

**Fifth Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**  
**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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authority of  
The Honourable George Hickes  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Eighth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
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DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
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HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
VACANT	Kirkfield Park	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 7, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

### PRAYER

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### House Business

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, as one of 57 private members in this Chamber, I believe that there's a unanimous consent in this Chamber to proceed this morning to start with the Good Samaritan act on the order, and I'll now sit down and let appropriate members deal with the appropriate leaves.

Is there leave of the House for us to deal with the Good Samaritan bill this morning?

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

**Mr. Chomiak:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

##### Bill 214—The Good Samaritan Protection Act

**Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James):** I move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 214, The Good Samaritan Protection Act; Loi sur l'immunité du bon samaritain, reported from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Ms. Korzeniowski:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my appreciation to my colleagues of this Chamber for their co-operation in allowing this very important bill to be passed. In particular, I'd like to thank the Member for River Heights for his considerable input.

It is timely, indeed, with the Christmas season upon us. It is also significant that it was passed on the international day of the volunteer. This bill embodies the very spirit of volunteerism so characteristic of Manitobans. It is comforting to know this legislation will encourage and promote their selfless and heroic acts by protecting volunteers from frivolous legal retribution or liability. It also

ensures that this consideration does not impede otherwise noble gestures.

In this changing world of technological advances, it is, perhaps, a good thing to have taken the time now to thoroughly examine existing bills with a view to ensuring coverage that reflects these advances, and stronger protection is necessary.

This bill is unique and stronger than any existing bill in any jurisdiction in North America. It includes in its scope not just emergency medical assistance but advice as well. Technology such as cell phones allows us untrained help to reach emergency situations faster than professional or proper medical help needed and can serve to guide the person at the scene to act appropriately until necessary resources arrive. Even just calm reassurances and encouragement, common sense can make a difference.

Secondly, it explicitly extends protection to members of volunteer organizations who provide first aid, but might receive some form of unsolicited remuneration for their services. Even a box of doughnuts could be misconstrued as remuneration. It will protect and help in encouraging participation in citizen-led, community-based groups and members of organizations such as Operation Red Nose, now fully mobilized for the festive season.

Furthermore, this bill will assist organizations such as Heart and Stroke in pursuing their work in saving lives, by encouraging people and businesses, large and small, to become more comfortable in using new techniques in CPR and new technologies such as AEDs, defibrillators. For instance, it was just last night, as a matter of fact, I had a friend relating a story. It was a sad story, where he was at a hockey game and there was a team medic with a defibrillator ready to help his team. It turned out there was a fan in the stands that ran into trouble, but the medic felt totally inhibited and unable to assist in this matter for fear of liability.

In my second reading, I spoke of the impetus for me to develop this bill. It was brought to my attention by an administrator at Boeing Canada in St. James-Assiniboia that Manitoba did not have a Good Samaritan act. This proved to be a problem for them after an incident in their workplace. In the summer of 2004, one of their employees suffered a major heart

attack and died while several co-workers looked on helplessly. This resulted in the company paying for the time and training of 42 employees so they need never again be unable to assist in future situations. The company further invested in automatic external defibrillators and training for their use.

Without the protection of this act, however, there was a hesitancy and question of liability in using them. This bill could remove the fear of liability. The man who died at Boeing was Dave Munro, a man not yet 50, who lived in Gimli. He was known to the MLA from Gimli, who speaks very highly of him and his family. His wife and daughter live and work there still, and his son is serving our country in Afghanistan. We don't know if Dave could have been saved at the time, but I hope that the passing of this bill will bring some measure of comfort to his family, that it was his tragic death that provided the impetus to bring this bill to Manitoba. His death and the enactment of this bill can save others from unnecessary death.

I would like to read a letter from Boeing Canada, who, I believe, serves as a role model for businesses in Manitoba caring for employees. It is addressed to myself, but I believe addresses all of us in this Assembly.

Dear Ms. Korzeniowski, on behalf—

**Mr. Speaker:** When making references to members, it's by the portfolios they hold or the constituency that they represent.

**Ms. Korzeniowski:** Even when quoting a letter?

**Mr. Speaker:** Even when quoting a letter.

**Ms. Korzeniowski:** Okay. Can I just delete it? [*interjection*]

Dear MLA for St. James, on behalf of all the employees of Boeing Canada Technology, Winnipeg Division, I want to thank you for the effort going into The Good Samaritan Protection Act. As you know, one of our employees passed away in the summer of 2004, leading us to train over 40 of our employees in first aid and cardiovascular resuscitation, cardio-pulmonary—pardon me, resuscitation. In addition, we invested in automatic external defibrillators, AEDs and training for those who use these devices. We will continue to invest in our people, and I applaud you for investing in our citizens by helping remove any hesitation to be more involved when a fellow citizen is in need, through the enactment of this legislation.

\* (10:10)

One of our core values as a company is to have a diverse and involved team. We are proud of the diversity of our Manitoba workforce, and we are working on having them more and more involved in our business. Without an involved and committed workforce we would not be the world leader in aerospace. The same can be said for our province. Having involved and committed citizens is the backbone and strength of our community. The Good Samaritan Protection Act is a great building block in paving the way toward a more involved and committed community. As you know through our dialogue with your office over the past year on this issue, we are proud that the province is seeking to build a stronger community by enacting this legislation. We want you and your distinguished colleagues to know that you have our full support and backing on this legislation. Please keep up the good work. Sincerely, Mark D. Ross, President and General Manager.

In conclusion, I believe that people will jump in and act without thinking about possible legal liability. We've seen and heard about acts of heroism many times, almost daily. It would be nice, however, to remove the threat of lawsuits and give Manitobans the protection they need to act in good faith to provide assistance in times of emergency. This bill will do that.

As I have said, this bill is about letting people do what is good and right and not have to give a second thought to reprisal when that second could cost or save a life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all the members of this Legislature and particularly the MLA for St. James for their co-operation in ensuring that this important legislation is passed today, today being the International Day of the Volunteer.

This bill is of vital importance to protect Good Samaritans in Manitoba, those who come forward in times of emergency and provide assistance and advice. It's of vital importance that it's passed now because it will enable our province to move forward in using technology like the automated external defibrillators. This bill will save lives and it's good that we can, today, work together to ensure that it's passed.

The bill will help the work and support the work of many who are involved with training and working with volunteers, St. John's Ambulance, the Manitoba Heart and Stroke association and many other

organizations. Indeed, Manitoba is known as a province for the extent to which we volunteer, and it is right and fitting that today in the Legislature we pass a bill that will support and enable volunteers to help without fear of liability or being sued.

It is a wonderful bill to be able to pass just before the holiday season, and in that context it really is a present to Manitobans and a present to volunteers in Manitoba.

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

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 214, The Good Samaritan Protection Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

## SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, we'll now go into second readings of public bills. The first one is Bill 203.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard)—*[interjection]* I understand that there might be a willingness to move to Bill 207 and leave Bill 203 in its current order. That might require leave?

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there a willingness of the House to deal with Bill 207 first, and then we'll go to the order of the bills.

Is there leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** I heard a no, so I'll call Bill 203, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention). The honourable Member for Inkster?

Bill 203. *[interjection]* There was a no, so we're dealing with Bill 203.

The honourable member, are you proceeding with Bill 203? If not, we're moving on to the next bill.

**An Honourable Member:** Next bill.

**Mr. Speaker:** Next bill. Okay.

Bill 205, The Milk Prices Review Amendment Act. Is the honourable member dealing with it? *[interjection]*

Okay, we'll move to the next one.

Bill 206, The Phosphorus-Free Dishwashing Detergent Act. The honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), are you dealing with the bill?

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Move on to the next one.

**Mr. Speaker:** Move on to the next one. Okay.

## Bill 207—The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** I move, seconded by the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), that Bill 207, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pension de retraite des enseignants, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mrs. Stefanson:** It's absolutely unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, that, after an agreement is made and so on, that, you know, we've got retired teachers here today in the gallery, but once again the heavy hand of this government likes to not allow things to happen as they should in this House. I think it's rather unfortunate. I think it's time and time again retired teachers have tried to meet with the government with respect to the pension issue, and I think it's unfortunate that this government has refused to listen to the Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba, refused to recognize them. Again, I think it's rather unfortunate. We've seen this time and time again with respect to this issue, but with respect to a number of other issues, I find it just very disappointing that they would choose to try and, once again, shut out the debate of this issue which is a very important issue.

I've had the opportunity to meet with the Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba on several occasions, and certainly the retired teachers are no strangers to the Manitoba Legislature. They've been here several times demonstrating out on the front steps of the Legislature that they're very concerned about their pensions, Mr. Speaker. They're concerned about the fact that this government has seen fit not to offer a fair COLA for the retired teachers. I know members opposite like to say that, oh, back in the dark days of the 1990s—and that's always a theme for this government.

You know what? The fact of the matter is, and I think it's time that the facts be put on the record because this government time and time again refuses to put the actual facts on the table, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important to correct the record today, to let people know, to let Manitobans know, to let members of the Legislature know that back then, you know what? We did offer full COLA to the retired teachers. I think it's unfortunate that time and time again this government likes to put unfactual information on the record, and I think it's just time to set the record straight.

\* (10:20)

But let's not look back at the 1990s, which again this government loves to do time and time again, regardless of the fact that they've been in government for seven years now, Mr. Speaker. They've had a chance to do something with respect to this, and they haven't. I think it's very unfortunate that they've chosen, instead, to turn their backs on the retired teachers. I think it's very unfortunate.

All they're asking for is fairness in their COLA, yet this government has turned a blind eye to them. Unfortunately, we are unable at this time to look at addressing this issue in this House with respect to a bill because private members are not allowed to bring forward bills that require funding, Mr. Speaker. So this was our way on our side of saying to the retired teachers that we do take them very seriously, that we hear them and that we want to make sure that their voice is heard at the table of the TRAF board, the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund board. We have said that time and time again.

Of course, we did bring an amendment forward to a bill a couple of years ago that would have put a permanent position from a retired teacher on the board, Mr. Speaker, and, of course, the government, rather than negotiating and sitting down with the retired teachers or talking with us about this, they chose to just vote it down. I think the retired teachers were very disappointed by that.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think that this bill does a number of things. What it does is it shows that we on this side of the House are very concerned about our retired teachers, that we take their concerns very seriously and that we are prepared to take a step out there and say, you know what? We support you. We know that you're just asking for something that is fair.

We need to sit down with the retired teachers, not just with the union, the MTS union. I think it's important. Although the union claims to represent the retired teachers as well, the union is paid for by the existing teachers. So, really, the retired teachers are in an unfortunate position where they don't actually have a say. So we do know that when issues are discussed with respect to their pensions and so on, they don't really have much of a say at the table.

So we felt it was very important that they have a say, Mr. Speaker, and we have decided to bring forward this bill that allows them a permanent position for a member of the Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba on the board of the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund.

One of the issues that the retired teachers are very concerned about is with respect to—there's sort of no one really necessarily on the board or doesn't have to be on the board with any sort of investment knowledge. We felt that that was very important for the retired teachers and, indeed, for everyone else on the board to have somebody that is an industry representative, someone that understands how pensions work and how investments work and so on.

Most other boards, Mr. Speaker, if you look at those boards, there are professionals within the communities on those boards, and this is one that it doesn't necessarily have to be. Now, some have been appointed in the past with this kind of background, but we think it's that important that we have to have someone with pension knowledge, with investment knowledge on the board. So we have asked for that to happen as well.

But my message to the retired teachers is: We are here. We are listening to you. We are working with you and we're taking your position very, very seriously. I think that's the important part of all of this, is that we're working with them, Mr. Speaker, but the heavy hand of this government is basically shutting the door. They're refusing to listen even to what is another side of the issue. Even though they may not agree with it, and so on, I think it's incumbent upon a government to listen and to consult all stakeholders with respect to any decisions that are made with respect to any of the parties.

I think it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that I believe this government has really shut out the retired teachers and has really not given them much of a say. This is their retirement funds. They have contributed to this fund, and now the government is refusing to give them even a fair COLA.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think the real issue here is that time and time again this government will bring forward legislation, will bring things to the table or to the floor of this Legislature and it's all for political purposes, and nothing really for the real issue. No one is ever really consulted fully. I mean, it's got another agenda on the table. I think it's really unfortunate, and I think that, certainly, the retired teachers of Manitoba deserve to be treated much better than they have been by this government.

That's why I believe, Mr. Speaker, that's why I brought this bill forward. That's why I believe strongly that we need to recognize the Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba and let them know that they are a very important part of our communities, and that we are here to help them and work with them.

So, with those words, I will leave it at that. I know maybe some other members will probably want to speak on this bill. Thank you.

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak against this resolution brought forward by the member opposite.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, on October 18, the RTAM rally—Halloween came early because I swear I saw half a dozen Tories standing out there as teacher advocates, and I was really appalled by that. They're still wearing that mask today because this is the party when myself, as a teacher, and 10 other teachers on this side of the House were subject to the most draconian legislation in the history of this province stripping teachers of their collective bargaining rights, locking teachers out of their professional development opportunities.

Two hundred and forty-two teachers were let go because of the budget announcements by the members opposite, and what did that impact on the teachers' pension funds, Mr. Speaker? Cutting teachers, cutting salaries, cutting positions, cutting funding to the education system and they have the nerve to stand up in this House and say we are champions for teachers. Have you hugged a teacher today? I find that appalling.

What I find appalling is the suggestion, the suggestion from the members opposite that they provided full COLA. It wasn't a problem for them to do so when they were in government. Well, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly they ignored the issue. They ignored the issue. I've got reports from the TRAF

board: The current practice is using amounts that would be needed in the future; as a result, the amounts available to finance future pension adjustments may not be sufficient to permit this objective to be realized in the future. June 1990, the exact same phrase.

June 1991, the exact same phrase appears again. June 1992, oh, now they weren't listening so they put it in a big box, Mr. Speaker. Each decision to grant full increases uses amounts that would be needed in the future. As a result, the amounts available to finance future pension adjustments may not be sufficient to permit this objective to be realized in the future. 1993, 1994, 1995, and what action did they take? They changed actuaries. That was the action of members opposite.

So, for them to suggest, suddenly, that they are champions of the teachers, I find absolutely appalling. They say that they are the champions of the teachers' pension fund. Well how many times did you open the act? How many times? How many times did you make significant changes? How many times?

Well, now the member isn't even sitting in her seat and ignoring it because she knows the history. She doesn't like to go back to the 1990s, and I sure hope we don't go back to the 1990s, Mr. Speaker. I sure hope we don't go back to the 1990s.

We have opened up the act four times in six and a half, almost seven years. We have made significant changes to the teachers' pension fund. When I was a teacher activist who came to this Legislature protesting during the 1990s, one of the priorities we had as teachers was to get the main account, the teachers' pension funded. It had been unfunded, an unfunded pension liability, which is the first thing that we did when we got in government to address this unfunded pension liability. What did that mean? That meant an increase in our credit rating. We're funding that unfunded liability. We've opened the pension act four times. We've made significant changes to the pension act, and, if anyone is going to improve the teachers' pensions, Mr. Speaker, it is this side of the House that is going to improve teachers' pensions.

\*(10:30)

I can't think of enough adjectives, but "appalling" really comes to mind to hear the members opposite take a stand for teachers, because they never took a stand for teachers before. They're

being political opportunists here, Mr. Speaker, and I find it really disingenuous for them to stand up with this piece of legislation in the House. We have always stood on the side of teachers. In fact, we restored respect to the profession.

They had a committee set up with the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) and the former member, Shirley Render, and their terms of reference were to say that we're going to save money by cutting teachers' salaries. They thought teachers were overpaid, never mind the pension. They ignored pension issues in the '90s, they ignored the education system. Now they're saying: Oh, you know, if we could've introduced the bill that would deal with money, we'd gladly do that, but I don't hear them saying they're guaranteeing full COLA. I don't hear them say that because they know that they would not be able to do that. It is \$57 million is what they're saying that they would be providing. That is what they're suggesting they would be providing.

Mr. Speaker, to have a group say that they provide a meaningful COLA with that amount of money, when they put \$7 million in the entire education system in six years? I think people can make their own conclusions. To hear the member, again, say we gave them full COLA, they ignored the actuarial advice. They ignored the advice. We've opened up the act. We've had the first increase in pension contributions in 25 years under this government. They say we ignore the retired teachers. I meet with the Retired Teachers Association on a regular basis. I have met with them very often. I was at that same rally, and I said exactly what the Leader of the Opposition said. He was interviewed in *The Manitoba Teacher* newsletter and he said: We have to find a solution that is in the best interests of both active and retired teachers. I've said the same thing. The only thing he offered at that rally that was different than what we have suggested is this legislation saying that we'll enshrine that there be an RTAM member on the TRAF board.

Well, members opposite don't even know that it's the teacher Pension Task Force that's engaged in the negotiations to determine what the benefit improvements would be for the teachers. They don't know that because they never bothered to have the teacher Pension Task Force do anything in the 1990s. We've had that task force involved here on an ongoing basis.

As you can tell, I'm pretty passionate about this, Mr. Speaker, because I am a teacher. I'm a teacher

who has become a politician because of the draconian legislation of members opposite. That's why I'm in this House today. That's why I'm on this side of the House. That's why there are 11 educators on this side of the House. We value education. I heard them say that education is going to be a priority for them. Have we had one question about education in the last 16 days in the House? I don't recall. Were they courageous enough to ask the question about teachers' pension funds when they had a gallery full of retired teachers? No, because they know their record. She says we don't want to go back to the '90s, and I sure as heck don't want to go back to the '90s.

I would've gotten back up in the House if they would've had the courage to ask me a question that day. I would've talked about their record and their draconian measures against the profession that is one of the most important professions in our province, and that is teachers.

I have a tremendous amount of respect for teachers, both active and retired. It is because of that that we are going to work with active and retired teachers to find a solution that is palatable for both. Members opposite are going to say they'll provide a full COLA, and this from a group that, as I said, \$7 million to the entire education system in six years is going to find the money to fund a full COLA? I don't think so.

We on this side of the House know that it's not a symbolic issue like having somebody on the TRAF board. It's not a symbolic issue like that because we have a retired teacher on the TRAF board. What it is, is having teachers engage in the teacher Pension Task Force, including retired teachers, which they are now. It's continuing to meet with retired teachers, as I continue to do, and it's continuing to work to find a solution that is palatable for active and retired teachers.

I have a message to the teachers of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite said that she had a message that they are listening. Well, we not only listen, we act. Members opposite have done nothing for teachers in this province in the last 20 years, and I'm appalled that they would even think that this lip service would be something—

**An Honourable Member:** They're playing politics.

**Mr. Bjornson:** They're playing politics here, Mr. Speaker, and lip service to the retired teachers. I will stand by our record and our performance with



respect to the education system and what's best for kids, what's best for parents, what's best for teachers, what's best for retired teachers any time against members opposite. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale):** Mr. Speaker, it's always an interesting scenario when you follow a speaker for the NDP, especially with the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) standing up and pontificating about all their great efforts and directions that they're taking in education, and what does he rely on? He always goes back to when we were in government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think what he could do in a very short period after the Premier (Mr. Doer) calls the election, when he sits on this side of the House, if he's re-elected, he can start to pontificate about all the great things that they didn't do.

If he looked at the bill, the bill is very simple. I don't know where the Minister of Education was going because the bill is very, very simple. It is only a two-page bill. What it's asking for is that the bill amends the section of The Teachers' Pension Act by increasing the number of board members to nine. Now, that is easy to understand. It's requiring at least one member to have investment management experience; and two, it's requiring one member to be a retired teacher nominated by the Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba. Now, that's a simple bill. That's all that the retired teachers are asking for. The retired teachers are asking for the government to have some consideration for their feelings and the direction that they feel they want their pension to be carried out.

But, in the meantime, this minister gives tirades about all the spending they're doing, all the things they're doing for the teachers, all the things they're doing for the education of teachers, but the retired teachers have asked for a very simple thing. They just want to be represented on the board. That's all they're asking for.

Now, the minister sits in his chair and he chirps again, and if he would like to ask for leave to stand up and talk again and put some more on, maybe we'll let him talk some more after I'm finished. But in the meantime I am just saying it's a very simple bill, a simple bill that maybe the Minister of Education might understand, representation on a board. Representation on a board, that's what they're asking for. Is there anything else on the bill that the minister can see that I didn't see, or was he reading from a different bill, because this is the bill that I'm talking

about, Bill 207, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act, amend the act to let these people sit on the board. In the meantime, the minister will go on pontificating about all the great things that they did and all the things that they feel that they should be credited for.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the teachers have a legitimate concern. It's their money that they put into a pension plan. They want to have a say on the board. Now, it is very, very simple. It's a simple situation, but the government feels that they don't want to look at it in a reasonable way, so they're going off on tirades about what happened in the '90s and all this other thing. That has no bearing or no direction in regard to the bill. It has nothing to do with the bill, nothing to do with the bill.

The minister keeps saying that he keeps pointing to all the things that they've done with their government. The bill is very simple, Mr. Speaker. They're asking for the number of board members to go to nine. They require one member to have investment management experience. *[interjection]* That's right. I am glad. A former teacher said that he can read that. That's good because that's the meaning of the bill. I am glad that one of the members of the government at least recognizes the content of the bill. The Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), I don't know what he was talking about.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's all I wanted to point out to the members and to the minister about the contents of the bill, so that maybe he can reconsider and address it that way. Thank you.

**Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East):** Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise to speak to this bill that's been proposed by the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). You know, the fact that a member from Tuxedo is purporting to be supportive of teachers is a little bit like Colonel Sanders being supportive of chickens. It's absolute rubbish and absolute pandering of the worst possible sort.

\* (10:40)

As one of the ministers of Education that reopened teachers' pensions and passed legislation to provide for a partial COLA, I was struck during my time as minister about how badly teachers and retired teachers and, in fact, the whole public education system in this province was treated by members opposite during their time in office.

When we came to office in 1999, and when I was honoured with the portfolio of Minister of

Education and Training in 1999, we were left to deal with crumbling infrastructure, a billion-dollar capital deficit in the public school system from the legacy, the sorry legacy left by members opposite: crumbling classrooms, crumbling gymnasiums, crumbling schools, mould in walls, no investment made of any meaningful nature for over a decade in our public school infrastructure. We were left with a legacy of disrespect and disregard and scorn for public educators, for teachers, active teachers; collective bargaining rights were rolled back by members opposite. There were proposals to cut salaries. There were, in fact, hundreds of job losses as a consequence of the policies initiated by members opposite during their time in office.

I think members opposite really dislike profoundly, educators, Mr. Speaker, dislike profoundly, seek to punish educators when they're in office, refer constantly and incessantly to the union bosses behind the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the union bosses who represented retired teachers today, and teachers in the public school system who are practising today, nothing but scorn for public educators.

Apart from the roll backs in collective bargaining, apart from the cuts to the public school system, apart from the crumbling infrastructure, when we came into office, the members opposite were selling off our classrooms to the highest bidder to put commercial television into the curriculum. Get McDonald's in the classroom and advertisements in the classroom. It was part of the curriculum, an ideological, I might add, an ideological perspective which views our classrooms and our students, our young people as nothing more than passive consumers and marks to be made so that they could be profited off of by corporations. That's the same sort of ideology that led to the sell off of the Manitoba Telephone System to the friends and neighbours of the members opposite. I mean, follow the money and follow the board of directors of MTS and you'll find the Charleswood-Tuxedo family compact wallowing in cash.

In fact, the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) herself, I believe, was sanctioned by the Securities Commission for trading without a licence, trading Manitoba telephone shares without a licence. The absence of integrity from members opposite, not only on public schools' issues, Mr. Speaker, but, broadly speaking, of public policy issues in this province is astonishing, that absence, that absolute lack of interest in the public good for this province.

The party opposite represents a very, very small, narrow band of friends, family and neighbours in the Tuxedo-Charleswood corridor, and, as a member from western Manitoba, it amazes me and it concerns me that we have in rural western Manitoba some seven, eight, nine, 10 seats, the bulk of the membership of the Conservative Party of Manitoba. The bulk of the members opposite represent rural constituencies, which concerns me because the policy initiatives undertaken by the members opposite have nothing to do with anything but redirecting wealth from the public domain, from every Manitoban, into the pockets and businesses of the small, narrow elite that that party serves, and it serves that small band, that small elite very, very well.

We've heard in this House, and the Premier (Mr. Doer) is fond to mention the increase in sales of Jaguars after the Manitoba Telephone System was sold. The party brokers, the party of the Charleswood-Tuxedo family compact, that's the party opposite, and to see them professing concern for teachers or retired teachers, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely sickening. It's pandering of the worst sort. The Member for Tuxedo, the highest-income constituency in the province of Manitoba, to see her professing concerns for teachers who labour throughout this province on behalf of all Manitobans is really quite sickening, and it's quite disingenuous. It is, indeed, like Colonel Sanders getting up and purporting to speak in the best interests of chickens and roasters for the restaurant chain that bears his name.

Mr. Speaker, since 1999, our government is committed to funding the unfunded pension liabilities that went unfunded completely throughout the entire 1990s. We've followed through on that commitment. We've increased premium contributions to the pension plan, the first increases in government in teacher contributions in over 25 years. For 11 years, members opposite sat in government, attacked full on the public school system, attacked full on the post-secondary system, attacked full on teachers, parents, students in every classroom in the province of Manitoba, attacked full on retired teachers, cut salaries, fired teachers, diminished the public education system in every way imaginable.

Today, to hear the Member for Tuxedo say that: I care. I care, Mr. Speaker. Well, it really is sickening. Over 25 years without a contribution until this government took the initiative to begin addressing this unfunded liability. We've also seen,

since 1999, the number of retired teachers grow from 7,300 to today 9,500, an increase of over 30 percent. In that same period, our government's contribution to the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund has increased from \$71 million to \$123 million, an increase of 86 percent.

Mr. Speaker, we've also appointed a retired teacher to TRAF, Mr. Terry Clifford, a very well-respected educator, to increase retired-teacher representation on the decision making of the TRAF board.

My colleague the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) made reference to the bill as a very simple bill. Well, I would submit it is so simple as to be lip-service and really relatively meaningless. It's nothing more than political pandering and speaking to the gallery. There's nothing in this bill. There's nothing in the policies that members opposite have to offer. They have nothing to offer except to punish teachers, punish retired teachers, punish the public school system and, frankly, that party opposite represents nothing more than a party that seeks to redistribute wealth from the province of Manitoba to a narrow, narrow band of elite in Charleswood-Tuxedo. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak briefly on Bill 207, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act. This bill is a fairly straightforward bill, which would provide a Legislative requirement for a retired teacher to be a member of the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund board. It is a simple, democratic process here. The Member for Brandon East is focussed on the events of the past rather than looking toward the future.

What is here is a step forward in terms of better democracy and better representation. We, in the Liberal Party, are prepared and would like to support this legislation because we feel that it is important that retired teachers have better democratic representation on the TRAF board, and that this representation be guaranteed in law, and not just be at the will and the whim of whatever government is in power.

\* (10:50)

Certainly, over the last considerable number of years, the pension for retired teachers has slipped. It has not kept up with what it should have done, and retired teachers, clearly, need and should have a reasonable cost of living adjustment. Retired

teachers, in particular, need to be protected from situations where some of the elder, particularly women, retired teachers are living with inadequate incomes, in poor circumstances. This should not have happened, and it needs to be corrected. Certainly, retired teachers deserve to be supported appropriately with an appropriate cost of living adjustment, and if we have an election and elect a Liberal government, that is one of the things that we will ensure happens.

Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, we will support this legislation. It is a step forward and a good one.

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines):** I am proud to speak a little bit on the bill. The members opposite might not know a lot about the financial investments in investing in pensions and putting real money into pensions, but I am pleased to speak on this because what's happened is that, when you invest in a pension, when you put money into a pension plan, you reap the rewards. The important part about this is that, throughout the '90s, although the actuary of the TRAF board requested, they sent warnings after warning after warning to government that they had to put more contributions in or there would be problems in the future. What they said was that this was a necessary action that government should have taken.

Who was in government at that time? The Conservative government was in power at the time. So, although the actuary said we have to increase contributions, we can't keep doing what we're doing, they did nothing. The other thing that was important to know about it is that our government actually puts the employer part of the pension in in real dollars for new employees. We've done that since 1999.

The former government didn't put any money into the pension. So, in other words, they are paying absolute lip service to this. They didn't (a) increase, as the actuary said that they had to do in order to make sure that there were adequate funds to pay COLA, and what they should have been doing is putting the employer share of the pension into the fund so it could earn money. What did they do? Nothing, throughout the '90s.

So, although you wonder why we bring it back to history, you cannot take money out of a fund, if the former government, the Conservative government, didn't do any of the actions that the actuaries and the pension fund managers said that they needed to do. They said that we needed to do action and the former government did nothing. Now what have we

done? We've actually made the pension contributions to new employees. We've actually made the employer's share, and we have actually started to fund the pension liability.

Now, let's ask about why the bill is there, and I'm pleased to see that the Liberal Leader is now a friend of teachers. He certainly wasn't when they cut millions and millions of dollars out of the federal budget that was transferred to the provincial budget. He has a history. He has a history that he tries to get people to forget. He has a history of cutting out research and science monies. He has a history of cutting the budget and transfers to the province, and then he wonders why there're some repercussions.

It's interesting to note, the members opposite, the Conservatives, wanted to cut history out of the curriculum, wanted to cut music out of the curriculum, wanted to cut art out of the curriculum, cut teachers out of the classroom, invested nothing, gave no raises, had Filmon Friday and took out professional development, and then wonder why we don't think they're friends of teachers. Just because you beat someone time after time after time, and just after you fire them and treat them with abuse, and then you say, with friends like that, who could we need as an enemy? These people are wolves in sheep's clothing, Mr. Speaker, the job losses, the cutting of money, the cutting of pension service from teachers, where the Filmon Fridays made sure that they didn't have full year's pensionable service.

They start talking about our financial savvy. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that the members opposite didn't hear that we have Terry Clifford, a retired teacher, on the pension board. He's a long-term MTS member, and I've known him and worked with him. But the sad part about this whole bill and the sad part that the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) doesn't understand is that the teachers' Pension Task Force which makes recommendations to improve TRAF pension benefits, they have always had retired teachers on that committee and they've always had input.

Under our government we've had input from the people who are on the teachers' Pension Task Force that makes recommendations on improving pensionable benefits. So, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Leader again is wrong. He doesn't understand what they're doing. I also am very, very worried about the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). The Leader of the Opposition, the Conservative Leader has often said that civil servants are paid too much.

They're given too many benefits. They're out of control and that they have no useful service, no purpose.

The members of the Conservative Party, time after time, when they're in power they believe that there are no good civil servants. We believe that civil servants provide a service to our community. We believe in the benefits of teachers. We believe that education is the great equalizer. What happens is if you provide a good quality public education service and you provide respect for teachers, you provide a decent salary, you provide a decent pension, that's what we stand for, and what we will do is we'll stand by our record.

Our record is actually really making differences in the pension, putting real money there, not lip service like members opposite but putting real money there. The teachers are now making an additional payment on their pension costs. No. 2, we're actually putting real money for real employees and making the employer contributions. We're actually making real differences by taking the pension liability, which was over \$2.5 billion when members opposite were in power, and starting to fund that pension liability so it doesn't continue to grow.

I also find it passing strange the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) is giving us financial advice. She's giving us financial advice. One of the few people in this House who've been convicted of trading securities without a licence is giving us financial advice. This is rather interesting. She's saying that the professionals should do this. The people who have been convicted of doing illegal activities outside of government are now in government. They're the keepers of the cookie jar. They're going to protect the long-term funding and increases and the money of the teachers.

Well, contrary to popular belief opposite, past actions do sort of influence what people are going to make in the future. If you continue to beat civil servants, if you continue to beat teachers, then that probably may occur in the future. I know you might put on a new mask, but I was a teacher in the '90s. I did not get any increases in pay in the '90s because there were cuts to the pay scale after they were negotiated. There were cuts to our remuneration after it was negotiated in good faith. That's the record of members opposite.

So, if you look at what we've done, we've got a retired teacher on the Pension Task Force and on the

TRAF board. That's what's in the bill. We're going to take action rather than just pay lip service like the members opposite often do, playing politics, paying lip service and not actually accomplishing anything. We're actually taking action. We've taken action three times, I believe, and we're working together.

Have there been past mistakes? Yes. For 35 years there've been issues that have happened, but the members opposite sat and chose to do nothing, absolutely nothing. So the Conservatives opposite, the Member for Tuxedo, I encourage her to talk to the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) who was Minister of Education and did nothing. I encourage her to talk to other members of her caucus who did absolutely nothing, and I encourage her to talk to Auntie Linda who did nothing. These are people who sat in the Liberal government and they did nothing.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have one minute remaining.

\* (11:00)

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 3—Accurate Budgets

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 11 a.m., we will now move on to Resolutions.

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), the following resolution:

WHEREAS budgets are presented, debated and passed in the Legislature each year and the Estimates process scrutinizes proposed spending by government; and

WHEREAS if the budget does not accurately portray total spending by government and the total cost of services provided by government, then budget debate and Estimates become somewhat irrelevant; and

WHEREAS all spending by government and services provided by government should receive proper debate and scrutiny in the Legislature; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has overspent its last six budgets ending March 31, 2006, by a total of \$834 million; and

WHEREAS \$834 million of spending by government did not receive any debate or scrutiny by the Legislature.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to present budgets to Manitobans that accurately predict spending by government and the total cost of services provided by government, and to limit its spending to the maximum limits passed in the budget except in exceptional circumstances or emergency situations.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, seconded by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain,

WHEREAS budgets are presented, debated and passed in—dispense?

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense.

**Mr. Hawranik:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put comments on the record with respect to what's been happening in the last six years under this NDP government with respect to budgets. I know year after year in spring, we have a budget that's introduced by the Finance Minister every year for the last six years, and what's happened is that there's been a total disregard for the budgetary process in the sense that there's been massive overspending of budgets and no accountability for that massive overspending.

In the last six budgets ending March 31, 2006, the provincial government overspent by a total of \$834 million. That \$834 million is enough to complete the floodway expansion project without borrowing a nickel. So, if they had actually used that \$834 million to expand the floodway, there'd be some results. This money is of concern to me on this side of the House because it isn't being scrutinized by the public, it isn't being debated in the House, it isn't being talked about in Estimates. Not a single penny of this extra spending has been debated during the budget debate and during the Estimates process.

I know members opposite, hopefully, have done their research because I have. In the last six years, \$834 million of overspending by this government. When I compare that, even for the previous nine years before the 1999 election, when I compare that to the previous nine years of Conservative administration, I find that there was overspending during those years as well, but not anywhere near to the extent that we've seen under this NDP government. When you take into account the extra costs that were involved by government during the 1997 flood, which was a very extraordinary

circumstance, we find that, in nine years of Conservative government prior to this government, the Conservative government overspent their budgets by an average of about \$15 million, as compared to about \$140 million each year under this NDP government. So there's a substantial difference, and there was no flood of the century during the NDP years of 1999 and on.

The only thing that has saved this government in terms of trying to balance the operating budget are increased revenues that have been available. Where do those revenues come from, Mr. Speaker? Well, they came, first of all, from broadening the application of the provincial sales tax in this province to include labour on mechanical and electrical contracts. It came from broadening the application of the provincial sales tax to legal fees, accounting fees, engineering fees and architectural fees. An additional \$30 million more per year has been raised by this government in increased taxes. They've also increased taxes the backdoor way in terms of increasing fees, permits and licences, the sneaky backdoor taxes. Some of them have increased once, twice, even three times since 1999. They took a \$201-million raid on Manitoba Hydro in 2004 and, when they took office, they doubled the water rental rates to Manitoba Hydro, which added an extra \$50 million more per year, and, of course, we've had an increase in federal transfer payments by more than \$1 billion on an annual basis since 1999, and that's responsible for more than 50 percent of the revenue growth in this province. We get those federal transfers, not because we're doing well in relation to other provinces. Obviously, it's because we're doing poorly in relation to other provinces. Our economy is not performing as it should, and I know the Minister of Finance disagrees with that, but the fact remains that our economy has never grown at a rate higher than the national average every year that this NDP government has been in Manitoba. Not once has it performed above the national average, and that's in comparison to other provinces. We have nine other provinces, and every province's economy has grown at a rate higher than the national average, at least one of those seven years. The only province that sticks out, in terms of growth in our economy, and an economy that has never grown above the national average is the province of Manitoba.

Now, all of this extra spending by this government, we've had \$834 million of unscrutinized spending in this House besides what is approved every year in their budgets. What are the results

since 1999? Our Conference Board of Canada has rated our health care system the worst in Canada, and we found out yesterday, in the *Free Press*, there was a report that we have the highest per capita spending in health in Canada. So the highest per capita spending in health in Canada is here in Manitoba and, yet, the worst health care system in Canada.

We also have crumbling roads in this province. Not a week goes by that I don't hear from constituents who constantly complain to me, as their representative, that our roads and our constituency are crumbling before our eyes, and not a thing is done about that. We have students who are falling behind; we have universities that underfunded. We have a crime rate that's among the highest in Canada. Our tax rates are not competitive with other provinces. Our personal income taxes are the highest west of Québec. When we talk about corporate income tax rates, six other provinces, overall, according to the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, has stated that six other provinces, overall, have lower corporate income taxes than Manitoba. Our general corporate manufacturing taxes are the second-highest in Canada. We have education taxes in Manitoba that are the second-highest in Canada, just behind Saskatchewan, which is another NDP government in Saskatchewan.

All of this mismanagement and all of the waste is really unnecessary. When we look at where the money has gone, I think that's another area that we have to look at; \$834 million of overspending. Where did it go? We had a \$1-million investment by this government on a toilet on the Provencher Bridge. We've had \$60 million in added costs to the floodway due to the forced unionization of workers on the floodway project. They spent \$100 million for brand new Cadillac VLTs to addict even more Manitobans to gambling in this province. \$550 million is going to be spent in added costs to build a hydro transmission line on the west side of Lake Winnipeg versus the east side of Lake Winnipeg where it's recommended to this government by Manitoba Hydro.

*Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Manitoba Hydro are the experts in this field, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're the experts in the field as to where a hydro transmission line should be located, and this government is totally ignoring the advice received from Manitoba Hydro. It's important to ensure that we have a reliable transmission of power from the north to the south, if we're going to build

more Hydro dams. Clearly, Manitoba Hydro has come out in support of a Hydro transmission line to be built on the east side of Lake Winnipeg versus the west. In fact, this Premier (Mr. Doer) and this government has indicated that one of the excuses why they want to put the Hydro transmission line on the west side of Lake Winnipeg is because it's an environmental reason, and they don't want to cut down more boreal forest. But the fact remains that more boreal forest will be cut down if you put a transmission line on the east side versus the west side, and that came out in committee about a year ago.

\* (11:10)

They've also hired a New York company to re-brand Manitoba and spent \$2.4 million on the "Spirited Energy" campaign. It could've been put to better use, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They spent \$3 million to purchase a Winnipeg film and sound stage. Originally, it was offered to the NDP for a dollar, and the minister at the negotiating table counters with \$3 million and not a penny less. That's how this government negotiates. They know little to nothing about business, and it's very obvious in terms of where they spent their money.

They spent \$2.2 million for high-priced lawyers to defend the Hells Angels—\$2.2 million. Do you think the average Manitoban would be able to hire the highest-priced criminal lawyers in defence? Not an average Manitoban, but the Hells Angels had access to those high-priced lawyers to defend them, and all at the public purse. They also hired a towing company that was owned by the members of the Hells Angels and spent \$28,000, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to tow government-owned vehicles using a towing company that's owned by the members of the Hells Angels.

I could go on and on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about this, but I see that my time is up, and I'm sure that my colleagues will add more to this resolution. Thank you.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** I really appreciate this opportunity to correct all the misinformation the member opposite has put on the record, a pathetic example of poor research, I might say. We're still waiting for his legislation that he promised to bring forward on whistle-blowers, but I guess he's been too busy doing this faulty research to get that done. *[interjection]* It's been two and a half years now, and you still haven't done it. If you'd just

do your homework, you'd have at least a shred of credibility.

It's also classic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after we politely listened to him put his misinformation on the record, he has to stand over there and interrupt us because he doesn't want to hear the facts, which is so typical of the member opposite and his sneaky lawyer-like ways for doing things wrong.

Now the member opposite wants to compare our six-year record with the previous administration's six-year record. Actually, if the member would spend less time doing his lawyer's work and more time being an MLA where he's getting a full-time salary, he might get the facts right once in a while.

Now, if we compare the periods of time, their last six budgets compared to our last six budgets, the facts will show, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that their overspending was more than 10 percent more than ours during their last six years in office when their actual budgets were lower. So their overspending amounted to about 2.4 percent of their budgets; our overspending amounts to about 1.7 percent of our budgets. As a matter of fact, the member can't even add the numbers up correctly because he has to eliminate from his numbers the \$79 million which was approved in this Legislature through Supplementary Estimates with proper debate. He adds that in and says it wasn't scrutinized by the Legislature. Either he wasn't here, and if he was here, he was asleep. If he wasn't here, he didn't do his research properly. So those are the facts.

Now, where did that money go? Where did that extra spending go? Well, a whole bunch of money went to the Canadian Agricultural Income Support program, an extra \$52 million last year for the CAIS program which is a formula-driven program. It's required that we make those contributions to support farmers. Members opposite were screaming for more support for farmers, and then when they get the money, they call it overspending. They try to have it both ways; it's so typical. Perhaps you should talk to your colleagues about what they really stand for and what they really want.

What about the cost related to floods? It's okay to spend money on flooding when they're in office, but if we spend money on flooding when we're in office, oh, no, you can't do that. Well, a flood's a flood, and you have to respond to the needs of Manitobans no matter when it happens, not just to suit your own political convenience.

What about firefighting? Firefighting isn't covered under the Disaster Financial Assistance program federally. It's 100 percent provincial responsibility. The member opposite would like to see Manitoba burn as opposed to going out and fighting those fires. We fought those fires. We protected those northern communities. The member has never been north of Lac du Bonnet to see a community in northern Manitoba. If he would take the time to go up there, he'd realize there are citizens deserving of equal treatment to everybody in Manitoba. Equal treatment and equal protection by the government. But, no, you're too busy doing your lawyering job instead of travelling around Manitoba to see that Manitobans need protection. That's your problem, inaccurate and lazy when it comes to doing research around here. Now—

**An Honourable Member:** This is below you, come on.

**Mr. Selinger:** Well, I learned it from you, Glen. You're the guy that got thrown out of the Legislature and you still haven't apologized for it. Are you going to jump up on a point of order and interrupt? Go for it.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what about the federal accounting error? What about the federal accounting error?

**An Honourable Member:** You're a joke.

**Mr. Selinger:** And you're a joke because you don't do your research, and you interrupt, too. Did I interrupt you when you were speaking? No, I didn't, so shut up.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the federal accounting error in 2002 was something that the members opposite did nothing about when they were in office. They didn't even—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Point of order being raised. The honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the Minister of Finance may be in full flight, I suspect, to tell other members of this Chamber—and I didn't hear any outbursts on this side or on the government side other than some laughing—but to tell members of this Chamber to shut up, I think, is unparliamentary, and I would invite your ruling on it.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable members, there are many ways of saying stop. Sometimes in the heat of passion, you can use different words. So I'll take it under advisement for proper ruling.

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**Mr. Selinger:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to your ruling and, of course, I will comply with it. In the meantime, I know the members opposite will be respectful and listen to the speech just like we did for them.

Now, if the member thinks that the spending in Manitoba is out of control, why was it okay to spend 10 percent more during their period in office, which was 2.4 percent of their budgets, when the overspending in this government has been less than 1.7 percent of our budgets? Our overspending related to disaster relief; it related to relief to farmers; it related to relief for fire assistance and the second worst for drought, for the BSE crisis.

These are all issues where the members opposite, including the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), were standing up in the Legislature demanding relief from the Legislature. When relief comes, they then say that it's overspending. They try to have it both ways. It's so typically classic of the members opposite that they're not accountable for their own behaviour, but they want to make everybody else accountable for standards that they themselves would not follow when they were in office. That's exactly what we have here, double standards, writ large.

Now, if their allegations were true, would we have got credit-rating upgrades? No. Have we gotten credit-rating upgrades? Yes. How many have we had? Five credit-rating upgrades, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Dominion Bond Rating Service was upgraded from A to A-high. Never happened when they were in office. Moody's was upgraded from AA3 to AA2. Never happened when they were in office. Then it was upgraded from AA2 to AA1 a second time. Never happened when they were in office. Then Standard and Poor's came along and changed our outlook from stable to positive. Never happened when they were in office. And, finally, our short-term ratings were increased from R1-low to R1-middle, reflecting our performance with respect to their criteria and improving our credit rating a total of five times in the last seven years.



If the member opposite thinks his government, when they were in office, can match that record, let him stand up and say so. He doesn't want to deal with the facts because he knows the facts demonstrate on a fair and accurate analysis that their overspending was much greater than ours. Their credit-rating improvements were far less than ours.

Now, in addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've done many things to improve compliance with GAAP, the generally accepted accounting principles—

\* (11:20)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Two minutes.

**Mr. Selinger:** —which were recommendations made to the government by the Auditor General. Including during their time in office, the Auditor General repeatedly told them that their balanced budget legislation did not comply with GAAP. What was their response? Do nothing. Stick their heads in the sand and ignore it. Of course, when they're in opposition, all of a sudden they embrace GAAP principles, and they want us to improve the legislation, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will do that. We will follow through. We will follow through and make the GAAP improvements which we've done every single year in office.

What are some of the improvements we've made?

Preparing the March 31, '05 summary financial statements in full compliance with GAAP for the first time in the history of the province and receiving an unqualified audit opinion from the Office of the Auditor General. Member opposite never mentions that in his speeches because he'd have to give credit where credit is due.

Being the first government in Manitoba history to have a plan to pay down the pension liability. In 1989, when these members took office, they had a review of the finances of the government. Their review told them to start dealing with the pension liability. Eleven years later when they left office, had they done anything about the pension liability? They had done absolutely nothing about the pension liability after being 11 years in office. In our first year in office, we put a long-term plan in place to deal with the pension liability. We did, in six months, what they failed to do in 11 years. Have they ever given any credit for that to us? No, they haven't. Have the credit rating agencies given us credit for that? Yes, they have. They're a lot more legitimate in

their opinions about the financial performance of the province than the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) is. He doesn't have a clue what he's talking about.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member's time has expired.

#### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** We have 37 visitors from Blumenort School under the direction of Jennifer Major, guests of the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

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**Mr. Cummings:** I do consider it a privilege to be able to be involved in this debate because I'm not sure what happened to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) this morning. He usually conducts himself in a very gentlemanly manner in this House, and I suspect that some of the revelations that we went through on the Crocus file last night kind of caused him to have a poor night. Maybe he didn't get enough sleep. I apologize for that, Mr. Minister, because normally I'm quite comfortable listening to your debate, but obviously you didn't sleep very well last night. I would suspect that's with good reason.

I want to address this bill because I think the principle behind this is important and one that we as members of this Legislature and members on this side who see an opportunity to form government, before too long I believe, will have the opportunity to actually put the principles that are enunciated here in place.

While the member can talk about how he has managed the affairs of government, and frankly, there are, as he says, things that they have accomplished that are of benefit, but the fact is that he is the one who has presided over a \$2-billion increase in the budget in this province. That's a 20 percent annual increase over the expenditures that were available to this province in 1999, and if we want to talk about history, if we want to talk about history, the debt of this province that was inherited from the previous NDP administration and the recession of the early '90s was a combination that took a long time to put us in a position where we could actually again balance our budget, which was accomplished in the mid-90s.

Now what we have is an argument over whether or not we want to be transparent with the public about the dollars that we are spending. That's what my colleague from Lac du Bonnet is talking about: transparency. The improvement of accountability by

government to the public. If you're spending more money than you're putting in your budget, then the public doesn't know about it. They find out six months later and it's sort of a shrug, well, okay, I guess they spent more money, but my tax bill is what I will judge this by. If my taxes are holding or haven't gone up an exorbitant amount, then I guess I don't have cause to question what the government did.

The fact is that this also speaks to the accountability around balanced budget legislation because that's why there are clauses requiring debt pay-back, because over the years governments have learned how to hide expenditures in a way that the public just doesn't understand until the debt comes up behind them and hits them in the back of the head. That's what we've had decade after decade in this province whereby the amortized debt to the province, the debt that's hidden in the Crown corporations, these debts are not readily understood by the public, and it's so easy to do what this government did, which was bury some debt in Manitoba Hydro when they took their, quote—*[interjection]*

Well, I heard a shriek of disbelief on the other side; \$250 million is not hay; it's a lot of cash. And that accumulated debt against that probably set the corporation back by a significant amount.

I do hope that the members in the Chamber, including the government members and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), would consider that openness and fairness with the public is what this bill is about. It creates a discussion about how we can set up a system that will demonstrate to the public that we want them to know that this is the number of dollars we took in and this is the number of dollars we spent and here is how we spent them. A pretty simple principle. I think the students from Blumenort would understand that quite readily. It's no different than balancing your household budget. If you spend more than you take in, you've got a debt, but if you spend all of what you take in, then you better be able to tell your family what you spent it on or they should be able to understand that it was spent in the right place. If there is a dispute, just as in a family, the province of Manitoba and the citizens of this province need to be able to understand and respect the decisions. They can disagree with the decisions, but they should be told what the decisions were. They should be told what the money was, how much, numbers that are appropriate to go with that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can't let it go by, however, that when this government talks about how it moves towards the acceptance of GAAP, wasn't it interesting that they fought against that for a number of years until they had a year when the Crowns made money? All of a sudden they flipped over to GAAP, some of the principles of GAAP, so that they could demonstrate a robust budget. There have been years during their tenure in government when it would've been the other mien, but they chose not to go to GAAP at that time. And just for those who've forgotten what GAAP means, it's generally accepted accounting principles, and it means that they need to put all of the debt, all the income of government on the table for the examination of the public.

If we go that far, why wouldn't we be prepared to also bring back before the Legislature, which is the one place where government is publicly held to accountability, to demonstrate the surplus and whether or not they are going to be spending that surplus? I don't for one minute believe it, but you could ask the question, were these accidental expenditures? Did the government not know that they were going to be spending this money? Of course they knew, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They just didn't want to talk about it. It allowed them to fulfil promises that were over and above the budget. That's the way government is. If you have robust and growing income which this government did, mainly from transfer payments frankly, but they had income that went far beyond what they had anticipated, so what is so wrong with my colleague's idea of having them present that information to the Legislature. It can do it with a mini budget; they can do it with any number of processes; but, let it be put forward as an intended expense, and one that then is built into the budgetary responsibility that goes with this.

This could even be seen as the government getting themselves in a position where they have some play money to deal with, where they now have a surplus that is not accountable except after the fact and is not going to be called to account about whether or not they have chosen their priorities. And that's really what the basic debate between this side and that side of the House is about I would say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is about how we chose priorities on behalf of our province. Is this a good expenditure of money?

\* (11:30)

Another three-quarters of \$1 billion or 80 percent of \$1 billion was spent over and above the

budget, and I believe I have the figure right. It strikes me that in a province where the budget not very long ago was only \$6 billion and is now at \$8 billion, that it's an opportunity for any government to demonstrate that it's willing to be held accountable.

I thank you for your indication of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm more than happy to debate this at greater length with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), given that opportunity, because he knows that the people of this province will judge his government and they will judge a future Conservative government by whether or not they are accountable and whether or not they choose their priorities wisely.

**Mr. Tim Sale (Fort Rouge):** This resolution is based on complete either misunderstanding or deliberate misinformation about the state of Manitoba's finances and the state of our budgets.

First of all, as my colleague the Minister of Finance made very clear, the premise of the motion, the resolution, is simply incorrect. The numbers are wrong. Basically, the total is actually \$702 million, less than the amount of overspending during the previous six years of the Conservative government.

But much more importantly, I want to address directly my fellow retiree from the beautiful area of Ste. Rose. I'm really wondering whether he in his speech was reflecting the policy of the opposition and whether they are saying that they are prepared to commit to bring every single change in the budget before a legislative sitting if they form government.

In other words, what my colleague opposite was suggesting was every time there's more money coming in, because the federal government's estimates are always wrong, and every time there's a drought and every time there's a crop failure and every time there's a flood and every time there's a fire up north, my honourable colleague says we should bring that before a sitting of the Legislature and debate it. While northern Manitoba burns, we'll talk. While southern Manitoba floods, we'll talk. While grasshoppers eat your crops, we'll talk. We'll have a discussion about whether we should support those farmers. We'll have a session of the Legislature, and every time there's a change in anything that has to do with the budget of the Province of Manitoba, we will talk about it. We'll presumably have a debate and we will then have a vote.

Now, I would like to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sometime before the clock strikes 12, whether the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), my honourable colleague, my fellow retiree, is really reflecting Conservative policy. They are so born-again, they are so committed to the narrow understandings of neo-Conservatism that he is saying every time there's a change of any substance in the budget, he's going to call the Legislature back, tell us about it, when he forms government sometime in the next two decades, and he's going to have a debate. So, while the forest fires rage, while the flood waters rise, while the grasshoppers eat, we're going to talk. Now, that just does not make much sense to me as a person who's responsible for public policy or public expenditures.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what has been the actual use of the extra money? Well, I sat as a Health Minister for a couple of years and I heard the opposition talking about cancer drugs. They said: We have to have these new drugs. Those drugs were not on the horizon when our budget was written. The budget is written in November, December and January as the members opposite know. It takes into effect on the 1st of April and runs for 12 months. A great number of things change in a health system during that period of time. So, either the members opposite are saying: We shouldn't have put those dollars into cancer drugs, we were wrong, which I don't think they're saying, or they are saying that the money to pay for these should have somehow dropped out of the sky somewhere, that we really didn't need to have it in our budget. I don't think they're really saying that either.

So I think when you look at an actual example, the CAIS program, the drought, the flood, the fires, and you say to them, are you really serious that this money should not have been spent, I think they will say, well, yes, actually, we did the same thing and we need to do that.

So the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) has put on the record simply a political resolution that bears no factual reality, no factual relationship to the reality of budgeting in any entity, whether it's a company, a farm, or a government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Budgets are guidance documents that one should live as closely as possible to and manage from the day they come into effect until the day they are over. That's what a good government tries to do, and our record is substantially better than the record of the

previous government where the overspending was 2.4 percent during your last six years and our overspending is about 1.7 percent. So we are making progress at accurate budgeting, but there will never be a day, there will never be a day in any large entity that is governing either a city or a province when things don't happen to cause a budget to be under stress. The issue is, can you manage it? The record of this Finance Minister is yes, the budget has been balanced. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund is larger than it was when we took office.

The upgrades in terms of those who actually measure governments' performance, the bond rating agencies who determine the price of our paper when we market it, how many basis points over prime we have to pay or under prime we're unable to pay. They are the people who actually are saying how do you do as a manager, and what they're saying is that this Finance Minister and this government have had a tremendous record of financial management: Five upgrades of our credit rating, Mr. Deputy Speaker; a debt to GDP ratio which is going down, down 6 percent since we formed government and it's still going down.

Finally, for the first time in Manitoba's history, we have a plan to pay down the pension liabilities of this province, which the members opposite were warned about in government. They were told in 1989 they should have been doing something about it. The trade-off that Duff Roblin made to pay for the floodway may have made sense in 1968 or '67 or '66, but it should have been turned around immediately after the floodway was dealt with by any government in there, and this is the government that did it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that every new employee of our government has his pension or her pension fully vested from the first day. Every new teacher has the pension contribution made. That never happened during the 1990s under the previous government when the liabilities of the province were escalating.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just for the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), who probably should be listening to this, he might want to know that the largest single deficit in Manitoba's history was \$742 million incurred by one Mr. Filmon and his Finance Minister, Mr. Stefanson, in '93, '94. The largest deficit ever in Manitoba's history, '93, '94: \$742 million. And you know, in their last two years in government—talk about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund—they drew down the Fiscal Stabilization Fund

by \$185 million one year and \$186 million the next year, and in those two years their revenues were growing very robustly. They simply wanted to empty that tank so that the incoming government, which they knew was going to be an NDP government, wouldn't have the resources to manage the budget appropriately, but they failed, because not only do we manage the budget appropriately, we've had our credit ratings upgraded. We've got more money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund than when we formed government. We've balanced the budget every year, and we are now fully compliant with GAAP rules, generally accepted accounting principles. When we look at the reality of that, the Public Accounts release in '04-05, the Auditor General said, and I quote, This is a red-letter day for Manitobans, and he confirmed that, and I quote again: This is the first time in history that we've been able to give them a clean opinion on the accounts, indicating that they were prepared in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles. You can't get a better endorsement than five credit upgrades and the Auditor General saying that this is a red-letter day and the Province is fully complying with GAAP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will comply with the requirements to change the legislation to allow for full GAAP compliance. We've been working for about four years now with our school divisions and our health authorities to make all the changes that should have been made, if the opposition members are so keen, in the 1990s. We're the government that's doing it. We're funding pensions. We're balancing the budget. We have credit upgrades. There is more money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. What exactly is the point from the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) except, perhaps, to try and make mischief, which he has failed at?

\* (11:40)

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** A point of order, the honourable Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier I used what I consider to be rude language in responding to some interruptions, and I'd like to unreservedly withdraw those comments and apologize to the Legislature.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** That should take care of the matter. I thank the honourable member.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie, I'd just like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us students from Collège Jeanne-Sauvé. We have 75 grade 9 students under the direction of Melanie Boothe. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Health (Ms. Oswald).

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

\* \* \*

**Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a privilege to rise today to debate the resolution before us. I would like to encourage all honourable members before rising and participating in debate on very important resolutions before us here in the Chamber that careful reading of the resolution be undertaken.

The former Health Minister cited on the record that the reason he was in opposition to the resolution before us today was because of the emergency type spending that sometimes government is required to undertake as well as unusual and exceptional circumstances that need to be addressed immediately that are outside the budget consideration and unknown at the time of consideration.

I want all honourable members to recognize that the resolution before us states that the spending outside of budget under exceptional circumstances and emergency situations is allowed for under this resolution that we are debating here this afternoon. I truly believe that it is important for government to address situations such as forest fires, such as drought and flood as well as immediate concerns of those facing crisis of a personal nature in our health care here in the province of Manitoba. So this resolution does allow for that and I want to make certain the record clearly reflects that.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is a privilege for me to rise today in support of the resolution as brought to the Legislative Assembly by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik). This resolution brings forward clarity to that of this House and the government of Manitoba's spending of hard-earned taxpayers' dollars. It really truly is incumbent upon all of us that we make absolutely certain that all Manitobans understand what government is doing and where they're investing and spending their hard-earned tax dollars.

This resolution deals with resources that the government allocates above and beyond that which has been discussed, debated here in this Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. I want to say that it is very, very important that we do provide a clear accounting of all monies spent in the best interests of Manitobans and that's all this resolution calls for. This resolution is based upon common sense.

I will say that the honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale), the former Minister of Health and Family Services, did say that when we need to go ahead and spend money we should, to address emergencies and exceptional circumstances. But I will say that on a farm, which he related to, we are limited by an agreement with the bank as to how much money we are able to spend in any given year. Effectively, if that amount is going to be exceeded, you have to call the bank; otherwise, they're not going to clear the cheque that's written in excess of your line of credit that has been approved. That is the business world. That's reality, and all this resolution does is speak to the reality that all other Manitobans have to exist under.

So it's not exceptional that this resolution be discussed here in the House because it is based upon everyday reality that all Manitobans have to live by, and so it should be incumbent upon government and the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to be the same as all other Manitobans. It is not asking an extraordinary amount. All we're stating is that we need a mechanism to examine when a budget is exceeded.

Yes, emergency situations and exceptional circumstances are exempt from this particular resolution, and so government can address the forest-fire situation as was cited by the former Minister of Health, and that is what we all want to see happen. We're not going to let the forest burn. We're not going to let the flood waters inundate persons here in the province of Manitoba without government reaction to it. This resolution does not preclude that happening.

But what we're seeing right now by the Government of Manitoba is an extraordinary growth in expenditure, much of which is taking place above and beyond the Estimates that have been discussed here in the House. I want to mention, at this point in time, a document that appears before all honourable members on a quarterly basis is one of comparison of expenditure as it relates to the Estimates passed here in the House. Now it has been the decision by the

Department of Finance to suspend the fourth quarter publishing of the document of comparative Estimates, and I will say that is very disappointing to myself because that document is a document that, in very, very short summation, provides a picture of the government expenditures and the very departments as to how close they are in their expenditures as related to the Estimates and budget that have been passed through the House.

The reason, they stated, for the suspension of the fourth quarter report, was that they say that now, under the generally accepted accounting principles and a more speedy reporting to the House of the Auditor's reports, a fourth quarter unaudited comparative summary is no longer needed. But I will state, as a person that comes from the business world, the documents that are submitted to this Chamber by the Auditor General do not offer very easily compared figures. The documents we receive here, especially the Volume 4, which is in excess of, I will go back to imperial measurement, more than an inch and a half thick, pages amounting more than 1,000, and it is very, very difficult to go through a document of that size to glean from it the comparative figures, and that's why the fourth quarter unaudited report of comparative Estimates is very, very important for members of the Legislative Assembly to grasp in a very short order how the government is performing and how close the expenditures are being related to the actual budgetary authorization from this Chamber.

Now, as far as a mechanism to gauge this over-expenditure, it is very easily done. We have a committee of the Legislative Assembly, and it's called the Public Accounts Committee, that is made up of members of the Legislative Assembly. This committee could very easily be convened and, under its purview, the expenditures of government can effectively be assessed and authorized—well, I won't say authorized because only the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba can effectively authorize officially expenditures. But take note of, evaluate, and at least elected individuals from this Legislative Assembly will have opportunity to question and understand and to bring that clarity to the Legislative Assembly about the expenditures.

\* (11:50)

I do also want to make note of a couple of other items that the extraordinary amount of money that has been put forward is one that I think needs to be borne out, that this government has effectively over

\$800 million of expenditures that were not discussed or debated here in the House. Mind you, they are again the following year because, obviously, the budgets are increased by that amount of money, and there is debate on them but, perhaps, six, eight, nine months after the fact, and I think that's important to note.

I also want to ask all members to support this resolution, but I do also want to state to the honourable members opposite that, indeed, yes, the government of Manitoba's bond rating and debt rating have been increased, but you have to look at the whole picture. You have to look at every obligation of government. That includes the special operating agencies and Crown corporations. If you evaluate the Crown corporations as special operating agencies of government, that is not the case. The bond ratings of our jewel of Crown corporations, Manitoba Hydro, has, in fact, been downgraded because of the additional debt thrust upon that very proud Crown corporation of the province of Manitoba over the years of the NDP administration.

That corporation is now being looked at in a very different light for any further borrowings that it might be required to undertake. The government in its Throne Speech, did, in fact, state that the borrowings will be needed. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to address the resolution proposed by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) today, entitled Accurate Budgets. I see this as a somewhat mischievous resolution and somewhat redundant and a waste of the Chamber's time, at this point, because I can tell you upon reading the resolution, basically, it's what we're doing already. We're already ahead of the curve here.

The resolution and the "THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to present budgets to Manitobans that accurately predict spending by government and the total cost of services provided by government and to limit its spending to the maximum limits passed in the budget except in exceptional circumstances or emergency situations."

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we've done. Is the member suggesting somehow that we should, in the interests of making certain that we don't exceed the budget, let the floods flood the land and the fires burn the forests. Does the

Member for Lac du Bonnet expect, if he was in government right now and a forest fire started in his constituency, he was going to sit by and let it burn? Let Rome burn while Nero fiddles? That seems to be his approach. So we know that he wouldn't do that if the future government has to do firefighting duties in this province, has to fight the floods. They will do that regardless of what their budget figures at the time say, and that would be accepted and totally supported by members of the public.

So I really don't know what they're complaining about. In terms of the total amount of spending that they claim was unaccounted for, the reality is that over the same period of time when they were in government, they actually had higher figures. It's not, Mr. Speaker, as if there's missing money here. So that's why I say this is mischievous, because they plan to use this in the election run-up to disseminate basically false and misleading information to the people and try to scare people into drumming up a few votes. That is not, to me, proper and honest behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, we've balanced the budget according to the Tory balanced budget legislation every year since we formed the government. Over the last few years, we've made significant progress in aligning the Province's accounting practices with the GAAP procedures. I want to tell you that I recall during the Filmon government it was the Filmon government that set up the balanced budget legislation, and there was a considerable debate about it at the time. Our caucus was certainly split over that issue, but, at the end of the day, we went along with it. We actually adopted and actually improved, if you look back on the record, we actually improved their balanced budget legislation and cut out some of the loopholes that they had.

It's funny how things have changed over the years because that was revolutionary in its day. They were moving ahead with this, and we were hard pressed to be supporting them. In fact, when we formed the government, we adopted all of their balanced budget legislation, and now they've got nothing to complain about. They have had nothing to complain about for a long time, so now they're finding fault with our system.

They're finding fault with a system where we have accepted the GAAP principles. They did absolutely nothing over the 11 years to proceed with GAAP other than perhaps talk about it once or twice, but it was this government that brought in the whole

range of GAAP principles that we currently have, and, as a matter of fact, we are still in the final stages of adopting the principles. It won't be fully implemented for another year or so.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's net debt that the Auditor General says is a very important figure went down by \$151 million last year. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund is higher than when we took office. As a matter of fact, when we came to office the balance of the rainy day fund was \$264 million, and, coincidentally, that was exactly the amount of money the members opposite got from the sale of the telephone system. What they did was develop a rainy day fund before the last election in 1999, and they blew it all out in a desperate attempt to gain re-election which, of course, was not successful.

Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned before, our debt to GDP is declining. It was 31.4 percent when we took office in 1999, and because of a robust economy in Manitoba it's now only 24.1 percent. These are improvements. The opposition should be heralding this as a big improvement over the years when they were in government.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale) very accurately gave us a description of what has happened with the bond-rating upgrades. I remember in the Schreyer years when we had one bond-rating drop, the Conservative opposition of the day went crazy, complaining about how one little drop in our credit rating was going to drive the Manitoba economy into the ground. Well, here in seven years we have five bond-rating increases, improvements, and have we had any accolades from the members opposite? We even have organizations that tend to be right-wing supporters supporting us in this. We have statements from different right-wing organizations saying that the Manitoba government is running a very, very good fiscal situation here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, evidently my time is nearing the end here, so I will stop while I'm ahead.

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk):** It's a pleasure to rise and put a few words on the record, very few words on the record, Mr. Speaker, in looking at the time we have left, but I'll be interested to speak on this in days to come.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) has said and the Minister of Finance and the Member for Fort Rouge put on the record, there are many problems that are associated with this

resolution brought forward by my colleague and neighbour from Lac du Bonnet. He as one of Lac du Bonnet's constituents and the constituency have benefited greatly from the spending decisions of this government, and now he stands up in this House and he's criticizing those very spending decisions of this government.

We know that in his own community he's benefited from two new schools, a new hospital in

Beausejour, upgrades to infrastructure in his community, upgrades to the roads in his community. All of those things were spending decisions made by this government.

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

The hour being 12 noon, we will recess and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, December 7, 2006**

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