

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	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
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	PC
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	PC
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 23, 2012

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 35—The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I move, seconded by the Minister for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 35, The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jours fériés dans le commerce de détail, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Howard: I'm pleased today to introduce Bill 35, the retail businesses holiday closing amendment and Employment Standards Code amendment act. These amendments will strengthen Sunday shopping—will expand Sunday shopping hours while providing retail workers the right to refuse working those extended hours. This amendment will provide greater flexibility in opening hours on Sundays by allowing hours of operation to be extended to the hours of 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Municipalities will be able to pass a bylaw specifying that these hours or any subset of these hours are the hours that retail businesses can be open on Sundays within their municipality. Where a municipality does not pass a bylaw, Sunday shopping would continue to be restricted.

Recognizing the needs of families and in order to ensure that these workers are not negatively affected, this amendment will strengthen the provision for workers to refuse Sunday work

provided sufficient notice is given. If an employee is terminated or discriminated against for their refusal, Employment Standards officers will have the authority to compensate or reinstate an employee in these cases.

This bill reflects the consensus recommendations of the Labour Management Review Committee. The committee is made up of equal numbers of employer and employee members and has provided valuable insight on this important issue, and I'd like to thank them for their work on this issue.

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

Bill 36—The Human Rights Code Amendment Act

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard), that Bill 36, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, 25 years ago, The Human Rights Code of Manitoba was ahead of its time. This bill will maintain Manitoba's position as the Canadian leader in defending human rights. It would expand the list of protected characteristics under the code to include social disadvantage and gender identity, and it would modernize and streamline the handling of complaints to better serve the public.

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

Bill 37—The Highway Traffic Amendment and Summary Convictions Amendment Act (Bicycle Helmets)

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Housing, Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 37, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Summary Convictions Amendment Act (Bicycle Helmets), now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, this bill will require the use of bicycle helmets for cyclists and passengers under the age of 18. Children are at particular risk for cycle-related injuries due to inexperience, loss of control, lack of traffic safety skills, high speed, and risk-taking behaviours.

Provincial legislation is required to reduce serious injuries, fatalities, and to increase the use of bicycle helmets by children across Manitoba. I highly recommend it for the entire House.

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

PETITIONS

Personal Care Homes and Long-Term Care—Steinbach

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The city of Steinbach is one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba and one of the largest cities in the province.

This growth has resulted in pressure on a number of important services, including personal care homes and long-term care space in the city.

Many long-time residents of the city of Steinbach have been forced to live out their final years outside of Steinbach because of the shortage of personal care homes and long-term care facilities.

Individuals who have lived in, worked in and contributed to the city of Steinbach their entire lives should not be forced to spend their final years in a place far from friends and family.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health ensure additional personal care homes and long-term care spaces are made available in the city of Steinbach on a priority basis.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by D. Friesen, R. Kehler, S. Kehler and thousands of other Manitobans.

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to our public gallery where we have with us this afternoon Paul Lee, co-president of École secondaire Kelvin High School student council; Jim Brown, principal of École secondaire Kelvin High School; and Grant Mitchell on behalf of Kelvin High School's 100th anniversary committee. These are guests of the honourable Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard).

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

And also in our public gallery, we have with us this afternoon from Pacific Junction School 50 grade 4 students under the direction of Ms. Jody Godfrey. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

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

*(13:40)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Graham James Sentencing Court of Appeal Date

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): If there's one thing we know about our justice system in Manitoba, it's very slow—very, very slow—and it shows up in many areas throughout the justice system, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, the Attorney General confirmed to us in committee that it's so slow that 69 per cent of the youth who are in custody are actually not sentenced; they're serving a remand custody sentence. And it seems that, in fact, every court in Manitoba is extremely slow, and that would include the Court of Appeal of Manitoba.

Canadians were rightly outraged when Mr. Graham James, who was convicted of some 'heinous' sexual assaults, was only given two years, Mr. Speaker.

Can the government tell us whether or not the appeal for Mr. James will actually occur before he's eligible for parole later this fall?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Certainly, making our courts more efficient is something our government has been very, very concerned about and interested in doing.

Of course, with the Court of Appeal itself, the member opposite is aware that we actually have added a position for another researcher for the Court of Appeal to make sure that they can process their decisions more quickly and get those decisions out.

I wonder if the member opposite could explain why he voted against more Crowns and more court staff a few weeks ago.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, we voted against record crime rates and will continue to vote against record crime rates, Mr. Speaker.

It's one thing to get a case heard in Manitoba, but it's another thing to get a decision. Some cases that have come before the Court of Appeal Manitoba still haven't had a decision after six months, and that's beyond what the Canadian Judicial Council recommends as their standard.

Graham James will be eligible for parole later this fall, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the Minister of Justice can tell us: Even if this case does get before—the appeal gets before the Court of Appeal in Manitoba, will there actually be a decision before Mr. James is eligible for parole?

Mr. Swan: I think the member opposite is aware, or ought to be aware, that I don't control the judges on the Court of Appeal of Manitoba, federally appointed judges who are the highest judges sitting in Manitoba who hear appeals from the Queen's Bench and from other tribunals and jurisdictions.

So I can't advise the member opposite, but the Crown attorneys working on the file take this matter very seriously. As the member is aware, the Crown attorneys have appealed the decision involving Mr. James, but I'm not going to speak out about a particular case which is before the courts, Mr. Speaker.

Minister's Support for Courtroom Cameras

Mr. Goertzen: The minister is responsible for the courts, and he certainly is responsible for the functioning of the courts, and it seems entirely likely, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. James will be out on parole long before a decision is ever made.

But that's not the only thing that is wrong, Mr. Speaker, with our court system. Changes to the court system overall are extremely slow in Manitoba.

I'd remind the Minister of Justice that it was his colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) who said that when it comes to cameras in

courtrooms—five years ago, he said the time has come for cameras in courtroom. Well, his time has come and gone, and we still don't have, Mr. Speaker, any cameras in the courtrooms in Manitoba.

I wonder if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) will give me his assurance that if there's an application to have a camera in the courtroom for the appeal of Graham James that he will support that application.

Mr. Swan: I'm glad the member opposite has corrected himself to note that an individual serving time in a federal institution would receive parole. So if the member opposite has a problem with the parole system, maybe he should talk to his Member of Parliament.

And as well, we went through this in Estimates just a couple of days ago and the member opposite and I actually agreed that if there was a place to start with cameras in the courtrooms, the Court of Appeal would appear to be an appropriate place to start, within the decision of the Court of Appeal judges who will be hearing that case. And there are certain circumstances when we have concerns about the safety of our Crown attorneys, where we have safe—concerns about the safety of potential witnesses, and concerns about the safety of court staff. I would agree that in the Court of Appeal those concerns are minimized.

I will be very interested to hear what the Court of Appeal does if indeed there is an application made in that case, and I do look forward to that, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 215

Government Support

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): This is a prime example of why this NDP government should support Bill 215, The Results-Based Budgeting Act. This NDP government continues to spend more on fighting crime while Manitobans are getting less in the way of results, Mr. Speaker. Crime should be going down, not up. A review of existing government programs will help the government find ways to better manage the tax dollars they are spending.

Mr. Speaker, will the NDP government agree to support Bill 215?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, very quickly, the answer would be no, but I don't want members opposite, for one minute,

to think that these type of reviews don't happen on a yearly basis, on an ongoing basis.

We've, through Budget 2012, initiated reviews of our spending. We've initiated reviews across the board to make sure that the budgets we—that we put forward are realistic, that they represent the values of Manitobans, that they represent the priorities of Manitobans. We believe we've done that.

And I wasn't surprised, but I was disappointed that members opposite voted against that not so long ago.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's time for this NDP government to get its head out of the sand. Crime is going up in the province, not down, which means that throwing more money at existing programs is like—is the equivalent—that are not working—is the equivalent of taking hard-earned taxpayer dollars and throwing them out the window.

Will the NDP government agree to support Bill 215 and take a giant step toward increasing the effectiveness of government programs in this province?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, the last so-called giant step that members opposite took in this regard ended up having nurses being laid off in the '90s, less support for health care, when they brought in an outside consultant to take a look.

I'm reminded about a thousand nurses that suffered—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Finance, to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Struthers: So the one thing Manitobans can count on is that this government is not going to take advice from members opposite who, at the hands of their decisions, a thousand nurses get laid off and actually hurts some of the priorities of Manitobans around health care, Mr. Speaker.

We'll do reviews. We'll continue to make smart decisions when it comes to spending, but we're not going to take this advice from members opposite.

Mrs. Stefanson: This spend-more, get-less mentality of this NDP government must be stopped.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 215 allows us to take a step in the right direction towards ensuring that programs are working in the best interests of Manitobans.

This afternoon we will be debating a motion calling on the NDP government to conduct an independent and transparent public spending review to ensure that Manitoba families are receiving effective government services at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers.

If they are refusing to support Bill 215, will they at least agree to support this motion this afternoon, and if not, Mr. Speaker, what are they afraid of?

Mr. Struthers: We're afraid that if members opposite had their way, we'd launch back into the kind of debate this province had when their outside adviser told them to privatize home care.

This government's approach is to invest in health care so that we can save money in terms of PCHs. We can save money in terms of long-term health needs of Manitobans. We're going to make investments in home care. We're going to make investments in primary care so that we can have a measure of good health care and smart spending decisions, unlike the cut-deep approach of members opposite that they tabled in this House in a resolution not so long ago—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Emergency Rooms Scheduled Appointment Policy

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Speaking of home care, this government right now is in the process of gutting it. So that minister has no credibility.

Our hospital ERs are supposed to treat patients in need of emergency care. Thousands of patients are waiting hours and hours for that care. However, the ERs are also acting as doctors' offices and seeing patients who are sent there for scheduled visits for routine care.

Eight years ago, the emergency task force recommended that ER scheduled visits be stopped as soon as possible.

So can this Minister of Health tell us why she continues to allow this abuse and inefficiency eight years after she was told to stop the practice and after she made a strong commitment to do so?

* (13:50)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): We know that our commitment to emergency medicine is indeed very strong here in the province of Manitoba.

We know that we have remodelled or fully renovated every ER in Winnipeg, and the Grace Hospital is next on the list. This would be, of course, the same emergency room, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite was suggesting was going to be closed and was frightening seniors in that area of the city. We're not closing the Grace ER as suggested by members opposite; indeed, we're expanding it.

We know that we're providing a wide variety of primary care outside of our emergency rooms in our Access centres, Mr. Speaker, indeed, now in our QuickCare clinics. We're continuing to invest in primary care and our acute care. We just wonder why members opposite never support it.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, despite the rhetoric from this Minister of Health, patients are falling through the cracks in our busy ERs. Two cases come to mind: Mrs. Brennan died after being pushed out of a busy ER too soon; Brian Sinclair died in a waiting room after waiting 34 hours for care, which he didn't get.

Yet scheduled visits are still taking up time and space in the ERs, and they are contributing to the problem. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the first numbers ever available on this practice are staggering. In 2010, according to a recent freedom of information, 12,800 scheduled visits took place in Winnipeg ERs, and in 2011, 14,200 scheduled ER visits—for scheduled visits took place. This is absolutely mind-boggling, considering that in 2004 they were supposed to be discontinued.

I'd like to ask this Minister of Health: How could she have been so incompetent in her mishandling of this issue?

Ms. Oswald: Again, I would remind the member that the work that we are doing is to build our complement of services in our hospitals, and, indeed, do everything that we can to reduce wait times in our emergency rooms.

There are many efforts going on to transform scheduled visits. We know that the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, for example, has implemented a centralized administration of IV antibiotics and wound care outside of hospitals. Certainly, we know wound care is being delivered in community, including home visits now. We know that cast checks are done at the Pan Am Minor Injury Clinic, which we built, Mr. Speaker. We know that we're going to continue to invest in our hospital

home teams to keep vulnerable elderly citizens in their homes, not needing to visit the ER.

We're investing, not hacking and slashing, as was suggested—

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

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has absolutely no credibility with her answer, and she doesn't know what she's talking about, nor is she answering the question and paying attention to the numbers.

Each ER sees thousands of patients for scheduled visits. It is obvious that this Minister of Health has seriously dropped the ball and has failed big time. There have been 27,000 scheduled visits over the last two years in Winnipeg ERs, after this government was told to stop the practice. No wonder patients can't access health care in a timely way in our ERs. No wonder patients are falling through the cracks.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health: How could she have failed so badly on carrying out this recommendation?

Ms. Oswald: Again, I will reiterate that I'm hearing this question and the miscellaneous rant loud and clear, Mr. Speaker, and I can say to the member opposite that we are building and reconstructing each one of our ERs here in Winnipeg. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we've built Access centres, a one-stop shop where we can move things like the receipt of IV antibiotics and wound care out of the scheduled visit in an ER into the community. Our QuickCare clinics are enabling nurse practitioners to take care of visits that have previously happened in an ER. We need to continue to work on removing those from emergency rooms.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know what I can tell you that we're not seeing in our emergency rooms routinely across the system, on average, every day: 28 patients in the hallway, which is what happened under their watch.

Chief Prevention Officer Lack of Competitive Hiring Process

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): The fact of the matter remains this government closed 18 ERs throughout Manitoba. Those ERs still remain closed, Mr. Speaker.

We have witnessed an assistant deputy minister in the Immigration Department organizing political

rallies for the NDP. We now have a former ADM within the Department of Labour being appointed to a brand new position as the chief prevention officer. Under questioning in Estimates last week, the minister acknowledged, and I quote, "There wasn't a competition for that position."

Mr. Speaker, I ask: Why has the minister not had a competition for this very important position?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Certainly, the person who's filling that position had been the ADM responsible for Workplace Safety and Health. This is the chief prevention officer. The role there is to bring a new, renewed focus on the prevention of workplace accidents. We have made some progress in this government in bringing that injury rate down, but we can do more.

The person in question was the person most experienced. They came from doing that work. This is just a refocusing of the work that they were doing.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, there appears to be a real cozy relationship developing between senior bureaucrats and the NDP party. We have ADMs organizing political rallies for the NDP. We now have ADMs appointed to new positions without a competitive process.

Upon further investigation, Don Hurst, who was just recently appointed as the chief prevention officer, has a very close relationship with the NDP. In fact, since his appointment as ADM in 2004, Mr. Hurst has contributed \$7,297 to the NDP party.

Is this the policy of the NDP government? Do people have to be financial supporters to receive appointments from this NDP government?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked, in this province, Manitobans are allowed to support the political party of their choice. That's a democratic right of Manitobans. There are people in the civil service who have run as candidates for all parties represented in this House, and they do so without any fear or favour of doing that and being involved in the political process.

I'm not surprised that the members opposite would raise a question about prevention of workplace injury. This is the same party that, when we hired more inspectors, called it simply more red tape and bureaucracy.

Mr. Cullen: We wonder about these relationships. Where do they end? In fact, more importantly, where

does it begin? We have ADMs organizing political rallies for the NDP. We now have an arrogant government appointing their friends and financial supporters to new positions without a competitive process.

Mr. Speaker, I ask: What message does this send to those hard-working NDP—or those people in the civil service? What message does it send to the hard-working people in the civil service?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the message that's being sent is that this government takes the prevention of workplace injury very seriously. So seriously, in fact, that we doubled the number of inspectors, that we've seen the number of inspections go from 1,000 a year when we took government to 12,000 last year, and we've seen the injury rate decrease by 40 per cent.

It's a priority of this government to protect those workers in their workplaces. This position will bring a new, a renewed focus, working with the Workers Compensation Board as well as the Department of Labour to make sure that we have a renewed focus on preventing workplace injury. I would think that's something everybody could support.

Central Plains Regional Development Corporation Funding Cancellation

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): For years regional development corporations have played a very important role in cultivating rural opportunities. The Minister of Agriculture recently cancelled the funding to Central Plains regional development corporation without consultation and without notice. Central Plains tried diligently and repeatedly to obtain confirmation of whether funding was to continue after April 1st, 2012, but the minister refused to respond.

Mr. Speaker, why won't this minister reinstate funding to Central Plains, at least to allow them an orderly shutdown process?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Thank you for the question of the member opposite.

Just a note of correction, as we all are aware, or they should be aware of, is that it's a three-year agreement. The three-year agreement was drawn up last year. There was well time advance notice that the three-year agreement is always under review in the appropriate timeline.

And I also want to make sure that member opposite is quite aware that we do have front-line staff in MAFRI in such businesses as development–business development specialists–and, also, rural leadership specialists to support rural communities and to pursue economic development in opportunities in their region.

* (14:00)

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, this was cancelled without consultation and without notice. The Central Plains regional development corporation is an active organization with staff and assets. They have operational costs, they have staff costs, and now they have severance costs to pay. They need time to liquidate their assets and dissolve the corporation. Yet, with no consultation from this NDP government, the annual funding was cut and their valuable services are now gone.

Mr. Speaker, the minister received a letter from Central Plains asking for \$27,000 for an orderly scaling down of the operation and to meet staff commitments and avoid a high likelihood of insolvency.

Will the minister ask his Cabinet to approve that \$27,000 to allow an orderly process for this corporation, which they are not going to continue to fund, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Let me repeat the answer again to our members opposite.

As we had been existence—the regional development corporations have been in existence since the 1960s and I guess the member opposite soon can relate to our federal and provincial regulations that maybe go back to when PFRAs were established, the Canadian wheat boards were established.

You know what, the reality is that partnerships don't last forever. We had a strong working relationship with the rural municipal governments, and over a period of time, unfortunately, a template has been the example of the federal-provincial relationship that we're facing with today in our provincial government with delays in transfer of moneys. Thank you.

Mrs. Taillieu: I don't know what to say to that, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* Yes, more of that. My goodness.

The board of directors of the Central Plains regional development corporation fear that they may

have financial liability as their directors' liability insurance will not cover losses the corporation might have from this shutdown.

One director believes the Central Plains RDC board members will be personally responsible for about three to five thousand dollars each if the minister does not provide sufficient funding to allow the corporation to wind down in an orderly fashion.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask this minister again: Is he going to make Manitobans pay out of their own pockets because of his mishandling of the regional development corporations' funding? How is that fair?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I want to assure the member opposite, as, you know what—the fact that there is other agencies that could be quite easily address the requirements—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I'm asking for the co-operation of honourable members, please. The honourable member for Morris has asked a question and she's entitled to hear the answer. The honourable Minister of Agriculture is attempting to answer the question.

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was indicating, Canada-Manitoba business centres also provide similar services for entrepreneur services. The other thing is that—let's face reality. The uncertain times, families, front-line services are the top priority for our government; health care, education are the top priorities.

Unfortunately, when we talk about certain things, when we talk about partnerships, let's be realistic about it to members opposite. How many jobs have been lost since the Canadian Wheat Board and how many jobs are potentially to get lost when the community pastures are going to be discussed in the rural economy?

Flooding (Lake Manitoba) Property Buyouts

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, the Lake Manitoba flood of 2011 has now become the devastation of 2012. Many properties in the Lake Manitoba inundation zone now look like debris-covered moonscapes. Many of the residents along the lake are burned out, depressed, and simply exhausted at both the flood fight and their ongoing difficulties of dealing with government programs.

These people are the victims, not the perpetrators, of this man-made flood. Some flood victims are saying, just give me a fair and reasonable buyout and let me leave my home and vocation with dignity.

Mr. Speaker, I ask: Are buyouts being considered by this government?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to again remind the members of this House that the historic nature of the flood last year—we're dealing with 30,000 claims, but behind each and every one of those claims are individual Manitobans, municipalities—been a hard impact. We are making progress, \$650 million in payouts through that claim process.

But I do want to stress one thing. Our primary goal is to rebuild the flood-affected areas, whether it's Lake Manitoba or Lake St. Martin or other affected areas in the province, and that's been the way this province has worked, Mr. Speaker. We did the same after the 1997 flood. We did the same after the 2009 flood.

And, indeed, when it comes to buyouts, that is an option, but it's an option that we put in place after the primary goal, which is to get people back to normal. Are people back to normal right now? No. We still have 2,400 Manitobans who have been evacuated and there's a lot of work to be done. Are we making progress? I believe we are, and we'll continue to do that until we get every Manitoban back to normal, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, in 2011 the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the former minister of Agriculture both alluded to buyouts being part of the package offered to residents on Lake Manitoba inundation zone. Promises were made; promises have since been broken.

Mr. Speaker, I ask again: Are equitable buyout packages part of the Lake Manitoba flood solution, and if they are, what is the criteria, what are the details, and what do people have to do to access those buyouts?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member as well of the degree to which we have gone to put in provincial programs. Yes, we have the disaster financial assistance program, but across the province for the 2011-2012 year: the Lake Dauphin Emergency Flood Protection program; cottages covered around Lake Manitoba, both property and

contents first time; Lake Manitoba pasture flooding assistance; Greenfeed Assistance Program; excess moisture stimulus program; Dauphin River flood assistance for fishers program. These are all a hundred per cent provincial programs.

In addition to that, we put in place the task forces reviewing the level of Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin and a review in terms of flood mitigation, which is going to make recommendations in terms of improving flood mitigation in the future.

Buyouts will be part of the picture, but just as they were after 1997, our goal, our primary goal is to rebuild around those lakes, rebuild around those rivers and get Manitobans back to normal.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, many Lake Manitoba properties are totally destroyed. Livelihoods have been lost for several years going forward, and rehabilitation costs are massive and may not even be cost-effective or feasible. People are physically and mentally exhausted. They are receiving mixed messages from this NDP government about programs and about lake levels going forward.

Mr. Speaker, why does this Premier and this government continue their erratic messaging? Will the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) tell the people of Lake Manitoba once and for all that buyouts are part of the solution? Flood victims deserve answers.

Mr. Ashton: Well, we're not going to throw in the towel when it comes to rebuilding; that's the first point.

And after 1997 we had \$130-million ring dike program in the Red River Valley, and in 2009 with a flood that was worse than 1955 we had not one home flooded. We had one home affected by seepage in a basement, Mr. Speaker, because we didn't throw in the towel for the Red River. We constructed the floodway expansion that dramatically improved the protection for the city of Winnipeg.

And last year when people in and around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin said, don't forget about us, we targeted November 1st to build the outlet for Lake St. Martin. We built it; we built it on time, under budget. We're not going to give up on the people around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

Experimental Lakes Research Centre Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the health of Manitoba's great lake, Lake Winnipeg, should be a top government priority, and yet it's recognized today as an international ecological catastrophe under this government. The NDP's policies, including their drain-only approach, have contributed to a very high phosphorus levels and severe algal blooms.

Many Manitoba scientists involved with the experimental lakes research centre have worked in an international effort to provide the scientific foundation to address these severe algal problems on Lake Winnipeg. Now, since the federal government announced last week that the facility will be closed within a year, the Premier has been silent.

*(14:10)

I ask the Premier: Why hasn't he been standing up for Manitobans? Why hasn't he been standing up for Lake Winnipeg? Why hasn't he been standing up for these incredible scientists?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member will know that we've taken several measures to improve the health of Lake Winnipeg, including restrictions on the expansion of hog barns in Manitoba, including being the first province to go phosphorus-free with respect to detergents and soaps, including measures to strengthen our regulations with respect to septic fields, including our own investments in research in the *Namao* boat on Lake Winnipeg that does all this research.

The experimental lakes program is a very important program. I'm glad the member raised it. It does have very significant implications for the future research on all lakes in Canada, 'inculping' Lake Winnipeg but also the Great Lakes as well. We think it is an important issue. I'm glad the member has raised the question.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier says it's important, and yet up to today he's been silent about the need to preserve and enhance the experimental lakes research centre, a one-of-a-kind, world-class research centre.

Many experimental lakes area scientists believe the removal of phosphorus only from Winnipeg sewage is the best strategy. And yet the Premier advocates for potentially unnecessary removal of

nitrogen as well as phosphorus, a much more expensive approach.

I ask the Premier: Is the fact that he has a disagreement with some of the scientists at the experimental lakes area colouring his judgment and leading to a less-than-enthusiastic support for the experimental lakes research centre?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member should know that we've been in close discussion with the government of Ontario on this matter. We've been in discussion with the scientists that are very concerned about this. We've been in discussion and had conversations with people directly impacted. We will be making representations to the federal government about the extreme importance of this research.

The Freshwater Institute's in Manitoba; the experimental lakes are, for the most part, in Ontario. That research in that area has had worldwide implications for the reduction of phosphorus in lakes all around the world. Lake Erie, in large measure, was saved because of the research that came out of there. Some of that research has had very strong applicability to the Lake Winnipeg. There are lakes in Europe that have benefited from that research.

The member full well knows that we want to support the continuation of this research in Manitoba as well as in Ontario, and I invite him to work with us on how we can make an even stronger case to the federal government. I invite the opposition to work with us, for the—once in a while for supporting this important research and development in Manitoba. If the whole Legislature got together on this, we could speak with one voice on protecting lakes in Manitoba.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, as the Premier knows, the situation of Lake Manitoba is very severe. Indeed, Lake Winnipeg's in such distress that at a spring fishing derby this year at Matheson Island with hundreds of fishermen participating, only one fish was caught. Of course, that was in an area with some severe algal blooms. Continuing research, including that as we've been talking about it, the experimental lakes area, is absolutely vital to get an improvement.

You know, I ask the Premier, and I'm certainly very well willing and ready to work with the Premier on this, but I ask the Premier: When is he going to move beyond discussions and talk and get to actual

action to help save the experimental lakes research centre?

Mr. Selinger: I appreciate the offer from the Leader of the Liberal Party to work with us. I look for a parallel offer from the opposition party across the way. This would be a refreshing approach to saving Lake Winnipeg and Manitoba and to ensuring the kind of research which has been championed and pioneered in Manitoba and carried out in Ontario, as well as other parts of the world, has the ability to continue. This research has made a very significant difference on the health of lakes all around the world. It is an important area.

We now have the Leader of the Liberal Party willing to work with us. Perhaps the Conservatives could stop their deafening silence on this issue and work with us as well, Mr. Speaker.

Kihiw Iskewock Lodge Transitional Housing for Women

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the Native Women's Transition Centre has been recognized by Amnesty International for their best practices in supporting successful transition of Aboriginal women from incarceration to positive roles in our community.

Could the Minister of Housing and Community Development please tell us about our government's support for their bold next step, Kihiw Iskewock?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Today was a proud day for the community of Daniel McIntyre. I was joined with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) as well as ministers—the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) to celebrate the first of its kind in Manitoba, a 15-bed transitional housing complex for Aboriginal women.

This is—this innovation will not only provide a roof, bricks and mortar, but also wrap around cultural, spiritual and healing programs to support the women as they move forward in their journey of healing and hope. Also, what's very important about this is it includes the family. So family reunification will be one of the goals of this initiative.

We need to thank the Native Women's Transition Centre for their leadership in this, as well as the many other women's organizations that formed CLOUT, and Elizabeth Fry, as well as the other

levels of government who made sure that this vision could become a reality.

Lyme Disease Diagnoses and Patient Services

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Dozens of people across southeastern Manitoba suffer from Lyme disease. This is a disease that is spread through ticks and through carrier animals. Over the past number of years the disease has increased in prevalence and more and more people are being diagnosed with the disease.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister: Is there an explanation for the increase in the Lyme disease, and what is being done by the Province to prevent it?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Indeed, the issue of Lyme disease and its spread and its prevalence in Manitoba has been the subject of great discussion by our public officials. Manitoba hosted an international conference, in fact, concerning Lyme disease where experts came together to discuss best practices and latest science.

We know that we have gone out earlier this year in terms of public health warnings to communities to let them know that they should be wary of the fact that the ticks are active more early this year than usual, predictably, because of the lovely spring that we had. We know that our medical professionals are working very hard on issues of surveillance and diagnosis, and we're counting on them to further their work so that Manitobans can be protected as best they can.

Mr. Graydon: I've received numerous complaints in my office that doctors in this province cannot properly diagnose Lyme disease. Many patients have had to travel outside the province and sometimes as far away as New York to receive a diagnosis of Lyme disease.

My question for the minister is: Does Manitoba science differ from American science?

Ms. Oswald: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, if the answer is no, it's a wonder that Minnesota diagnoses a thousand a cases a year and Manitoba diagnoses 25.

Manitobans demand a top-notch health-care system; however, those that have contacted Lyme disease believe that the system is failing them and that they're forced to travel outside the province.

Left untreated, Lyme disease and its symptoms work as an imitator, masking as many other serious conditions. Dozens of patients have been placed in this predicament and have been left with more questions than answers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this minister: Do Manitoba doctors recognize diagnoses from outside this province?

Ms. Oswald: I would reiterate for the member that, indeed, public health officials and physicians are taking the issue of Lyme disease very seriously, in fact, which is why they worked to host an international conference wherein individuals from the United States, from across Canada came together to share the science and to share the best practice and to discuss different ways that diagnosis can take place, early intervention can take place and to find the most appropriate treatment protocols for those individuals that are living with Lyme disease.

No mistake about it, those individuals that are living with Lyme disease face very significant challenges. It can be very debilitating, and I want to assure the member that health professionals in Manitoba and public health officials are seeking the best possible science to enable diagnosis and treatment.

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Community Pastures Consultation Panel Creation

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Saskatchewan is taking action and it has announced a five-member producer panel to assist in the transition of management for community pastures within their province.

Will the Minister of Agriculture commit today to setting up a similar producer panel in Manitoba to ensure community pasture patrons have continuing access to their pasture commitments?

*(14:20)

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): And thank you for the question, members opposite.

I want to ensure the member opposite that we've been in discussions with our federal counterparts and we do take this very seriously. And I think it's a situation that, when we talk about trying to keep the family farms together, trying to keep the young entrepreneurs in existence—and a decision has been

made to somewhat consider changing alternative management plans into community pasture, but I sense that the choice of the federal government is to say, it's not a paying proposition, so we'll just put it towards the provincial government.

So I really question the decision that was made and I hope that we, as a Province, will pursue working with the federal government to find alternative solutions for the betterment of the cattle industry that suffered through seven years of the BSE, and we feel very, very proud to support the cattle industry in the province of Manitoba.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

École secondaire Kelvin High School 100th Anniversary

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): This year marks the 100th anniversary of École secondaire Kelvin High School. This venerable institution will be celebrating its centenary this coming weekend with a three-day reunion. Thousands of alumni are expected to attend various events, including a concert, coffee house, remembrance services, car show, a gala dinner and even yoga.

Mr. Speaker, Kelvin has a storied history, one that has touched every facet of Winnipeg's cultural, economic and political leave-life. It became—it began as Kelvin Technical High School in 1912 on the corner of Stafford Street and Academy Road, and later became Kelvin High School. The original 1912 school building was replaced by the present one in 1964.

Over the years, Kelvin has established itself as an academic educational institution of excellence. Many graduates have gone on to distinguish themselves in various endeavours. In various provincial and national competitions, Kelvin groups have distinguished themselves with honours in athletics, musical competitions and debating events.

Every year that I've attended the Kelvin High School graduation exercises, I'm impressed and a little humbled by the academic, athletic and cultural achievements of the graduates. Kelvin's graduates have gone on to become leaders in their fields. The list of notable alumni is far too long to list, but include luminaries such as Izzy and Gail Asper, Fred Penner, Senator Janis Johnson and Neil Young.

Kelvin does not only produce high school graduates; it produces citizens. The students and faculty pride themselves on organizing activities that exhibit a social conscience and strive to improve our community. I have had the pleasure of attending the annual breakfast and activity day that Kelvin students host for elementary schools in December. I have been particularly impressed by the students' commitment to including all children in these activities, including those with special needs.

Today with us in the gallery, we have Grant Mitchell from the Kelvin 100th anniversary committee, Paul Lee, student council co-president, and Jim Brown, principal.

On behalf of all members of this House, I offer my congratulations on a successful century of education at Kelvin High School.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Morden City Status

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to inform the members of the Manitoba Legislature that Morden will be our province's newest city.

On Monday, March the 12th, Morden Mayor Ken Wiebe moved a motion, seconded by Deputy Mayor Irvin Wiebe, for Morden to officially make the request to the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) to become Manitoba's newest city. Mayor Wiebe made the announcement public later that week at the annual general meeting of the Morden Chamber of Commerce.

City status became an option for the former town after the results of Statistics Canada 2011 census data revealed that Morden's population had surpassed 7,500 residents. That's the population threshold established by the Province to seek city status.

The communities of Morden and Winkler are among the fastest growing in the province. Morden has been growing considerably over the last number of years. In 2001, the population was just over 6,100; in 2006, it had climbed to 6,500. The news 2011 census records Morden's population as 7,812. That's an 18.9 per cent population increase.

Neighbouring RM of Stanley has witnessed an historic 31.2 per cent population increase, while the city of Winkler has recorded a similar jump of 17.2 per cent, bringing the total population of Morden, Winkler, and the RM of Stanley to 26,228.

Being a city will provide Morden with many advantages, including new opportunities in advertising and brand development; city status will undoubtedly attract the attention of new businesses and encourage newcomers to consider putting down roots.

But Morden's success story is more than just a moniker of the name. The evidence of Morden's growth is in the new businesses coming up in the downtown area. It's at Homestead South's new 82-suite assisted-living complex. It's in the commercial development continuing in the 38-acre Pembina Connection development on the east side of town. And it's in Morden's agricultural research station, which is poised to receive 50 new staff and a significant expansion of its wheat programs. Many other projects are either under way or in development.

Most importantly, Morden's transition to city reaffirms the community vision, ethic, and progress. And I extend sincere congratulations to Mayor Wiebe, Deputy Mayor Wiebe, the council, and residents of Morden on this milestone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Teddy Bears' Picnic

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): I'd like everyone to invite everyone to join me at the 26th annual Teddy Bears' Picnic this Sunday at Assiniboine Park. This much-loved, free event is a perfect place for friends, family, children, and teddy bears to get together.

They'll have fun playing and also learn a little bit more about how to help each other stay healthy. Of course, it's also the perfect time to bring your teddy bear down for their annual checkup. We want to make sure that our stuffed friends stay healthy and happy too. I hope that everyone can come and join me on Sunday to support the Children's Hospital Foundation and have a lot of fun. One of the most exciting opportunities at the picnic is the chance to bring your teddy bear to the Dr. Goodbear Clinic Tent. There, highly trained medical staff will give teddy bears a checkup and emergency medical attention if needed.

For over 25 years, the Teddy Bears' Picnic has been bringing families together and raising awareness about children's health. We started with just seven full tents of activities and has grown to more than 40 tents today. From the clinic to the main stage, there's something fun for everyone.

The Children's Hospital Foundation of Manitoba hosts the Teddy Bears' Picnic and since its beginnings has raised \$2.2 million for children's health care and research. Every dollar your family spends goes to—at the picnic goes towards pediatric research and the Manitoba institute of health and equipment and programs for Children's Hospital. The foundation of the Teddy Bears' Picnic has played a crucial role in educating Manitobans about child health issues and helping children in hospitals get the treatment that they need.

Mr. Speaker, everyone is welcome to come down Sunday to the Teddy Bears' Picnic, no matter how old you are or what kind of stuffing you're made of. Special thanks to all the volunteers and friends who bring this important event to life.

Thank you.

Caring For Our Watersheds Program

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): The Caring For Our Watersheds competition is an annual environmental contest for students in Manitoba sponsored by Agrium. I had the pleasure of attending the event at Oak Hammock Marsh on April the 14th.

The contestants are groups from one to four students from grades 7 to 12 and they are registered by their teachers amongst participating schools. The contest challenges the students to answer a simple question: What can you do to improve your watershed? Their answers were some of the most innovative, thought-provoking, cost-friendly, really solutions to our watershed challenges that I've heard.

The entries are judged based on innovation, environmental impact, comprehensive scope and communication, budget, realistic solutions and visuals. The top ten schools' projects for 2012 were from Virden Collegiate institute, Gimli High School, Lord Selkirk Regional, Westwood Collegiate, and the Thomas Greenway middle school. The proposals exhibited a remarkable diversity of topics, such as stream-bank erosion, invasive species, the learning garden, advertising the proper disposal of mercury lamps, Sturgeon Creek restoration, composting, the Partnered and Prepared program for improving our watersheds, upgrading restrooms in my school, green roof, a recycling campaign, an installation—installing infiltration systems into school water fountains.

As a hunter and conservation myself, I have seen the great potential for this program—holds for the next generation of conservationists and the status of our watersheds. There are 10 major drain areas in our

province alone. Many problems with those watersheds and their potential solutions will often impact countless living creatures, millions of square kilometres, and thousands of people over multiple jurisdiction.

* (14:30)

The caring of our watersheds programs taps into the 'creativity' of our youth and the practicality to work within the community to improve our watersheds. It's a great privilege to have to rise and honour these young environmental stewards of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists Training Program

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): A graduate level program to educate speech language pathologists and audiologists is badly needed in our province.

This morning we had a breakfast at the Legislature with members of the Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association. For 20 years, they've been trying to get a training program for speech language pathologists and audiologists in Manitoba. For when—20 years, consecutive and NDP governments have been saying no.

A training program for speech language pathologists and audiologists is needed now and urgently. Manitoba is short of speech language pathologists and audiologists. They are essential to help children and adults with speech and hearing problems. For children, early access to the right help can make a lifelong difference in their ability to speak and pronounce words well and for such children to reach their potential, and yet we heard this morning of long waits to speak—see speech language pathologists and audiologists because of the shortage in Manitoba. It's urgent that we have in Manitoba the speech language pathologists and audiologist training program as soon as possible.

I want to say thank you to Laura Lenton, president of the Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association; to Maureen Penko, the past president; to Dr. Alexa Okrainec and to the other members of the Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association and their staff for coming to the Legislature and providing such an informative presentation.

I want to also, in this statement, to extend congratulations to Kelvin High School on their

100 years and wish them the best in the celebrations coming up in the next few days.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): As previously announced, we'll be dealing with the Opposition Day motion today.

And I also just want to let the House know we'll be doing Committee of Supply tomorrow, which means we'll also be sitting in Committee of Supply on Friday.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): And I wonder if I could seek leave of the House to have the Opposition Day motion be moved by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow for the Opposition Day motion to be moved by the honourable member for Tuxedo? *[Agreed]*

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu),

THAT the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to conduct an independent and transparent public spending examination to ensure Manitoba families are receiving effective government services at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: I am pleased to rise and introduce this motion today before the Manitoba Legislature. And I want to thank the member for Morris for seconding the motion, and, indeed, I encourage all members of the Legislative Assembly to support this motion today.

This is a motion that calls on accountability, transparency, and essentially a review of all government programs, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that Manitobans have the opportunity to see first-hand what programs are working, what are not. And if those programs are not working, we need to try and make the programs better, more efficient and effective for Manitobans in order to ensure that we're providing those programs that are needed for all Manitobans. So, indeed, I encourage all members of this House to support this.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this session, we on this side of the House introduced a five-point alternative budget plan to the NDP—for the NDP that will help control spending and create jobs by improving Manitoba's business climate without raising costs for Manitoba families. And this, again, this motion that we're debating before the Legislature today is indeed very important because it goes back to the basic fundamentals of this government. We see that the government sees fit to spend taxpayer dollars at whatever way they see fit, Mr. Speaker. The problem here is that there seems to be a spend-more, get-less mentality when it comes to this NDP government.

We continue to see the revolving door of justice, Mr. Speaker. We continue to see people who are waiting for diagnostic services, for other services in health care, in ERs, people dying in ERs waiting for health-care services. We see that children in the child and family services sector of the government continue to fall through the cracks under the NDP government. And we continue to be almost dead last in Canada, if not dead last, when it comes to mathematics results in Canada. And these are just but a few things that the NDP government that—of what's going on in Manitoba today.

And so while the NDP government has continued to spend more on all of the government programs out there, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans continue to get less in the way of services. So this motion is just calling on the government to do a review of all of the government programs to ensure that we find out what programs are working, what programs are not working. Let's look at what it is that we're trying to achieve as a result of these programs. If we're not achieving the results that we want and need and that Manitobans want and need, then we need to do away with those programs and look for other more efficient and effective ways to deliver those services.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are hoping to see that this Legislature text-takes step to restore transparency and fairness, and that's what they're looking for from us and that's why we're introducing—we introduced this motion today.

Let's look at the NDP recent trend, Mr. Speaker. Need to protect salaries? Well, if you're the NDP you just change the balance budget law. Need to seek around—need to sneak around the election blackout on announcements? Well, if you're the NDP government you just break the law and apologize later. Need to raise money? Well, if you're the NDP

government you just break the promise and raise taxes. Need to stack the Chamber? Well, if you're the NDP you just use an ADM in the civil service to do their political work. Don't like the recidivism rates? Well, if you're the NDP government you change the definition of recidivism and make it look like we don't have a catch-and-release justice system.

Well, Mr. Speaker, these are just but a few examples of what this NDP government has been doing over the last number of years. When the NDP do get caught, they simply make half-hearted apologies. They say they didn't understand the law even though they wrote the law.

In the case of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), Mr. Speaker, we know that he sent out a letter where he spoke on the record and he was correcting the record. He said that he inadvertently misled the House, and all the while knowing that he was misleading the House. And that's why he put the initial statements on the record.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP party that went into the election told Manitobans that they were on track with the deficit. They even said things were, quote, unquote, ahead of schedule. Then after the election we suddenly discover the deficit would be over a billion dollars. The government is not on track. The core government will run a \$504-million deficit this year. That is \$84 million or 20 per cent higher than it was supposed to be in the NDP's 2010 five-year economic plan.

*(14:40)

Mr. Speaker, the 2010 plan also called for limiting core government spending growth to an average of 1.9 per cent per year. Excluding the 2011 flood costs, core government spending growth will average 3.6 per cent per year in the first three years of the NDP plan. The government has a spending addiction and they have no intention of reining in their spending, and that's why Manitobans are being forced to pay more in the way of taxes, as they have had to as a result of this recent budget introduced by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, instead of focusing on expanding the economy as we have suggested through our five-point plan in creating jobs to fund front-line services, this government wants to raise taxes. Well, Manitobans can't afford this approach, and they have been telling us that for quite some time now.

This is an NDP party that promised Manitoba families—promised, Mr. Speaker—that they would not

raise taxes. Yet, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) made a clear promise and he said, quote, unquote: We'll deliver on it. Then, at his first available opportunity, and their first available opportunity, they turned around and handed Manitoba families one of the largest tax increases in the history of this province. These tax increases will take \$184 million out of the pockets of Manitoba families, probably a lot more, considering the record of the NDP when it comes to underestimating tax revenues.

This is on top of the emergency rate increase for hydro, as well as a refusal by Manitoba Hydro to return money to customers that the PUB ordered be refunded. This is on top of an increase in child-care fees, something I don't recall the NDP promising in the last election either, Mr. Speaker. This is on top of the NDP breaking their promise to remove education taxes from seniors and farmers. Not only did they fail to keep this promise, they cut their education support so education taxes around Manitoba are skyrocketing.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP tried to blame everyone and everything else. They tried to blame the flood, but the NDP knew that they were misleading Manitobans on this. They told Manitobans everything was on track during the election. Well, we all know in—Manitobans now know that that wasn't the case.

I could go on and on and I know I'm coming to the end of my time, Mr. Speaker, but the problem is, the bottom line is, is that this is a tax-and-spend government. It is a government that chooses to raise taxes to pay for their spending addiction, rather than reining their spending problem themselves, and at least admitting that they've got a problem.

And this motion before us today is simply calling on members of the government, members of the Cabinet, to do a review of all of the government programs, to ensure that we can create and deliver services to Manitobans, to ensure we can create positive programs for Manitobans, and to be able to deliver the services to Manitobans who are—who effect—who want those services, and who need those services, and who deserve those services, Mr. Speaker.

So, to me, I think all members of this House, if there's nothing to hide from members opposite, Mr. Speaker, and members of this government, they have nothing—they've nothing to lose by supporting this

motion today. This is something that is in the best interest of all Manitobans.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): What's obvious is that Manitoba families have a lot to lose if members opposite get their way, Mr. Speaker.

I've been saying all along, that there have been people who have advised us, you know, when we went into an economic downturn, a global economic downturn, people advised us to cut deeply, to cut deeply into health care and cut deeply into education, and not invest in infrastructures and, I guess, turn kids away who need our help, not invest in corrections and those kinds of services. But there was a group of people saying cut deeply into these services so that you can come back into balance and save, why—I could—believe it was, \$500 million, all in one fell swoop. There was those people telling us that, Mr. Speaker.

On the other side of the spectrum, Mr. Speaker, there were people who were saying, don't worry about it, keep spending; here's something new to spend some money on; here's a program here to spend money on; here's something else to spend money on.

What I didn't quite understand, I guess, is that both those people who are saying cut deeply and those who say spend more, they're all in the same caucus across the way here. They're all over there. Here I thought they were just going to come along and say to us, cut deeply, like they brought the resolution into this House, Mr. Speaker, but, I guess I'm—I underestimated the members across the way; they really do want to have it both ways.

Mr. Speaker, this is a group of people across the way who came into this House with a resolution that proposed. And I'm not dreaming this, they can look it up in *Hansard* if they like. They remembered what they voted on and I remember how I voted on this resolution.

It was very clear; it was to cut deeply into the things that matter most to Manitoba families.

Mr. Speaker, they held that position tightly—very tightly, right up until—what event would that have been that forced them change their minds? It was on a Monday, I think; it was a—late on a Monday afternoon into Monday evening, when members opposite—oh, they came out of some backroom someplace saying, we've changed our stripes, we

think we should spend again. People of Manitoba, don't believe what we told you before. Don't believe what the NDP are saying, because they'll say we're nasty people when it comes to budgeting.

Believe us now. Don't believe what we said yesterday about cutting deeply into these services, Mr. Speaker, believe us now. Oh, by the way, the election's tomorrow; that had nothing to do with us coming out of this dark room, backroom someplace, with a new position.

They ran saying they were going to come back into balance in 2018—2018—four years after what we said we'd come into balance. Like, eight years after they brought forward a resolution that would've cut \$500 million out of Manitoba services, Mr. Speaker.

They come into this House and they talk about credibility, Mr. Speaker? I don't believe it.

Mr. Speaker, we understand completely that in order to protect the services that Manitobans value, to order to protect the services that Manitobans believe in and have always believed in, in this province, that we have to act responsibly when we're in government.

Having two positions, as the members opposite seem to have, isn't responsible. Must have been one heck of a caucus meeting to come up with this resolution when you've got some people saying, we got to stick to our tough position. And then you've got some, right in question period today, who want us to spend more. Every time they get up, they want to spend more money and more money, and now, they come forward with a resolution today, saying, we got to review that spending.

Well, which is it, Mr. Speaker? Which is it for members opposite?

I think a more responsible, a more Manitoban approach, would be to say Manitobans up-to Manitobans upfront, when we had a global economic downturn—and we still face uncertain times, Mr. Speaker. I think the more responsible approach would say, look, for the next five years, we're going to have this economic recovery strategy. We are saying to you, we will run a deficit in those—in four of those years and come back into balance in the fifth year, in 2014.

And we put forward our plan as to how we would accomplish that, and, as has been pointed out earlier, in year one, we were not just meeting targets, we were exceeding those targets. Year two comes

along, and we have—in addition to the economic downturn to deal with, we have a flood to deal with, which members opposite, quite obviously, either didn't notice or pretend not to acknowledge or they pretend we don't have to pay for it now.

Mr. Speaker, this government made some commitments; we announced programs—we did it openly; we worked with people in the civil service—especially needs to be congratulated for their work in making sure as many Manitobans as possible qualify through those programs for those benefits. That needs to be paid for.

Members opposite might think there's a tree out the back of the Legislative grounds so they can just go and take the money from—maybe that's their fantasy.

But we, on this side of the House, understand that we need to budget for that and we need to find that money, Mr. Speaker.

Now, you can find that money by cutting programs deeply, as members opposite have advised us to do, or you can do it raising some revenue.

*(14:50)

We, Mr. Speaker, have decided that we do have to contain costs and I can—and that is very clear in Budget 2012, if members opposite would care to read it. And, as members opposite have pointed out, there are some revenue increases as part of our overall strategy to come back into balance while protecting services Manitobans care about. In this budget that we put forward—in Budget 2012 we've done a number of things in which we contain costs. Members opposite talk about this review; they have no credibility given their history with reviews.

Mr. Speaker, we have put in place this year a program portfolio management review. This is a process in which we will hit our targets, from last year to this year a 3.9 per cent decrease in spending is what we will produce. Members opposite might not think that's a big deal because, of course, their resolution would've cut way deeper. We've put in place this review to produce an overall reduction of 1 per cent, \$128 million is what we will reduce as we move forward.

An Honourable Member: Who wrote that?

Mr. Struthers: The member opposite wants to know who wrote that. That was in the budget, Mr. Speaker. A budget that he voted against, and so I would

question the kind of credibility that they come forward with.

We've been very clear that we're going to reduce regional health authorities from 11 down to five, and that there will be savings as we do that. We have said very clearly that we're going to reduce the number of Crown corporations: Manitoba liquor control and Manitoba—the liquor and lotteries, reduce them into one corporation, again, realizing savings in dollars.

Mr. Speaker, we have said that we're going to decrease by 20 per cent the number of agencies, boards and commissions in this province, again, something that will produce savings. All the while the savings that we accrue through these measures and others will be redirected into front-line services.

Mr. Speaker, we do understand that there are many things about the way governments deliver programs that need to change. We understand that. What we do not agree with is the hack and slash kind of an approach that members opposite speak of and actually did when they were in government. That kind of an approach we do reject. This is a very responsible approach that we've taken—we're taking forward. That this is—these are the reasons why we won't be supporting this kind of a draconian review as proposed. But don't underestimate our determination to make sure that we come back into balance in 2014, and protect health-care service at the same time.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Thank you. I thank the honourable member for Morris. The honourable member for Morris has the floor.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I'm pleased to stand and speak in support of this motion brought forward by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), and I don't believe that the Finance Minister actually understood the motion because he didn't speak to it at all. He spoke around it and around it, which is typical of what this NDP government does, and that's the reason for this motion being brought forward: accountability and transparency.

I'd like to read this motion one more time so maybe he'll get it this time, and it says that the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to agree that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and Cabinet ministers are—sorry, I'm reading the wrong one—that the Legislative Assembly—*[interjection]* Oh, well, there's two Opposition Day motions on the Order Paper—that the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to conduct

an independent and transparent public spending examination to ensure Manitoba families are receiving effective government services at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers, Mr. Speaker. That's what the Opposition Day motion is about. And I'm really not really sure why—what they would find so egregious in this, because what it says is: to ensure Manitoba families are receiving effective government services at the lowest cost—possible cost to taxpayers. I don't see anything egregious about that statement. I'm wondering why they wouldn't want to be supporting it.

And, Mr. Speaker, all this is is—as the member from Tuxedo says, is to examine what's working within government programs and what's not working within government programs. That is a simple thing, and most organizations do that. In fact, all organizations do that, whether it's a business, a private enterprise, or a public body or a volunteer organization. All organizations conduct examinations or review from time to time, to ensure that the money they take in is effectively used on the way it goes out to the people that it needs to go to. This is just good practice—good practice in any organization.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's all about controlling the spending and improving the business climate within the province and promoting entrepreneurship—creating jobs, growing the economy in that way. Rather than tax and spend, let's create a business climate, a business-friendly climate in Manitoba.

We encourage head offices and businesses to come here. We encourage new, young entrepreneurs to start businesses here, not hinder them with all the mounds of red tape that they have to go through, but encourage them and allow the climate so that they can do their business here. Young people can stay here, grow our economy here in Manitoba and become good supporters of the economy and, therefore, growing the economy and growing the tax base. That's the way to do it, not tax and spend like this government wants to do all the time.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not surprised when I hear the members not going to support this because they don't—they don't support transparency and accountability. They try and hide everything because, you know, who on that side of the House went out and knocked on doors and said, if you elect me, I'm going to raise taxes by \$184 million this year.

I don't know if any of them did that but, Mr. Speaker, they hid that. They did not go to the public

and tell the public that they were going to raise hydro rates, and they were going to child-care rates, and they were going to raise fees on licences and fees on certificates, death certificates and fees on female services and registrations on cars—all this totalling up to \$184 million. No, they hid that—they hid that from the public. They didn't want the public to know that. So they weren't upfront and they weren't accountable.

A lot of things that this government has done has been the same way, Mr. Speaker. They go and they do things like break the law. They go and they make an announcement in the 90-day blackout period. One of the—the Health Minister did that and then she comes back and says, oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know.

Well, excuse me, Mr. Speaker. She was part of the Cabinet that made that legislation. Of course, she knew. She knew what she was doing; she willfully broke the law, and there was no consequences for that. Of course, they want to hide that. Of course, they don't want to raise that issue.

Mr. Speaker, they politicized the civil service. They pretend one thing, and they do another. And they get the civil service to go out and do their political bidding for them. And that is just a blight on democracy in this province. The civil servants are here to serve all of Manitobans, not the NDP government. That is a blight on democracy that this government has done. Of course, they want to hide that, too.

And, Mr. Speaker, if they want to protect their salaries, what do they do? They change the balanced budget legislation, and they just sneak—sneak that in there. Oh, well, you know, we need to protect our ministerial salaries, but they don't the public to know about that. They want to hide it all and keep it very secret. They don't want to be transparent and accountable to the people of Manitoba.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) had his turn to speak, and now he seems to chirp some more from his seat. But he was the one that caught in a lie, and then had to apologize to the government, to the House, saying, oh, it was inadvertent—

* (15:00)

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

I wish to caution the honourable member for Morris.

The term that she just referenced in respect to another member of the House has been ruled unparliamentary. I ask her please to withdraw that particular comment.

Mrs. Taillieu: I withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Please continue.

Mrs. Taillieu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes we get very passionate when we speak in the Chamber and certainly some words slip out that we don't intend to say, but I do want to note that the minister then had to apologize to the House and say that what he put on the record the first time, which wasn't exactly true, that it was inadvertent. Inadvertent.

So, you know, we know that this government wants to hide things that they don't want the public to know. And, you know, things happened before the election: we're ahead of schedule on the deficit. After the election: oops, we're over a billion dollars, highest deficit in the province—has ever had in the history of the province. We won't raise taxes and we'll deliver on that. Remember that statement, Mr. Speaker, from before the election?

And what happens after the election? At the earliest convenience, \$184 million in new taxes and fees. They even promised to, before the election, remove education taxes for seniors and farmers, but where—what happened to that? We didn't see that promise materialize, so another broken promise. A litany of broken promises from this government, and it's only because they don't want to be transparent to the public of Manitoba. They want to say one thing before an election and do something different after the election, and that is why Manitobans don't trust this NDP government.

It's very strange, too, that this government thinks—portends itself to be accountable and transparent, and yet these are the people, at the same time, that lecture other levels of government on their behaviour and bring in legislation to tell them how to act and what to do, and talk to school boards about their role in accountability. All of these things, they say one thing and they do another.

They make laws that are supposed to be governing all of Manitobans, but it seems it's not for all Manitobans, because the NDP government is exempt from the laws of Manitoba, it would seem. They want to make these laws, but they want to make them for other people.

I think this is a good motion brought forward by the member from Tuxedo, who is simply saying, let's have an independent spending examination, examination of everything that's gone on. Just let's have a look at it. Makes good sense, to see what's working and what's not working, and I don't see anything wrong with that.

And I think if the government was truly interested, a government that was truly interested in the future of the well-being of this province would support an independent spending examination and would vote for the motion.

But a government that is arrogant, deceitful and only there to hold power for themselves, and hiding things from the public, spinning untruths, well that's a government that certainly wouldn't vote for this resolution. I wonder how they'll vote. Thank you.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I'm pleased to be able to speak to the Opposition Day motion which urges the government to conduct a public spending review.

Now, we welcome the opportunity to debate this particular motion on this side of the House because this gives us the opportunity to say to the members opposite, to say to them bluntly, categorically, unequivocally, we're already doing it. It's already happening.

Why don't—my suggestion to the opposition is to suggest a motion to our side of the House that offers something that we're not doing, but instead all's they're asking us to do is what we're already doing.

Now, the members opposite have been out of office for a long time.

An Honourable Member: Not long enough.

Mr. Allum: Not long enough, says my friend from Thompson, but nevertheless, they've been out of business for a long time, out of government for a long time, so they may have forgotten. It's possible, they may have forgotten, it's been a long time ago, or possibly they don't know, but, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the members opposite that it is the business of government to review public spending every day, 365 days a year, so that Manitobans receive the highest quality public services possible. So in part, the opposition motion tells us to do something that we routinely do, and it happens every day.

But, more than that, Mr. Speaker, budget two twelve calls on the government to hold the line on

spending. The truth is that more than 10 departments, I think, won't have any additional resources available to them, and other departments that are *[inaudible]* and important to us will have modest increases. But on the whole, Budget 2012 tells us that we need to hold the line on spending, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Secondly, Budget 2012 calls for a portfolio management review to achieve an additional 1 per cent savings that totals \$128 million for in-year savings. We'll be doing that as part of the project-program-portfolio management review.

But more than that, instead of handing the keys to government to some independent person out there—and we know on this side of the House who that kind of person might be. Connie Curran springs to mind, but they might have in mind the Drummond report from Ontario, in which an independent but not exactly unbiased observer, since he was an economist for the TD Bank for many, many years, suggested to the government in Ontario that one of the ways that they could balance the budget was to hack and chop and axe and chop and hack and chop.

Well, we wouldn't hand over the keys and the responsibility to government, the responsibility to Manitobans, to someone to tell us to do that, Mr. Speaker. That would be against our principles on the one hand, but why we are in government in the first place. We want to make these tough decisions; we want to work with Manitobans; we want to make sure that Manitobans have the services that they need so that what matters most to Manitobans is taken care of; and that's exactly what we're doing.

More than that, though, Mr. Speaker, the portfolio management review is an integrated undertaking. It's an inclusive undertaking. It works with all members of the public service and the government members to ensure that the choices that we make are best by Manitobans. They don't just arbitrarily hack. They 'ont' just arbitrarily slash. The don't just arbitrarily axe programs. Instead, it will be a thoughtful, considered, integrated, inclusive approach that make sure that the things that matter most to Manitobans are still in effect after we're done the portfolio management review.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what the motion really tells me and what it suggests to members on this side of the House is that the opposition doesn't really understand what their job is. They don't know what they're supposed to do. They're not sure of how they're supposed to conduct themselves. They're—

they don't know that they're supposed to offer an alternative to what we on this side of the House propose, an alternative plan for Manitobans. They're required to propose an alternative vision for Manitobans in the 21st century—

An Honourable Member: Pallister's going to do that.

Mr. Allum: —but they're not going to do that. Well, apparently, Mr. Pallister will do that, Mr. Speaker, because no one else on that side of the House wants to be a leader of their party or of a government.

Somebody else can do it, they say. Give over the keys of government to an independent observer to do it, Mr. Speaker. That's their suggestion. Well, we take on the responsibility, and we work in partnership with Manitobans.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as an alternative to Budget 2012, the members opposite published a—something on their 'webstite', and it talks about five things that they think we should do, one of which is this—one of this is this program spending review exercise that they say we should do. It also says something about red tape and something about hydro and something else and something else, the New West Partnership, the apparent cure-all to all that ails us. You got the common cold? Sign the partnership agreement, because that'll apparently cure it.

* (15:10)

But you know, Mr. Speaker, you know in those five points that they identify is what their alternative vision is. You know what's not included in those five points? You know what's not there? Not a word about health care. That's a service Manitobans want. Silent on the matter.

Not a word about education, Mr. Speaker. Not a word. That's a service Manitobans want, but, instead, there's not a word about it. Not a word about infrastructure, not a word about energy efficiency, not a word about childcare, not a word about housing. There's not one word in their alternative view that speaks to what matters most to Manitobans. And I say, shame.

What's clear, Mr. Speaker, is that Budget 2012 speaks to the things that matter most to Manitobans, but keeps in mind that balance is required to make sure that we use our limited resources to the very best of our advantage. But we know what lies behind the motion from the members opposite; it's a biased, non-transparent intent to cut public services, chop

public programs and take an axe to the public sector. And we welcome this motion and we welcome the chance to debate it, because I want to say bluntly, categorically, unequivocally, we reject that particular solution and we won't do it.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are involved in a much more productive exercise, a much more positive process and a much more exciting project. We regard it as our obligation, not only to make sure that spending is kept in check, but to build Manitoba for the 21st century.

They want to take us back to the 19th century, Mr. Speaker. We want to build a government for the 21st century and that's why we're merging Crown corporations; that's why we're merging regional health authorities; that's why we're ensuring that Manitobans have the lowest utility rates in the country; and that's why we're holding the line on tuition for our students. We're investing in Manitoba, we're keeping Manitoba affordable and we're building for the future. I would invite the opposition to join that side.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): You know, listening to some of the things that have been said in the House, it reminds me of dealing with an addict, and this government has an addiction to spending. They're always suspicious; addicts are always suspicious of other people, and the—this government certainly is suspicious of—it's pretty clear what this motion says. We just want them to check out, do a spending review and be clear about it. But, you know, the first step to a—to recovery of an addict, someone that's addicted to spending, is admitting, Mr. Speaker, that you have a problem, and this government obviously can't admit they have a problem.

They think that they're always right, that no one else in the world could have anything to say. We see problems throughout every committee we go on. The Public Accounts Committee, we can't get answers to. The government thinks that if, you know, the Auditor General makes a recommendation, the government has—doesn't have to follow it. They expect a report to be passed when only half of the recommendations have been fulfilled. The Auditor General doesn't do these things just on a whim. Her department works hard to make sure that Manitobans are well represented, and then money is well-spent.

So those—we feel that many of those recommendations, most of them should be followed and we need reasons why they shouldn't be. You

know, we have Crown corporations that are aren't clear and aren't following their mandate. We have Manitoba Hydro, that we're not sure which direction they're going on. Originally, when we looked back at the Public Utilities Board rulings, they assured us by this year, March 31st, 2012, we were going to see a 75-25 debt-to-equity ratio. We now know that's blown out of the water. That, indeed, the Public Utilities Board expected that that ratio would be reached with increases less than the CPI rate. But, obviously, we're going to emergency rate increases; we're going to expect rate increases of 3.5 per cent. So, very difficult to find that we're going to be able to do that in hydro.

And, you know, the budget—obviously, we can talk about that, how we miss—how Manitobans were misled by no tax increases. And then, well, obviously, the big tax increase in recent history. And we have a Finance Minister that, as evidenced yesterday, doesn't understand the difference between a balance sheet and an income statement. And that's disturbing to Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, because that's a pretty critical part of his job, and I know he lots of advice along the way, but it's a little important to know that. But I guess he didn't get that education through his system.

So, anyway, he can maybe ask somebody the difference or I can inform him how that works.

You know—[interjection] I do have a little bit of education in that regard from both Brandon University and elsewhere, Stan, and in business, and business in government is—are very different.

But we have a right to disclose to Manitobans and Manitobans need to know what the truth is of the matter. He has the right to—

Mr. Speaker: I just wish to caution the honourable member for Brandon West that if he was referencing another member of the Assembly by a name other than a constituency or a portfolio, I caution the honourable member, please refer to other members by their constituency or their portfolios.

Mr. Helwer: I'm sorry, I must of misspoke, Mr. Speaker. It was inadvertence, apparently.

However, we do have a right to disclose to Manitobans on the truth of the budget and how we value our assets and how we go about that. We have a requirement to disclose to bond rating agencies, and misleading statements made by this minister, you know, are very troubling to Manitobans. So we need some clarity in that debate that, obviously,

there's broken promises. They're willing to talk about past governments' records, the federal government's records, American government's records, but, obviously, they're not very proud of theirs because they don't speak to their record very often.

And, you know, we have lots of problems, obviously, throughout the whole gamut of government services, and we want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that Manitobans are well served by the money that they pay in taxes and how that money is spent.

Government projects—well, where to go there? I mean, can we find a government project that was finished on time and on budget? I mean, I can talk about the bridges in Brandon again. You know, the original projections were—the original projectionments were \$17 million for those two bridges and, two years, and what did we get? Several years down the road, \$28 million, I think, is what it may have—that was the number on the sign, anyway, but it could have been well beyond that.

So, you know, the government needs to take responsibility for its actions instead of hiding things. And I'm very concerned about how much—how many things are hidden by this government, how little they want to answer questions, even in the House, in committee, or in the Public Accounts Committee. And those are where Manitobans expect us to ask the questions that—that's where Manitobans expect to get answers. And all we see are higher costs, higher taxes, fewer services and we're just going down a very, very dangerous road, Mr. Speaker.

So, in the end here, you know, I really do hope that the government, if they do truly believe that they are doing this, as the previous speaker said, that they will follow this resolution and will, indeed, have a full and open public accounting of how they do things and a review, an independent review, not something that they look at their own books by themselves to expect that they know how they're going to do it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to speak today to the resolution put forward by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

And the resolution urges the provincial government to conduct an independent and transparent public spending examination to ensure Manitoba families are receiving effective government services at the lowest possible cost to

taxpayers. Now, on the surface of that, it would be hard to take issue with this except, as the member for Riverview has pointed out, that we're already doing what this resolution is asking for.

But we have to look at, you know, where this resolution is coming from. The Conservative Party of Manitoba has a history, been around a long, long time. And when the Conservatives talk about restraining government spending, we have to look little deeper as to see what that actually means. And in the recent past we have, you know, Gary Filmon to look at in his 11 years as to what sort of restraint and approach to spending cuts that he took as premier.

But, you know, there's a much more interesting template to follow in the Conservative past than Gary Filmon. As a matter of fact, Gary Filmon was a pussycat compared to Sterling Lyon. And there are members in the Legislature who were around in that period of time, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) being one, who know that that is true. And Sterling Lyon actually had a name for his spending restraint program and it was called acute protracted restraint.

* (15:20)

And, you know, I don't have all of my notes in here yet, so I'll have to save some of them for the next time I get to speak, but you know, it was quite well-known what his approach was. For example, Mr. Speaker, he stopped—by the way, in the middle of the election campaign in 1977, he said—Sterling Lyon said that the dam construction—that was Jenpeg was particularly exorbitant, citing \$300 million Jenpeg's dam on the Nelson River as one of the greatest pieces of political incompetence and wastage of taxpayers' dollars that has ever taken place in the history of Canada.

And after he got elected, he appointed Justice Tritschler to examine Hydro's operations, you know, consistent with what they want to do here, and the report was released in 1979. After all this fuss and all this expense, it didn't lead to any significant change whatsoever in the way Hydro operated, and nor did it receive—reach any conclusions about privatizing part or all of the Crown corporation. But, clearly, you know, that's where they were headed.

Now let's look for—let's look at some of the other aspects of Sterling Lyon's approach. He froze construction. There was a seniors home in my constituency that was just stopped on the spot. He's—

he froze the Hydro dam construction right in the middle, having spent a gazillion or two dollars on it; just froze it, stopped construction. So, in 1981, when I was fundraising for the provincial party for the upcoming election—I think the member for Kildonan was involved in fundraising then, too—you know, I had occasion to talk to an engineering firm, an architect firm, and the message was clear. They were saying straight up: You know, here's our cheque for your re-election. We're dyed-in-the-wool Conservatives, but we can't afford these guys. We would never vote NDP, never vote NDP, but when you're in power, when the NDP's in power, things get done. We have jobs. We can work.

So I think that that's where a lot of the Conservative problem, you know, comes from, is examples like Sterling Lyon, where people remember that. Their business buddies who they chat up in various events that they attend, you know, maybe the odd Jets game, you know, are very suspicious of them. They're very suspicious of them because you know why they like them and they generally agree with them? They know that in practice, things—the results, the outcomes are not that great, having Conservatives around.

Another approach that Sterling Lyon took was to fire civil servants. He set up a review committee. I don't know how many—I think he actually targeted a number, you know, and then he tried to reach it. I don't think he got to the total, but this is what he did. He promoted fear in the constituency, in the civil service and around the province. And people—you know, after four years—I think he was the first premier in many, many decades to only serve four years and he was thrown out in 1981.

But the question is: What does that all have to do with what we're talking about today? Well, Mr. Speaker, it has a lot to do with what we're talking about today, because their new leader, Brian Pallister, is the future for them, right? And Gary Filmon is a pussycat compared to Brian Pallister. Brian Pallister has very little in common with Gary Filmon, who had a more or less humane approach on a general basis.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Honourable member for Morris, on a point of order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I think that a former member of this Chamber and a former member of the federal Cabinet deserves respect, and the way in which the member is speaking of him I don't believe is respectful.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Elmwood, on the same point of order.

Mr. Maloway: Well, Mr. Speaker, I mean I can appreciate the member trying to get some brownie points in advance of the new leader arriving, but there is no point of order here, in my opinion.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I appreciate the advice that I've received from honourable members with respect to the point of order, but I must rule that there is no point of order. There appears to be a dispute over the facts with respect to this, and we'll let the member for Elmwood continue his comments.

Mr. Maloway: So, Mr. Speaker, the—a point I'm trying to make is that the new de facto leader of the Conservative Party takes his inspiration not from Gary Filmon. I mean, in my view that might be passable, but he takes it from Sterling Lyon, you know, and Sterling Lyon had a very radical approach. So the idea that somehow that they're going to introduce a motion here to suggest somehow we're going to have an independent commission to decide on spending reduction—when their history is one of hacking and slashing—is laughable. That is not where they're going to go and, you know, their new leader may arrive here and he may be, you know, he may be convinced by some of his handlers that, you know, he has to be not as extreme as the past and not as extreme as Sterling Lyon. But the reality is that the—that he has a track record, the Conservative Party has a track record and we are going to let people know about that track record.

For example, the member, Mr. Pallister, when he was here made a big production about how he was going to reduce red tape in the government. And, you know, when he left and ran for federal Conservative leader—*[interjection]* And, by the way, the member is totally wrong. He was never anywhere near the Cabinet. But when he was running for federal leader of the Conservative Party against Joe Clark he was claiming that he had reduced—he'd been reduced the red tape—the number of pages of business regulations in Manitoba, from 10,000 pages he'd reduced it by three or four thousand pages. Well, I'd like to ask

that former member, you know, name me one, name me one page. We can't find his report. As hard as we look for this great report that he talked about that was in all his press releases when he ran for leadership of the federal Conservative Party, we can't find 3,000 pages of reductions. We can't find any pages or reductions. So, you know, I think they have to go back to the drawing board here, rethink their approach, and I'm sure they're going to do that.

Now, you know, let's look at the—thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's look at what they actually did in the more recent past, you know, in the Filmon years. They decided to sell the telephone system. Okay, we all—we even remember that. And they set it up—they set up the IPO in such a way that they couldn't possibly be unsuccessful because unlike Facebook they actually undervalued it. They—the shares had been trading around \$30, \$35 I believe—I don't own any—for the last number of years, and they sold these shares at \$13 a share and they even financed that. They—*[interjection]* I didn't buy any. They financed the shares so people could buy these shares at \$6. The point about all this is they sold off the telephone system which was owned by the public at a fraction of the cost, at less than half price, okay, and now they wonder why you can't have proper cellphone service in Emerson.

Now, isn't that—you know, aren't they a group of geniuses? Right? You know, now, what did they do with the proceeds of the telephone system? Well, they put it into the rainy day fund and they used it, you know, for government operations in an attempt to win the 1999 election. Now, fortunately, the public saw through all that and threw them out of office, and I think they're going to continue to do so in the future.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Very entertaining to follow the member from Elmwood, and he talked about the Lyon government being thrown out after four years. I think it was only three years that you, sir, got kicked out of the federal government by your own party. So I don't—maybe we should not cast the first stone when it—*[interjection]* This was a member that was a—held the record for the most words spoke of any member, so his rhetoric means nothing—means nothing—Mr. Speaker. Whenever we hear the member from Elmwood get up and talk about any issue, he has no relevance it's just hot air. I was hoping that he would be able to stick to the script and I will help him with that today.

* (15:30)

When we talk about accountability and transparency, what are we really talking about? We talk about things that make our province work, make us competitive, and that is so important. Why don't we do those things?

When we talk about Manitoba Hydro, what have we done to our businesses? We put another tax on them. They didn't like the previous chair of the PUB. What'd they do? He said, you got to be accountable; we want to see your records; we want to make sure; before we put another rate increase, we want to see the documentation. So what'd they do? They went and changed the chair. 'Ka-chinck.' Boy oh boy, that worked great. All of Manitoba can pay more hydro rates now. That's not what we're doing to make Manitoba competitive. We talk about the women in our world that are so important to make this province a better place. What do they do to them? They put a tax on their haircuts. What woman don't like to look nice? So it was another back-door tax. We talk about registration of our vehicles so we can get to and from work. Those people—those people in rural Manitoba, those that commute, Mr. Speaker, are very, very important to us. So what'd they do to them? They put another \$35 tax on their vehicle registrations. Shame on them. Talk about sales tax on our insurance properties, and that is another back-door tax.

They know very well what they're doing, and I know the member from Dauphin, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), he's not all to blame on this. I can tell you that he don't have the capability to make the some of the decisions that he made in this last budget. If he did, then he has to stand up and say, I inadvertently made those mistakes, because I don't think he really meant to do what he intended to do with this budget. Because if he did, when you look at the overall debt, the overall debt of the province, they had the spending problem prior to the election—in 2010 and 2011, a billion-dollar debt.

Also, in that very same budget, they were proposing a small deficit. Instead, they went ahead, spent more money, another \$504 million for 2011-2012, that is going to affect our kids, our grandkids. And quite frankly, I'm proud to be a grandparent, but I am not going to stand in this House and let this NDP government tax my kids and my grandkids. What a legacy to leave. How proud can you be to be part of a government that taxes your kids and your grandkids for a spending problem that you have? You got to look in the mirror and say, how could I do

this? What right do I have to spend more money—spend more money—than what I can really afford to spend? I think we need to take a hard look at it.

Also, they talk about consultation. This motion is bang on. They may not understand it, Mr. Speaker, what they should understand. We talked about the RHAs. We said in our campaign, yes, they need to be looked at, but where was the consultation? We drill this home time and time again, and this government 'yets' to pay attention to really what is going on, and consultation is imperative.

Talk about the education tax, about 'accountaby,' and me and the Minister of Finance, he was Ag Minister at the time, we talked about the rebate of farm taxes back to the farmer. The farmer pays the tax—pays the tax—applies to the Department of Agriculture for that refund. Instead of walking down the hall and handing the Minister of Finance a cheque—and if the Minister of Finance did have any input in—it was a \$1.40 or a \$1.50—I don't know what the fees are—the government pays for writing a cheque, but whatever that amount is it's got to be a whole lot less than a hundred million dollars that it cost to administer that program. They also talked about in the election—prior to the election being called, they were going to eliminate school taxes for seniors. They haven't laid out that plan yet. I hope it's better than what they did with the education tax on farmland.

Also, I know the member from Riverview talked about the New West Partnership. Well, we have a lot to learn about working with other provinces. We have nothing left. We are in the middle of nowhere. We need to reach out to those other provinces, find out what they're doing right, find out what they're doing wrong, be at the table. In fact, there's other talks going on in between the northern states and some of these other provinces. And I say, where's the government? Where are they actually going to be as a result of some of these conversations that are going on between the western provinces and the northern states?

We have to make sure we're accountable, and that's what this resolution does, Mr. Speaker. It's very clear to me that what we need to do is conduct an independent and transparent public-spending examination. It's about priorities. It's about spending your money in the right places and on the right things we need to do—not overspending.

Yes, they stand up and say, oh, the government—the Conservatives can't have it both ways. They can't

ask for more spending on one hand and ask to cut on the other. It's about priorities; it's about doing the right thing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): And it's a pleasure to get involved in the debate this afternoon, and I listened to the member for Interlake with great—excuse me—yes, the—Lakeside with great interest, Mr. Speaker, as he talks about spending priorities. But I didn't hear him recommend to the Chamber or recommend to the government a single thing in his riding that he wants to cut. I never heard him say, you know, we're building a new school there in Warren or Woodlands, I believe. He could've cut that school if he wanted to. He could've stood up in the House a few minutes ago, it's—I have a great idea on how to save 3 or 4 or 5 or 10 million dollars; cut that school in my backyard.

But did he do it? No, he didn't do it, Mr. Speaker. The member didn't do it. And I can guarantee you, when that school is open, he'll be pushing aside the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) and say, oh, this was my idea; this school was my idea. And that's what he'll be doing.

We know that to be true of all the members across the way, because, I can tell you, I got a chance to listen to them in debate, both—and during the budget and during Estimates. I know all the ministers here can back me up. Every single one of them asked for more. They asked for more, more, more.

Spend more money, is all we hear from the members opposite, again today from the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu). You know, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) was talking about the necessity to review government programs, which exactly what this resolution calls for, the necessity to review government programs. And a program, as you imagine, has been around since 1960. I think it's important that we reviewed it; he did. They felt that there's better alternate ways to spend that money and we made that decision. But what does the member for Morris want? She wants us to spend more money.

Mr. Speaker—and you can go from every single member across the way. You know, the—you hear this from—I know that former member for Portage la Prairie, he wanted a whole new hospital. And, no, I'm not sure where they're at with that now. I know they wanted the new emergency ward.

You know, member—my good friend from Lac du Bonnet, I know he's eager to get a number of

roads paved in his area, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* See? I—he agrees with me now, even though he voted against our budget, which is doing exactly that.

Every single member opposite is guilty, because none of them come here and say, oh, by the way, you know, I can—you'll want to close down things in my riding, or don't pave my road, Mr. Speaker. Every single one of them wants more money.

And I think it's important, as the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) talks about, is comparing the record between our government and then the Filmon government. We'll talk a little bit about—we'll talk about debt and debt servicing, Mr. Speaker. When they were in government—when they left government in 1999, they were spending 13 cents on the dollar to service the debt. That was much—now, we reduce that to 6 per cent. These are these—you know, these Tories across the way, they're the great titans of industry, you know, the great captains of commerce. They know how to run businesses, you know, but they were into—as a member of finance—*[interjection]*—into the ground; exactly right. So they were running—they were spending 13 cents on the dollar to service the debt; we're now spending 6 cents on the dollar to service the debt.

Now, when you—the other thing—what's the—the other thing now, Mr. Speaker, to speak about, of course, is the net debt-to-GDP ratio. When they were in power—when they left office, the net debt-to-GDP ratio was running in the high to mid—round—I should say, around 34, 35 per cent. So the net debt to the growth—to the actual wealth of the economy, was around 34 to 35 per cent. We've reduced that down to the mid-20s; incredible reduction. You know, I've never heard—I never heard a single member across the way mention the incredible reduction that we accomplished in reducing the ratio of net debt-to-GDP. And it's important that we talk about net debt.

* (15:40)

Another thing, Mr. Speaker, is tax cuts. When it comes to a government that cuts taxes, it's the NDP government here on this side of the House that have cut taxes for Manitobans. You know, I remember Gary Filmon was in power; he broadened the PST. They also reduced the property tax credit. We came into office in '99; we increased the property tax credit. What's it now, Mr. Finance Minister? *[interjection]* It's up to \$650 now—*[interjection]*

Excuse me; it's up to \$700 now—from \$250. Mr. Speaker, for seniors, it's up to \$1,150.

Mr. Speaker, the—we cut taxes here in Manitoba, a billion dollars a year—a billion dollars a year—\$600 million for—on families and \$400 million on businesses. Again, these big friends across the way, they're big friends of business.

It is this government that completely eliminated the tax. We completed eliminated the small business tax here in Manitoba. You would think the members opposite—they call themselves the friends of business—you'd think they would be supporting that, Mr. Speaker. But every single year—every single year—they vote against the tax cut to small businesses here in Manitoba.

We've—Mr. Speaker, we've increased the threshold for the small business income threshold from \$200,000 to \$400,000. We even lowered the corporate tax rate. We lowered it from 17 per cent to 12 per cent. Again, the members opposite voted against every single one.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, when it comes to tax cuts, when it comes to showing responsibility when managing the economy, when it comes to showing creativity, when it comes to dealing with the recession of the century, you can count on this side to do the right thing.

I ask the members opposite, where is their plan, Mr. Speaker? I'm eager to hear it from the next member speaking. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, and judging by some of the excitability and the rhetoric and the posturing on the other side for some of the speakers that we've heard, it's obvious that we've struck a nerve or we're getting close. It seems to be a great area of sensitivity on that side.

So I am pleased to stand this afternoon, support this motion, a very reasonable motion that would call for the government to conduct an independent and transparent public spending examination that would ensure that Manitoba families are getting the kind of effective government services at the lowest cost to taxpayers.

And I take issue with the fact that one of the members opposite claims that the motion doesn't go anywhere to talking about the things that are important to Manitobans, when in the actual wording of the motion, it's clear that the intent of the motion is to ensure that government services continue, that government services are effective and that government services are delivered at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers.

And that is something that I can get behind and it's something that I can stand up for, and I know this motion is important because it would improve transparency, it would improve fairness to the government of Manitoba. And we only have to look back a number of weeks and the last couple of weeks of session to see that this government has not taken pains to ensure transparency and not taken pains to ensure that it is responsive to Manitobans, and there is example after example of the NDP running roughshod over processes that are important.

You only have to look back as far as to see that the—this government has breached Elections Manitoba rules that have to do with blackout periods when advertising cannot take place, and they get caught and they get caught in the act and they claim that they're sorry for having done so. But the fact of the matter is that they've done so before, and it shows in arrogance, it shows a cynicism, but it shows more than that. It shows that there's a—not an intent to follow the rules.

And certainly we saw this a number of weeks ago right here in the Chamber, when we saw an assistant deputy minister using his position to encourage service agencies to attend these proceedings in the House and sending an email asking his third-party service providers to please be in attendance in this Chamber and see the proceedings. And it's just not appropriate, and the concern that we share, as an opposition, is it should have been evident to the assistant deputy minister that it was not an appropriate function for him to use his email in that regard to put out that request.

I even have in front of me the content of that communication, and it reads: I would like service agencies especially to feel free to release staff and clients to attend tomorrow's session in the gallery at the Legislature if they choose. And that email was sent by the assistant deputy minister for Immigration and Multiculturalism on the 18th of April.

And as I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, it should have been apparent. It should have been clear. It should have been instinctive to the assistant deputy minister that that would not be prudent to send a communication like that. And yet it happened, and yet it took place. And it put those third-party providers in a very difficult position, and that's what I want to speak about this afternoon. So there may be less pomposity in my remarks this afternoon, but perhaps there will be some ideas there for government members to consider supporting.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's exactly the issue of the politicization of the civil service that I would like to direct in my remarks this afternoon. And nowhere is this more evident than in the somewhat recent parachuting of a political staffer into a position into the faculty—or into the Department of Education whereby there's been the creation of a new position of associate deputy minister of Education. And it's a troubling sign that this has taken place, and I would like to explain to my colleagues in this Chamber why I'm troubled by that development.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to make clear at the outset that this is not an indictment in any way of the individual who's now in that position. It is not an attempt to cast aspersions on his education or on his career path. As a matter of fact, I know that in Executive Council Estimates my leader also called attention to the fact that in his former profession this individual had been effective, and his former position was that of a senior staffer to a minister, I believe, in the government, or perhaps he worked, I believe, with Cabinet. But the fact of the matter remains that we have someone who had a distinctly partisan role who has now gone on to serve in the public or the civil service, and that's a concern to us in the opposition and we believe that Manitobans share our concern.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think what is important in this way—as someone who has actually worked in a federal political office I'm distinctly aware that some of the work in those offices has a partisan nature, whether you're working with correspondence or communications or policy. And I'm sure that this new associate deputy minister was very effective in his position, but to go from that position to a position within Education, within the Department of Education in a non-competitive process, it raises flags.

And I know that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) rationalized this appointment in Estimates saying that it was an order-in-council appointment by Cabinet, and he said that deputy ministers are often appointed in that manner. And I would agree that he is correct, but I would not also agree that it is always the case that associate deputy ministers are appointed without a competitive process. I know that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) called for information to come forward, whether the government could provide information to indicate whether it was always the case that associate deputy ministers were appointed, and that information has not been provided at this time.

In any case, the civil service operates on the principle of neutrality. It should operate whereby the civil service has the reputation and the tradition of impartiality. And I brought with me this afternoon a discussion paper by the Public Service Commission entitled Public Service Impartiality: Taking Stock. And this is an important document inasmuch as it makes clear that it is essential to the success of the civil service that the reputation and the tradition of impartiality be maintained, both in the eyes of the public and of the civil servants themselves.

*(15:50)

And, in particular, in the time remaining I would just like to make reference to one specific area because I know on what basis this government is appointing, without a competitive process, an associate deputy minister.

They're doing so through a process called priority appointment. And priority appointment is basically a process by which—and it's been throughout the 20th century, a process by where an individual who had worked in a minister's office could be recognized through a priority appointment to the civil service because of—with an understanding that they had worked and they had gained an area of expertise and that they were now deemed qualified for a position in the civil service.

But I would want to bring to the attention of this government that that is a loophole that the federal government chose to close a few years ago. That priority appointment right was repealed in the Federal Accountability Act, which came into a force—into force in December 2006. And individuals who now, in the federal civil service, have worked for a minister's office, cannot be—cannot receive a priority appointment to a placement in the civil service. Instead, all they can do is, in the one-year period following their departure from a minister's office, they can apply for a public service position.

That is a severe restriction of an opportunity awarded to an individual who had previously worked in a minister's office. There is no similar provision for this government and it's what I call upon them to consider doing. Would they put this in place, and in so doing, would they really then go to this motion, and that is, restore transparency and fairness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this resolution, which calls for independent and transparent public spending

examination to ensure that 'manifome'—Manitoba families are receiving effective government services at an affordable cost and, you know, what is me is the most important word here, is the word "effective", that we need to make sure that people have high quality services that they should be getting in areas like health care and in so many other areas where we're wanting to better support children and families. And being sure that actions are effective is very, very important.

Why, I had the opportunity to talk with the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) in Estimates recently. And I asked him what he was doing in terms of prevention of diabetes, and so he told me, in his ministry, and that I asked him, well are you measuring the results? Do you know how many people in Manitoba have—are getting diabetes, and are your affects—is your program having an impact to reduce the extent of diabetes and the number of people getting diabetes? And he said, no, that part wasn't my problem, my only interest is in getting advertising out there and doing what I can, but I'm not concerned about whether it's actually effective. So, I believe that effectiveness has to be a top, top consideration, and I think that this is reasonable, to look at effectiveness.

I had a fellow in my office the other day who had worked several years ago, when this government was in power, and the WRHA—he came forward to his superiors and said, look, I have some ideas to provide a more effective approach and to save money at the same time, at a lower cost. He was told, bluntly, then by his superiors, that in the WRHA that they really weren't too concerned about cost.

That seems to have been an attitude in many areas—too many areas of this government, and certainly when I have asked about, you know, prevention of FASD, time and time again, I have asked, well, what are the outcomes? Are we actually decreasing the incidents of FASD? And time and time again, I have an answer, well, from our perspective, we don't believe we—we're not measuring FASD accurately in terms of the number of people who get FASD. So we don't know.

And, in my view, that we should have programs which are effective, and that being able to measure the results of what we're doing is an important part of what we—what governments should be doing. And rather than take too much time, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make this point, that this is a reasonable

effort. I want to give others a chance to speak, and so I will sit down now and thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to be able to put some words on the record in regards to this Opposition Day motion brought forward by our leader, the member from Fort Whyte. And this is in the name of accountability, accountability in the financing of the Province of Manitoba.

Let the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to conduct an independent and transparent public spending examination, to ensure Manitoba families are receiving effective government services at the lowest possible costs to taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, I think that's a—it should be something that's done on a regular manner. And the government indicates, or the odd member across the floor indicates that they think they do this on a regular basis. But their actions prove otherwise, and I guess that's what I want to address today.

Mr. Speaker, I—if this had been the case, and we can go back in history as far as the '60s if we want to, maybe even the '70s. I guess I go back far enough that I can remember when I was nominated—the '80s of the Pawley era—when the debt increased from 1.4 to 5.2 billion dollars in four years, from '84 to '88. And, you know, over the next 11 years it increased another \$1.1 billion—billion, pretty much flat by comparison.

And now we've gone from that 6.2 area to \$14 billion under this government in the same, just about the same 11, 12 years—13 now, Mr. Speaker, and growing. There's no sign of it slowing down, in spite of the fact that they continue to talk about balanced budget legislation. But they've had to change the balanced budget legislation three times to try to save their salaries, to try to hoodwink Manitobans into thinking that they're being responsible and accountable. And I believe that it's a situation that, certainly out in my area, people are fed up with. And around Manitoba, as I speak to a lot of folks, they are very, very concerned that our debt is now at a record level.

If we'd been accountable and I mean, let's—and I just want to back up for a moment, Mr. Speaker. In that 11-year period when the debt was virtually flat

in Manitoba, even the premier who is now the ambassador to Canada, the former premier of Manitoba, Mr. Doer, indicated in this very House—it's in *Hansard* for the colleagues that have been—NDP colleagues that have just been elected—he indicated that there was a year when the federal government cutbacks to the province of Manitoba transfer payments were \$284 million. That's a huge amount of money.

This government has never seen that kind of cutback in transfer payments and support from the federal government, whether it was the Liberals or the Conservatives, since they were—since they came into power, Mr. Speaker. I think that's something that—take into consideration. It's certainly something that Manitobans continue to think about, as they move forward with the type of unaccountability that we've seen since the election under this Premier (Mr. Selinger).

And I only refer to the fact that I was at the debate last fall when the Premier of this Legislature today indicated to taxpayers of Manitoba that he would not increase taxes in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, that he could accomplish all of his election platforms with no increase in taxes, and he also declared that he was on schedule to do so.

Well, the moment that they got the first opportunity to have a budget, Mr. Speaker, they brought down the biggest debt in Manitoba's history—over \$1 billion, and sure, we had a flood. But they knew in September that there was a flood when the Premier made that statement. And I guess he was just like the member from Seine River that broke the election finance—or election laws in Manitoba in regards to advertising before the election. They broke the law there, and she was really only following the pattern provided by her Premier, in regards to the unaccountability of being accountable for the statements that he had made.

* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker, I find it disconcerting that they can say one thing and do another so quickly after an election. I also note that two days after the budget came down, they tried to cover it up by bringing in a ruse in regards to trying to blame the federal government for cutting the immigration program when, in fact, the Provincial Nominee Program isn't even impacted by the decisions that were being made. And the settlement services will end up with more money to spend in Manitoba than what they've had before under the handling of this situation by the

NDP government. And I'm only referring to the \$36 million of the \$37 million in that program coming from the federal government. They just wanted to be accountable for when they're putting up 97 per cent of the money that they have the opportunity to be accountable for that.

I just wanted to say, as well, Mr. Speaker, that using civil servants to have lobby-lobby for-on behalf of the government in this Legislature, in this Chamber and in this gallery is something that Manitobans detest, that it will come back to haunt the NDP as they move through the next two or three years. And a number of these things—the arrogance of this government will show forth as Manitobans continue to look at the crumbling infrastructure that we've got, the falling further behind in the debt that we have. The mismanagement of those funds is what bothers people more than anything else, not the fact that they're expensive. We know that there are infrastructure projects in this province that need to be built, that need to enhance our industries, that need to have the opportunity to provide safety for citizens as they travel our roads and drink our water and breathe our air in this province. But this government is being unaccountable in regards to those areas by paying lip service to some of them at the same time as they're prohibiting Manitobans from doing a number of projects in co-operation with the government—if I could say so—all because of red tape. I know of many, many developments in my own constituency right now. Constituencies come to me—constituents come on a weekly basis to talk about the loss of opportunity, that they can't move forward at the speed that they'd like to in regards to being able to implement new construction projects and new businesses in my own area, and I know it's the same across Manitoba.

There's been lip service provided to the people of—that were flooded out around Lake Manitoba, around the Shoal lakes region of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, questions today in the House about whether the minister will actually honour the buyout programs that he talked about for these citizens back last year when it was in the middle of the flood. And citizens don't like the fact that they've been told one thing, and now that they try to claim there isn't any money left for those projects.

So I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that when you've got the biggest core government debt ever in the Province of Manitoba, it will run a \$504-million deficit this year as opposed to the 2010 one, being a five-year economic plan being \$84 million more than

it was predicted at that time just two years ago, these are things that'll come home to roost to the NDP as they move forward. The fact that they did increase taxes by \$184 million; \$114 million on fees and charges; they increased hydro rates; they increased registrations for vehicles; they increased gasoline tax; they extended gasoline tax, even to farm communities and the farm—and the gasoline used on farms.

A number of these taxes—daycare centres as well—there's a whole list that continues to grow as we move forward even in this session. We find them every day. They dropped the regional development corporations.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by saying that I believe that there is a more responsible way to go. There is a way to be more transparent, stop the deception in Manitoba, and we propose to provide that independence from a Progressive Conservative perspective, provide that transparency and assurance to Manitoba taxpayers that their dollars are being spent in an accountable manner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Being a new MLA coming from a business background, I'm having a hard time with some of the events that have happened over the last nine months. During the election campaign the NDP promised that they would not raise taxes, and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stated publicly: We'll deliver on that. They also said that they were on track with the budget. They were ahead of schedule. Mr. Speaker, the Premier practically staked his reputation on that, and then what happened? They raised the taxes anyway.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Who will suffer from this? The consumer, the everyday Manitobans who have no choice but to pay these taxes, a tax increase of at least \$185 million, the largest increase in many years, and again, who will suffer? The everyday Manitoba consumer, the ones on fixed incomes, all Manitobans.

I am proud to have run a business for over 30 years, and a business that kept growing. If I would have ran my business the way this government is being run, I would have no customers, no business, and be bankrupt. This government's deficit just keeps growing. This government has a spending addiction and is not willing to do anything about it. A good example is the military attaché: 180—or \$190,000 plus, for what?

I listened to how much more money this government needs for health care, education, roads and bridges. These are all important items for the future of Manitoba. We need to look after these, but this government needs to look at its spending habits; it needs to look at its priorities; it needs to look at the programs that are not working; it needs to look at growing the economy with entrepreneurship; it needs to stop blaming the federal government.

We are losing skilled labours to our neighbours in the West. Is this government doing anything about it? Are we going to see record tax increases in next year's budget? How many more broken promises? Does this government have any plans for servicing the deficit should interest rates go up?

I'm proud to be a Manitoban. Manitoba is a have province, but this government has turned this province into a have-not province. I listen to the members across and wonder what some of them are thinking. No matter how good of a job this government thinks they are doing, just remember, there a lot of Manitobans out there that would disagree with them.

This motion is one that will help this government, and I don't understand why the members across wouldn't vote for it. It's going to help them. This motion would also provide a way for the government to be more honest to the province of Manitoba, to all the taxpayers. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I would like to thank my colleagues from Tuxedo and Morris for bringing forward this Opposition Day motion. Mr. Speaker, this motion is important because it will improve the transparency and fairness of the government of Manitoba. Having seen the level of arrogance this NDP government has shown toward the public over the past five weeks, Manitobans are hoping to see this Legislature take steps to restore transparency and fairness.

As a newly elected MLA, I am appalled by the broken promises this government made to all Manitobans during the election. I strongly feel that if Manitobans knew then what they know now, there would be at least two fewer members on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Couple of examples of their broken promises: When the NDP did get caught, they simply made half-hearted apologies. They say they didn't

understand the law, even though they wrote it; they say it was inadvertent. Fact is, free tickets, paid for by public funded corporations, is not right, Mr. Speaker.

This an NDP party that went to the election and told Manitobans that they were on track with the deficit. They even said things were ahead of schedule. Then after the election, we suddenly discovered the deficit would be over \$1 billion—\$1.12 billion to be exact. The government is not on track. The government will run a \$504-million deficit this year. That is \$84 million, or 20 per cent higher than it was supposed to be in the NDP's 2010 five-year economic plan. When all is said and done, it could be a lot more.

* (16:10)

The 2010 plan also called for limiting core government spending growth to an average of 1.9 per cent per year. Excluding the 2011 flood costs, core government spending growth will be an average of 3.6 per cent per year in the first three years of the NDP plan. The government has a spending problem and they have no intention of reining in their spending. Instead of focusing on expanding the economy and creating jobs to fund front-line services, this government wants to raise taxes. Manitobans can't afford this approach.

September 18th, 2011, Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stated, and I quote: Today's NDP will save seniors a total of \$35 million every year by eliminating the school tax on seniors.

The seniors in my constituency, and in Manitoba, are still waiting for that promise to come to fruition.

This is an NDP party that promised Manitoba families—promised—that they would not raise taxes. The Premier also made a clear promise and said that they will deliver on it. Then they turned around and handed Manitoba families one of the largest tax increases in history. These tax increases will take \$184 million out of the pockets of Manitoba families; probably a lot more, considering the record of NDP when it comes to underestimating tax revenues.

The member from Agassiz brought forward a bill, Bill 205, The Municipal Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act. This bill was to protect municipal council members from defamation claims for statements made at council meetings. Today we are making a motion to improve

transparency and fairness. What I'm finding this government to be doing, by squashing the Bill 205 that was brought forward by the member from Agassiz, is that it's forcing municipalities and the City to go more in camera, so that they are feeling a little more protected.

What happens when municipalities and cities go in camera? Well, of course, the transparency and fairness isn't in the public's eye and, therefore, gives way for speculation.

One of the top emergency rate increases for Hydro, as well, was brought forward by this Budget 2012, the refusal by Manitoba Hydro to return money to customers that the PUB ordered to be refunded. This is also on top of an increase in child-care fees, something I don't recall the NDP promising in the last election either. This is also on top of the NDP breaking their promise, again, as I stated before, to remove education taxes from seniors, but also from farmers. Not only did they fail to keep this promise, they cut their education support so education taxes around Manitoba are skyrocketing. Again, another example of downloading onto other municipalities or school boards, Mr. Speaker.

Manitobans are sick of being the highest taxed province west of Québec. This motion would be first step toward changing that, and I thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): It's a pleasure to put a few words on the record for this Opposition Day motion, and I—you never like to correct your colleagues, but I have to correct my colleague from Lac du Bonnet. With this budget we are now the highest taxed Canadians, period, never mind west of Québec. This budget has now raised our taxes higher than every other province, and that is a sad, sad record to have in this country.

So, Mr. Speaker, this—what we're talking about here is transparency and fairness within government. And you look at what this government has done, whether it's protecting their salaries, whether they're getting caught lying and then issuing half-hearted apologies, whether it's saying one thing in an election campaign and then doing something completely different, this is not what Manitobans do, in our families, in our businesses. We don't operate our lives like this in Manitoba, and yet this government seems to have decided now that this is how they will operate, and saying one thing, doing something else, put—inserting taxes when they said they wouldn't

insert taxes. And that's, you know, if our families, if our businesses ran on that type of record, it would truly be a different world out there. But that's not how ordinary Manitobans do it. And what this resolution is calling for is really for the province of Manitoba, for the government of Manitoba to operate with the same moral standards—if I can use that word—as what businesses and regular Manitobans do in their household, in their businesses.

And this is not—this shouldn't be asking for too much. And when—and, as I suspect, they will not support this resolution, it really speaks to their—is this speaking to their character individually, or is this a government that's afraid to come clean and show that they really are willing to be transparent, willing to open up their books to public—to the public's viewing and to examine their spending. To make sure that as taxpayers—and we're all taxpayers in this province—we want to make sure that we're getting value for our dollar. Everyone knows that we have to pay taxes to—for basic services and for things that we expect every day in life in Manitoba. But at the same time, what we're asking—what Manitobans are asking for is transparency and the ability to see value for their dollars that they're spending. And we're not seeing that right now, because when you have a government that says, no, we're not going to raise taxes, and then turns around and raises taxes, it raises a suspicion within the taxpaying public that, well, if they're not doing that, what else are they hiding? And, really, if they're into hiding, then it's a bad story because there's probably a lot more out there that we don't even know about, that they know about, and that's why they're just totally opposed to having any transparency in their books.

And we know that—you only have to look at—see what's happening in countries around the world that are facing real fiscal challenges, and Manitoba is headed that way in terms of our debt, in terms of our income capacity to pay this debt within the province, and this is something that is—it's going a dangerous trend.

And it's unfortunate that the government members always want to dwell in the past, although for some reason they don't want to dwell on the Schreyer or the Pawley years of how debt raised. But they—they're living in the past and—but it's—this government has to wake up and face today because everybody is looking at what their budgets are today within their households, within their companies, and you cannot live in the past as this government is trying to do.

They're—they've been shielded by record transfer payments out of Ottawa. They've been shielded by record interest rates, low interest rates. And all it takes is a couple of points of the interest rates to move up and it will totally change the financial picture of the province, and it will also affect a lot of businesses too. So—and therefore, it will affect tax revenues to this government.

So there needs to be some planning, and I know that socialists are not great on planning long term; they're, sort of, for the day and for the minute. And it's unfortunate that when you are in charge of the province that you don't have a longer term vision of this, other than taxing everyday Manitobans for more than what they are—they can afford to pay.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would urge the members opposite to think about their own household budgets, think about their—well, I guess they don't have businesses, so they can't do that. So—but think about how businesses would run and they should be supporting a resolution such as this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): It is no surprise that we are today, again, talking about an NDP government driving up debt in the province of Manitoba.

Over the years we've had a lot of opportunities as the opposition to warn the government about the looming debt crisis that was going to face our province if they didn't stop spending more than \$1.50, \$2 for every dollar that was coming in.

* (16:20)

The crisis that we are seeing upon us, as a world, is a crisis that one day will actually be on our doorstep as well. And this motion is one of the steps—this is by no means the only step—but it is one of the steps that will help the province of Manitoba get itself ready for what may come at us.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've had a lot of individuals put comments on the records and give various speeches, and I try not to respond to speeches given by others. But my good friend the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) I have to say that very disappointing. If that's the kind of garbage that he put on the record in Ottawa no wonder he lost his seat. This is a very serious issue and to put the kind of stuff he put on the record no wonder he survived only three years in Ottawa because we are facing—and the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) called it the harshest recession in this century, I believe is what

he said, and we are facing some incredibly, incredibly troubling times.

And I've got an article here from *New York Times* printed today and it has to do with the crisis in Europe, and what it is is that there's a lot of pressure on for Europe to come together, the 17 countries, and create the euro bond which would basically be borne by four countries, and that would be Austria, Finland, The Netherlands and Germany. And what they want to do, and I quote: "that the most creditworthy countries like Germany would almost certainly have their borrowing costs rise as they in essence would guarantee the loans of their debt-saddled neighbours." And if, in fact the 17 country—it'll be a euro fund does go through what we could actually see is that European countries would be printing money, and what it is is it's money that's not created and spent, it's actually money that's borrowed and spent, and we could actually see the rise of inflation in the world. And we haven't seen a lot of inflation for the last 10 years and thus we've had very reasonable interest rates.

If, however, Europe were to go this path—and I hope they don't, I hope those four countries hold the line—but if they do go that path and they do start spending printed money and not money that's backed by economic growth, if they start spending printed money we could end up seeing an interest rate—even an increase of 2, 3 per cent would be very difficult for this NDP government to swallow in its budgetary process. And then, Mr. Speaker, then the government would be—would either continue deficit spending which is unsustainable at this rate of debt. I believe the last number we got was in and around \$1.2 billion over expenditure, and that is simply unsustainable. We cannot continue going into debt every year by a billion dollars. Even going into debt by 2, 3 hundred million dollars is something that could be catastrophic if we end up seeing interest rates increase, which they will inevitably—inevitably do. Interest rates will go up, and then the borrowing costs of this government will become a problem, and perhaps someday we will see the same kind of problem in Manitoba that they see in Europe.

The only thing is is instead of being an economy like the four countries listed here—Austria, Finland, Netherlands and Germany—instead of being one of those economies, Manitoba is going to be one of the other ones like Greece, Portugal, Italy or Spain where we will be the ones that'll be faced with a declining—inclining credit ratings and increased interest costs.

And, Mr. Speaker, the motion in front of us is merely one more of the tools that would help this province move forward and get its finances under control. But to try and run away from it and try to spend your way out of this will only bring further problems for this province, and as the member for Selkirk said, we are now facing one of the greatest recessions in this century. We should be prepared for it and start listening to these kinds of ideas that are coming forward and take them serious and speak to them seriously, and I would encourage this House to pass this resolution.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I certainly welcome the opportunity to speak to this particular resolution, and I do want to acknowledge the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) for bringing forward this resolution, and I would hope that the members in government would've spent a little bit of time in actually reading this particular resolution because all members in the Chamber are to be acting on behalf of our constituents, acting on behalf of Manitobans, and I will read the resolution for the members opposite because we're going to have an opportunity to have a vote on this particular resolution.

Basically, what the resolution is saying, Mr. Speaker, is that we are offering to the NDP government to conduct an independent and transparent public spending review to ensure Manitoba families are receiving effective government services at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers. I know when you've been listening to 'bate'—it appears that we probably have almost two separate Manitobans here—new—two separate Manitoba provinces. You know, we certainly hear from the rose-coloured-glasses view of the NDP, we're trying to provide what we think is some options that the government can provide to make their spending more effective. And we really think that we're speaking on behalf of all Manitobans when we bring forward resolutions such as this.

I think, Mr. Speaker, what you find with governments, once they've been in office for an extended period of time, there becomes an air of arrogance, and the government of the day thinks they have the ability to do whatever they want in terms of legislation and sometimes in terms of what they do behind the scenes. You know, we've seen this government here use some of their assistant deputy ministers to get involved in political rallies here at the Legislative Building and, you know, that certainly raises a concern.

And I raised the issue in question period today talking about the cozy relationship of senior bureaucracy with the current NDP government. And I think that it's something that has to be brought forward, and it's a very important issue.

You know, today I raised the issue; we had an ADM was appointed into a brand new position by this current government and, unfortunately, there was no open and fair competition for that particular situation. So that really speaks, Mr. Speaker, to the transparency of this government.

This government's been here and in government for quite some time and I believe they've lost their eyes on the real transparency and being open and accountable to Manitobans, and it's very unfortunate. And that's why we bring forward these resolutions to speak to some of those issues regarding fairness, accountability and transparency.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know there's a lot of issues out there in Manitoba, and this government certainly chooses, in a lot of cases, to put their head in the sand and ignore the real issues that are facing all Manitobans. I just want to quote from today's *Winnipeg Sun* and there's an interesting paragraph in there. And I will quote: "Spiralling debt, a huge structural deficit, a catch-and-release justice system, sky-high taxation, a sluggish health-care system, and a fibbing Finance Minister. Those issues are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg facing this government."

So there's a lot of issues out there. The editorial boards are starting to recognize there's a lot of issues facing Manitobans, and sometimes—and what that quote is referencing is the government will lose sight of the issues that it should be responsible for and the basics.

We should be—they should be ensuring that Manitobans have adequate health care. The health care—we're spending more money than ever before in health care, but we're getting less in terms of services provided. We spend more and get less in health care of anywhere in Canada. And it's incumbent upon us as members representing the public that we should be making sure that taxpayers dollars are being used widely.

The same thing can be said for education. Certainly a cornerstone of what provincial government should be doing is providing education opportunities for our youth and for older individuals, as well. And we've seen the results. We're putting more and more money into education, but at the end

of the day, when we look at our test scores, compared to other jurisdictions across Canada, and, in fact, other jurisdictions around the world, our scores are going down, Mr. Speaker; another case of NDP government spending more money but getting less and poorer results.

Another issue that the government should be looking after is infrastructure. And we know where infrastructure's going in the terms of the province here in Manitoba. We're—crumbling infrastructure from Winnipeg and rural communities, we've heard this time and time again. And we know that the government's going to say, yes, but we're spending more money on it.

Well that's, in fact, the point that we're trying to raise here. We're spending more money but getting less results.

And that's exactly what this motion speaks to, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 28(14), I must interrupt the debate to put the question on the motion of the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the Nays have it.

* (16:30)

Formal Vote

Mrs. Taillieu: Could we have a recorded vote, please?

Mr. Speaker: Recorded vote having been requested, please call in the members.

Order, please.

The question before the House is the motion by the honourable member for Tuxedo.

Does the House wish to have the motion reread?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. It's been moved by the member for Tuxedo,

THAT the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to conduct an independent and transparent public spending examination to ensure Manitoba families are receiving effective government services at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers.

Division

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

Yeas

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Maguire, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Taillieu, Wishart.

Nays

Allan, Allum, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Pettersen, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wight.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 18, Nays 35.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Would you please call second readings on bills 11, 15, 19 and 22.

SECOND READINGS

Mr. Speaker: We're going to be dealing with bills 11, 15, 19 and 22.

And we'll start with Bill 11.

* (16:50)

**Bill 11—The Criminal Property Forfeiture
Amendment Act
(Administrative Forfeiture and
Miscellaneous Amendments)**

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 11, The Criminal Property Forfeiture Amendment Act (Administrative Forfeiture and Miscellaneous Amendments); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la confiscation de biens obtenus ou utilisés criminellement (confiscation administrative et modifications diverses), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: I'm pleased to present this bill to the Legislature. The Criminal Property Forfeiture Amendment Act arises from our experience and success in using the legislation over the past several years, legislative changes that have been made in other provinces, developing Canadian case law and extensive consultations with our provincial officials, other jurisdictions and the police.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most significant aspects of the bill is the introduction of the administrative forfeiture process. Since the latest amendments and the creation of the provincial unit in September 2009, criminal property forfeiture has become one of the most powerful and important tools that Manitoba can employ against those who would profit from or use property as an instrument of unlawful activity.

This administrative process would enhance an already successful forfeiture program by providing the ability to pursue unclaimed assets, excluding real property, while at the same time having an effective and efficient process that protects innocent interest holders. Administrative forfeiture will allow the director to seek forfeiture outside of court. It will create an administrative function while preserving the usual court process where forfeiture is contested. This will allow for the forfeiture of smaller, unclaimed assets without substantive cost and significant legal resources.

This new amendment will help to keep money earned from the trade and dangerous drugs, sexual exploitation and guns, among other things, off the street, giving instead back to the community the programs designed to enhance public safety.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has two amendments that continue this government's commitment to support victims of crime. First, it provides the ability to pause the civil forfeiture process when an innocent victim is involved as a witness and a court feels it is in the interests of justice. The court will have the ability to allow criminal process to resolved first, while at the same time freezing assets to prevent them from being sold. This will ensure that the first time the victim's evidence is heard is in the criminal court.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the bill will now allow for the distribution of money from the criminal property forfeiture fund under this act to the Victims' Assistance Fund, under The Victims' Bill of Rights, to support programs and services that benefit victims of crime.

This bill enhances two areas of disclosure to enable the director, the police, and financial institutions to better share information. This bill will give financial institutions the authority to disclose necessary information to the director in a way that is consistent with federal legislation. The bill also provides the police with the ability to share personal health information where the director needs to confirm that instruments of unlawful activity have been used to cause serious bodily harm.

Mr. Speaker, this bill introduces changes to allow the asset manager, appointed under the act, to manage and dispose of offence-related property that has been ordered forfeited by a criminal court under the Criminal Code forfeiture rules.

Finally, this bill proposes technical amendments to ensure that Manitoba's act keeps pace with developments based upon practical experience as well as the forfeiture case law. This bill clarifies that, as in other provinces, property should be considered an instrument of unlawful activity, not only if it was used in unlawful activity that resulted in the acquisition of property, but also if it was likely to result in the acquisition of property.

The bill will also clarify the type of document to be used to commence a proceeding, and remove the requirement to name as defendants those who are not at risk of losing their interest in the property after it is forfeited, like holders of utility caveats.

Mr. Speaker, The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act has been a great success in contributing to the safety of Manitobans. This bill builds on that

foundation. I look forward to the support of the House in having this bill passed.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I move, seconded by the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister, Bill 15, now we'll call?

Bill 15—The Fortified Buildings Amendment Act

Mr. Swan: I move, seconded by the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 14, The Fortified Buildings Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les bâtiments fortifiés, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, just to ensure that I'm correct, the honourable minister referenced Bill 14. Did he mean Bill 15? Bill 15.

It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Housing and Community Development, that Bill 15, The Fortified Buildings Amendment Act, be now read for a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, the traps and devices that are likely to cause death or bodily harm when someone triggers them are a public safety concern. It is a concern when they're used to prevent access to property and shield unlawful activity. Such traps are inherently dangerous and pose an immediate threat to the safety of emergency response personnel, law enforcement officials and members of the public who may come into contact with them.

Currently, The Fortified Buildings Act allows orders forcing the removal of barricades and other obstacles that could pose a risk to public safety by interfering with an emergency responder or law enforcement's official's ability to access a building. This bill builds on the success of that act. This bill would amend The Fortified Buildings Act to make it a provincial offence for a person to set a trap on a property, or for a person who owns or occupies a property to knowingly let it remain there. Offenders convicted of the new offence will face possible fines, jail, or both. Legitimate uses of traps or trap-like devices will still be permitted.

The bill will also permit Manitoba's Public Safety Investigation Unit or police to apply for a

warrant to enter a property to inspect it and seize traps if there are reasonable grounds to believe that there is a dangerous trap on the property. In addition, it will require the Public Safety Investigation Unit or police to remove or dismantle any traps they otherwise encounter in or on a property.

The amendments to this bill implement the government's commitment to create new additional sanctions under provincial legislation for criminals who threaten the safety of police officers and emergency responders by using traps to shield meth labs and grow ops, among others.

Mr. Speaker, we'll discuss this bill in more detail at the committee stage, so I'll conclude my remarks. I look forward to the full support of this House in having this bill passed. Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: I move, seconded by the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call Bill 19.

Bill 19—The Use of Animals to Shield Unlawful Activities Act

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 19, The Use of Animals to Shield Unlawful Activities Act; Loi sur l'utilisation d'animaux dans le cadre d'activités illégales, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, currently, there's nothing preventing animals from being used to protect property where unlawful acts are occurring in order to shield that unlawful activity from detection and intervention by law enforcement. Animals used for such a purpose are dangerous and pose a threat to the safety of police officers, firefighters and other first responders and members of the public who may into contact with them.

This bill implements government's commitment to create new sanctions of the provincial legislation for using animals to shield unlawful activity from detection and intervention by law enforcement. This bill will make it a provincial offence for a person who is committing an unlawful act on a property to use an animal to protect that property.

The legislation will not apply to every animal, but is targeted to animals that pose a threat to persons who enter the property, based on the species or breed of the animal, its size and temperament, its location on or within the property, and whether it's confined or restrained in some way.

Persons convicted of the new offence will face a fine of up to \$5,000, a jail sentence of up to three months or both a fine and jail.

I will be able to discuss this bill in more detail at the committee stage, so I will conclude my remarks at this point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: I move, seconded by the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), that the debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call Bill 22. The honourable Minister of Justice.

**Bill 22—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Extension of Ignition-Interlock Program)**

Mr. Swan: I move, seconded by the—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) will continue his remarks on Bill 22, for second reading.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 23, 2012

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