life support has been terminated here in the city of Winnipeg and the other one facing horrendous criminal charges, we continue to listen to a government that sets a new date. Well, if they maybe listened, or if they maybe had followed through on their previous promises, well, we definitely would not have had that situation a few weeks ago.

A vote against this budget is a vote against a government that lies to get elected, that will say anything to get elected, that will do anything to stay elected.

A vote against this budget is a vote against a government that drives 65,000 Manitobans from Manitoba. That is Manitoba's interprovincial net loss since the NDP have taken office—have taken office, 65,000. And now, as my colleague, the MLA for Morden-Winkler, notes, with the increased speed limit of 110, those Manitobans will head to Saskatchewan all that faster.

A vote against this budget is a vote against a government that has reduced flood protection by 38 per cent over the last two years, despite their sound bites and despite their commitments to flood protection, a 38 per cent reduction in flood protection funding in the last two years, again, as witnessed in the NDP's own budget documents.

A vote against this budget is a vote against charging cottage owners for services they do not use, they do not utilize and using those cottage owners as a cash cow to fund their own insatiable appetite. A vote—an appetite that, again, the government's own budgetary documents show a significant—a 35 per cent decrease in the amount of the capital budget spent in our provincial parks since the NDP began increasing lease fees and service fees to cottage owners. And, despite the claims that cottage owners were not paying their fair share and that they needed this money to pay for park improvements, we see the capital improvements only drop.

A vote against this budget, a vote against a government that closes the OR in Altona, and when asked about it, simply dances and then ignores a real issue facing citizens in rural Manitoba on a day-by-day basis. And Altona is but a small microcosm sample—or a small sample of the rural

communities, and not only rural communities but many of the urban communities that simply—whose health-care needs are not being met by this NDP government.

A vote against this budget is a vote against \$840 million being allocated to debt servicing costs as opposed to going to the priorities of Manitobans of health care, of education, of infrastructure renewal—\$840 million. A single interest—a single point in interest change will add approximately \$25 million to the cost of servicing the debt on an annualized basis according to the Department of Finance.

And while we all as, actually, homeowners, having mortgages—and perhaps your mortgage has been recently up for renewal—have taken advantage of those low interest rates, I think everyone is aware that interest rates will eventually rise. In those—in that interest-debt cost, chickens will come home to roost and, in all likelihood, the NDP will be long gone by the time that arrives. It'll be Manitobans who will actually have to pay those costs.

So, as you can imagine, I mean, interest costs, I mean, would go up, you know, 4 per cent, 5 per cent, which is well within the—you know, the average over the 20 years. You're talking about in excess of another \$125 million that are going out to be diverted from the priorities of Manitobans to simply pay the carrying costs—not any kind of principal payment but the carrying costs of the debt incurred by the NDP in their inability to live within their means despite promise after promise after promise, date after date after date being set.

This is—a vote against this budget is a vote against an NDP government that has—because of its ineptitude when it comes to our education system, allows—has resulted in the lowest science, reading and math scores in Canada.

A vote against this budget is a vote against the raising of the PST under some—and I always enjoy the MLA for Seine River's colourful language. I think the word she uses is poppycock—excuse about roads and then diverting 40 per cent of that increase to general revenues.

A vote against this budget, is a vote against a \$105-million education cut budget to budget. And, again, these numbers are not my numbers. These are the NDP government numbers as presented in their budgetary documents.

If the budget that was presented the other day last week—and I use that word loosely because while I've only been elected for the last several—or last 14 months in which—by the way, you may not be aware, but the Morris by-election was the longest delay in Manitoba history. I think the Winnipeg Free Press referred to it as passive-aggressive, the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) refusal to call that by-election, but I believe Madam Deputy Speaker and her colleagues are familiar with the Premier's passive-aggressive nature which may have resulted or led in part to their rebellion.

But this eight-page document that passes as a budget, if the only commitment in it had been the increase—the immediate increase to the 75 per cent through RentAid of median market rates, I would have no problem endorsing and supporting this budget. But it does not, and I feel bad. I know a lot of Manitobans fought for this increase. I know our party's position over the last number of years has been for the immediate allocation or immediate goal or target of 75 per cent.

The original plan was a four-year process, and I know even members on the other side of the House, you know, eternally advocated for the immediacy of that policy—that 75 per cent policy. The member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), in fact, is on the public record talking about how he—behind the scenes, how he begged the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) to take action on that file, and that, unfortunately, when they were in a position—when she was in a position to actually take action as a minister of the Crown, that she ignored that position. And then, of course, again, in her own budgetary address she takes, obviously, offence that the minister or the MLA for St. Norbert's efforts, as she puts it, to, quote unquote, take credit, and she references his position as poppycock. But again, I will let the NDP members deal with their own internal dynamics, and I use the word dynamics when it comes to the NDP very loosely.

\*(16:20)

The newest member or the newest Minister of Conservation, I listened to his speech obviously with great intent as the new minister. I was looking for comments about new directions that the ministry may have under his leadership, obviously, which has been a—the department has been ravaged by an overall—just since the last provincial election, a 10 per cent overall funding reduction which has led to serious front-line service cuts, the front-line

service cuts that I brought to the attention of the House and the minister yesterday, which an individual in Brandon attended the Conservation office midafternoon. I believe it was about 2:30 in the afternoon, only to find the doors closed, and then when he finally got the attention of a staff member, they advised, oh, they've been closed for quite some time; we simply don't have funding for a reception staff.

And that was that, and obviously it's that loss of those kinds of front-line services.

We know that—I was hoping to hear something within the new minister's speech about the NDP's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and I believe that original commitment was to reduce them by 6 per cent less than 1990 emissions, and so confident and so were the NDP about that commitment they even enshrined it—enshrined it in legislation.

And the then-premier, Mr. Doer, had suggested that, you know, if we don't, when asked, well, by the media, well, if you don't issue a target what should the consequence be, and he said, we should be turfed. Well, it's one of the few times I'll agree with the former MLA for—from Concordia, that—yes—absolutely, the NDP should be turfed because not only have greenhouse emissions not gone down but they've gone up under the watch of the NDP government. And so, not surprisingly, like so many other pieces of legislation—legislation brought in by the NDP government—it looks like they're going to have to change that legislation as well and come up with a whole new strategy.

And, if you look at their old strategy, it's pretty clear why that strategy failed. That strategy was actually failed not again—again, if you look at the history of the NDP not surprising, but failed on them doing nothing and letting other people do the work. The two—two of the three cornerstones of the greenhouse gas reduction strategy, one was that they had counted on stringent new national and international guidelines when it comes to vehicular admissions—emissions, sorry, that never came to light or at least didn't meet the goal that they had internally set, and No. 2 is they'd hoped for some national cap-and-trade system. So again it's sad, sad that the whole strategy was essentially based on them doing nothing and it's no—not surprising then that a strategy which two thirds of it is based on you doing nothing that that strategy fails. But again that is a history of today's NDP.

We know that when it comes to today's NDP, we've seen obviously the raising and the lying to Manitobans about the raising of the PST and that any idea that we're raising the PST is ridiculous and, of course, after they do it there's some poppycock about this is all for front-line services and health and education, and then, of course, that went off the rails. Well, and then, as my colleague from Morden-Winkler knows, flood mitigation—*[interjection]*—he says yes—but that was version 2.0 was that no, no, it's all for infrastructure and flood mitigation.

And we looked in my own area, and I happen to have the Red and the Assiniboine dissecting my area so I'm getting coming or going it seems the floods are, and even right now which, you know, again, knock on wood, we've had overall a very good spring. I mean, in fact, we could probably use a little bit of moisture in some areas for our agricultural producers. And yet homes and farms along the Assiniboine in the constituency—in the RM of Cartier and St. François Xavier which are in the Morris constituency—are seeing seepage through their dikes because of high levels on the Assiniboine, high levels due in large part to, again, incompetence, or as the NDP like to say, miscalculation on their part in terms of the use of the Shellmouth Dam, an issue my colleague from Arthur-Virden brought to light the other day.

I think I made reference in the media that the NDP were virtually comatose on the file when it came to flood mitigation, and, as I referenced earlier, the fact that they're actually reducing the amount of funds spent on flood protection over the next couple years is testament to what miss—what a fallacy their PST hike was.

They talk about, and I listened again to the minister and thought, you know, surely there's going to be some reference to the construction of a permanent outlet at Lake St. Martin to start that process, a significant, significant project that again may not be the silver bullet but obviously is part of that larger flood mitigation plan that we have to have. A plan that I remember when the government—when the NDP said, you know, well, there's a reason why it's going to take us 30—what was it, 10 years, 30 years—I'm not sure, but whatever, you know, every dozen years it's going to take us to do, and they put out an itinerary of these—this is our checklist and this is what needs to be accomplished before we can finally complete the permanent outlet.

Well, step No. 1 was to issue a press release, and I always thought that was quite amusing that that is how difficult these efforts are for the NDP when it comes to constructing flood mitigation when they're more concerned about getting their message out than getting a project done.

I listened again to the minister, and I'm waiting for legislation about zebra mussels. His predecessor attempted a—to dump tons—hundreds of tons of potassium chloride in several harbours here in Manitoba, and then after sealing off those harbours with the silk curtains, got aboard his little—the S.S. Minnow, and with his George-Bush-type flag and mission accomplished.

But what he didn't note or what he didn't share with Manitobans would have been briefing notes that his own—that he would receive from his own department that mission hadn't been accomplished. And while—and if the mission had been to knock back zebra mussels, then that mission would have been accomplished. But, no, the mission—and he was very clear—was to eradicate, when it was very clear that eradication simply wasn't on the table. When zebra mussels begin to infest the waterway, then it really becomes an ongoing war, a war of mitigation and to hold them back.

So, while the former minister was on the S.S. Minnow with his mission accomplished banner, unfortunately the zebra mussels were repopulating, and we're still waiting. Again, the zebra mussels, their entry into our waterways is not new. It happened—they first entered Manitoba's waterways over seven years ago and we still have not received any legislation to deal with what is a very, very significant, significant threat.

So, you know—and we're often—you know, the members opposite love to hue and cry when it's—when we indicate that obviously we won't be supporting their Premier (Mr. Selinger) and, by extension, this budget. But in this case I don't have a problem of saying I agree with the members of Seine River and St. Vital, Thompson, St. Norbert, Fort Rouge, Interlake, Flin Flon, Southdale, Dauphin, Minto, Dawson Trail, Assiniboia, St. Vital and Elmwood that this Premier needs to go and, by extension, his entire government needs to go.

Now, I know we—many of us within these chambers have children, both young and old, and I'm very fortunate, I have three young children. My youngest is only five years old and she had recently

said to me on a Friday during her off-day in kindergarten, she had said, actually, the day after the budget, you know, can I come and attend—can I come to work with you tomorrow, Daddy? And I said, well, what would you do all day? She said, well, I would go and I would knock on all the government offices in—at their doors. And I said, well, but what would you say when they answer the door? Well, with a straight face she would say, I would ask them why they're stealing my money, Daddy. And I said, well, good for you, Tess, and I'm not sure what kind of answer you'll get from them, but good for you.

I thought—and you, as a young mother and soon to be with a second child on the way, I thought it was with interest that one of the—on the front cover of the budget speech was a young family, a father and son reading a book that I'm sure many of us have read to our own children, the—by Bill Martin Jr., Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do You See?

So, with apologies to Bill Martin Jr., I'll conclude with an ode to panda bear.

So, panda bear, panda bear, what do you see? I see a \$422-million deficit staring at me. Deficit, deficit, what do you see? I see a palace coup charging by me. Palace coup, palace coup, what do you see? I see a moose crisis swinging by me. Moose crisis, moose crisis, what do you see? I see broken promises strutting by me. Broken promises, broken promises, what do you see? I see reduced flood protection splashing by me. Reduced flood protection, reduced flood protection, what do you see? I see Bipole III flying by me. Bipole III, Bipole III, what do you see? I see a 29 per cent child poverty rate watching over me. Child poverty rate, child poverty rate, what do you see? I see a deficit, a palace coup, a moose crisis, broken promises, reduced flood protection, Bipole III, all under the benevolent watch of today's NDP.

And with that, I am proud to stand in my place in this Chamber and say I most definitely will not be supporting the NDP's 2015-2016 provincial budget. Thank you.

\* (16:30)

**Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy):** I'm proud to be able to stand up, say a few words on the budget.

I'd like to start, of course, by recognizing a new colleague, the new MLA for—from The Pas riding. I know that she's made history as the first First Nations woman to be elected to the Chamber. I know that the

people of The Pas are going to be incredibly proud of the work she's done. But I also want to acknowledge the people up in The Pas riding. It's unprecedented, first time in history, and I want to thank and congratulate all the people up in The Pas region for making history. I know that she comes—and I think most members of the House know the legacy of her family and her dad. I was able to do some work with her father long before getting into politics and working with young people and families in some of our most isolated First Nation communities in Manitoba. And I certainly am looking forward to serving with her.

There's been lots that has been said about Manitoba's story, Manitoba budget as it relates to, of course, the economy. Independent private sector forecasters are predicting the Manitoba economy is one of the best and will continue to be one of the best in Canada. In fact, I was able to say on the record a number of times, a couple times already, BMO Capital Markets Senior Economist Robert Kavcic said, in a note to investors, this: First, we must praise the often overlooked but now rising star on the regional labour force map, Manitoba.

Now, I'm not sure who he was talking about when he said people were overlooking this economy, but it sounds like—it sure sounds like members opposite he was referring to. But he goes on to say: Employment growth now leads the country at 3.1 per cent year over year by a wide margin. He noted this about the labour market in Manitoba: Employment growth led the country in March at a very strong 3.1 per cent year-over-year clip, the best pace the province has seen in 13 years at 5.4 per cent in March. The jobless rate is now second lowest in the country.

Well, the big question is: How is this possible? How do we have such a strong economy that is being forecasted by private sector analysis?

Well, one, if you take the time and you go out and you talk to businesses, which I've been able to do, and many of us have been able to do on this side of the House, what they say is they're always looking for ways to give back to their hometowns, to give back to their home communities, to give back to their home province. And one of the messages they say is the best way to do that is by looking after employees. They know that when you look after your employees, your businesses do better. So then you get an opportunity to talk to some of the employers, some of the workers, some of the people that are on the

front lines doing the kinds of things that make our economy strong.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

And what do they say? Well, our government is working alongside of businesses to provide training, to making sure that people are being trained, that they're getting those additional opportunities to upgrade, and what those employers and those employees say is that they are deeply happy about those opportunities because they can make a good wage for themselves and their families and they can contribute back to their hometowns.

Mr. Speaker, that's how you build more advantages. That's how you participate in Canada's fastest growing economy. A great example of this is when we were able to go to Brandon last week to announce training alongside with the federal government to Zenith, a company that has been in business in Brandon for 54 years—54 years of providing and giving back to their hometown. I was joined by Mr. Cumming, Mr. Parsons [*phonetic*]; the members from Brandon West, and East, were there. And got to spend some time and hear first-hand from the good folks at Zenith and the contribution that they're making to their own town.

And I was talking to a friend of mine and he said that when he leaves Brandon, he goes back, he knows he's back home when he sees the Zenith logo, because they're doing so much work over the past 54 years giving back to their home town. And I was proud to be able to go there and stand with the business owner, stand with workers in Brandon.

Now part of the story around Manitoba's economy is also that of jobs. And what is the job story in Manitoba? Well, we lead in job growth over the last year, Mr. Speaker, 20,000 jobs, three out of four in the private sector, four out of five are full-time jobs. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country.

A few headlines that have just recently come out—and we can go back and look this whole year—but I just took some of the more recent ones: Manitoba in economic elite. That was done by nine key private sector forecasters. Strength in diversity: so it talks about the diversity of our economy, not just in terms of the diversity of the industry, but also our regional diversity and how we work with the North as well as the south, as well as Winnipeg and east and west. Construction, business is booming in

Manitoba: Manitoba manufacturers end on a high note.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I was able—proud to go down to Steinbach and participate and get to see—I'm participating in an announcement out in Valeant, who is actually closing down shop in one part of the country and expanding their operations here in Manitoba. And I got to do a tour and great to see the great things that are happening down in Steinbach and the surrounding area. And I've been able to say before that that's, of course, where we make COLD-FX. So, you know, if you're not feeling very well and you want to prevent some of those things, you should buy COLD-FX because you'll be supporting Manitoba's economy.

But as I was talking to management, as part of the tour, as part of the announcement, I just simply asked the question, why would you want to come to Manitoba? Why close shop in one part of the country and come to Manitoba? And there were three distinct things that they told me and consistently told me. One, it's an affordable place to do work; it's an affordable place to do business. And so it just made economic sense for them to expand here in Manitoba.

The other message was that we have one of the youngest and fastest growing demographics in the nation so that when you need workers, and you need employees, you have this young dynamic. And I want to say for the record, that the most talented young people in the nation live in Manitoba and it's a huge advantage, Mr. Speaker, that that's the fastest growing demographic in the country. And what they told me was, that they can work with the government to provide training and upgrading so that they can continue to give back by hiring more people, and those employees, because they continue to be able to get trained, they can give back because they can earn a good living for themselves and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I hear often members opposite talk about Saskatchewan; they seem to really like Saskatchewan. And I think their message has been clear to young people; that young people should give up and move to Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, when you actually take the time to talk to young people, their message is clear, that they want to give back. They're proud of where they live. They're proud of their hometowns. They're proud of their home communities. They're proud of their home province and they want to give back here.

What are our private sector allies saying about this? Rosemary Sparks, Executive Director of BuildForce Canada, she says there's never been a better time to get involved in trades in Manitoba. You know, Mr. Speaker, we have—and here's what she's talking about—here when you have great economic growth in a province, it creates demand for jobs. Here's some of the jobs that are available, that are going to continue to be available because of our strong economy: boilmakers and bricklayers and carpenters, construction estimators, construction managers, crane operators, electricians, floor-covering installers, heavy-equipment operators, insulators, ironworkers, painters, decorators, plumbers, roofers and shinglers, sheet-metal workers, sprinkler-system installers. Over and over and over again, the message is clear—truck drivers and welders—that she says there's never been a better time to get involved in the trades.

\* (16:40)

How has this budget responded to that? How has this government responded? Well, we've tripled the amount of apprentices in the province, over 10,000, and we continue to start younger. So we making sure that we're starting at the high school level so that they can get the training and get excited and get the tap on the shoulder. And our message is clear in this budget, to give young people a tap on the shoulder to say you are needed and there is a job for you. And those investments are there, Mr. Speaker.

What is Mike Moore, the president of the Manitoba Home Builders' Association have to say? There's no better place to start your own business. It's possible in Manitoba after only four, five, six years as a tradesperson. So he's saying you can get a job as a tradesperson because they're available; they're there—the training's there. We're working with businesses. But he's also saying, if you get tired of working for someone, guess what? Now is the time to start your own business. Members opposite don't have to take my word for it. That's what our private sector allies are saying, Mr. Speaker.

Michael Legary, co-founder of Startup Winnipeg: There's no better way to get your new idea, your new approach or your new product to market than to come on down to Innovation Alley. Now, at one time, when members opposite were in government, that used to be called Adelaide Street. And people used to see Adelaide Street as a—quite a challenging place to do business, quite a challenging place to build on the skills and talents of our

entrepreneurs. But there's been so much momentum created under the leadership of people like Michael Legary and Dave Angus and Chris Johnson, that it's not just seen as a place of hardship; it's actually seen a place of potential. It's one of the most exciting places in our city, Mr. Speaker.

Let's take, for example, our downtown. We have more people working in our downtown than ever before. We have more people doing business in our downtown than ever before. We have more students going to school in our core area than ever before. And that's really important—it's quite symbolic—because what it says is that no matter who you are or where you come from, post-secondary education is for you. In fact, when Prince Charles decided to come to Winnipeg, he ended up in the Exchange at Red River community college, as well as at Startup Winnipeg. It's an exciting place to be. We're giving young people a tap on the shoulder to say post-secondary is for you no matter who you are or where you come from.

We have more people now wanting to be close to the action. And they're living in our downtown—world-class businesses, world-class entertainment, world-class people in our downtown. In one weekend, Mr. Speaker, in one weekend—I think you could appreciate this—Cher, Heart, Queen and Bruno Mars were all in Winnipeg in one weekend—world-class things going on.

Luke Bryan was just in town. And what did Luke Bryan have to say at the MTS Centre? And members opposite, I know, opposed it. They spoke against it. They voted against it, when it came to the MTS Centre. When it came time to celebrate it, they were there to show up. And that's okay—we like that; that's a good thing. But what did Luke Bryan say when he came to town? Luke Bryan said, this is the place I heard that is the loudest barn in the National Hockey League. So you see and feel that pride every single day, the kind of momentum that is happening in just one part of our city, just in our downtown alone, as we look at, this is happening all throughout Manitoba, all through our hometowns, we are seeing this.

Now, what are these—what are people saying? What are our private sector partners telling us? The message is clear. There has never been a better time to be in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. The message from young people is clear. They are proud of their hometowns. They are proud of their home communities. They are proud of their home province.

And they want to give back. And the message in this budget is also clear that we will stand with businesses and we will stand with young people, Mr. Speaker.

Now, wages is part of the story. We led the country in wage growth over the last year. The average Manitoban worker, owed \$40 per week more. Minimum wage increase every year that we are in government, Mr. Speaker. This coming summer, and we're very proud in the budget to announce our Youth Jobs Strategy, but I do want to say, this coming summer, I'm very—I know we work very closely with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, as well as non-profit organizations, as well as local businesses all throughout the province, including the North and our rural areas and in our towns. We'll have more young people working this summer than ever before. They will work more hours and more weeks than ever before, and they will earn more money than they have ever before because we increased minimum wage every year that we've been in government.

In fact, when we launched and were able to highlight the incredible contribution that our young people are making—our role models, our ambassadors, building safe and healthy communities—the hashtag got going, your career starts here. And we were very proud to stand with young people, Mr. Speaker, because they're doing incredible things, many of them getting that critical first job in their hometowns that leads to them understanding and getting a sense of the kind of career they want and a strong message that this is a great place to raise your family.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the story continues. We continue to take full advantage of Manitoba's geographic location. We are in the centre. Also known is that we are in the heart of the continent. We're proud to do more than 50 per cent of trade to the east of us, close to 40 per cent to the west of us. We continue to take full advantage of the north as well as the south, and that is why you get headlines like strength in diversity. That's why people look at us to take a lead to improve interprovincial trade. In the past 10 years, Manitoba's exports increased by 4.1 billion, 44.8 per cent.

We're investing in the north, the south, the east, investing in strategic trade routes, and we're seeing investments in these trade routes like Highway 75, a key strategic trade route for us, and it's flood-proof. We're flood-proofing it to make sure that those

businesses are protected, that Highway 1 to the west of us, we've improved safety. And it was announced, of course, that you now—the speed limit is now 110 to the west. Highway east continues to get upgrades and there's more to come on highway east—Highway 1 to the east, in and all around the city of Winnipeg, the southwest Perimeter, the Headingley bypass, investments into CentrePort way. Mr. Speaker, all these kinds of investments, we're seen as leaders.

In fact, we were at trade infrastructure luncheon, hosted by Economic Development Winnipeg under the leadership of Marina James, also there supported by CentrePort under the leadership of Diane Gray and the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association under the leadership of Chris Lorenc, Mr. Speaker, and when we were at the luncheon, I've got to say they talked about and they highlighted Manitoba's infrastructure plan. And John Law was the keynote speaker.

John Law was there. John Law is the president of Lawmark International, co-author of Building on Advantage, Improving Canada's Trade Infrastructure. Now, I've got to say I thought his keynote was engaging—learned a lot. You got to read his report. But I've got to say one of the things that jumped out to me is that the Leader of the Opposition took the time to come and he asked a question about Manitoba's plan, and Mr. Law's response was concise and it was memorable. He said, look, having a long-term plan makes a lot of sense. It brings stability for businesses, gets people working. This is a plan—and he's looking at this nationally, internationally—he says makes sense. He said there's strength in Manitoba's plan because we're working so closely with the private sector, businesses like Zenith, who are giving back to their hometowns, hiring people, so they can earn a good wage and make a good living. So we're working closely with the private sector. But, ultimately, what he told the Leader of the Opposition and to everyone at the luncheon, Manitoba is doing it right. That was his answer. Manitoba is doing it right, and that they're seen as leaders when it comes to this plan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk about the work, the investments and—that we're making, of course, around supporting some of our more vulnerable families. You know, I am the MLA for Point Douglas, and I've got to tell you, when you're the MLA for Point Douglas and born and raised in Winnipeg's North End, people have this unbelievable ability in our province, in our communities, to see

incredible potential. They don't just see hardship; they see potential. They recognize that no matter who you are or where you come from, anything should be possible. Anything should be possible and nothing more symbolic than that than the new member from The Pas, the first First Nations woman elected to this government.

\* (16:50)

They understand, with the right investment, the time, resources and energy, you can have a great impact. You can have a big impact. And part of that is our investments into Rent Assist, investments that build stability, stability when people are transitioning, working to get that first job, going from social assistance to getting that first job, that there's stability there, there's resources there for you and your family, there is stability in—when you're providing training.

So, if you're a single mom and you're sitting in a classroom at Urban Circle getting upgrading, that you're going to have the resources you need, both in terms of the community resources and those financial resources, and stability for children and loved ones. And we recognize that we get some of these best ideas from people in the community, from non-profit 'orinizations,' from individuals, from people that are dealing and struggling with this every day, Mr. Speaker. And that's the investments that we've been able to make. That tells one part of the story on supporting some of our most vulnerable. We've invested to make sure that everyone recognizes that you need to get a sense of belonging in your neighbourhoods and your community, that you might not have a lot of money, but you should still be allowed to be generous and have a sense of contribution. And that's what this budget's doing; it's working with people, investing in people.

Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, there's a big contrast between the two. Members opposite, in their plan, decided to claw back the National Child Benefit. We've invested in early childhood development programs, things like the prenatal benefit, and we've recognized that if you want to maximize the potential of any child, it starts long before they're born; it starts at the prenatal stage, particularly in making sure that moms are in—being able to engage in those services and resources, the Healthy Baby program that provides community supports.

Our message has been clear that if you want young people to do good academically, go on to

post-secondary, that literacy and language and numeracy starts long before children come into school. So they clawed back the National Child Benefit; we invested in early childhood development. They froze minimum wage seven times—seven times; we've increased minimum wage every year that we've been in government. They cut 56 organizations in one budget, and those organizations were the organizations that support our most vulnerable families. That's the record of the Leader of the Opposition: 56 in one budget, Mr. Speaker. Well, art of that story was all the friendship centres. Well, we are now investing in non-profits as well as we reinstated, of course, all the funding back to the friendships centres.

You know, Mr. Speaker, one of the things we got to understand about being poor and poverty, if we're not careful, that people can really struggle and we have to make sure that we, when we're making our investments, that people get that sense of belonging. Well, when you claw back the National Child Benefit, when you freeze minimum wage, when you cut organizations and you build a policy on a snitch line and then you campaign on it, you know, those are policies built on making people who are poor feel embarrassed, that should be grounded in shame and stigma.

Well, you know, this budget is investing in stability, not embarrassment. This budget is investing in making sure people understand that they belong. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Works!, part of the—a part of a program that brings people who struggle, for a variety of reasons, that face barriers, and businesses, and making sure that there's a bridge in between. So these businesses that always want to give back and they want to hire people who struggle the most, that those services and resources are there.

Manitoba Works! is one example. Alicia, who participated in announcements with me as a single mom, not only in her childhood—spent a lot of her time on social assistance as a child but then struggled in her own right and then got involved in Manitoba Works! and now has got her first job. She's working incredibly hard to make a better life for herself and her family and her children and has become an incredible role model. That program has an 88 per cent job success rate. That is a far different approach than a snitch line, Mr. Speaker. That is how you build pride and belonging and a sense of contribution. That's how you do it.

Now, the budget—I want to say, in closing, the message has been clear. It's been clear from businesses, it's clear from workers, it's clear from families, that there's no better time to be in Manitoba than right now. The message from young people has been clear, that they're proud of their hometowns. They're proud of their home communities, and they're proud of their home province, and they want to give back. And they recognize with the right supports and, if people will stand with them, that they can have an impact anywhere in the world and still be able to give back to their hometowns.

And the message is clear in this budget that we are standing with them. We're standing with young people; we're standing with workers; we're standing with businesses, Mr. Speaker. And we're standing with families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I would like to put a few things on the record in the short time I have left today, and maybe tomorrow we'll get a chance to come back a little bit more.

But, first of all, I want to welcome all of you back to the House, of course, and those that are not going to be seeking re-election, the members from Agassiz, River East, and, of course, Gimli, Assiniboia and St. Vital, we certainly want to thank them for their service that they provided to this Chamber and, of course, the constituents which they represent.

We've been talking the last couple of days about the \$670,000 bonus package that's been brought forward by this government for those employees that have since been terminated to move on to other capacities. And just what would that look like if we had the opportunity to spend some of that money on things like police officers to make our communities safer, of course, or hire more nurses, of course, to be able to help those in need whenever they have those emergency services that they require. Or how about doctors that which they made a promise in 2011 that every Manitoban would have a doctor by 2015? We see that that commitment has not been kept. Or how about those families in need that are less fortunate than others, that have been trying, through no fault of their own—many times that want a hand up rather than a handout? They want to be able to make sure that they can provide for their families.

And, of course, those that are waiting for emergency service that are looking for an MRI or a

CT scan or, of course, filling a pothole here or there. We know that that's also very important—that we see from this government in a well that—a way that the \$670,000 could have been spent far better than the way it has been through benefiting just those few seven—those few seven that have come about as a result of this government and the infighting that—which the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province made it very clear that they would suffer no repercussions from going on to help another member try to become the next leader of Manitoba.

**An Honourable Member:** Happy family.

**Mr. Eichler:** And they were a big, happy family, as the member from Morden-Winkler is proud to point out. We know that, of course, when we look at what the government could have also done with that, that would have been a great start on our outlet on Manitoba—Lake Manitoba to go forward. Rather than just coffee shops and small talk, we would have been able to actually start to make a difference. In fact, there's been some other proposals brought forward. We haven't seen anything announced on that yet, either, or where they're plan on going with the outlet on Lake Manitoba.

I know that there's a number of individuals that's been out of their home since 2011, and that's unfortunate. Four years of being out of your home and your community and, of course, those businesses that have been impacted as well by being out of their community and supporting their local community.

And we know that the suffering that has come result of those communities and that outlet should have been built long ago. We know very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that time is of the essence, and those people on Lake Manitoba have made it very clear that they would like to see a change come in that regard sooner than later.

What we look at when we start to look at what this government should have done in the budget and listening to Manitobans—and I can say very clearly that we're proud, on this side of the House, to say we have reached out to a lot of those communities—in fact, every community. We've been north to Thompson, to Swan River, Churchill, The Pas, a number of those areas, and we've been welcomed in those communities, wanting to hear what they have to say.

And I can tell you that there is a lot that needs to be done, and those issues have not been met. They have not been addressed. And we know that we're going to be able to—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) will have 25 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 11, 2015

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