

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

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

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**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.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garri	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.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 2, 2006

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

*PRAYER*

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PETITIONS**

**Funding for New Cancer Drugs**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death of Manitobans.

Families are often forced to watch their loved ones suffer the devastating consequences of this disease for long periods of time.

New drugs such as Erbitux, Avastin, Zevalin, Rituxan, Herceptin and Eloxatin have been found to work well and offer new hope to those suffering from various forms of cancer.

Unfortunately, these innovative new treatments are often costly and remain unfunded under Manitoba's provincial health care system.

Consequently, patients and their families are often forced to make the difficult choice between paying for the treatment themselves or going without.

CancerCare Manitoba has asked for an additional \$12 million for its budget to help provide these leading-edge treatments and drugs for Manitobans.

Several other provinces have already approved these drugs and are providing them to their residents at present time.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba and the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) to consider providing CancerCare Manitoba with the appropriate funding necessary so they may provide leading-edge care for patients in the same manner as other provinces.

To request the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Health to consider accelerating the

process by which new cancer treatment drugs are approved so that more Manitobans are able to be treated in the most effective manner possible.

This petition is signed by David Bevan, William Marchak, D.J. Hanley and thousands of others.

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

\* (13:35)

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death of Manitobans.

Families are often forced to watch their loved ones suffer the devastating consequences of this disease for long periods of time.

New drugs such as Erbitux, Avastin, Zevalin, Rituxan, Herceptin and Eloxatin have been found to work well and offer new hope to those suffering from various forms of cancer.

Unfortunately, these innovative new treatments are often costly and remain unfunded under Manitoba's provincial health care system.

Consequently, patients and their families are often forced to make the difficult choice between paying for the treatment themselves or going without.

CancerCare Manitoba has asked for an additional \$12 million for its budget to help provide these leading-edge treatments and drugs for Manitobans.

Several other provinces have already approved these drugs and are providing them to their residents at present time.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba and the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) to consider providing CancerCare Manitoba with the appropriate

funding necessary so they may provide leading-edge care for patients in the same manner as other provinces.

To request the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Health to consider accelerating the process by which new cancer treatment drugs are approved so that more Manitobans are able to be treated in the most effective manner possible.

This petition is signed by W. Blevins, R. Cadick, E. Neilson and thousands of others, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death of Manitobans.

Families are often forced to watch their loved ones suffer the devastating consequences of this disease for long periods of time.

New drugs such as Erbitux, Avastin, Zevalin, Rituxan, Herceptin and Eloxatin have been found to work well and offer new hope to those suffering from various forms of cancer.

Unfortunately, these innovative new treatments are often costly and remain unfunded under Manitoba's provincial health care system.

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CancerCare Manitoba has asked for an additional \$12 million for its budget to help provide these leading-edge treatments and drugs for Manitobans.

Other provinces have already approved these drugs and are providing them to their residents at present time.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba and the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) to consider providing CancerCare Manitoba with the appropriate funding necessary so they may provide leading-edge care for patients in the same manner as other provinces.

To request the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Health to consider accelerating the

process by which new cancer care treatment drugs are approved so that more Manitobans are able to be treated in the most effective manner possible.

This petition is signed by Regina Giesbrecht, Marvin Giesbrecht and Cathy Annan. Thank you.

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** Mr. Speaker, may I have leave to present the Member for Lakeside's (Mr. Eichler) petition, please?

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave? [*Agreed*]

### Crocus Investment Fund

**Mrs. Rowat:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly, and these are the reasons for this petition:

The Auditor General's *Examination of the Crocus Investment Fund* indicated that as early as 2001, the government was made aware of red flags at the Crocus Investment Fund.

In 2001, Industry, Economic Development and Mines officials stated long-term plans at the Crocus Investment Fund requiring policy changes by the government were cleared by someone in "higher authority," indicating political interference at the highest level.

In 2002, an official from the Department of Finance suggested that Crocus Investment Fund's continuing requests for legislative amendments may be a sign of management issues and that an independent review of Crocus Investment Fund's operations may be in order.

Industry, Economic Development and Mines officials indicated that several requests had been made for a copy of Crocus Investment Fund's business plan, but that Crocus Investment Fund never complied with these requests.

Manitoba's Auditor General stated, "We believe the department was aware of red flags at Crocus and failed to follow up on those in a timely way."

As a direct result of the government ignoring the red flags, more than 33,000 Crocus investors have lost more than \$60 million.

The relationship between some union leaders, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP seem to be the primary reason as for why the government ignored the red flags.

The people of Manitoba want to know what occurred within the NDP government regarding

Crocus, who is responsible and what needs to be done so this does not happen again.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To strongly urge the Premier to consider calling an independent inquiry into the Crocus Investment Fund scandal.

This petition signed by Norma Boisvert, Wilf Taylor, Jackie Peckover and many, many, many others.

\* (13:40)

### **Civil Service Employees–Neepawa**

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislature Assembly.

These are the reasons for the petition:

Eleven immediate positions from Manitoba Conservation Lands Branch, as of April 1, the Crown Lands and Property Special Operating Agency, are being moved out of Neepawa.

Removal of these positions will severely impact the local economy with potentially 33 adults and children leaving the community.

Removal of these positions will be detrimental to revitalizing the rural and surrounding communities of Neepawa.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider stopping the removal of these positions from our community, and to consider utilizing current technology, such as the Land Management Services existing sub-office in Dauphin utilizes, and in order to maintain these positions in their existing location.

I present this petition on behalf of Joanne Pollock, Jim Pollock and Kathryn Jasiencyk.

### **Crocus Investment Fund**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba government was made aware of serious problems involving the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

Manitoba's provincial auditor stated "We believe the department was aware of red flags at Crocus and failed to follow up on those in a timely way."

As a direct result of the government not acting on what it knew, over 33,000 Crocus investors have lost tens of millions of dollars.

The relationship between some union leaders, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP seems to be the primary reason as for why the government ignored the red flags.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider the need to seek clarification on why the government did not act on fixing the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

To urge the Premier and his government to cooperate in making public what really happened and call a public inquiry.

This is signed by M. Dhillon, G. Andrews, P. Powell and many, many other Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us Jae Eadie who is a city councillor.

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

Also in the public gallery we have from St. James Assiniboia School Division, International Education Program, 20 Grades 9 to 12 English as a Second Language students under the direction of Mrs. Alex Humphries.

This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines (Mr. Rondeau).

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

### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### **Manitoba Economy Transfer Payment Dependency**

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, Mr. Speaker, today there is significant impact of the budget proposal in

Ottawa that will be presented shortly, impacts for this province.

My question is to the Premier, because Manitoba has a significant dependence on transfer payments, and undoubtedly will be referenced again in the budget in Ottawa; one of the cornerstones of our federation, Mr. Speaker, but a dependence of this nature indicates that we may not be developing our own true potential. Six years in a row, the Manitoba economy has failed to perform at the national average, and the brilliant retort of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) is, well, somebody has to be below average.

Mr. Speaker, is it the Premier's strategy to keep us below average?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the percentage of money from equalization is a percentage of—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

\* (13:45)

**Mr. Doer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The percentage of money provided in the equalization payment under the Constitution of Canada as a percentage of the budget is less today than it was in 1999. The member opposite was in Cabinet—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** The member opposite was part of a Cabinet, in fact, I think has a current adviser named Mr. Stefanson that wrote on a number of occasions to the federal government asking for a 10-province average. Mr. Manness, a big adviser to the Alliance Party that morphed into the new Progressive Conservative Party, had the similar position. I can give copies to the members opposite. I guess they did not discuss them at Cabinet when the member opposite was in Cabinet. But the dependency is less today than it was five years ago.

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Speaker, this Premier has presided over the most rapid growth in the size of the budget in this province in recent history, and he is sitting at 35 percent dependence on transfer payments, 35 percent. What does that mean to the people of this province? Transfers have increased now so we are continuing with our dependence.

I want to know if this Premier has a plan to divert from his drive to the lower common denominator to restore economic buoyancy to this

province so we are not so dependent on transfer payments.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite includes some of the per capita payments which are still below where they were on a per capita basis in health care, post-secondary education and social services. Surely, the member opposite would want to look at the equalization number.

As I say, I could table the letters from Mr. Stefanson, a current adviser to members opposite, that call on a 10-province average. That, by the way, was called on by Senator Lowell Murray and Ms. Stein in a report that was written just recently.

But, Mr. Speaker, I suggest, yes, we are in favour of continuing to reduce the dependency, and the only way Manitoba—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, I suggest we would be a lot further ahead if we had built Conawapa instead of mothballing it. We are the party that believes in building Hydro for the future of Manitoba, and we believe building Hydro will be for Manitoba in the future what oil and gas is to Alberta and Saskatchewan right now. We believe in that.

### Provincial Growth Plan

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, when in doubt, shout seems to be the Premier's mode of operation and his legacy whether he likes it or not.

He has presided over very poor management of significant growth in our budget. We have spent every dollar that has come into the coffers of this province and driven the province further into debt. The Premier needs to be accountable for his actions and how he is managing on behalf of the population of this province. I do not need any briefing notes from him. I can quote from his own budget, where, since the year 2000, it has gone from \$2.1 billion to almost \$3 billion growth in transfer payments.

Mr. Speaker, when will he put forward an economic plan so that this province can achieve its potential growth?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the percentage of equalization payments made to Manitoba in '99, in the budget, was over 20, I think it was 20.5 percent. It is lower today. The Dominion Bond Rating agency had a conclusion that it had

come down. As a percentage of the budget, it also concluded that Manitoba's economy has performed in such a way that with balanced budgets and the practice we are taking, the debt to GDP ratio is going down.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out in terms of debt, members opposite did not get the Auditor General to sign off fully on their books in '98 and '99. It should have been a front-page story. It was a huge scandal in our view. It was clearly in the Auditor General's statement. They—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

\* (13:50)

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite hid debt, including all the health capital debt. They hid the purchase of Centra Gas, they hid many other items that were not contained within the debt. The difference between being accountable is they used to hide the debt. We put it on the books. Now that we have done that the credit rating in Manitoba is better today than when members opposite left. That is accountability.

#### **Manitoba Economy Tax Rates**

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, this is the same government that the Auditor General said about its budgets and its books that it was misleading by omission. The federal Conservative government will bring down its budget this afternoon, and a large part of that budget is designed to reduce taxes. The federal Finance Minister is on record as saying Canadians pay too much tax. The Premier (Mr. Doer) is on record as saying that this NDP government has similar priorities to our federal government.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Will he admit that, under this NDP government, Manitobans pay too much tax?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, if the member wants to compare our tax rates to federal tax rates he will find on every corporate tax rate, small business tax rate or personal income tax rate, Manitoba taxes are significantly lower than federal taxes to the same citizens.

Let us give an example. I will give an example for small business. The federal election, the current federal government ran on a program of reducing

small business taxes from 12 to 11 percent. We are at 4.5 percent. We are going to 3 percent. I can give examples in every category where our taxes are substantially lower than any equivalent federal tax rate. So we are glad the federal government is finally starting to catch up with us.

**Mr. Hawranik:** Mr. Speaker, the tax-cut record of this Finance Minister and this budget is dismal. There is eight dollars of new spending for every dollar of tax cuts, and every dollar of tax cuts is eroded by those sneaky backdoor taxes such as increased Pharmacare deductibles and the increase of a whole variety of fees, licences and tariffs.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why has he failed to provide Manitobans with any real or substantial tax cuts?

**Mr. Selinger:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, since we have come to office, first of all, on the personal income tax, we completely overhauled the system in our first budget. We took off a surtax that all Manitobans paid over \$30,000. We increased all the non-refundable tax credits by 39 percent. We have taken 15,000 Manitobans off the tax rolls, and some of the items that the member complains about, spending like the education property tax credit, actually restored the cutbacks that members opposite made. They cut the property tax credits by \$75; we have increased them by \$150, and that counts as spending in the budget. You have to explain to your residents why you voted against it.

**Mr. Hawranik:** Mr. Speaker, the only way this Finance Minister took 15,000 Manitobans off the tax roll is because they moved to Alberta.

Today, with the new federal budget, there will be cause for celebration. Canadians pay too much tax, and our Conservative federal Finance Minister knows this. He will provide tax relief to Canadians today and ensure that Canadians keep more of their hard-earned money today, but this is not so in Manitoba. Our Minister of Finance provides meagre tax cuts, not today but next year, and perhaps more after that, and maybe in 2008.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Why has he refused to give Manitobans real tax relief today? Why is he happy to make Manitobans wait years for those tax cuts?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, unless the member opposite has some specific knowledge he has not disclosed to the Legislature about what is in the

federal budget, I think we should all wait until three o'clock to see what really transpires.

His rhetoric is quite different from the facts. The number of people living in Manitoba, including young people, is actually going up every year since we have been in office as opposed to going down when they were in office. Personal disposable income is up by over 16 percent as opposed to going down by over 12 percent when they were in office. Tax reductions for families, for small business, for corporations, for citizens who are paying school taxes, have all gone down. When the members opposite were in office, when the federal government looks at their tax rates compared to ours, they are all higher. The member opposite speaks a lot of rhetoric and hot air but his facts are completely different.

\*(13:55)

### **Justice System Electronic Monitoring Program**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, late last year the Minister of Justice indicated that while he was interested in electronic monitoring of offenders, he could not make the commitment because he could not figure out how to keep the batteries alive in the ankle bracelets. Well, miracle of miracles, today we learn that Nova Scotia has launched their electronic monitoring program and apparently they have solved the Manitoba mystery of dead batteries.

Will this Minister of Justice today put aside his silly excuses, follow the lead of Nova Scotia and other provinces and bring forward the electronic monitoring program today?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I was interested to see that Nova Scotia is the first province to have an experiment with GPS monitoring. It is always good to have another experiment out there.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I thought there was a question earlier, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I need to be able to hear the questions. I need to be able to hear the answers. We have visitors in the gallery. We have the viewing public. We need to have decorum in the House.

The honourable Attorney General has the floor.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, we note that Nova Scotia will be experimenting with GPS when it comes to some conditional sentence offenders. By the way, we understand that the federal government is moving expeditiously to tighten up conditional sentences. We will see what impact that has on the experiment.

Mr. Speaker, we are very keen to see this technology go to work, but we are not going to do something because maybe at first blush it just sounds good. It has to be in the public interest and better protect our safety.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I think the only batteries that need to be recharged in this province are the batteries of this Minister of Justice. He is out of steam.

The deputy chief of police in Halifax today said that this would be a very valuable tool for police and it would help bring forward community safety in Nova Scotia. Yet, here in Manitoba, the Minister of Justice bumbles and he babbles and he just cannot seem to get it right. Other provinces have electronic monitoring programs. Nova Scotia now has a GPS system and we are well behind. Once again, we are not going to be the first province. We might not be the middle province. We will probably be the last province that gets on board with this technology.

If he needs to find a Duracell, I can find it for him, but, if not, let us get on with this program, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, I know that criminal defence lawyers and the opposition have been calling for the use of electronic monitoring in Manitoba. I know that there are some out there that would love to see that as an alternative to incarceration, but members opposite should also know that providing that kind of incentive for defence lawyers or for the courts could imperil public safety if not employed appropriately. I remind members opposite, offenders on monitoring can kill and they have.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice talks about perils of safety, so let us talk about that. Last year the Minister of Justice told Manitobans that he had no idea how many individuals who were on the streets were in violation of the conditions of their probation. That is what this electronic monitoring system would do. So I will give the minister another chance now, a number of months after.

The minister refuses to commit to electronic monitoring, so could he please tell Manitobans today how many people are on the streets that have



breached the conditions of their probation, their bail or their conditional sentences?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, I have instructed the department to ensure that we determine if this technology indeed can improve public safety and in what circumstances. As I have said before, I am very keen to see technology go to work for public safety, but—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I am asking the honourable Member for Steinbach. I have already asked the House for the opportunity to hear the questions and the answers, and I would ask the honourable Member for Steinbach to give the opportunity for the minister to answer the question, because he is trying to answer and I cannot hear what the answer is. I ask the co-operation of the honourable Member for Steinbach.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, while we are very keen for this technology to go to work for public safety, I notice from the federal government's Web site the following. It says being placed on an electronic monitoring program had no appreciable impact on the future criminal behaviour of the offenders that continued to engage in as much crime as those who remained imprisoned or those who receive a sentence of probation.

So we have to make sure that we do not play loose with the safety of Manitobans, that when a program is brought in to Manitoba, and I hope it is very soon, that it be done in a way that will not provide a false sense of security for vulnerable victims.

\*(14:00)

### **Health Care System Federal Transfer Payments**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has increased the health care budget by some almost \$1.5 billion since they took office in 1999. Yet, even after all of that money has been spent, Manitoba is still ranked dead last in the country.

Today the federal budget will be introduced and will likely provide more transfer payments for health care in Manitoba. Is it the Minister of Health's plan to continue with their spend-more, get-less management strategy at the expense of Manitoba patients? Will he continue to have his hand out to Ottawa without giving Manitobans a much needed

hand-up when it comes to health care in our province?

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, when medicare was introduced in this country, it was a 50-50 partnership with the federal government, and today, it is a 20-80 partnership with the Province paying the 80. If the federal government is prepared to be a partner again in medicare, to provide additional funding for wait lists, for information technology, for patient care and to come back closer to a 50-50 deal, we think that would be fair for all Canadians and all Manitobans.

### **Emergency Services**

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Mr. Speaker, there are 14 ERs closed in rural Manitoba and a shortage of 14 ER doctors in Winnipeg. The Minister of Health likes to talk about all these new doctors in Manitoba. Well, where are they? Are these doctors practising in Manitoba or are they simply licensed here and practising in other provinces?

Will our patients be forced to follow their doctors to other provinces in order to get access to the health care services that they deserve to have right here at home? Is this their strategy to reduce wait lists in our province, to send our patients and doctors to other provinces?

**Mr. Sale:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I just remind the member that it was when the previous Progressive Conservative government was in power that patients were being sent out of this province to United States for radiation therapy.

I remind the member that it was during that same period in the 1990s, in what were described by the doctors themselves as the dark days, when there were 117 doctors who left this province and none came to replace them. Under this government there are more than 200 more doctors licensed and practising in Manitoba, including some 57 in rural Manitoba. More nurses, more doctors, more surgery, better care for cancer patients, better care for cardiac patients, I do not apologize for investing in that kind of care for Manitobans.

### **Health Care System Cataract Surgery Wait Lists**

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Mr. Speaker, Nancy McCauley, a constituent of mine, was told in December that she required cataract surgery. Last

month she was informed that her surgery has been scheduled for October 10, 2006, 44 weeks later. That is double the average wait.

Can the Minister of Health explain to Mrs. McCauley why she has to wait 44 weeks for cataract surgery at the Pan Am Clinic when Western Canada Waiting List Project suggested a maximum of 12 weeks?

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, we accept the challenge of reducing our cataract wait list like we have reduced our cardiac wait list and our cancer wait list, and are in the process of reducing our hip and knee wait list, like we have reduced our waiting time for pediatric dental surgery from over 1,400 cases waiting to 550 cases waiting.

We announced 850 more procedures at Pan Am Clinic for cataract surgery. I accept the criticism that the wait time for this patient is too long. If the member wants to give me specific details, I would be glad to receive them from him, as I have received other concerns from him and acted on them.

**Mr. Dyck:** Mr. Speaker, the minister did receive a letter in April, I believe it is the 10th, but anyway, the minister, in fact, as much indicated that the wait lists are about 22 weeks. Mrs. McCauley cannot drive until she undergoes cataract surgery. Naturally this 44-week wait is a hardship for her and her husband.

Will the minister commit to ensuring that Mrs. McCauley and other Manitobans like her do not have to wait longer than 12 weeks for cataract surgery?

**Mr. Sale:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answer, we accept the goal that was set by the benchmark target of approximately 12 to 14 weeks for cataract surgery. That is why we announced those extra procedures. We are also proud of the work of Misericordia hospital and the centre of excellence there, which is rated across Canada as one of the best, if not the best, management programs for cataract surgery in this country. We are doing more. We will continue to do more. If the member wants to provide me with specifics, I would be glad to receive them as I have in the past from him.

#### **Rural Health Care ER Closures**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, three emergency rooms are closed in my constituency; that is MacGregor, Cartwright and

Crystal City. These closures have put additional pressure on the doctors remaining. In fact, Rock Lake health district fears losing yet another doctor. This NDP government has allowed this situation to spiral out of control. These communities are trying to recruit doctors. This government claims they have doctors. Where are they?

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I think that the member knows that we have had challenges in rural Manitoba. I am pleased that Arborg is now back on the road of health. I am pleased that Ashern is open, that Eriksdale is open, that Gimli is functioning normally. All of our rural communities we work very hard with when we have a crisis or a shortage to ensure that they are prioritized for recruiting. That is why we have an integrated and co-ordinated physician recruitment office, an integrated Web site. We are getting many more inquiries through that Web site, and we will continue to address these challenges, including the ones that the member references, just as aggressively as we can.

We cannot make up for medical enrolment cuts that were made in the 1990s, Mr. Speaker. It takes 10 to 12 years to train a doctor. They cut enrolment. We increased it. But there is still a demand across Canada and a shortage across Canada. We did not create that shortage. They did.

#### **Rural Health Care ER Closures**

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** The government of Manitoba, in 1998, announced a new hospital and personal care home for Emerson, Manitoba. The town bought the land for the new hospital. The citizens raised the 20 percent local requirement for the new construction. The land is there. The money is there.

Why did the NDP close the emergency services at Emerson Hospital instead of building a new facility that the people in Emerson were promised?

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, there were a great number of promises as the previous government came to the close of its reign in power, including approximately \$300 million which they put out on health care in 1999, but did not put in the budget. So, when they claim that we have increased our spending by a significant amount, about \$300 million of that was spending they did not

have the courage to put on the books when they were in government, including the project that the member opposite speaks about now.

### **Federal Budget Impact on Manitoba**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, today is federal budget day, and there will be decisions announced in Ottawa that are of vital interest to Manitobans. There will be decisions on Lake Winnipeg, on the Canadian centre for public health, on the Canadian Museum of Human Rights and on public day care funding. These will have serious issues and serious ramifications if the money is not there. There are concerns that the budget may not provide adequate funding for these or for the floodway.

It is widely reported today that Stephen Harper has carefully consulted with Jack Layton and the federal NDP to ensure the budget has Mr. Layton's support.

My question to the Premier: Has the Premier spoken to his close friend, Jack Layton, and asked him to drop his support for the budget if it comes up short for Manitobans?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** I would say, Mr. Speaker, that I suspect that like our budgets that are very, very positive in terms of investing in people, not to contribute anything more to the hilly knoll here and the conspiracy theory of the member opposite, but I would suspect that the budget today would be more positive than any budget the member opposite presented in Parliament from '93 to '97. He has a record. He is accountable.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I am quite shocked that the member opposite did not mention the Kelowna Accord. I am shocked the member opposite did not mention it in his question. We think one of the biggest priorities for the future of Canada and Manitoba is the Kelowna Accord. I am disappointed the leader did not mention it. We stand for the Kelowna Accord.

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Premier is quite right that the Kelowna Accord is important, and that is why I have a second question.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Premier, if today's budget falls short for Manitoba on the floodway, on the Kelowna Accord, on child care, on the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, on Lake Winnipeg, will the Premier ask Jack Layton to nix his support for Stephen Harper? Or, Mr. Speaker, is the Premier more concerned about preserving his cozy friendship with Stephen Harper?

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, there is an old political saying that in Texas, the only thing in the middle of the road is yellow lines and dead armadillos, and in Canada, it is yellow lines and dead skunks. But, Mr. Speaker, I would not digress to make that statement.

I note this conversion on the road to Damascus any time we mention the member's own record as a federal Liberal Cabinet minister. He was jumping up on points of order and he almost went right through the ceiling. Now he cannot ask a question about the provincial legislative agenda; he has got to be a surrogate for the federal Liberals. Shame on him.

### **Manufacturing Industry Impact on Canadian Dollar**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** My question is for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). As the Canadian dollar continues to rise, the significant impact that that has on Manitoba, in particular its manufacturing industry, poses a very serious problem.

Manitoba has benefited through the years of having a diversified economy. The government does have a role, Mr. Speaker, at protecting our industries. Individuals are concerned about the future of the manufacturing industry. In fact, Manitoba could be the lead in the potential recession because of this government's mismanagement of public money.

My question to the Minister of Finance is: What specific actions has this minister done in this budget to protect those very important manufacturing jobs in the case of a rising Canadian dollar? This is having a very real impact on jobs in Manitoba.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Well, the governor of the Bank of Canada is Mr. Dodge who was

appointed by the former Liberal government. I would point out that some of the interest rate decisions that he has made, I assume independent of Parliament, have been decisions that we have not always agreed with.

I also would point out that in the manufacturing credit, tax credit has gone from 20 percent to 35 percent in this budget, Mr. Speaker, which is refundable. I would also point out that Manitoba's manufacturing has maintained its position in spite of the fact that the dollar has gone from 62 cents to close to 90 cents on the dollar. This increase of 60 percent in the refundable credit is something that businesses want. That is why they want this budget to pass, and I would encourage members to—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

#### **International Students New Initiatives**

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, since 1999, the province of Manitoba has enjoyed a substantial increase in international students enrolled in our colleges and universities. Would the Minister of Advanced Education and Training please advise the House of initiatives this government has taken to support these international students and their experiences in our communities?

**Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** Mr. Speaker, indeed international student enrolment has grown since 1999 by 285 percent. There are now 3,000 international students in Manitoba.

But perhaps more relevant to the question today is the fact that last week, together with the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), I announced the continuation of the International Students Off-Campus Work Program which allows international students to work 20 hours a week off campus. Students reap economic benefits, gain cultural and community experience and also work experience. Those students are more likely to stay in Canada. In 2005, 67 applied; 67 stayed.

#### **Cancer Care Centre Deloraine**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, on November 25, 2004, 18 months ago, the Health Minister announced the cancer treatment centre for Deloraine to reduce the highway medicine that this NDP government is forcing on rural Manitobans. Last May, the Premier (Mr. Doer) said

that he would put a new chemotherapy unit in Deloraine.

Mr. Speaker, why has this NDP government broken yet another health promise by not even beginning the construction of Deloraine's promised cancer care centre? When will this construction begin?

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** First, Mr. Speaker, let me correct the record in terms of a previous answer I gave. I had said that the previous government was sending patients out of province for radiation therapy. I was wrong. They refused to send them out of province. It was our government who changed that policy and did send them out until we could bring the treatment time for radiation therapy down to where it is today, less than one week.

The plans for Deloraine are well advanced, Mr. Speaker. I would like to tell the member that we announced two centres at the same time: Pinawa and Deloraine. I am going to Pinawa on Thursday to open the new cancer care centre in Pinawa.

#### **Rural Health Care Emergency Services**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** In spite of the Premier's 2003 election promise to the community of Rivers, the Riverdale Health Centre has been closed to acute care and emergency services for long periods since December 2003, forcing community members to endure highway medicine. On September 16, 2003, the Premier said, and I quote, I did commit that acute care facilities would remain in Rivers.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health tell the House when Rivers can expect acute care and emergency services to be reinstated?

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I was absolutely delighted when the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority in Brandon collaborated so that acute rehab from surgery in Brandon could take place in Rivers and that we could use that hospital more appropriately and more aggressively. There is a doctor currently undergoing his assessment in terms of his readiness to practise in the emergency room. If he is successful, and I hope he will be, then the Rivers emergency will open as soon as he completes that assessment process.

**Mrs. Rowat:** The promise is still unfulfilled since 2003. The community has raised over \$450,000 and

wants to move forward on this initiative, and the minister sits there and looks totally confused.

Last week a long-time resident of Rivers was sent to the Carberry hospital to die. This woman's son for years visited the mother daily in Rivers personal care home. However, he does not have a car and cannot travel and was not able to visit his dying mother in Carberry. Sadly, this woman died in Carberry with no family members there to comfort her. Rivers residents are angry that situations such as this are continuing to happen, and they want to know when this promise is going to be fulfilled.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health: Is this yet another broken health care promise by the Premier (Mr. Doer) and this NDP government?

**Mr. Sale:** Mr. Speaker, it would be good if the member could think between questions and change her question. I answered that the first time. There is a physician being assessed. When and if the assessment is successful, then there will be sufficient staff to reopen Rivers. I answered that the first time around. We are concerned that Rivers be able to provide the acute rehab and the good care that that community wants and deserves.

Contrary to what the member said, when she and I were both there, the Rivers community was tremendously supportive of this plan. They celebrated it with over 200 people present on the front lawn on a beautiful day, Mr. Speaker. I continue to hear that that community is very pleased with the new role of the Rivers hospital.

#### **Rural Health Care Access to Services**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, communities within the RHA such as Ashern, Arborg and Gimli have been hit hard by doctor shortages. The sad result is our rural families must be brought to Winnipeg or other areas for hospital services.

A constituent of mine broke his ankle and had to lie in a hospital bed untreated for seven days before being shipped to Winkler by ambulance to have it set. Shameful, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Minister of Health if he considers highway medicine acceptable. Your area. Shame on you.

\* (14:20)

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, as I have always done in the role of Minister of Health, if the member opposite will provide me with the specifics of the situation, I will inquire into it as I have done for many members on that side in regard to issues they have raised with me.

The ER at Eriksdale is open; the ER at Ashern is open; the ER at Gimli is open; the ER at Arborg is open. We continue to have challenges, but every time we have a serious challenge we work with the community. We work to help them make sure they can retain doctors when they get them, to find physicians for . . . if that is what is needed. To do what Ashern did to help with housing, we work with communities to make sure that retention and recruitment works in this province. We will continue to do that.

#### **Rural Health Care Emergency Services**

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Minister of Health can be so condescending and arrogant in questions that are truly serious on behalf of many Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a question of the Premier (Mr. Doer). During the last election campaign the Premier made his way through my constituency and into the constituency of Minnedosa. At that time he promised that indeed the Rivers hospital emergency services would be open. As a matter of fact, he included in that the Erickson hospital. We are now moving into the tourism season and more than 40,000 people will be gathering in the Clear Lake, Sandy Lake, Ditch Lake areas, and Erickson hospital remains without its emergency services open.

I want to ask the Premier whether he will fulfil that commitment and ensure that the emergency services in Erickson will be reopened for the summer season at least, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Erickson have been very pleased with the advanced practice nurse support and the support of physicians from surrounding communities over the last year. We will make sure there are sufficient resources positioned in the holiday and vacation areas of our province because, indeed, the member is correct, our populations do move in the summertime

to cottage areas. We will make sure that appropriate resources are placed in those communities so that when people need transport to health care or need health care, it will be as available as it possibly can be to them.

**Mr. Derkach:** I think the minister just makes the case that indeed we have now converted our hospitals and our emergency services in rural Manitoba into highway services. Unfortunately, yes, people are loaded into ambulances and taken at distances, but it is all at the cost of the patient. We have asked repeatedly that the minister address the issue of interfacility transfers. Rural people are forced to pay these exorbitant costs because this government cannot get its act together.

I want to ask the Premier whether or not the issue of interfacility transfers will be addressed so that rural people do not have to pay exorbitant costs, as Erik Hurlin from Miniota had to pay \$2,100 for being transferred from a facility in rural Manitoba to a facility in the city.

**Mr. Sale:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for Oral Questions had expired.

### Speaker's Ruling

**Mr. Speaker:** I have a ruling for the House.

Following Members' Statements on April 25, 2006, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) raised a point of order regarding comments attributed to the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) in an article from the April 22, 2006, edition of the *Winnipeg Free Press* titled, "Bad blood continues to paralyse legislature." The Official Opposition House Leader contended that the Government House Leader was quoted in the article as saying that, "there is a sessional order that is now in peril" and "there is . . . a serious question as to what the speaker will do on June 13." He further asserted that these comments were a reflection on the Speaker and were anticipating a matter appointed for consideration in the House.

The honourable Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak), the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) also offered contributions to the point of order.

I took the matter under advisement in order to check all resources available to the Speaker and consult the procedural authorities.

I would note for the House that Rule 41, cited by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, which states: "No member shall revive a debate already concluded during the session or anticipate a matter appointed for consideration of which notice has been given." It is not relevant in the current situation as it refers to debates within the Legislature and does not govern remarks that members may make outside of the Legislative Chamber.

In addition, I would bring to the House's attention that Marleau and Montpetit advise on page 522 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* that the Speaker has no authority to rule on statements made outside of the House by one member against another. This finding is supported by rulings that were made in the House on April 14, 2004, November 23, 2004, and April 20, 2005.

Regarding the issue of whether or not the comments complained of were a reflection on the Speaker, I am guided by a ruling that Speaker Rocan gave in 1994 in a comparable situation when the then-Premier, Mr. Filmon, was quoted in a media interview as saying, "When the votes are taken, we have 29, they have 28." The issue was raised in the House as reflecting on the impartiality of the Speaker.

Speaker Rocan ruled, in part, that the issue was not a reflection on the Speaker, and I would like to quote from that ruling. On May 9, 1994, he stated: "In my review of the actual words spoken by the Premier, I find that they do not in themselves reflect on the partiality of the Chair. They do not directly imply wrongdoing, slander or partiality of a presiding officer. The interpretation of the honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) of what the words spoke by the First Minister is just that—an interpretation. The explanation by the Premier of what he meant is also just that—an explanation."

Turning to the current issue, I believe that we have a similar situation where we have different interpretations and explanations of what the words mean. My interpretation from reading the article is that the words are not reflecting on the Speaker. I would note that I, as the Speaker, am even quoted in

the article as indicating that the situation referred to is unprecedented in Manitoba and that I will have to consult other legislatures for advice. I certainly hope honourable members would not suggest that I am reflecting on myself.

I would therefore rule there is no point of order.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Brandon Rural Forum

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the organizers of the 14th annual Rural Forum held in Brandon at the Keystone Complex last Friday and Saturday, April 28 and 29. The official opening had entertainers Susan Aglukark singing in the evening banquet on Friday night, featured a performance by home-grown artist Alana Levandoski from Kelwood, Manitoba. However, a highlight for my wife, Beryl, and I at the Friday banquet was the announcement that Reston Collegiate won the Grand Challenge cup for the top team in Manitoba participating in the Youth Business Institute Executive game Grand Challenge.

This business plan development program had 81 teams entered with Reston Collegiate's team of Samantha Price, Allison Greig, Angela Gray and Dave Van Buren being Manitoba's best. Also special mention should go to Mr. Dave Adams as the teacher coach for this business administration program. Congratulations to these top-notch students and Mr. Adams. I know he had seven strong teams in this rural school and all are to be commended for their efforts.

\* (14:30)

This year's Rural Forum focussed its learning opportunities on bio-composites, agri-energy and how communities and rural industries interact. Since its inception by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) some 14 years ago, Rural Forum has offered Manitobans a chance to share ideas and explore opportunities to make this province a better place for all of us to live and improve our economic growth. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, many exhibitors expressed the concern that the attendance seemed to be somewhat smaller than it has been over the past few years.

Mr. Speaker, the intent of this event is to feature rural-based businesses and research activities from across the province. It includes a wide variety of

regional displays highlighting the spirit of many communities throughout Manitoba that contribute to our economy and our culture.

I wish to congratulate the communities that took part in the promotion of their own regions.

### Safety in the School Forum

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** I am pleased to inform the House that on Saturday, April 29, I was a panellist at a community forum hosted by River East Transcona School Division to discuss safety in the schools. I was delighted to participate in this forum with parents and educators to discuss this important topic.

Mr. Speaker, the students, parents, teachers and administrators at the school division deserve a great deal of recognition for their efforts to improve safety in schools. This forum is one of a number of initiatives they have undertaken. The introduction of the Learning and Behaviour Initiative from kindergarten to the middle years will soon be extended to the senior years. Since 2003 the division has trained over 200 professionals and para-professionals to work with violent and aggressive students. A system of behaviour specialists has also been implemented to help all schools in the division.

Mr. Speaker, the safety of our schools and communities should be a great concern to all of us. Our schools and communities must be places where children and adults can reach their full potential without fear of intimidation. I am proud of our government's record of achievement on this issue. We have introduced legislation such as the Safe Schools Charter and programs such as Triple P, Positive Parent Programming, to address this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, education is one of the most important elements in building a better society and our government has demonstrated that value in our budget.

In conclusion, I would like to thank and commend all the parents, teachers and administrators of River East Transcona School Division for hosting this community forum and for their commitment to safety in our schools. Thank you.

### Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges Program

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Last night, I had the honour of attending the opening ceremonies of the

Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges program in Canada. This was held at the Miller Collegiate in Altona which has a group of students from the D'Arcy McGee High School in Québec visiting in Altona and joining forces with W.C. Miller Collegiate students to complete and work on two major projects that these young students out of Québec and Manitoba have initiated. This program is also being co-sponsored by businesses in the Town of Altona and the town council and also the federal government.

These students are building two projects. One is a skateboard park in the town of Altona, which is being engineered and designed entirely by the students, and they are also completing the refurbishing of the swimming pool facilities, including mural paintings and the like. The principal of W.C. Miller Collegiate says that these are ambitious kids. These people know what they want to do and they have a work ethic.

It is being sponsored by SEVEC and SEVEC is currently engaged in this project as an initial project to help students from across this country co-ordinate, communicate and co-operate in these kinds of projects and learn how to better appreciate each other's cultures and societies, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Co-ordinated Stroke Strategy**

**Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today in the Manitoba Legislature to advise members and the general public of an important project that stands to both enhance stroke prevention and improve the care and treatment received by stroke victims in our province.

The Brandon Regional Health Authority and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Manitoba have been working together for the past year to develop the Co-ordinated Stroke Strategy, a strategy which could eventually be used in every regional health authority in the province.

This strategy which is based upon best practice guidelines for stroke care and draws from successes achieved in other Canadian jurisdictions was recently implemented in my home community of Brandon.

Mr. Speaker, the Co-ordinated Stroke Strategy details how best to rehabilitate stroke victims from diagnosis to discharge, giving patients a better chance not only of surviving a stroke but of improving their recovery.

On behalf of the Government of Manitoba, I would like to commend the Brandon Regional Health Authority and the Manitoba Heart and Stroke Foundation for their dedication to furthering health care excellence in our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **New Flyer Industries Strike**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, the other day I had the privilege, actually, to walk with some striking workers over at New Flyer Industries. I appreciated the opportunity that individuals, the workers, took the time to share with me a number of concerns that they had in regard to the company which they had worked for. There were two issues that really came up time and time again, one being the need for a pension.

I truly believe that governing bodies, whether they are provincial or federal, need to look in terms of what sort of pensions companies such as Flyer and others are actually providing their employees. I talked to one individual who was walking the line, and he was working for that company for over 30 years, yet he is receiving a pension well below \$1,000 a month once he does retire. I think that we need to look at the private companies as a whole in ensuring that there are better pensions for our workers.

I also want to raise the issue of final offer selection. There is a disappointment that the provincial government has not recognized the value of final offer selection in an amended form so that both the employee and the employer could benefit. I think that there are opportunities that have been there in the past and, unfortunately, for whatever reasons, this government has not acted on, Mr. Speaker, even though, back in '88, '89 they advocated so strongly for final offer selection. But they appear to have turned a deaf ear to the worker, to the average union member.

So I am going to call this government to task, Mr. Speaker, on coming up with progressive ideas dealing with labour in the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**  
**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**  
**ADJOURNED DEBATE**  
**(Fourth Day of Debate)**



**Mr. Speaker:** Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in sub-amendment thereto. The debate remains open.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to put some comments on the record on this amendment and sub-amendment to the seventh budget of the NDP.

For the last several weeks the bells have been ringing here in hopes that the Doer government will call an inquiry into the Crocus scandal, conflicts of interest throughout Crocus, WCB and TRAF. Mr. Speaker, we did not seem to be getting very far with the bell ringing. The government seemed to want to ignore the calls from the public and the media and the investors to dig into the issue and to call an inquiry.

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

We have changed our strategy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we do have deep resolve to get to the bottom of this, to get to the truth, and we will still be addressing that issue in a very, very strong fashion. We need to have a clear understanding in Manitoba of what this government knew, when it knew it, what it did and what it did not do.

\* (14:40)

An inquiry is the only way to get to these answers, but the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) will not call one. He has no intention. He, obviously, has something to hide, and that is becoming more apparent all the time: that the NDP government, and, probably, particularly the Premier, has something to hide and why he refuses to call an inquiry. It certainly could very well be his close connection to all of those that are involved, the close connection to his NDP friends.

Instead, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to protect his own political skin he is not going to do what is right for Manitoba, and he is not clearing the black cloud that is hanging over venture capital in Manitoba. Even ENSIS is hurting now because of it. But this Premier is more interested in protecting his own political hide than he is in doing what is right for Manitoba.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Doer government weaves and ducks and spins and maneuvers around

Crocus, around WCB and around TRAF. They do not want to be held to account in this Chamber. So they want to debate their budget of no vision, their budget of lost opportunity, their budget of spend more and get less. It is like that commercial that we hear now out there that has this really catchy tune called "Hands In My Pocket."

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on April 27, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) said, and I quote: "We do business differently." They certainly do do business differently. When we look at the budget, at their spending, at their debt, at their lack of vision, at the lack of an economic strategy—and I will go into those in more depth—certainly, we can see what the Minister of Finance said: We do things differently. Everybody will certainly say they sure do because they do it with very little accountability, very little transparency and very little answers here in the House.

So it is interesting they wanted so badly to debate the budget, and yet most of the time they are standing in here looking back at years gone by rather than actually speaking to their own budget, back to looking at addressing no accountability in their government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a lot of phrases that I could use to label this budget. Actually, as I sat thinking about it, it was not hard to come up with a number of labels: standing still in a changing world; race to the bottom; striving for mediocrity; the bar is set too low; overpromised and underdelivered; lazy socialism; take the easy way out; live for today; mismanaging Manitoba; buy now, pay later. You could take any one of these and put it forward to put a label onto this budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, instead of the Doer government's poor performance for this province, we should be a province that has momentum; we should be a province that is basking in opportunity and a province that is growing. Instead, we have got an NDP government that flushes opportunities down the toilet if, in fact, they even look at opportunities and take advantage of them. Instead, there is a big flush happening in this province, and, unfortunately, we are not seeing some good opportunities addressed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if leadership is about elevating our sights and about aspiring to excellence, then I would suggest to you that Manitoba has a poor leader in this Premier. He is a poor leader that coasts along, benefiting from the vision and hard work of the previous government, or he benefits from transfer

payments from Ottawa. He has done nothing to bring prosperity to Manitoba. He just coasts on the performance of others and then stands in the House with obscure answers to some very, very serious questions, and that is not leadership.

He is not attracting investment here; he is not attracting business here; and he is not attracting people here. In fact, the opposite is happening. Entrepreneurs are fleeing Manitoba. Our young are fleeing. My 20-year-old son just lost six of his buddies to Alberta, and they said it was because there was more opportunity there. So my 20-year-old right now is wondering, "What am I doing, like my friends are all going to Alberta?" He feels he is stuck in Manitoba. They are all leaving for better opportunity and better wages, and they are saying that is not here in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a brain drain to greener pastures. These friends of my sons were talented young men that had a lot to offer this province, but that is a brain drain in what we saw when they left. The last one to leave Manitoba turn off the lights, because we are certainly heading in that direction. One more term of this government and that will be the mantra over this province, "turn off the lights" because our young and our talented are not going to stay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is the legacy of this Premier (Mr. Doer) and his NDP government? Well, take your pick. I am going to give the members who are very vocal, these NDP members here, and they are chirping a lot in their seats. I am going to give them a number of things that they can pick to decide what is the legacy of their leader and their government.

First of all, scandals: Seven Oaks School Division; Crocus; WCB; throw a little bit of TRAF in there, with the Manitoba Property Fund; Aiyawin; Child and Family Services with 31 deaths of little children, the latest being a five-year-old girl, Phoenix Sinclair.

How about a health care system ranked dead last in Canada? Where we heard today on CJOB a number of people with end-stage cancer begging this government to listen to them, begging this government to fund lifesaving drugs. So there is another legacy for this government.

How about highest debt in the history of this province? How about increasing sneaky, backdoor taxes and user fees? How about average weekly

wage being amongst the lowest in the country? How about six straight years of economic growth below the Canadian average with the year 2005 seeing Manitoba have the lowest of any economic growth, the worst one west of Québec?

We have a province with one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada. We have terrorization of the taxpayer. We have no private-sector momentum. We are the only have-not province in western Canada. We have the highest property taxes west of Québec. We have a sputtering economic engine. In fact, we do not even have much of an economic engine with this government. There is just a lot of sputtering going on.

We have high business taxes. We have crumbling and dangerous roads. We have got sewage pouring into our rivers and a government that does not want to address it. We have the percentage of government funding of education at an all-time low. Did I mention a health care system ranked dead last in Canada?

How about a poor image? Another legacy for this government. The best this government can offer up is blue skies and lots of lakes. Well, that is really going to keep our young people here. Unfortunately, it is not even resonating out there. Even Saskatchewan last week was laughing at Manitoba and including us in their speeches when they were talking about their own province. Saskatchewan is laughing at us, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We have got a devastated agriculture sector. We are not only going to lose farmers; we are losing a whole agricultural industry.

The Hells Angels have come to town, the Bandidos and probably a few other gangs.

Hallway medicine is alive and well, but we have also now got highway medicine, all under the NDP government.

We have also got high murder rates, high rates of vehicle thefts and other crimes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had a political conspiracy to set up a superfund so that this NDP government could get their mitts on pension money. Too many eyes watching the Crown corps, so what they want to do now is they want to manipulate and maneuver and go after another source of money, and that was pensions.

We have to wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this government would have done if they had not

been caught, and that is the serious concern by a lot of people whose pension money was at risk, and I believe that TRAF was one example with a \$10-million agreement to invest in the Manitoba Property Fund. The Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) will not say how much of that \$10 million flowed. But the question needs to be asked: If they were not caught by the scandals erupting at the time, how much of that money would have flowed and how much more would have been committed, and what was the government's involvement in all of that in directing their appointed board members to direct some of that money into social investments?

\*(14:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, two terms of the NDP and we are in a mess. We are right back to where Manitoba was when Howard Pawley lost government—one big fat mess—only it looks like it is going to be much worse by the end of their term. And the Tories are always forced to be brought in to clean up a mess where government throws money everywhere, hoping it is going to stick and hoping it is going to bring them votes in an election. But it is not done with a judicious view to doing what is right for the people of this province. Instead, it is doing what is expedient for them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba is no longer competitive, and it is only going to get worse. The Doer government has not even opened its eyes to the growing competitive challenge and threat of China and India. They are busy right now just looking to Saskatchewan and maybe looking at some other provinces. However, I would not even give them that much credit because I do not think they are looking that far and wide. There is a huge challenge out there in terms of the competitive edge that China and India are going to have and the huge impact that it is going to have on this whole country, but especially here in Manitoba. Even Saskatchewan has surpassed us because this government has set the bar so low for Manitoba.

This Doer government desperately needs a long-term plan to make Manitoba a more competitive place to do business. We are going to continue to perform below the Canadian average economically and we are going to continue to lose jobs to other provinces if it does not adopt a strong economic plan. But did we see this in this budget? Absolutely not, which means that Manitoba is going to continue to fall behind its neighbours. Manitoba's competitive position is weak and wages here are well behind

other provinces. Again, because this government is not doing what it is supposed to do, to have that plan to make the province a strong place where people want to do business. When businesses do well, wages can go up. But this government does not seem to understand some of these basic, basic principles of how to make a province thrive.

When we look at the *Brandon Sun*, a headline at the time of the budget: Economic danger lurks in wings as NDP tiptoes down the middle. I would like to put a few of the comments from that article on the record here: Undersell all the way and perform only slightly better than what you promised, such is the way of Manitoba's NDP government. The budget indicated more money will be spent this year, nearly \$400 million over and above what was spent in 2005, with a trickle of that flowing back into Manitobans' pockets in the form of tax relief.

On the flip side of that: The government offered to spend more on health care, welfare, education and highways, a move designed to keep everybody barely satisfied in some small way. But this mushy, middle-of-the-road approach hides some troubling facts about Manitoba's economy and the precarious financial situation the government has put the province in, despite relatively good times. The fact is that future generations of Manitoba taxpayers now have to find more than \$20 billion to pay off debt and pension liabilities for its civil service workers, and all that before we spend billions more on northern hydro dams.

The final excerpt from that particular editorial from the *Brandon Sun* said, and I quote: Yet the question remains, in spite of a few bright spots, how long can Manitobans afford the luxury of a spendthrift NDP government that does by eighth measures what should be done by halves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that says it very well, and that is from a third party out there. That is not even, you know, those of us in here pumping up any rhetoric. That is comments made from people out there, ordinary people that are watching what this government is doing.

Top business leaders are saying that Manitoba needs to lower individual and business taxes in order to compete with other jurisdictions. They also support that education taxes be removed off property taxes. That is something that we have been supporting for several years. We promoted it, we support it and we believe in it.

Let us do something like that. Let us take some of this windfall of money that this government has been having come their way and do something that could get the economy going that would be a great kick-start for the economy. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have not seen that in this government, and we have not seen it in another budget. This budget failed to deliver on any economic strategy, which means this province is only going to fall further behind.

Some interesting comments also from another third-party source out there, and that was the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. I would like to read from an excerpt from a newspaper article from the Chamber of Commerce which said, and I quote: But as we looked deeper into the budget, we recognized the challenges that will continue to hold this province back. The budget reveals increased revenues of an astounding \$500 million, but unfortunately it also reveals increased spending of close to \$550 million. We saw new expenditures outweighing new tax relief by a ratio of 8 to 1. We saw provincial debt load on the rise and a rainy day fund being drained. Overall, we saw a budget that was crafted to please every one, but in essence, will mean very little to all Manitobans. We saw a budget that is slowly and timidly moving with no clear vision for the future.

They went on to talk about British Columbia and some of the initiatives that are happening in British Columbia with their budget. In the article, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce pointed out that B.C. citizens have seen a real turnaround in their economy. After the government there was first elected in B.C., they made difficult decisions including dramatically reducing the size of the government and, at the same time, dramatically reducing the tax burden.

They also pointed out that the B.C. budget outlined a three-year detailed fiscal plan that clearly articulated what the citizens and business of that province could expect. Through increased revenues from a robust economy, they are able to invest in areas of priority such as post-secondary education, family services, their infrastructure and in health care. So what stands out more than anything is that the British Columbia government articulated five long-term objectives on behalf of the citizens.

We would love to see something here in Manitoba. In British Columbia, they spoke to a vision. They spoke to a plan. The one exciting aspect to what they were putting forward is one of the

objectives to create the most jobs per capita than any other province, and they built it into their budget on how they were going to achieve that. They realize in British Columbia that good jobs are what will attract and keep people. They realize that tabling a budget that raises expectations can only produce positive results through strengthened confidence. We do not have that in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

What we seem to have here is a government that is tired, complacent and indeed taking Manitobans for granted. When we look at Manitoba's debt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are on dangerous ground in this province. Based on the province's own numbers, the numbers that have come from this NDP government, we are going to accumulate \$618 million in new long-term debt this year alone. At this rate, the province's long-term debt will be almost \$21 billion by the end of this year. The NDP has run up \$4.5 billion in new long-term debt since it took power in 1999. I am sure a lot of people are asking, how is that possible. How can a debt continue to grow when this government is getting so much money? Why are they draining the rainy day fund? Why are they not doing something to control their spending?

Government debt under this government continues to grow thanks to successive years of deficits as the Auditor General has pointed out and also additional borrowing for things like health care facilities and Crown corporations. This budget shows that the provincial debt continues to rise this year despite claims by this government that they are running a fiscally responsible government.

\*(15:00)

There is just a lot of hot air on that side and people are noticing it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So no matter how this government calculates its debt, it is going up. They are trying to spin it that it is not, but in reality it definitely is, and that means that the children, the youth of this province, are the ones that are going to be paying for this government's excesses. So no wonder my son's friends are moving to Alberta. Why would they want to stay here when they are going to inherit a debt like this?

When we look at the debt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only are we seeing the biggest debt in history in this province, the amount of money we are spending on a daily basis to pay for the interest of that debt is mind-boggling. We are paying \$3.5 million a day in interest to service that debt. Well, imagine what we could be doing with that kind of money and yet

nowhere in this budget have we seen a government put forward the kind of vision to deal with the opportunities that could make this province better or to address the challenges here. Instead we see a government that, frankly, is quite interested only in spending and not in trying to rein in any of that spending and look at how they could provide hope and opportunity.

When we look at the budget in more specifics and look at some of the priorities in this province, health care definitely has to come up as a serious concern. Our health care system in Manitoba is ranked dead last right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is ranked the worst in Canada according to a very recent report on Canadian health care, and it cites long patient waiting lists. So, despite the amount of money, the extra billion and a half that this government has put into health care, being the fourth highest spender in Canada, we are still seeing long waiting lists. We are still seeing people crying out for care.

As I mentioned earlier this morning on CJOB, when we sit and listen to people with end stage cancer begging this government to pay attention, begging for help so that they can be treated as equals with other provinces or with other countries that actually address some of these drugs that treat cancer, it actually made me sick, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have to sit and listen and hear people having to beg a government for help on something as important as addressing cancer.

The whole issue of cancer has been looming in front of us for a number of years, and this government, I do not think, has been paying enough attention. They did not pay attention when we talked about the ER crisis until patients started to die. They ignored red flags that were brought up. They did not pay attention to patients and red flags that came up in cardiac surgery, and those warning signs were given to this government years before patients started to die waiting for cardiac surgery. They did not pay attention when we started to talk about the waiting lists in orthopedic surgery. Instead, the only time this NDP government did anything about any of those issues was after it made headlines after people started to die. Those red flags were brought to their attention long before this government did anything. Not only does that smack of a lazy government, but that smacks of arrogance by a government that does not want to listen to anybody else and does not try to get in front of an issue and help people.

For the last several years now, there have been very, very disturbing trends being shown in terms of what is going to happen with cancer and the impact that this is going to have. Where is this government on that? They are nowhere. They are not even addressing some of the issues that need to be addressed in that area, and right now when you see 5,000 people forced to sign a petition begging this government for drugs to treat cancer, you know that we are in for some bleak times in this province, all of this from a government that promised in 1999 to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million.

That had to be the most arrogant promise and the most infamous promise in history in this province and, as my colleague pointed out, irresponsible. It was irresponsible in a lot of ways because what it did is it put out false hope for a lot of people, but it bought them an election, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That one election promise bought them an election, and they have failed miserably to deliver on that particular promise. They should be ashamed of themselves for using people and manipulating people to buy votes in an election. They have failed horribly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on in great degree on health care, but there are so many other things that do need to be addressed as well. The one thing, when we heard the Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) put forward the budget speech and then talk about it after, he said, and I quote, this is "a proud budget for us in Manitoba." Well, what a disturbing comment. If that is the kind of budget that makes a Finance Minister proud, then we should all have grave concerns because it was insulting to Manitobans.

When you get cancer patients out there begging for help, when you have got roads that are now unsafe to drive on, I do not understand how a Finance Minister could say this was a proud budget. When we see the ag industry in the crisis that it is in, how, possibly, could a Finance Minister have said this was a proud budget? When we see children dying in care, 31 kids over five years, the last one a five-year-old girl, how could the Finance Minister have said this was a budget that was proud?

It is mind-boggling, this is a proud budget for Manitobans. We are below the economic growth of other provinces. Taxes are high here. There are so many huge issues. So we see a lot of spending. We see a lot of splurging. We have got spending

outpacing inflation and economic growth and we have got a Finance Minister that is proud. And he is draining the rainy day fund. Well, why is he draining it? In fact, it is not too long off where we will actually see that rainy day fund have no money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need a government that is going to make Manitoba stronger. We need a government that will build prosperity, share prosperity and support prosperity. Instead of focusing on handouts, we need to reach higher. We need to go further. We need to find a way to make this a province that people want to stay in, instead of putting forward some of the weak platform that this government put forward, to put forward a budget that has no vision, that has no compelling inherent piece to it that makes people want to come here or want to stay here.

They are failing Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This budget was not a budget that they should have been proud of. It is a budget that is failing people in this province. That is really not something that we should sit back and take lightly. Manitobans should be very, very concerned about the future with an NDP government.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to follow the member for grassy knoll here today, that positive, upbeat message that we have come so much to appreciate coming from the grassy knoll across the other side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, quite often we welcome people back to the Legislature after we have been out of the Legislature for a while. So I want to take this opportunity to welcome back the Conservative Party of Manitoba to the Legislature, to finally get down to doing the business of what the people sent us here. I should not just label the Conservatives. It is the Conservative-Liberal coalition that I welcome back to the Legislature, hating to leave out the other two positive members that exist across the way.

\*(15:10)

I do want to draw some attention to a couple of minutes in this Legislature last Friday that I thought was very classy, that I thought was very well said, and that was a speech by the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray). I thought the Member for Kirkfield Park hit one out of the park last Friday when he spoke of the reasons for being here and the reasons why we are all here. I think he really hit the essence of what we are all about in this Legislature. I

say, hats off to the Member for Kirkfield Park for indicating to us and through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to all Manitobans, the fact that people here in this Legislature put a lot of hard work into representing their constituents and all Manitobans; that people here at the Legislature who are elected are putting their name forward for all the right reasons; and that all of us, irrespective of our political party, irrespective of the views that we bring to this forum deserve a lot of credit. I think the Member for Kirkfield Park, indeed, deserves a lot of credit for standing in the House the other day and making the speech that he did make.

My theory on that is that the Member for Kirkfield Park, as I am, is a member of a certain group of people who have cheered for the Toronto Maple Leafs for so long that it is just built up in us at this time of the year that we can handle adversity. When the playoffs begin—we go through it every year since 1967, I must say—Mr. Deputy Speaker, those of us who are Leafs fans find, I think, ways in which we can express ourselves in a positive way even though our team missed the playoffs this year, and every year makes the playoffs but does not get too far. I think we build up a certain amount of positive energy. I know that the Member for Kirkfield Park expressed that the other day, and I want to thank him for reminding us all of the real reasons why we are here. I think it is good to reflect on those sorts of words during the heat of battle here in the Legislature and have them guide us in our responses and our approaches on behalf of our constituents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in listening to a number of the few speeches that we have heard on this year's budget as presented by our Finance Minister just about two months ago, I am reminded of Nancy Reagan who said very confidently and very boldly to Americans and to the world to just say no. And you know what? I would not encourage members opposite to take that same approach. It is not good enough to just say no. It is just not good enough, especially to a budget that addresses the concerns of Manitobans, especially to a budget that deserves to be supported by all 57 members in this Legislature. I am sure, I am positive, that people across the way, members across the way, if they really took a good, hard look at this and said, no, I am not going to get sucked into just saying no. I am going to think about this budget. I am going to take this budget, and I am going to look at what my constituents need, what my constituents want—*[interjection]*

I know that the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and others are not going to get suckered into just saying no. They are going to think about this. They are going to think about the tax cuts that are in the budget. They are going to think about the support to agriculture. They are going to think about the support to education. They are going to think about the support to health care. They are going to think about those things in this budget that are progressive, the green element to this budget, the brave moves forward in terms of alternative energy. Our oil and gas—I do not think members opposite can just say no to that.

Now, if they say no, I would be interested in hearing their rationale. But I have not heard it, especially in the speech that just preceded me standing in this Legislature, no rationale, just saying no. That is it. That is it. Just saying no.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the Minister of Conservation, I was very proud to hear our Finance Minister talk about a whole array of very positive, of very progressive measures that we have put forward. I want to start with the support with dollars for the Protected Areas Initiative, a Protected Areas Initiative that has been very successful since 1999. In particular I want to draw members' attention to what are called ecological reserves. Ecological reserves are that part of the Protected Areas Initiative that offer to a chunk of land the highest level of protection of our whole Protected Areas Initiative. In the last year and a half I was very pleased to be minister while five ecological reserves were put forward, processed and then accepted by our government, approved by our government.

This budget, I think, very wisely extends our support to create more ecological reserves. It is a good program. I would be very disappointed if members across the way just said no to increasing the number of ecological reserves in our province. There are very specific reasons, very specific criteria for establishing an ecological reserve. When you see our government moving forward, whether it is a small area of land or a very large area of land that we are looking to establish as an ecological reserve, you know that there is good reason for it, you know that there are specific criteria that that ecosystem meets in order to get the kind of support necessary to provide that kind of protection.

The Brokenhead Wetland was one of the more recent ones, one of the more recent ecological

reserves that this government, I think wisely, protected not so long ago. That area of land north and east of the city of Winnipeg, up in the Brokenhead area, had some very specific reasons for protection: the plant life in that area that needed to be protected, the orchids, the carnivorous plants, the ecosystem that is found around those plants.

I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in the 1990s this very area of land was under threat from a project supported by members who now sit across the way where they were going to drain this bog in order to try to dilute Gull Lake because they did not have the foresight to deal with the sewage problems on Gull Lake. So, instead of boldly going forward and putting some regulations in place to make people clean up Gull Lake, they were going to drain a bog containing rare Manitoba orchids. They were going to drain that actually until the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and I, in opposition, stood up and said you cannot do that, along with the Orchid Society, along with the Manitoba Naturalists Society and others. We convinced the government to stop that kind of madness. Now we have moved not only to protect, but to put this area of land into an ecological reserve. That is a very progressive move forward, and the Premier (Mr. Doer) and I thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon that we spent touring through the ecological reserve known as the Brokenhead Wetland reserve and viewing what was going on there.

\* (15:20)

Along with that, up in the Duck Mountains, we protected an area known as Armit Meadows. Again, very forward thinking. I am going to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that with Armit Meadows and the Birch River reserve, not only was it that particular site that we protected as an ecological reserve, but I would challenge anybody from any legislature in our dominion to go to the top of the north end of the Porcupine Mountains and look straight north out onto the Red Deer Lake area, the Red Deer River far up to the overflow. Go there in the fall of the year, and I defy anyone to find a more picturesque, more beautiful part of our country. We, as a government, have moved to protect this. I do not want members to just say no to those sorts of things.

This budget is your opportunity to continue the good work that we have been doing, in terms of ecological reserves, in terms of park protection, in terms of identifying with other groups the parts of

our ecosystem that deserve our protection. Do not say no to that.

The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurouchou) is very interested in the UNESCO site, which is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on my list to get to today. But, before I do that, I want to talk a little bit about our parks in this province. I want to talk about our parks. We have some parks in this province that we should be very proud of. We have work to do in our parks, I think, and our government in Budget 2006 has dedicated very significant funds, very significant support in order to do that work. Unlike the government that preceded us, pre-1999, we take this seriously and we are moving forward.

For one thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in all that time that those folks across the way had to make good sound decisions, they did not think it was necessary to offer 911 emergency services in our parks. Well, you cannot do that when your minister of the day is cutting, cutting, cutting support for parks like they did. You cannot have that. On the other side, on the other hand, we have made that commitment and it is part of Budget 2006. We will be moving forward to provide 911 service in our busiest of parks: Grand Beach, Birds Hill, Hecla/Grindstone, the Duck Mountains, and, of course, the Whiteshell.

Three million visitors in those five parks alone are going to have the benefit of 911 emergency service. That is very important. That is something tangible that Manitobans and visitors from outside of our province who have come to enjoy our beautiful parks—*[interjection]* I will get to that too. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a very progressive step forward, and I do not want members opposite just to say no to that in this budget.

You know the Member for Portage was chirping a minute ago about our park reservation system. Well, you know what? When members opposite were making decisions in this province, they thought it was perfectly fine to set up a contract with an American company because they did not believe Manitobans could do this as well as an American. So, they set up a contract, they set up a system that sent Manitobans who live just outside of our provincial parks to phone California to set up a reservation in a Manitoba park.

This government has confidence that Manitobans can do that themselves. So we have signed an agreement with a Manitoba firm, a

Manitoba call centre, with Manitoba software, with Manitobans on the phone, with Manitobans in our parks taking those reservations from Manitobans. You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It is working better than it ever has. In the first day, we took in over 6,000 reservations, something that members opposite could never brag about when they were in government. In two weeks we have got over 10,000 reservations made. Nobody in this system was allowed to queue-jump, and I want to make sure that that is on the record because that has been a problem with the reservation systems that have been in place in the past.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget shows support for a made-in-Manitoba solution to our park reservation system. This reservation system that we have introduced to Manitoba has been supported by a number of the user groups, businesses, campers, a number of people out in the province who depend on this system, and we are striving toward making this system the best that it can be.

Some other improvements in our parks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, include investing in campsites that are unserviced in order to provide electrification, to provide service for Manitobans. We find that there are campsites on the weekends that are unserviced that go vacant while we have campers waiting to get into a serviced site. So, while our friends across the way did nothing to help this in all the time they had, we have been moving to put funds into campsites, to electrify them, to provide service, so that more and more Manitoba families can enjoy our great parks and our great outdoors here in Manitoba. That is part of this Budget 2006, and I do not want members opposite to just say no to support for our parks.

Tulabi Falls, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are making changes at Tulabi Falls that reflect this government's progressive stand on green technology. We want to have a park that we can point to that is based on the best of green technology that we can provide for parks, and that is where we are doing it.

Yurts, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, it is not good enough, I do not think, to just offer the same old, same old, same old, like we see from across the way. We introduced yurts last year, and the response was so positive that we have decided we are going to continue that and offer yurts in more and more parks here in Manitoba.

I was very proud, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be asked to speak a couple of weeks ago at the annual meeting of the Nature Conservancy of Canada.



Members here presently today might want to say no to the doubling of funding for the Nature Conservancy of Canada, a group that does excellent work. They protected some of the most endangered tall grass prairie in the whole continent down in the R.M. of Stuartburn, that part of our province that is slowly but surely being lost, that part of our continent, as a matter of fact, that is being lost. They have moved forward, along with us and the nature society, to make sure that that is protected. I know that a member like the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) appreciates that being in his backyard, knowing that his area is contributing to the ecological well-being of our province.

Well, current members of the Conservative Party here in the House might say no to the doubling of our annual grant to the Nature Conservancy, but I was pleased to see in the audience that former Premier Gary Filmon, former members like Rosemary Vodrey and Mike Radcliffe were there. They were supportive of this, and I say congratulations to them. There were no current members there, but the past members, the past members of the Conservative Party were there in force, saying we should be supporting the Nature Conservancy and the work it is doing, and our government was there. Our government is there in the Budget 2006, and our government is saying yes to the good work of the Nature Conservancy. I hope members opposite do not say no to the Nature Conservancy.

\* (15:30)

I also want to draw particular attention to the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, I think, again, a very progressive fund that helps a whole number of organizations and supports a whole number of good causes, most recently being a \$75,000 support to the Winnipeg Airport. The Winnipeg Airport very progressively wants to meet the LEED certification. They want to be the first airport in Canada, maybe even North America. We are saying yes to the Winnipeg Airport Authority. We are saying yes through the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund to a very good project. I hope members opposite do not just say no to that.

The LEED certification, for members opposite, I think is a very progressive program, a voluntary program that sets the certification to where you can design your buildings, design your structures so that you can meet the gold or silver or bronze levels and incorporate things such as geothermal heating and

cooling, incorporate solar energy, incorporate wind power, do your design of the building in an environmentally sustainable way. Those are good things for us to be supporting and I am glad that our government is doing that. I hope that members opposite would do the same because we are going to have, in this province, our largest airport being a leader in Canada. I hope that members opposite are wise enough to get involved and to stand up in support of that. They have their chance when we vote on Budget 2006.

Here is another group, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is going to get an increase in their funding from us, a group that does very good work, the International Institute for Sustainable Development. We are working together with this group on a whole number of projects, including the World Heritage site, which I have been getting mixed messages from members across the way as to whether they support this. I do not know if they even understand it, but I would like them to make up their mind on their support not just for the International Institute for Sustainable Development but also this very worthwhile project where you have local communities coming together to do some planning, not worried about the Ontario-Manitoba border and collaborating with Pikangikum First Nation to the east of us in Ontario, a very worthwhile project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that I have made some arguments from my perspective as Conservation Minister. I also want to say it is my perspective as the MLA for Dauphin-Roblin that this budget is very good for my constituents. I will have no problem, and have had no problem speaking to them about the good things in this budget and the ways in which it will help my constituents with their quality of life, the way it will help specifically in terms of encouraging young people to stay in Manitoba, not the negative doom and gloom that we just heard from the Member for Charleswood, but how this budget can help us to convince young people that Manitoba is worthwhile and that they can remain here in the province and raise families and contribute to our economy and to our way of life.

This budget does more in terms of tax reductions than any Conservative Party budget that I saw in the 1990s. It does more to support agriculture, which from my part of the world is the basis upon which our economy either fails or succeeds. I think we need to understand how important agriculture is to communities that I represent. I can say without hesitation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the approach

that this government has taken to support farmers, to support ranchers, to support building value on top of what our agriculture economy does already, to support the diversification of farm operations, I think, is exemplary.

So I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there will be the usual pressures on our friends across the way to just say no. I know that maybe they believe that they must step forward as opposition members and just oppose. I know that there will be pressure from certain groups outside of this building to get our friends across the way to say no to a good budget. I know that that will happen, but I also know that members across the way can, if properly motivated, if they do their homework, if they really look at the budget and think about it, they do not have to get suckered in to just saying no.

I really must encourage members across the way to stand up, be positive, be a positive force, be a good, positive force on behalf of their constituents and vote yes for this budget. Do not just say no; say yes. Be positive for a change and let us pass this budget and get on with the business of Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to rise to make some comments on the budget that was presented in this House some time ago, also listening to some of the government ministers being proponents for the acceptance of this budget, and then in making comments to the budget, we heard the honourable Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) talk about agriculture.

I have searched high and low in the actual budget document to find a heading such as protecting our water resource or our natural resource or environmental stewardship, energy preparedness and all those kinds of things, yet in this whole document, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot find the word or the heading that would be entitled agriculture. One of our biggest industries, one of our biggest export earners in this province, and there is no mention of the Department of Agriculture or the importance of agriculture to this province of Manitoba. I think that speaks very, very loudly to how this government treats not only agriculture but rural Manitoba as a place to live and raise your family.

I also find it very interesting that the Minister of Conservation who speaks so highly and so loudly of the tall grass prairie and indeed many of the smaller ecological reserves that we have in this province,

especially in southeast Manitoba, he says then that there are no members in this Legislature that were involved in the establishment of the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve, is what he said. He said there were no members left in this Chamber.

Well, I want to remind the honourable Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), the Minister of Conservation, that when I was first elected in 1988 and became the Minister of Natural Resources at that time, which included water and forestry, indeed all the conservation issues including the heritage sites and all those kinds of things, in large part it included such initiatives as ensuring that our resources would be protected in such a way that future generations would indeed have access to those resources in a sustainable manner.

\*(15:40)

It was Gary Filmon as the Premier and it was the Conservative government that started the initiative of sustainable development, sustainable resource development and sustainable communities. We looked at what was needed, what had been left in tatters by the previous NDP government under Howard Pawley and Ed Schreyer, and we looked at what was happening to rural Manitoba and the decay that we saw in virtually every community. We took it upon ourselves to establish the department of rural development, and we took it upon ourselves to initiate the establishment of the Round Table on Environment. The term "sustainable environmental development" was coined by the Gary Filmon administration. Let not this minister stand in his place and take credit for any of that because he did not even know what the terms meant at the time.

He did not know what it meant to sustain communities, whole communities, to provide education in those small communities, to provide health care facilities in those small communities, to provide an environment in which our young children could prosper and flourish and the primary sector in that whole development was agriculture.

I say to the Minister for Conservation (Mr. Struthers) that he needs to look at past budget documents under the former Conservative administration. I challenge him to tell me that there was one document presented by that previous Conservative government that would have excluded Agriculture as a heading in a financial statement dealing with the progression of society in an agrarian-reliant province. Yet this document, called the Manitoba Budget 2006, has no heading that says Agriculture,

and yet it is the mainstay of all those rural Manitoban communities.

No wonder our schools are closing. No wonder our hospitals are closing, Emerson, and we could go on and on. The Letellier school is now being discussed for closure, one of the few French immersion schools in southern Manitoba. It is a school that is pretty near and dear to my heart because it was once, when the NDP previously held office in this province, was slated for closure and yet we decided that there would be growth in this community and there was growth. We grew that school from 80 students to 140 students. Yet only in six short years, six long years we should say, it is now again facing the hammer of closure, and it is an NDP government that will close it this time around.

It is an NDP government that closed the hospital in Emerson. It is an NDP government that is telling the people of Manitoba that there is no future. The only future, they say, is if government wields the heavy hand and forces farmers that are cash strapped to contribute through a checkoff to a forced investment to an industry that farmers do not want to invest in.

This is the first time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have ever in my 18 years of experience in this place seen any government dare to encroach on individuals' rights where the investment of their own financial resources is at stake. This government dares to use its heavy hand of government to force those cattle producers to take \$2 out of their pocket for every head of cattle, whether it is a calf, whether it is a 200-pounder, whether it is a cow or whether it is a bull, \$2 a head will be put into a little kitty, and this government will invest for that person that is making the contribution, will invest for him in a venture that the government chooses to invest in.

Where have we ever seen any Canadian government under a democracy use that kind of power that we have seen here? This government, this Manitoba government uses the same tactics that have been used in foreign countries all over the world. We fought the Second World War to protect the rights of the individual to make the choices of where they would invest. Yet here we have a Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) who brings forward a bill that will force individual producers to invest in facilities that they themselves do not choose to invest in.

What is next? What is next, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Will this government come up next with a checkoff on all employees to put into an investment fund that will save the Crocus Fund, to bail out the Crocus Fund? Is that next? That is what I am hearing in the rural communities being talked about now. Is that what we are going to be forced to do next, to develop a checkoff on every employee's cheque, just a little bit? We will check it off and dump it into the investment of the Crocus Fund to save the Crocus Fund.

Think about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are a lot of issues that we need to talk about.

I want to get back to the issue that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) was talking about, and that is the establishment of the Tall Grass Prairie. I was the Minister of Natural Resources when this issue was brought to my attention and Conservation Canada came to visit with me. The board walked into my office and they said, Mr. Minister, we want to bring to your attention that we only have 12 acres of tall grass prairie left in Manitoba. We are developing another two-acre site, they said, which is going to be right on 75 highway, next to a little church, and we want you to see that site.

After they finished their presentation, I invited them down to my constituency and I took them on a little tour. It included the Aux Marais River, where we have some land. There was about 12 acres that had never been touched and I asked them, what is this spot of land here? They said, well, that looks like tall grass prairie. Yes, and I said there are probably hundreds of thousands of acres similar to this in my constituency.

We took them out to Gardenton, Manitoba, and we showed them the true tall grass prairie of southeast Manitoba. Today Conservancy Canada owns 16,000 acres there. They brought money in from all over Canada and are buying up land in competition with the beef producers over there. That they are driving up prices of land is what the beef producers in the Gardenton and Vita area are telling me. Not that we are opposed to the conserving of tall grass prairie. But let me tell you one thing, that these farmers that have farmed there all their lives and their families before them, I think, did an exemplary job of conserving the natural state of that tall grass prairie.

You know what they did with that land, Mr.

Deputy Speaker? They actually raised cattle on it. Instead of the huge herds of buffalo roaming that part of Manitoba prior to the people that came and developed western Canada, prior to them coming up and killing off the herds, there were probably a million head of cattle grazing, or buffalo grazing out in that part of Manitoba, grazing that tall grass prairie. Yet, when the farmers took over the land, when the Ukrainian families came and established themselves in that area, there was nothing to do in that area but raise livestock. It is stony, rocky land, yes, but it grows wonderful grass.

\* (15:50)

Today, that Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) said it was he and his government that were responsible for establishing the Tall Grass Prairie. Well, my dear Sir, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was the good Lord that established the tall grass prairie. Well, my dear Sir, it was the good Lord that established the tall grass prairie in that part of the province of Manitoba and it is still there. It was the stewards who came and settled in this province, the Ukrainian community and many other ethnic minorities who came and settled in that southeast part of Manitoba who knew how to raise cattle, knew how to raise livestock, knew how to raise chickens, and this Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) and his colleagues are putting in place legislation, the regulations that will stop any further development of that industry, because most of that area is Class 4 land. This minister said, you cannot use or spread manure that comes out of those cows, chickens, pigs and whatever else have you, you cannot use that to fertilize your grass. He will make it against the law in those regions, in those sections, to fertilize the natural prairie, the tall grass prairie that has been there forever.

This person who is now the Minister of Water Stewardship, this minister simply has no clue of what true agriculture is all about. You cannot raise grass unless you provide proper fertilities to these grasses. You cannot raise wheat unless it is properly fertilized. What amazes me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that when I was much younger than I am today, we were told time and time again by the scientists, by the soil scientists and the water scientists in this province, when I went to school we were told if you keep on farming your land—they at that time called it mining the land—if you keep on mining the land the way you are for another 50 years, you will not be able to harvest any meaningful crops on your land. You need to replace proper fertility to your land if

you are going to grow very significant crops on farmland. Yet this minister cannot understand the value of adding proper fertility products to the land.

What more natural fertility product could one try and find anywhere than the very first fertility products that humans ever found, and that is the stuff that comes out of animals. Oh, yeah, we call it manure. There used to be an agronomic term that I believe was used at one time to describe this natural product, but we do not use those words anymore. I am not going to suggest that the minister start using it now, because now we call it a detriment to the environment, this so-called manure, and it is one of the most natural products for growing grass or grain or, for that matter, beans or whatever have you. It is one of the most natural products.

This minister cannot understand that. He has put forward legislation that will prevent the raising of livestock in much of southeast Manitoba. He says to me, you cannot farm the swamps and you cannot farm the sand dunes. Well, we have not found a tractor yet that will be able to farm the swamps. We have not found a tractor yet that can maneuver properly on sand dunes. They get stuck, unless maybe the minister could come out and I will show him how that happens when you take a tractor out on sand dunes.

But this minister does not understand that nature has a wonderful way of interacting with reality, and the reality of the fact is that our wildlife in that area depends on human beings. It depends on proper management. It depends on a proper environmental cycle to take place. Agriculture and the farmers of southeast Manitoba have certainly demonstrated that they know how to do that. This minister, who has yet to set foot at any one of those so-called public hearings that he had, should come out and listen to them. Maybe he should take lessons on how to do business on the land.

This is also the same minister and the same government that is now telling the people of Manitoba of the huge destruction that will happen when Devils Lake water enters Manitoba. For four, five years all we heard from this Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) was of the huge destruction that would happen in Lake Winnipeg if Devils Lake water ever was allowed to flow into it. Well, he has the distinction, he has the distinction of being the minister when the first Devils Lake water, all 13 days of it, hit Lake Winnipeg and the Red River in Manitoba. It is there now. Any of the biota

or any of the fish species or any of the algae products that were in Devils Lake should already be in Manitoba now.

What I find most interesting is that this minister or the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the Province of Manitoba said we had 20 scientists on the water at Devils Lake, in the water and under the water. For 20 days they were there searching for stuff. Yet, when I talk to the people of North Dakota, the scientists at North Dakota and the head of the water conservation at North Dakota, University of North Dakota, they told me that the Province of Manitoba had two people on a little boat in the lake for the better part of three days. Those are their words. This minister, this Premier told the people that we had 20 scientists on the lake, in the lake and under the lake for 20 days. Then this was on CJOB. Then on CBC, a short few hours later, it was not four weeks, it was only three weeks.

You know, there are so many different stories that these two people, the Premier and the Minister of Water Stewardship, have told about Devils Lake, they have a hard time keeping the facts straight themselves. When I asked a scientist to explain to me what the dangers were of what the minister was looking for in Devils Lake, they said this: We have a hard time supporting the political rhetoric with scientific evidence. They could not support the political rhetoric with scientific evidence.

So now we have a situation where the Devils Lake pumps were supposed to start yesterday, and it is my understanding that the State of North Dakota has implemented a procedure under which the pumps can or cannot be started. If the level of sulphates in the Sheyenne River rise beyond I believe it is three parts per million, the pumps cannot start. That is their own rules. *[interjection]* The minister chuckles. But the State of North Dakota developed criteria under which pumping could occur and which pumping could not occur. If certain levels of sulphates are found in the Sheyenne River, the pumps will not start.

\*(16:00)

So was the case on May 1. When the pumps were slated to start, and the water would be running, it has nothing to do with the minister or the Premier or anybody negotiating a deal, but the pumps would have actually pumped water into the Red River and into Lake Winnipeg.

Yet, when the studies that the minister said, or that the Premier (Mr. Doer) said they had 20 scientists looking at—when the actual fact was they only had two people on a small boat for the better part of three days—when the results of those tests came in, the study analysis that I saw from the State of North Dakota said we were looking for 12 species, and we could not find any of the 12 targeted species. Then I looked at the Manitoba study and the report, and it said we were looking for 12 species, but we could not find any of those 12 species. Then I saw another paragraph which had four words in it that I cannot pronounce. I am sorry. They were scientific words, and I do not know who put them in there, and I do not know what they mean, but obviously there were four species of something that were identified as being of concern in the Manitoba report.

In the other reports that I have looked at I could not find those. So, obviously, during the three days that two people were on the lake—and they were not in the lake, and they were not under the lake, they were just on the lake in a little boat—obviously, they found something that the others had not found or maybe we do not know that. Could it have been, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the minister might have manufactured this? Maybe this is another thing that the scientists will find difficult to support with scientific evidence. I do not know. I think some day we should ask the minister to explain those things.

I think it is also important to note that when you look at the total budget in this and how much of the total budget was designated to agriculture—and what I find interesting is that they have combined rural development and agriculture now, and they brought those two departments together—and I believe agriculture and rural development now have a total budget of \$181 million. That seems like a significant rise, but when I do the addition of what the previous administration had identified for agriculture and rural development there is a significant shortfall. Now does that mean there is increased spending for agriculture? I do not know. In my book—I mean, maybe we need a scientist to look at that one too or maybe an economist or maybe we should ask the minister to explain that, if she could. But maybe that is why the word "Agriculture" is not headlined in this budget document. Maybe that could be the reason. We do not know.

The other thing is when I look at the whole matter of the total budget and I look at the 1999

budget when our Conservative administration left office, there is an almost two billion dollars, or just better than two-billion-dollar increase in the total budget, total spending, of this government. Two billion dollars, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is a lot of money in most people's language. What did they do with that? Did they reduce taxes by a billion dollars? No.

They laughed at the previous administration during the 1999 election; they laughed at the Conservatives for saying that there would be a billion dollars in revenue increase, and there would only be—and that the Conservatives would give half of it back to the people in tax reduction. This NDP government laughed and said, how silly can you be, where are you going to find the extra billion dollars? Well, somehow the NDP have found not only one billion dollars, they found two. What have they done with it? They have spent it all. Then what did they do? Then they borrowed some more money. Then what did they do? Then they went into the fund that had been established as a set-aside fund, the rainy day fund, and they are now spending that, too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, where will they go next? I say to the people of Manitoba, look out; these people will spend you into destitution. They know not how to manage. They know not how to run a government, and they certainly do not know how to protect health care and provide for education and look after our children's needs in this country.

I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is time that this government called an election and put the question before the people.

### House Business

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** On House business, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under Rule 31(8), I announce that next Tuesday's private member's resolution will be on Hometown Manitoba. Thank you.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk):** I, like the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), am looking forward to that next election, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am looking forward to that. I hope the Premier (Mr. Doer) heard him because, like I said, we are all anxious to head in and run on our record and run on this budget, a budget that I would remind the member is balanced, a budget that invests in health care and education and

families and a budget that has significant tax cuts. *[interjection]* I am reminded by the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) that our coalition friends in Ottawa just reduced the GST. Prime Minister Harper is learning from this government how to cut taxes for families out there.

You know, what is interesting in listening to the members opposite, gloom and doom. It is getting depressing in here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, listening to the Conservatives and the Liberals go on about the negative situation that Manitobans are facing. But the reality, of course, is much, much different. As Manitobans know when they go to health care institutions and facilities and when they attend their schools and they travel on the roads and so on, they know that when they pay their taxes they know that things are much better now than they were six years ago. *[interjection]* Well, the member does not only want to talk about roads.

I can say to the member that in our area there has been significant improvement in our roads. I know the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), other members who represent the North and the member who represents the Interlake, they are very happy with the investment that this government has made into infrastructure when it comes to roads. Not only that, my friend, we have also twinned Highway No. 1 which, I might add, the Conservatives ignored for years and years. We have also twinned the bypass around the city of Winnipeg, again something which they have ignored.

In my own particular riding, Glen Findlay, when he was the highways minister, announced he was going to redo Highway No. 9 and 27. In 1995, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he made that pledge that he would rebuild and repair that highway, that intersection. I am pleased to announce that it was done by this government. It was opened by this government, this minister of highways and myself and the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson). We did that just last year, 10 years after Glen Findlay promised that to the people of Selkirk. They never did it. They never did it. It was this government and it was this Premier (Mr. Doer) that ensured that that project went ahead.

Highway 59, another important road in our community, another road that allows Manitobans and tourists to travel up to visit some of the beautiful parks and the beautiful beaches we have on the east side of the lake, Grand Beach, Grand Marais: It was this government that put over \$4 million into that

road last year to upgrade Highway 59, again something that was ignored by members opposite, ignored by Darren Praznik, who was their MLA for years. He did absolutely nothing on Highway 59, completely ignored it. That was part of his legacy to that community.

\*(16:10)

On Monday I will be joined by the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and the Premier at the sod-turning ceremonies for the new East Selkirk school, Mr. Deputy Speaker, almost a \$9-million investment that our community is making in that school, again something that was ignored by Darren Praznik for all the years that he was their MLA.

No wonder you guys did not want him as your leader. No wonder you did not want Darren as your leader. The guy did not deliver on anything for that community. I am pleased to say that on May 9 we will be turning the sod on that very important investment in that community, because a school is not only an investment in our children, it is an investment in the whole community. I know that they are looking forward to that great day when that school opens, hopefully, in another year.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the other things that we have had happen in Selkirk recently. Just last week I was joined by the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) where our government has announced that, after years of neglect, we are proceeding with the redevelopment of the Selkirk Mental Health Centre, which is the largest institution, the only institution now in Manitoba that delivers care to those who suffer with a mental illness or a brain injury, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased to report that we announced, once again, last week—and the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is trying to say, well, of course he is incorrect—that we will be proceeding with fast-tracking that project. The construction will begin this year and should be completed by 2008.

Again, when the Conservatives were in power, what did they do with the Selkirk Mental Health Centre? Well, they closed the School of Psychiatric Nursing and they laid off about 20 or so employees that worked at the Selkirk Mental Health Centre. They also closed the training plant.

I am interested in the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), as she stands up every day with a petition regarding some job loss in her community. I

can understand that. I understand where she is coming from; no one wants to see that happen. But in our situation those jobs are being transferred from Minnedosa to Portage. We have not heard what the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou) thinks of that job transfer, I might add. In my case, her predecessor, Harold Gilleshammer, we all remember him, completely closed down the Selkirk training plant, laid off 10 employees, never a concern from that individual. Don Orchard, we all remember him, closed our school of nursing down in Selkirk. You can contrast their record when it comes to serving the Interlake versus ours, and then the people out there will be eager to go to that ballot box when the Premier calls the election. *[interjection]* If he listens to the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) who just stood up and called for an election, I know that the people of Selkirk and Interlake and all of our ridings will reward this government for what we have done.

You know, it is interesting as they say, oh, you promised to deal with the health care, six months and \$15 million to get rid of hallway medicine. We took that record to the people in 2003 and what did they do? They increased our majority to 35 seats. We took that record and we took that promise and that commitment to the people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we increased our seats.

Well, the Liberals, of course, doubled their seats, and I congratulate them for doing that. It is quite an achievement of this Legislature to double your seats. But we will see what happens next time. We will never know what is going to happen next time.

The Conservatives, of course, went down. That was one of their leader's claims to fame is that he stopped them from being wiped out. The Member for Kirkfield Park claims that he stopped the party from being wiped out.

I do want to pay tribute to the Member for Kirkfield Park and wish him well. I guess he will not be here very long because the Member for Emerson just demanded that we call an election and the Member for Kirkfield Park says he is only going to be here until the election is called.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I assume the Premier will listen to the member, and we will be heading out on the old hustings pretty soon. We will be knocking on doors and putting in signs. I was out the other day looking at my vast inventory of election signs and polishing them up to hammer them in all the

hundreds of locations that I have in my community. I am eager to go. I think Manitobans are eager to go as well. They are eager to cast judgment upon the gloom and doom Conservatives that sit right to my right here. Manitobans will be eager to cast judgement on them and onto these Liberals.

I want to just mention something about the budget. I think what we need to do is we need to analyze it. Obviously, as I said, it is balanced, it cuts taxes, it is investing in important things, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to refer to an article that was in *The Winnipeg Sun*. Of course, this was on March 8, I believe. It was a long time ago, the day after the budget was presented and the experts weighed in on the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Selinger) efforts, and I must quote Evelyn Jacks who says, "This is an open-for-business budget." She did not see the gloom and doom of the members opposite. No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she knows a good budget when she sees it.

Even their friend, Adrienne Batra, had to admit that it is pretty good. She even had to admit that, which is interesting. The other day in the Chamber here, when the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) was saying his farewells, he looks up into the gallery and he says all my staff is up there, and then there is Adrienne Batra sitting up there in the gallery. I assume she must be on their Conservative payroll because she was sitting up there with all the other Conservatives casting judgment. But even she is forced to admit that this budget is good for business.

You know what is interesting is that, since we have formed government, I believe we have had how many upgrades to our credit rating? I believe we have had two upgrades. Contrast those to the gloom and doom years of the Filmon administration. I believe there was simply nothing but downgrades to the bond ratings to the Filmon government. *[interjection]* I believe the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) is confirming what I said. I look forward to his comments when he has the chance to speak to the budget.

This budget alone will cut over \$80 million in new personal and property income taxes. This budget will completely eliminate a tax in this province. Now the Harper Conservatives, they are reducing the GST, brought in by Brian Mulroney, by the way. They are reducing it by 1 percent. They have not eliminated it. We have completely eliminated the

ESL, one of the first times, I would suggest, that I have been here that any government was able to completely eliminate a tax.

I know John Loewen, when he was here, was going to one day get rid of the payroll tax; then he was going to get rid of all the education tax; then he was going to get rid of all the VLTs; then he was going to build an underpass; he was going to build a new school; he was going to build an overpass. He was going to do this all in one day. I am sure you were not upset when he left you. Then he ran as a Liberal and he lost there. We do not know where he is going to come back next time. He is not going to come back as an NDPer, I can guarantee you that, but we do not know where he is going to come back. I am sure the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is probably trying to chase him down.

The Leader of the Liberal Party writes a blog, and I was reading his blog a couple of months ago. It was very entertaining. The member went to Israel. He went to Israel and it was quite entertaining, his tales of his journey. What was interesting was when he was in Israel, the Member for Inkster was trying to recruit Reg Alcock to replace him. *[interjection]* Now he laughs. Well, the Member for Inkster announced that he was going to run for the Liberal leadership federally, the Member for Inkster, then he said, I cannot do that, so I will try to get Reg to come here.

But you know, these Liberals in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are something else. I mean, the Leader of the Liberal Party comes to Selkirk and he says I am against that floodway, and again today he stands up in this House and demands where is the federal government's commitment to the floodway. That is a problem with this individual. He has credibility issues.

\* (16:20)

MTS Centre is another thing. He was hugging Eaton's there, and now he is going to the gala opening of MTS claiming that he was always for it. Now the hog plant. When he goes out to meet with farmers, the Leader of the Liberal Party supports the farmers. Now he is supporting the farmers and he stands up in this Chamber everyday and he attacks the agricultural industry. He attacks the agricultural industry. You know he is going to chase that plant—he is not going to chase that plant to Morris—he is going to chase that plant to Saskatoon with talk like



that, and what is he going to say then? You know—  
[interjection]

**An Honourable Member:** You want it in Selkirk?

**Mr. Dewar:** Yes. If Selkirk had the ability to provide the necessary waste waters, of course. I have talked to our council in that area, of course. The problem is we do not have the infrastructure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to meet the needs of such a large water user like that particular plant. Probably only two sites do, and that is Winnipeg and that is in Brandon.

But it is regrettable, like I say. The Liberal Leader is trying to chase that plant not only out of Winnipeg; he is trying to chase it to help our good NDP friends in Saskatchewan as opposed to providing employment here in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on and on about the Liberal. He stands up every day in this House and he says: Oh, we are spending too much; we are overspending. Then, on the other hand, you know, saying not spending enough, just like my friends in the Conservative Party. I hate to say this to my good friend here, but it is true. Well, every day you guys stand up and ask for more money for health care, education, roads and so on, while at the same time you are asking for massive tax cuts, you know, do not balance this budget and that.

I think Manitobans, as the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) has said, we want an election. I agree with him. I am hoping the Premier (Mr. Doer) will hear his many demands. I am sure other members will stand up here and they will demand an election. I know that when that day comes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this government, this member and all my colleagues will be ready for that day because Manitobans know we are on the right track when it comes to balancing the budget, cutting taxes. I urge all my colleagues, for your sake, for the Conservatives' sake here, support this budget. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman):** Je me lève aujourd'hui au nom des électeurs de la circonscription de Carman pour faire ma réponse au budget NPD et pour vous dire comment, à mon avis, nous pouvons faire mieux pour assurer un avenir prospère pour les jeunes dans notre province. Les jeunes sont l'avenir de notre province, Monsieur le Vice-président, et c'est notre devoir de faire tout ce que nous pouvons afin qu'ils puissent réussir et prospérer dans une province qui

dispose des outils de base nécessaires pour être une province nantie.

Bien que je pense que nous avons ces outils, je considère que nous devons les utiliser plus efficacement dans plusieurs domaines et que cela n'a pas été accompli dans le budget NPD sous sa forme actuelle.

#### **Translation**

*I rise today on behalf of the people of the constituency of Carman to respond to the NDP budget and to tell you where I feel we can do more to ensure a prosperous future for the youth of this province. The young are the future of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is our duty to do all that we can so that they can succeed and thrive in a province that has the basic tools needed to be a have province.*

*While I feel that we have these tools, I think that in several areas we need to use them more effectively and that this has not been accomplished in the NDP budget in its current form.*

#### **English**

We have all seen all across this country that the way of thinking has changed within provincial governments. Increased natural resource revenues in provinces like Alberta and through offshore reserves on the east coast have seen many provinces take a fundamental step forward within the areas of economic development and industry. Now, more than ever before, the talent and skills of young Manitobans is in great demand to meet the needs of this new revolution.

Hardly a day goes by that we do not hear of the exodus of youth to centres like Calgary, Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver and Montréal. This pains me because I fundamentally believe that Manitoba youth do not want to leave their homes and families behind to seek opportunities outside of this province. But that the opportunity for them to succeed and thrive are in these centres, and that we have not done enough to keep our students, young professionals and specialists from leaving Manitoba behind for their greener grass in other provinces.

I believe that if everything were equal, youth would choose to stay, and, in fact, that Manitoba has the potential to entice youths from other provinces to live in Manitoba in the future.

Throughout this address, I intend to point out constructive solutions that this government should consider in their effort to produce what should be a forward-thinking and proactive strategy to revolutionize our province in the way that other provinces have done. With previous budgets under this current NDP government, we have fallen behind several of our neighbouring provinces, and if we do not correct now, we will see the steady flow of youths out of the province become a torrent. I offer that it is not too late to address this problem should the NDP decide to accept amendments to its budget. But should our use and needed development continue to be ignored, we may face a future that leaves us incapable of ever escaping our inability to compete with the rest of Canada.

Monsieur le Vice-président, je vais entamer le débat sur les enjeux en abordant le sujet de l'enseignement postsecondaire parce que si nous allons répondre aux besoins des jeunes du Manitoba, c'est précisément là que nous devons commencer. La vie est certainement très différente de ce qu'elle était autrefois et c'est devenu une réalité que l'économie dépend de la main d'oeuvre qualifiée. Afin que les jeunes obtiennent les compétences nécessaires, il faut vraiment que leur éducation aille bien au-delà de ce qui est offert dans le système d'écoles publiques.

### **Translation**

*Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall start my debate of the issues with the topic of advanced education, because if we are to address the needs of youth in Manitoba, this is exactly where we need to start. Life is certainly very different now than in the past and it has become a reality that the economy depends on skilled labour. In order for youth to obtain those skills there is a definite need to further their education far beyond what is offered by public schooling.*

### **English**

Another reality has seemed to become apparent, the need for advanced education, and that is we are continually driving our students deeper into debt with each passing year. Students are now leaving universities with historic debt levels in the tens of thousands of dollars. When we are asking students to learn the skills needed to succeed in the future economy, we are also forcing them to take up multiple jobs, just to keep food on their tables. Those who choose to focus solely on their studies are forced to deal with crippling debt levels just as they

are beginning to enter the work force. How can we ask a new worker to become a functioning, productive member of our society while also forcing them to pay off debt for as much as a decade after they leave school?

The NDP tuition freeze has been proven not to work. Universities have figured out the NDP strategy and are just raising service fees to record levels as a way around their inability to raise tuitions. I fully agree, as most do, that we must make education affordable. But, if a current strategy is found to be faulty or flawed, it must be addressed, rectified, and a new policy put in place. I find it hard to believe that this government is spending over half a billion dollars, and yet they still cannot find an effective way to deliver affordable, high-quality education.

I have no doubt that Manitoba students have the same intelligence and abilities as their cohorts in other provinces, and that all we need to do is to get out of the way, provide them with the ability to showcase their skills properly in the education system, and we will be richly rewarded.

Part of enticing young people to stay in this province is to provide taxation levels that are competitive with our provincial neighbours, and this is something that has not been properly addressed in the current budget. Manitoba's basic personal exemption is the fourth lowest in all of Canada. Single-earner families of four in Manitoba are the highest-taxed Canadians west of Québec. We want to recruit young workers, but then they see that Manitoba ranks eighth out of 10 provinces in regard to average weekly earnings. First, students are driven to debt, achieving a solid education, and then the government is asking them to pay the debt off, while earning some of the lowest wages in Canada.

Monsieur le Vice-président, je représente une circonscription rurale dont la population est étroitement liée à l'industrie agricole. J'ai remarqué des tendances troublantes dans ce domaine et je n'ai pas encore vu ce gouvernement proposer des solutions appropriées.

### **Translation**

*Mr. Deputy Speaker, I represent a rural constituency, whose population is closely tied to the agricultural industry. I have seen some troubling trends in this area and I have not yet seen proper solutions offered by this government.*

**English**

\* (16:30)

Three years have now passed since the discovery of BSE, and yet we still see a lack of vision from this government on the issue of increased slaughter capacity. Instead of a clear vision, Budget 2006 simply offers another loan program to our struggling producers, and we have since heard of a \$2 per head levy on cattle sales in the province. These tactics are only driving already struggling producers even further into debt and may be forced to abandon a way of life that they have had for generations.

Les jeunes sont de moins en moins nombreux à rester sur les fermes. Cela me peine de voir que des jeunes producteurs agricoles sont obligés de vendre les fermes familiales exploitées autrefois avec succès par leurs parents et leurs grands-parents, en raison d'un manque de soutien ainsi qu'un manque de volonté de la part de ce gouvernement à s'attaquer à leurs problèmes de façon claire et effective.

**Translation**

*Young people remaining on the farm are becoming fewer and fewer. It pains me to see that young agricultural producers are being forced to sell the family farms that their parents and grandparents were able to operate successfully in the past because of a lack of support and an unwillingness on the part of this government to address their issues in a clear and effective way.*

**English**

While the intention of the NDP government to lower school taxes on agricultural lands is a beginning, it is only that. We need to go much further. It amazes me that the government can find ways to implement loan programs, but not provide the lasting benefits that the elimination of these school taxes would bring. We need an approach to agriculture that offers a hand up to struggling producers, and not simply another handout in the form of a loan.

Young farmers are some of the hardest workers in Manitoba, and there is no good reason why a person who puts in an honest day's work should not be able to survive in the agricultural industry. These are dynamic young people who have decided to stay in Manitoba and they deserve the support and attention of this government. There must be a focus on proactive solutions that benefit everyone, and one

of the ways to achieve these solutions is through diversification and research into new ways to harness agricultural revenues.

La diversification constitue un aspect vital de l'agriculture et le développement des parcs éoliennes à Saint-Léon est source d'une grande fierté pour les gens de ma circonscription. Ces gens sont très contents de participer à cette initiative et je dois reconnaître que la décision de ce gouvernement d'examiner l'énergie éolienne comme complément à nos autres ressources naturelles est digne d'éloges. La capacité du Manitoba de faire concurrence dépend de la diversification, et à condition que celle-ci se fasse de façon responsable, elle sera très bien accueillie.

Le développement de l'énergie éolienne a été un élément clé du budget NDP, mais il nous faut des garanties que ce gouvernement donnera suite à ce genre et à tous les genres de diversification rurale et que l'engagement envers la réflexion prospective se poursuivra d'une manière responsable et bien gérée.

**Translation**

*Diversification is an important aspect of agriculture and the development of the wind farm in St. Leon is a source of great pride for my constituents. These people are very happy to participate in this initiative, and I must acknowledge that the decision of this government to look at wind power as a compliment to our other natural resources is praiseworthy. Diversification is important to the ability of Manitoba to compete, and as long as it is done in a responsible manner it is much welcomed.*

*While the development of wind power was central in the NDP budget, there still must be assurances that this and all types of rural economic diversification are followed up on by the government and that the commitment to forward thinking is continued in a responsible and well-managed manner.*

**English**

When the agriculture industry suffers, so does the entire rural economy. By solving the problems of our producers we can kick-start the ability of our rural communities to entice investment and stay viable well into the future. When youth leave the farm, we also see a parallel trend with youth leaving our rural communities. There are ever less young doctors, nurses, school teachers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders living in our rural communities. By addressing agricultural struggles and helping our

producers to have a higher earning power, we see an increased cash flow into rural areas, and we get more economic development.

If youth have the necessities and economic opportunities available to them in rural communities, the trend of moving to urban centres will be slowed, and our rural communities would have the talent and skilled workers they need to stay viable.

Related to the issue of agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that of water stewardship. In the Budget 2006 the NDP had the opportunity to address the issue of the water regulations that were hotly debated across the province. Instead, little attention was paid to The Water Protection Act, and a lot of the questions that were raised by our farmers have not been addressed. When we speak of the youth and the future generations, nothing is more basic than the need for clean water. We owe it to future generations to provide them with clean, unpolluted water, and this is something all members of this House agree on. I share the desire of the government to protect our water, but we must ensure that all stakeholders are brought to the table to discuss how to best prevent contaminating our lakes and waterways.

Farmers have been good stewards of the soil in the past, and continue to be today. It only makes sense that they should be consulted, and that their ideas and concerns heeded in the efforts to protect our most precious natural resources.

Monsieur le Vice-président, nous avons vu la part du budget consacrée à la santé atteindre un total de 42 pour cent. Globalement, le budget de 2006 a augmenté le budget des soins de santé de 217,6 millions de dollars. Si nous allons redresser la situation financière de la province et léguer à ses enfants un système de soins de santé dont ils peuvent être fiers, nous devons freiner les dépenses insoutenables. Sinon, toutes les générations futures hériteront d'un système en faillite qui ne servira à personne.

### **Translation**

*Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen the portion of the budget dedicated to health reach a total of 42 percent. Overall, the 2006 budget increased the health care budget by \$217.6 million. If we are going to right the province's financial situation and pass on to the children of this province a health care system that they can be proud of, we must contain this unsustainable spending. Otherwise, all the future*

*generations will be left with a bankrupt system that serves no one.*

### **English**

We have seen this government raise spending, and yet we have seen little in the way of results. How can we expect to entice youth to come to the province, or even convince our own youth to stay when they see that the Conference Board of Canada has released a report card on health care and ranks Manitoba dead last in overall quality of the health care system? Not only are we losing our Manitoba-trained doctors and nurses to other provinces, there seems to be no solid plan for rectifying this situation in the near future.

We have become an exporter of talent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this is something that cannot continue. Waiting lists to see doctors or have a procedure done have not been addressed, and this budget seems to do nothing but throw money at the problem. When a family cannot find a family doctor because all the doctors in the city have a client list longer than ever before, this is a problem that needs to be addressed. We are seeing that our population is aging, as well as our doctors, and we are entering a time when our health care system will tax the most at a time when retirement will deplete the ranks of our health care workers. We need to be able to provide proper health services and recruit young health care specialists and professionals.

Subsequent NDP budgets have shown that this cannot be achieved by simply pouring more and more money into the department. If the health care system in the city of Winnipeg is under a great deal of stress, then the system in rural Manitoba is a full-blown crisis. Budget 2006 has done very little to address the growing needs of rural communities like those in my constituency. While people in the city cannot find a family doctor because of a long client list, many in rural areas have to travel great distances to see a doctor because there are none in their rural communities. Over a dozen rural emergency rooms are currently closed, and I have seen no tools in the budget to address this growing problem. It is no wonder that young families are leaving rural areas, as they need proper access to health care for young children, access that has disappeared from rural areas over the last seven years.

One of the fundamentals of providing a future for our youth is ensuring safety on our streets and dealing effectively with the justice system. We need

to have the resources to ensure that high-risk and gang offenders are properly monitored. When youth fall prey to gangs, it can lead to a life of crime, and, as we have seen in many cases, it can also lead to the death of not only gang members, but innocent civilians who tragically wind up in the crossfire between rival gangs.

Monsieur le Vice-président, pour moi, récemment l'une des éclaircies a été la décision du NPD de suivre notre suggestion de présenter de la législation visant à accorder aux parents le droit de placer leurs adolescents toxicomanes dans des centres de désintoxication. J'étais d'accord avec cette initiative lorsqu'elle a été proposée auparavant par notre parti et je suis toujours d'accord avec elle.

\* (16:40)

Je m'inquiète cependant que cette législation n'a pas bénéficié d'un financement adéquat alors qu'elle offre la possibilité d'empêcher que les enfants deviennent les victimes du commerce brutal de la drogue avant qu'il ne soit trop tard.

**Translation**

*Mr. Deputy Speaker, for myself, one of the bright spots of late was the decision of the NDP to follow our suggestion to introduce legislation to give parents the right to place their drug-addicted teens into detox facilities. I agreed with this initiative when it was suggested by our party previously and I still agree with it.*

*I do, however, have a concern that this legislation has not been backed by adequate funding, although it provides the possibility of stopping children from becoming victims of the brutal drug trade before it is too late.*

**English**

Well, there was a mention of having more police officers on the streets, and having increased numbers of officers is fundamental to the delivery of a safe and productive city. It appears that the announcements of new officers in Budget 2006 is just a re-announcement of a previous commitment. When the government speaks of increasing safety and fixing problems in the justice system, we must ensure that an announcement of increased hiring means actual bodies on the street, and not just numbers on a page.

Just as I had previously mentioned about the situation we are facing with an aging population of doctors, we are facing a similarly impending crisis

on an aging police force. Just as we need to recruit young doctors, we must recruit young police officers to fill the void left by an ever larger section of retiring police officers. It is one thing for the NDP to mention the hiring of 31 new police officers. If we see 35 retire, however, it means we are further behind than we were before. Hiring of new, youthful officers must outstrip retirement if the government is truly committed to safer streets.

Flooding has, once again, had a tremendous affect on this province this year, even as farm operations are struggling to recover from high water levels and flooding from last year. While we cannot control the weather, and severe flooding has wreaked havoc on farming operations in multiple years now, the list of crises facing rural farm operations is ever growing. BSE, flooding, low crop prices, lack of slaughter capacity, and other issues are pushing farmers, and especially our young farmers with already high debt levels, right to the brink. It is our duty to ensure that we protect these producers in their time of need, and that we provide them with the proper disaster response mechanism to limit their losses and ensure that they are able to remain on their feet.

Monsieur le Vice-président, j'aimerais terminer simplement en soulignant le fait que lorsqu'une province crée un budget, le gouvernement doit se poser la question: Qu'est-ce que nous offrons à nos jeunes? Je suis persuadé qu'il est possible de faire bien plus pour offrir à nos étudiants, à nos jeunes professionnels et à nos enfants une province qui est meilleure que celle que nous avons actuellement.

**Translation**

*Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to close by simply emphasizing the fact that when a province creates a budget, the government must ask itself the question: What are we providing for our youth? I am sure that much more can be done to provide our students, our young professionals and our children with a better province than the one we currently have.*

**English**

We are at a crossroads where we can become a confident "have" province, and make Manitoba competitive with our neighbours, and show the youth of Canada that Manitoba can be an importer of talent, instead of an exporter. The other option is to continue in our complacency and simply keep letting the leaders of tomorrow leave this province for greener pastures in Ontario, Alberta, British

Columbia and the likes. I choose the former option, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope that the NDP will do the same. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Healthy Living):** It is my pleasure to stand today to put a few words on the record about Budget 2006. Before I do that, and there is just so much good news in this budget, I hope in the limited time that I have today I will be able to express my passion for the number of very good things in this budget.

I do want to take a moment to thank the constituents of Seine River for continuing to support me in representing them in the Manitoba Legislature. It is, indeed, an honour to represent the people of this community who live and work and learn and play and do all that they can to make Manitoba a better place to live. So, I extend my gratitude to the constituents of Seine River for their continued confidence.

I would, also, like to extend a welcome to the new Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen). He has, in his short time in the Legislature, certainly made an impression, and I wish him well in his future endeavours. I suppose it is incumbent upon me to say, not necessarily too well. But, as a human being from one side of the House to another, I wish him all the best in his pursuit in his role as leader.

I also want to take an opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to extend my best wishes and my respect to the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), who served his party nobly as a leader. I had the good fortune in my role as legislative assistant to the Premier (Mr. Doer) to attend a number of events with the former Leader of the Opposition, and I can say, in all sincerity, that he represented his party with dignity. We had several opportunities, of course, to exchange pleasantries, political jabs, of course, and he did always afford me the same dignity and respect. I think that he served all Manitobans in a very positive fashion and with good humour. So I do extend my respect to him for the time that he invested in representing his party on the opposite side of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before putting words on the record about the budget, I also want to express my gratitude to my own family. All of us in the Legislature here know that in this role it does take the support of many loved ones to ensure that you

can do the best possible job. I want to express my gratitude to my husband, Sam, who, I am delighted to say, will be a permanent resident of Canada, of Manitoba, as of tomorrow. Certainly, people cannot say that I am not doing my best to increase immigration here in Manitoba, and I also, of course, want to say that I am seeing the world, perhaps as many of my colleagues have already seen it, and that is as a parent. One looks now at the world with a different set of eyes, and perhaps through my son's eyes, brand-new eyes, to see the wonder and to see the amazement and to see the world with imagination, perhaps as somebody not so old but a little older might have seen the world previously. It is really a delight to, in fact, see the world anew and know that the role that we have here in the Manitoba Legislature is one that is of great responsibility, and we must all take, whatever our political stripes, such a duty with great care to ensure that the children of Manitoba have the best possible future. So I am very pleased, I suppose, to thank my son, Jack, for letting me see the world in a whole new way.

Manitobans agree, of whatever political stripe, that we want to give our young people the best possible start in life, and that is really one of the things that makes this budget so exciting. This budget really does emphasize our commitment to children and to youth. First and foremost, we see in the budget our government's commitment to moving forward to implement the recommendations from our all-party Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force. We engaged in a dialogue with Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know that the health of our children is a non-partisan issue, and together and collectively we listened to what Manitobans had to say. We put forth recommendations to ensure that our young people are going to be as healthy and, ultimately, as happy as they can be, and this budget goes about laying the groundwork to ensure that we fulfill those recommendations and that we are building opportunities so we can raise healthy, happy children.

One of the things that, as the Minister responsible for Healthy Child Manitoba, I was really delighted to see was the expansion of the Healthy Baby program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is going to go to more communities to ensure that more babies and their parents are getting the healthiest possible start in life. This is something I know that all members of the House are going to be able to get behind and going to be able to vote for with unbridled enthusiasm.

I was also very delighted to see an expansion of the Centres de la petite enfance et de la famille into more Francophone schools and Francophone communities. Seine River has a very rich and robust Francophone community, and I know that many of those people will be very happy to see this continued and increased investment bringing together child development and early learning resources and services for parents.

\* (16:50)

Another thing I noticed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is our continued expansion of supports for adolescents, and one of the ways that we are doing this in Budget '06 is through the expansion of our teen clinics. I think it is really worthwhile to mention yet again that with the introduction of our first clinic in Elmwood here in Winnipeg we saw extraordinary results over a short period of two years. What we saw was a teen pregnancy rate dropping by 24 percent in that area of the city, when we compare it to an overall drop in Winnipeg of about 8 percent. Now, certainly, we would be the first to say that we cannot say unequivocally that A causes B, but what we do know is that there were no additional interventions in that community, no particular additional resources put into that community other than the grass-roots teen clinic that was formed at Elmwood High School. Really, one has to note that 24 percent versus an overall 8 percent is an extraordinary number. It is a number worth reproducing in other areas of Winnipeg and Manitoba, and that is why Budget '06 is making that continued investment. We are very, very happy for that reason, that we are looking after children as they are born into this world, looking after them preschool and ensuring that we are looking after them through their adolescent years.

I was also very pleased to see in Budget '06, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and as Minister of Healthy Living, I took particular delight in remarking the new Children's Physical Activity Tax Credit that we are committed to paralleling with the promised federal commitment. I know that that federal budget is hot off the presses, and so we will look with bated breath at what the federal government is going to do. We are committed to matching that commitment to encourage even greater participation by children in athletics, in recreation and other physical activity.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

It is also important that, as we work together as a government to increase our young people's

participation in physical activity, we want to make sure that those individuals are as safe as they can be, engaging in these activities. One of the best things that we can do in our community is to encourage, in our beautiful summers, our young people going out and riding their bikes, and we want to make sure that young people are as safe as they can be. We have, for that reason, purchased 1,000 bike helmets in conjunction with KidSport to ensure that our young people can have bicycle helmets that may not otherwise be able to afford them.

In addition to that, we have introduced a program to help families purchase bicycle helmets at low cost through the school system, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that every young person, not just young person, every young person and their parents are wearing bicycle helmets to ensure that they are as safe as they can be. Budget '06 has supported that kind of thinking.

Mr. Speaker, I am also very pleased that through Budget '06 we are supporting new healthy food nutrition guidelines for schools and making sure that our curriculum is strengthened in areas of health and physical education and nutrition to make sure that our young people can get the best possible opportunities for physical activity and positive nutrition.

We know, also, Mr. Speaker, that children attend school perhaps five and a half, six hours a day, and that we need to be working to ensure that those supports are also available to parents and to families in the community and in their homes. Budget '06 is ensuring that we are providing supports for education about physical activity opportunities and for positive nutrition in the community as well.

I am also absolutely delighted to make mention of the fact that Budget '06 provides for an expansion of Manitoba in Motion to ensure that families across Manitoba are getting to be as physically active as they can, to look at as many diverse opportunities for our young people, for our families, for our seniors, Mr. Speaker, for them to be in situations where they can age as healthily and happily as possible. That is just what Manitoba in Motion is going to do.

I am also very proud of the fact that we are investing an additional \$2 million in new annual funding to combat crystal meth and addictions, part of our larger comprehensive strategy on crystal meth. Mr. Speaker, I really do believe it is worth noting that members of this House are very committed to

different forms of mental health and addictions treatment, and although there are times, particularly during Question Period, where members across the House may trade jabs—thank goodness, our seats are not closer—I think it is fair to say that I would want to take a moment to honour the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), the member from the opposition party, for his passion and commitment and his effort toward combatting the issue of crystal meth. We may not always agree on the same methods; we may not always agree on the same tone, but I do believe that, when a member of this House takes it upon himself or herself to work towards educating communities against something as horrendous as the scourge of crystal meth, then it is worth noting, and I do commend the Member for Steinbach for his effort in that regard.

As I said before, we are working towards implementing recommendations from the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force, again an all-party endeavour. I do commend members opposite that worked with us on that task force to ensure that those recommendations are going to be fulfilled. We may not always agree on how these programs are delivered. We may never agree within the context of Question Period, Mr. Speaker, but when we get down to the business of looking after children in Manitoba there are times that we can agree. There are times that we can come to consensus. That is what happened with that report. I do applaud the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), for coming together to make those recommendations, and I do applaud the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for touring the province with us to listen to what people had to say.

Certainly, I am also very delighted about Budget '06 and what it has to offer for seniors in our province. Funding, for example, Mr. Speaker, for the four-year, \$98-million Aging in Place long-term care strategy for seniors to ensure that we can increase community living supports and to provide alternatives to institutional care, particularly for those people not yet ready for the kind of care that they might receive in a personal care home. I am very proud that Budget 2006 has made that kind of investment. Seniors have told us about the kinds of supportive housing, assisted living arrangements that they need to ensure that they can be in their community, be with their loved ones, be with their friends, share community. We have listened to what

they have had to say and incorporated this into our Aging in Place strategy.

I am also very impressed with the Budget 2006 and its investments in our healthy aging strategy for seniors, including new resources to expand community-based services, to improve access for seniors to government services, and to expand Manitoba strategy to prevent elder abuse, a very unfortunate but indeed very real part of some seniors' lives here in Manitoba. We want to do all that we can to prevent this and, in fact, to ensure that it is not part of any senior's life here in Manitoba.

Certainly, we hear from a lot of constituents in Seine River their concerns about tax savings and about our infrastructure. I am very pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that an additional \$4.5 million from the Building Manitoba Fund, including more for transit and roads, is incorporated into this budget, which is very important to the constituents of Seine River.

A new \$3-million grant for the City of Winnipeg for property assessment costs is very important to the people of Seine River, where, of course, we are seeing a housing boom like perhaps no other constituency here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

I was also very pleased to see us actively pursuing the renewal of our federal partnership to complete the Red River Floodway expansion, as, of course, the Red River Floodway is such an integral part and, of course, lies close to the heart of Seine River.

We are very pleased as well to see \$618 million in tax savings for Manitoba families and businesses occurring since 1999. This is a very important step forward once again in Budget '06, Mr. Speaker. This is something that is important to the families and the businesspeople in the constituency of Seine River, and it once again shows our party's commitment to ensuring that we have a balanced and fair budget here in Manitoba.

I think it is very important to note that Budget 2006 in Manitoba—we have seen personal income taxes reduced by \$291 million since 1999. We have seen property taxes by \$181 million be reduced and business taxes by \$146 million, Mr. Speaker, when we compare it to 1999. These are the kinds of numbers that one might associate with or at least an image that another party tries to portray themselves. This is a strong NDP government, a strong NDP



budget, and we are very, very proud of these accomplishments.

We have eliminated the residential education support levy, saving Manitobans \$34 million just this year, Mr. Speaker. This is the kind of budget that people can get excited about. This is the kind of budget that people want to embrace. It is about the health of our children; it is about balanced and fair tax savings; it is about ensuring that we are investing in the future of our young people by providing resources for university education, for ensuring that we have as much opportunity for our young people as possible.

I could go on for some time, would that I had the time. I just know that members opposite are going to get as excited as I am about Budget '06. I know they will not be able to contain themselves from standing to their feet and—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 14 minutes remaining.

The time being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 2, 2006

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Driedger	1765
Struthers	1770
Penner	1774
Dewar	1778
Rocan	1781
Oswald	1785