

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

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

*Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable George Hickes  
Speaker*

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
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 Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
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**

**Wednesday, May 3, 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 that 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 T.J. Burnett, Maureen Houston, Betty Dawson 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.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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.

Signed by Carly Harasymchuk, Leyna Macovichuk, Garret Klos and many others.

\* (13:35)

**Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale):** Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to present the petition on behalf of the Member for Minnedosa.

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

#### **Grandparents' Access to Grandchildren**

**Mr. Reimer:** Mr. Speaker, these are the reasons for this petition:

It is important to recognize and respect the special relationship that exists between grandparents and grandchildren.

Maintaining an existing, healthy relationship between a grandparent and a grandchild is in the best interest of the child. Grandparents play a critical role in the social and emotional development of their grandchildren. This relationship is vital to promote the intergenerational exchange of culture and heritage, fostering a well-rounded self-identity for the child.

In the event of divorce, death of a parent or other life-changing incident, a relationship can be severed without consent of the grandparent or grandchildren. It should be a priority of the provincial government to provide grandparents with the means to obtain reasonable access to their grandchildren.

Therefore we petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider amending legislation to improve the process by which grandparents can obtain reasonable access to their grandchildren.

This is signed by Cherokee Mendrikis, Lori McMillan, Cal Frost and many, many others.

#### **Morris-Macdonald School Division**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The RCMP investigation of allegations of criminal activity in the former Morris-Macdonald School Division has been completed and has found no evidence to substantiate criminal charges.

In the wake of the Auditor General's 2001 report, the provincial government fired the board of trustees of the former Morris-Macdonald School Division. As a result, residents were without an elected board for nearly a year.

The RCMP investigation and the firing of the board have irreparably tarnished the reputations of many citizens in the former Morris-Macdonald School Division.

When the provincial government insisted that the school division reimburse the Province for the overpayment of funds, the government-appointed trustee of the school division increased local ratepayers' school taxes by 28 percent to be implemented each year for four consecutive years.

This action imposed a significant burden on farmers and other faultless citizens in the former Morris-Macdonald School Division. To date, \$1.4 million have been paid out of the citizens' pockets for actions that, as the RCMP have recently acknowledged, were not criminal in nature.

Residents of the former Morris-Macdonald School Division are angered and frustrated by the provincial government's lack of acknowledgement of its mistake, refusal to apologize to those involved and failure to reimburse the additional tax dollars that blameless citizens have been forced to pay.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To strongly urge the provincial government to consider apologizing to citizens of the former Morris-Macdonald School Division for firing the school board, launching a criminal investigation and tarnishing their reputation.

To request that the provincial government consider reimbursing blameless Morris-Macdonald citizens who have paid the Province \$1.4 million in additional school taxes over the last three years.

This is signed by Scott Dunn, Veronica Dunn, D. Pollhammer and many, many others.

\* (13:40)

### **Crocus Investment Fund**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, a 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.

Signed by David Lumgair, A. Smirl, C. Allen 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 loge to my right where we have with us Levi Barnabas who is an MLA in the territory of Nunavut. Also we have Steve Mapsalak who is an MLA for Nunavut, and also he is my cousin.

*[Inuktitut was spoken]*

In other words, I said, I welcome them on behalf of all honourable members.

Also in the public gallery we have a former page, Amos Wiebe. I would like to welcome you here today.

We also have seated in the public gallery from Steinbach Christian High School 36 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Curt Plett. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Also in the public gallery we have from Minitonas Middle Years School 31 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Mel Lausman. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk).

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

### **Point of Order**

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order or a matter of privilege?

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** On a point of order.

**Mr. Derkach:** Mr. Speaker, I would like the House to know that Mr. Levi Barnabas was the first Speaker of the territory of Nunavut when, in fact, we were able to visit with them on the day that his government was sworn in.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Assembly, and it certainly was a historic day that we were able to be with their government on that first day and with his premier on that first day. I just want to welcome Mr. Barnabas to our Legislature on behalf of our caucus, but also extend our sympathies on the loss of the Speaker of the Legislature of Nunavut, who was Mr. Nutarak. I hope that message is conveyed to not only the Legislature but to the people of Nunavut. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for River Heights, on the same point of order.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** On the same point of order. I just want to welcome our guests from Nunavut and wish them well in the future.

**Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism):** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the same point of order, I, too, would like to extend sincere condolences to our friends from Nunavut, our brothers from the northern part of our country, and, through them, extend to the family of the late Speaker our sincere condolences on behalf of your friends here in the province of Manitoba.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised, well, it is not a point of order, but I thank all honourable members for their comments on behalf of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Federal Taxation Reduction Strategy

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we saw a very family-friendly budget brought down in the federal government. We saw a \$1,200 child day-care benefit for those who have children under six years of age. Apparently there is some ambiguity or some confusion about how the Premier intends to treat this within this province. At 7 a.m. it seemed that perhaps he was prepared to tax this benefit back and by 9 a.m., he decided that would not be likely.

But, I am wondering if he was, in fact, deciding not to tax it or has he got another means by which he would be clawing back this benefit?

\* (13:45)

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Well, Mr. Speaker, there may be some confusion because I believe some federal officials were talking about no taxing of the benefit and others in the budget documents clearly state that this is a taxable income under the federal government's budget.

Mr. Speaker, we will not be clawing it back. We are not the party of clawback, members opposite are.

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, now that we have that resounding commitment from the Premier, Mr. Speaker, there is another area that may well be a grey area for the Premier, and that is the \$1,000 grant for people who are involved in apprenticeship programs. The Premier, you know, he is Prime Minister Harper's new best friend, I believe, because he keeps saying that there are interesting parallels with his own government.

So I would ask that the Premier might identify what his final decision will be on whether or not this will be taxable in his regime.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, many of the items under \$3,000 for students are non-taxable.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable Member for Ste. Rose has the floor.

**Mr. Cummings:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier, unfortunately, has a way of shading his remarks so I will be quite happy to let him defend his comments.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said also that the Conservative tax cuts complement those that his government have brought in. Well, I do not see how it is very complementary when the federal tax saving for an elderly couple on \$30,000 worth of income, and that is a pretty modest income, they will get a \$330-saving by the changes that were introduced yesterday and his government will save them \$22. Where is the parallel?

**Mr. Doer:** I know the members opposite have not considered in their calculation the increase in tax in the middle-income tax bracket proposed by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, he will not find any members on this side increasing any tax.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Secondly, Mr. Speaker, you will see the elimination of the second tax on residential homeowners, the ESL of \$34 million. I am sure the member opposite did not calculate that in his question.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the small business tax now has been reduced by the federal government from 12 percent to 11.5 percent, and the threshold over three years is going up to \$400,000. We actually raised the threshold to \$400,000 three years ago, and we are lowering the small business tax from 4.5 percent to 3 percent. So our small business tax is 3 percent; their Tory small business tax is going down to 11.5 percent.

So I would point out that because we have made progress every year, that is why we have done so well. I would also point out that there is no shading with members opposite on children's benefits. They clawed back \$19 million from the lowest-income children in Manitoba. We did not claw it back. We reinstated that money, and we will not claw back this benefit for low-income Manitoba families.

\* (13:50)

#### Provincial Taxation Reduction Strategy

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, the way this government increases taxes is through the sneaky, backdoor way.

Our Conservative federal Finance Minister has implemented massive federal tax reductions in yesterday's budget because he believes that Canada has to be tax competitive with the rest of the world. In Manitoba, our NDP Finance Minister implements meagre tax reductions because he believes that Manitoba does not need to be tax competitive with the rest of Canada. That is the difference between a Conservative government and an NDP government.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why does he refuse to make Manitoba tax competitive with the rest of Canada?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, let us just do some comparisons. In '06, the general corporate tax rate that the federal government has is over 22 percent; ours is 14.5 percent. The first bracket in the federal government has been raised from 15 to 15.25; ours is 10.9. The second bracket is 22 percent; ours is 13.5. The third bracket is 26 percent; ours is 17.4. They have a fourth bracket of 29 percent and we have nothing there. They are higher. That is your government. Ours is more cost effective.

**Mr. Hawranik:** Mr. Speaker, if the Finance Minister wants to make proper comparisons, the federal government has a personal deduction a thousand dollars higher than Manitoba, and if we did that in Manitoba we would take 68,000 more Manitobans—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Hawranik:** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative federal Finance Minister has presented a budget with twice as much tax relief for Canadians as new spending. Let us compare our NDP government. This Finance Minister has presented a budget with eight times more new spending than tax relief. What is the difference? A Conservative government believes you know how to spend your own money better than government does. This NDP government believes that government knows how to spend our money better than we can.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why does he believe that he can spend Manitobans' money better than we can?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, it was just yesterday in this House that virtually every question from members opposite was asking why we are not spending more on health care. It is the members

opposite who seem to have very specific ideas. The members opposite have a huge wish list of things they want to spend money on until they come to the next day when they want tax reductions. I am sure by tomorrow we will be back into spending priorities for the members opposite.

The facts are this: The federal small business tax rate goes from 12 percent to 11 percent. We are already at 4.5 percent; we are going to 3. Their threshold goes to \$400,000. We have been there for three years. Who is more competitive? The facts are clear.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Hawranik:** Mr. Speaker, our only wish list is that this government spend with some results. That is our only wish list.

Our Conservative federal Finance Minister presented a budget which provides relief for families. A two-earner family of four earning \$60,000 with two children and one child under the age of six years is given \$981 in tax reductions and savings. That is \$981 more in their pockets. In contrast, our NDP Finance Minister just presented a budget that will offer that very same family a total of \$44 in tax relief, a whopping \$981 from the federal government and a meagre \$44 from this NDP government.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: When will he offer meaningful tax reductions for Manitoba families?

\*(13:55)

**Mr. Selinger:** It is amusing that the member opposite is defending an increase in the lower tax bracket in the federal budget. He seems to be comfortable with that. I know if I would have done that he would have been having conniptions for sure.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite says there is no value for the money in the money we are spending. Well, I can tell you that the members of his constituency appreciate the new school we built out there. I can tell the member opposite that his constituents appreciate the health care spending that we put out there. I can tell you also that the members of his constituency, the citizens of his constituency, know that he voted against all those things which are making a meaningful difference in the lives of those citizens.

### Health Care System Wait List Guarantees

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, on the one hand the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) likes to refer to the Stephen Harper Conservatives as, and I quote, out of touch with mainstream Canadians. On the other hand, the Premier (Mr. Doer) likes to refer to Stephen Harper, our Conservative Prime Minister, as his good friend. Which is it? Which hat are they wearing today? Is it cozy up to Harper day or is it bash Harper day?

Patients in Winnipeg are waiting 44 weeks for hip and knee surgery while the national benchmark is 26 weeks. The benchmark for cataract surgery is 16 weeks, but we know a patient who is waiting upwards of 44 weeks. When will this Minister of Health meet the benchmarks set nationally? Join with the Prime Minister and guarantee Manitobans waiting in pain that he will live up to those commitments.

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I notice that this is federal budget day in the provincial House, and I just remind the member opposite that there was not one nickel of money for health care in the federal budget. So, if they are very concerned about health and health spending, they might speak to their federal minister and say where was the money for Infoway? Where was the money for increased information technology so we can manage our system more effectively?

I would also tell the member opposite through you, Mr. Speaker, that this year we will do approximately 1,000 more hips and knees than we did last year. We are making great progress in regard to the hips and knees issue, and you will see those wait lists start to come down very quickly.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Mr. Speaker, there actually is more money for cancer care in the budget, and I hope this minister steps up to the plate and starts offering those cancer drugs that people are waiting in pain for in Manitoba. Shame on him.

First, the NDP says the Harper Conservatives are out of touch with Canadians, then the Premier calls Stephen Harper his good friend. You know, Mr. Speaker, they cannot have it both ways. They are either for wait list guarantees or they are against them. It is a sad day for Manitobans waiting in pain when this minister stands before them and tells them that he is not willing to commit to wait list guarantees.

Manitobans wants a guarantee, Mr. Speaker. Why is this Minister of Health not prepared to give it to them?

**Mr. Sale:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have some very good friends who are somewhat out of touch so I do not think those two things are incompatible at all. It is quite possible to be out of touch with reality and still have a good friend. I do not see those things as a problem whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, we are moving in a very significant way towards meeting the benchmark. Like some of the members opposite are out of touch, but they are still my friends.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Just to remind members, I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers in case there is a breach of a rule or departure from our practices.

**Mr. Sale:** Mr. Speaker, we set a target this year for doing approximately 800 more hips and knees. We have done more than 110 percent of that target, including procedures being done in Boundary Trails hospital where I was just able to be there in announcing the placement of a new MRI in that hospital.

We are making great progress, and we will continue to make great progress due to the hard work of our doctors and nurses, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** He is right about one thing, he has about 33 friends across the way that are perhaps out of touch with reality.

Mr. Speaker, let us not forget—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** And speaking of out of touch, Mr. Speaker, let us not forget this same Premier who, seven years ago misled Manitobans just to get elected, told them that if elected he would end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. Well, here we are seven years later and \$1.5 billion later and hallway medicine is alive and well in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, why are they saving hallway medicine instead of saving patients' lives? Why will he not commit to a wait list guarantee for the sake of patients in Manitoba who continue to wait in pain?

\*(14:00)



**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I know members opposite believe in the divine right of the Conservatives to be elected forever, but, you know, it is a funny thing in democracy. In 1999, the people did have the wisdom to get rid of the dismal years of the Conservative government and replace the pessimistic, negative nabobs who were in government with a positive, optimistic can-do team.

You are able to say there are 33 friends of this government because we actually increased the number of members in government in 2003 because we are positive and a can-do government, and we are going to do it again whenever the Premier calls the next election.

### **Winnipeg Police Service Officer Shortage**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** We applaud the federal Conservative government for walking the walk when it comes to safety and not just talking the talk like this NDP government does.

The federal government has taken real steps in putting in place a training and recruitment strategy for 1,000 new RCMP officers which will help Manitoba communities. But, in the city of Winnipeg, the problem of an officer shortage continues and will likely worsen.

Can the Minister of Justice confirm today that in Winnipeg every uniform patrol division is currently short 10 percent of its officer complement, Mr. Speaker?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I note that the federal government committed new dollars for police and prosecutions, which we commend them for, but if you look at the first fiscal year, this year, that works out on a per capita basis to 1.3 million in new funding. We are pleased that as a provincial government we have committed \$8 million in new funding for this province.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I gather the minister then is confirming that they are 10 percent short in every uniform patrol division here in Winnipeg.

We also learned today that the class of Winnipeg police officers who are currently in training has only been 30 people. It was supposed to be 48 people. The missing eight trainees are part of the new police officers that were promised in the NDP budget and the Throne Speech; 30 real officers, 18 NDP phantom officers. With the welcomed commitment

by the federal government for 1,000 new RCMP officers, this is only going to get worse.

Why are there 18 missing officers in the training program today, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, earlier the Member for Steinbach, he sounds like a councillor for Winnipeg actually, but the Member for Steinbach, as I recall—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I recall hearing the Member for Steinbach question the veracity of the mayor and chief of police earlier in some questions in this House which I think is regrettable.

But, Mr. Speaker, his questions about the management of Winnipeg Police Service is an issue, of course. That is the responsibility of a municipal government, the City of Winnipeg, and it has been working in co-operation with that municipal government that we were able to fund directly many, many positions. Indeed, on top of 46 directly funded provincial positions, there is going to be a permanent Clean Sweep Operation and that is because of this government's commitment to public safety.

**Mr. Goertzen:** It is passing strange because when the Minister of Justice wanted to announce the expansion of new officers, he did not mind standing up and putting out a press release saying that it was his responsibility. When he wanted to announce these phantom officers, he did not mind standing at a podium and making that announcement saying, it is my responsibility. Now, when they are 18 short in the training program, he says, oh, I am sorry, it is not my responsibility. Well, he cannot have it both ways. He can try to take credit one day and not try to take blame the next day.

Why are there 18 officers short in the training program when he said they would be in place, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, in the best of my recollection, the member opposite voted against the funding of 23 officers in the last budget. I take it from what he is saying that he will support this budget because of its commitment, the policing, on a priority basis like never seen in the history of this province. I also take it from the member's question that he is actually suggesting that the Province take over the management of the City of Winnipeg police services. He might want to talk to his friends at City

Hall before he starts raising the spectre of such an admission.

### **Highway Infrastructure Federal Funding**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government has realized highways are a priority in this country. In yesterday's budget the federal Conservative government committed over \$100 million to improve Manitoba's infrastructure needs. Previously the City of Winnipeg doubled its budget for street maintenance. The NDP's commitment to highway improvements is insignificant by comparison.

Will the minister today commit that these intended federal funds will be committed to his already announced previous funding to build safer roads in Manitoba?

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services):** I am pleased to see the federal government has finally seen the light in this country and is looking forward to putting forward a vision with regard to transportation.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, last year the opposition voted against a \$15-million increase in the transportation budget. This year we have increased the transportation budget by \$29 million. I am certainly looking forward to see how they are going to vote on a \$29-million increase to the transportation budget in this province.

**Mr. Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are waiting for this minister to see the light. Yesterday's federal commitment to Manitoba's infrastructure is over \$100 million. To date, despite the minister's protestations, Manitoba's crumbling, unsafe road network continues to deteriorate on a massive scale.

Will the minister commit today that this newly committed federal cash will be used to improve Manitoba's roads and not just add it to his lapsed funding total of the past years, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Lemieux:** I am glad to see the conversion from members opposite. The Member for Arthur-Virden should either jump on the paving wagon or get out of the road because we are paving Highway No. 1 to the Saskatchewan border. Also, Mr. Speaker, in the constituency of Morris and the constituency of Emerson, we are going to improve Highway 75. Move your garden tractor, move your Lexus, we are coming through. We are fixing 75.

**Mr. Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans can well see how the minister protests too much. He does not even know where the road wagon is. There are hundreds of miles of roads in Manitoba that need upgrading and safety, that need economic development for safety in Manitoba for the travelling public.

This minister, even in spite of yesterday's new financial commitment from the federal government, has not committed that he will spend these funds over and above his previously announced funding in Manitoba. He has not assured Manitobans that these funds will not be lapsed. That is his track record on road building in Manitoba.

Will he commit today that these funds will not be lapsed?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, we are pleased that the federal government has allocated some money for the highways in Canada. We would note that the federal government collects \$165 million and rising in gasoline tax, and contributes very little back. We are pleased there was a down payment to municipalities made by the previous government which is maintained in this budget, but it will be less than \$10 million in a budget of, we are spending well over 10 times that amount if not much more. So, this is important, but I believe that all members should unite and call on the national government to return every cent collected in gas tax back to highways here in Manitoba.

\*(14:10)

### **CAIS Program Amendments-Minister's Support**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government has announced a commitment of \$1.5 billion in direct aid to our producers. Farmers have long looked to governments in keeping their industry competitive. By comparison, Manitoba's NDP government has managed economic crisis with increased taxes on farmers through programs like the mandatory cattle checkoff.

Mr. Speaker, given the support of the federal government in this federal budget, can the Minister of Agriculture assure Manitoba farmers that her government will do its part in supporting changes to agriculture to the CAIS program?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Of course, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we will.

**Mr. Eichler:** Her actions speak louder than words, Mr. Speaker. I hope she will honour that.

The federal government also announced yesterday that it will commit to changing the CAIS program to make it more responsive to the needs of farmers. What the NDP has done for farmers of Manitoba, they refused to support improvements to the CAIS program, introducing loan programs that will eat up the federal contributions while further increasing farmers' debt loads.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture now accept changes to the CAIS program being put forward and finally work with farmers and not against them?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, I would encourage the member opposite to make a phone call and get his facts right. I would encourage him to read the federal-provincial press release that came out of the federal-provincial meeting, where federal and provincial governments said they were going to work together to change CAIS to meet the needs of the producers. The recommendations that came out from provincial governments, Mr. Speaker, recommendations that came from Kananaskis before the Conservatives were in power, are some of the things that were announced in yesterday's federal budget. We look forward to the federal Conservative government implementing some of it.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, the federal budget is bringing forward increased funding for investment and new agricultural opportunities and value added. It is also providing for disaster assistance and green cover programs. Meanwhile, the NDP government continues to provide more regulatory hurdles and administrative costs.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the federal budget, can the minister assure Manitoba farmers they will not be faced with more government-imposed costs to their operations?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Speaker, the changes that the federal minister proposed yesterday on inventory evaluations is a change that was recommended and proposed by provincial governments along with the federal government. The CAIS Negative Margins Program is one that was proposed and the plan was put in place at Kananaskis. It is not something new that is happening here.

The creation of a federal disaster assistance program and cover crop program are programs that Manitoba suggested and we talked about to the

federal government. So, of course, Mr. Speaker, these are important programs. We want to see them implemented, and we look forward to getting more details from the federal government on how they will do it.

### Federal Budget Impact on Manitoba

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable Member for River Heights has the floor.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The Premier has said he is generally satisfied with the budget of yesterday from the federal government, and the minister of highways is so enthusiastic that he says the Conservatives have seen the light.

For the record, Mr. Speaker, the budget did not mention Lake Winnipeg, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights or the floodway. The budget effectively cancels the Kelowna Accord, drastically cuts environmental and Kyoto funding, cuts funding for new child care spaces and omits any mention of an east-west power grid. The budget also raises taxes for those who are less well off.

My question is to the Premier: Can the Premier tell us why he is generally satisfied with a budget like this?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Conservatives being absolute surrogates for the budget and the Liberals being, like Pavlov's dog, opposed to the budget; the NDP government is the only one balanced enough to say what is positive in the budget and what is lacking in the budget.

We have opposed the fact that the member opposite did not raise in his first question yesterday the Kelowna Accord. We believe a long-term investment in Canada's First Nations and Canada's Aboriginal people is absolutely essential. We have said it from the beginning. We said it again yesterday when the member excluded Aboriginal people from his first question on the budget.

But, we also recognize fitness tax credits, seniors tax credits. Some other provisions in the budget are positive. We are balancers. Some things we like in the budget, we said so; and areas where they are deficient, we also said so. We are not going to be extreme in one way in doing the Hallelujah chorus, and we are not going to be extreme in the other way by just being negative. We are going to be balanced

about what has to be done for this country, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier is saying once again that he is supportive, generally positive of this budget, a budget, I would note that his federal leader, Jack Layton, calls a betrayal of working families.

There are many Manitobans today who want to know why the Premier is not standing up for working people and standing up for Manitoba. There is no mention of Lake Winnipeg. There is no mention of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. There is a rise in taxes for those who are less well off. Why is the Premier continuing to stand up and support such a budget?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the health care cut made by the member opposite when he was in Cabinet was the equivalent—*[interjection]* He has been in the federal Cabinet. It was the equivalent of closing down every hospital in rural and northern Manitoba. The Liberals have a record. That member has a record.

We have already stated that we are opposed to the deletion of the Kelowna Accord, and we have already said that items like fitness programs for children we would support. There are still 11 months to deal with the child care spaces issue. We again need no lecture from the member opposite who did not put one child care space in Manitoba when he was in Cabinet.

In terms of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the federal government had supported the \$100 million commitment for capital, Mr. Speaker, but the gap on the operating amount is still being discussed with the committee and with the national government. There is no conclusion to that yet, but we believe strongly that that museum should be located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. It should have both capital funding and operating funding which was not announced by the previous government.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I am proud of a lot of things that we did which were very positive for Manitoba and we are ready to stand up for Manitobans.

What I would ask the Premier is: Many Manitobans want to know why the Premier is so satisfied with a budget that does so little to address many of the vital concerns of Manitobans; an east-west power grid, the lack of support, the cutting in

half of the support for environmental programs and greenhouse gas emissions, the cancelling of \$396 million for rural and Aboriginal broadband Internet access. All of these are important to Manitobans.

Why is the Premier not standing up strongly and speaking up for Manitobans? Why is he saying he is generally satisfied? Why are his ministers saying the Conservatives have seen the light?

**Mr. Doer:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, we have stated this latter day program that was developed in Kelowna after 13 years, that we support it. It is too bad it was in the fiscal statement released by the federal Liberal government in the fall of 2005. It is too bad we agreed to some \$500 million for health care funding for Aboriginal people, and it never flowed from the fall of 2004.

Mr. Speaker, there is \$2 billion in the budget for renewable energy. We will be proposing an east-west grid which was never built by the former Liberal government to be part of the vision of Canada today.

Lastly, we have said and committed in our budget that he is voting against, that we will put in and expand broadband to remote and Aboriginal communities in our budget over the next two years. Vote for the budget, or if you vote against it, you are voting for broadband for Aboriginal communities.

\*(14:20)

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Before recognizing the honourable member, I want to remind all honourable members that questions and answers should go through the Chair.

#### **Bicycle Safety Low-cost Helmets**

**Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry):** Mr. Speaker, our government has committed to a variety of initiatives that promote healthy living and injury prevention for all Manitobans. Individuals and families can be seen cycling through our Manitoba communities. For example, in Fort Garry, I am very proud to be hosting the second annual bike rodeo to promote safe cycling for the constituents.

Can the Minister of Healthy Living tell us what our government is doing to ensure that children in Manitoba and their families will have access to bike helmets this coming summer?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Healthy Living):** I am very pleased to announce that when

we travelled the province as an all-party entity to speak to Manitobans about their health and their children's health, we heard Manitobans say loud and clear that they wanted to ensure they had affordable helmets for their children to wear while riding their bikes.

I am happy to announce that we have instituted a program in school, Mr. Speaker, where children and their parents can order these helmets at a very affordable cost. Not only that, but these helmets will be delivered to the school before the end of this school year to ensure that our children in our beautiful spring weather, when it comes, will indeed have an opportunity to be fit, to be safe and to be healthy.

### **Advanced Education Apprenticeship Training**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, the federal Conservative government clearly realizes the importance of a trained and skilled workforce. The budget announced yesterday allows tax credits for employers who hire apprentices. Meanwhile, our students and youth are being turned away from apprenticeship programs in Manitoba.

What immediate action is this government taking to ensure that more young people will not flee our province in search of other opportunities?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, if the member would have listened carefully to the budget, we expanded the co-op education tax credit which will give a tax credit to employers over two years for hiring people in an area where they are training. If the members had not held up the budget for the last month and a half, we could have been on to that now and making progress.

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, we have learned that at least eight students have been turned away from the Heavy Duty Equipment Mechanic Apprenticeship Program at Assiniboine Community College. Clearly, there is a need for these individuals in this trade. This is another example of misdirection on the part of this government.

This federal government recognizes the value of apprenticeship programs. When will this government get its act together?

**Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** It certainly is a pleasure to have a question on advanced education and training. It gives me the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to

make the point that this government's funding to colleges this year is 5.8 percent, as well, to be followed by 5 percent and 5 percent.

It also gives me the opportunity to bring the members' attention to the College Expansion Initiative and make the point that, since this government has been in power, we have increased enrolment in colleges—[interjection] I beg your pardon? We have increased enrolment—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order or a matter of privilege?

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

### **Point of Order**

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

**Mr. Derkach:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, it appeared that the minister did not hear what I had asked her. I just asked her to answer the question and she said, "pardon me." So if she would get on with answering the question that was asked we would all appreciate it.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Usually the skins get thicker around here over the years, not thinner.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does not have a point of order.

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**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable minister, to continue her answer.

**Ms. McGifford:** Yes, just to complete my answer, Mr. Speaker, I was making the point that we have increased enrolment in our colleges by 33 percent. That includes great advances in apprenticeship. We have doubled, for example, the number of Aboriginal apprenticeships in this province and we have more work to do and we will be doing that work.

**Mr. Speaker:** The time for Oral Questions has expired.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Julianna Rhymer

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Miss Julianna Rhymer, a young woman from Morris who won the Canada Day Poster Challenge in Manitoba. The winners were announced April 10 by Canadian Heritage and Status of Women Minister Beverley Oda. Miss Rhymer finished first for the entire province of Manitoba.

I recall last year her poster, along with other students from the school at Morris Collegiate, were on display here at the Legislature, Mr. Speaker. That was part of the Community Newspaper Day celebration, and certainly set up by Mr. Doug Penner of the Morris *Scratching River Post* and *Crow Wing Warrior*. In that poster, she received fourth place. Of course, we are celebrating her first place win today.

The theme of this year's Canada Poster Challenge was images of Canada, and the contestants were invited to express themselves through an image of what Canada meant to them. To win such a heavily contested challenge is quite an accomplishment, and as the winner for Manitoba, Miss Rhymer will now have the opportunity to travel to Ottawa as the guest of Ms. Oda to celebrate Canada Day on Parliament Hill.

Along with the other provincial winners, Julianna will have her poster displayed in a Canadian Children's Museum from June to September, and from April 11 to May 5 the CBC will display the posters on their Web site to have people vote for the national winner, which will be announced this month.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Julianna Rhymer on her accomplishment and wish her the best of luck in Ottawa as she competes in the Canada Day Poster Challenge national championships. Thank you very much.

### Channel Development Corporation

**Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform all members of the recent success of Doug Eryou and Channel Development Corporation of Bakers Narrows, Manitoba. In December, the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission introduced 80 cases of Tansi, a delicious dry white wine made from birch sap, to the Manitoba market. Shortly after its introduction all the cases were sold out.

Doug Eryou started Channel Development Corporation in 2003 with the intention of creating sustainable natural resource products with the value-added component occurring in northern Manitoba. Tansi was self-funded and was a joint venture with DD Leobard Winery of Winnipeg. It was developed with the assistance of the Food Development Centre in Portage la Prairie.

Tansi is only the beginning of Channel Development Corporation's ambitious plans to create made-in-Manitoba products that will bring economic benefits to the North. They recently purchased a 33-litre steam distillation unit to investigate the potential of producing essential oils and hydrosols from the northern Manitoba boreal forest. They are currently experimenting with Labrador tea to harness its unique aroma and flavours in food products. They plan to introduce a red wine from northern berries. In the early planning stage is a northern winery and ecotourism operation featuring food and drink of the boreal forest. This would relocate the value-added components of their products from Winnipeg to Bakers Narrows.

\* (14:30)

I congratulate Channel Development Corporation on the success of Tansi. Their entrepreneurship and commitment to developing the northern economy are a credit to our province. Whenever a new quantity of the birch wine becomes available, I encourage Manitobans from across the province to pick up a bottle of Tansi and taste the flavours and natural goodness of the northern forest and in so doing bring economic development to the region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Bonnie and John Buhler

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** I am pleased to announce and excited to indicate to the House that we had another private-public partnership take place this morning within our health care system at Boundary Trails in the southern part of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I was delighted to be at this event together with the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) as they recognized the contributions of Bonnie and John Buhler for their contribution of \$1.5 million towards an MRI. They were given the mandate to raise the added \$1.5 million which would allow the Boundary Trails Health Centre to put the MRI in place. I think it is again an example of how we can work together with the community.

I want to thank the chair of the fundraising committee for specifically the MRI who was John Kuhl. He, together with his committee, went and raised the \$1.5 million within several months. Secondly, I want to also thank Ivadell Sigurdson for the work that she did. She is the chair of the foundation.

Mr. Speaker, it was wonderful to see the enthusiasm that this generated within our community. The way it appears, and if everything will be on schedule, within one year we should be able to open the MRI. The funding that is being given by Manitoba Health is the operation of this machine.

So, again, I want to thank those who were involved in garnering the money, collecting it from within the community and, again, John and Bonnie Buhler for instigating this event.

Mr. Speaker, from this event we went down to Tabor Home and had an opportunity to tour their facilities. Again, the minister had a first-hand opportunity to see how desperately we are in need of a new personal care facility within the area. The administration helped us tour the facility and, consequently, this gave us the opportunity to see the desperate need that they are in. I must indicate to you that there is a waiting list of people, and I want to thank you for this opportunity to bring these events to the attention of the House. Thank you.

#### **Selkirk Mental Health Centre**

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that construction site preparation is underway for the new Selkirk Mental Health Centre. This \$23-million investment is one of the three capital health projects that our government is undertaking. The other two projects, of course, are at the Brandon Hospital and the Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that the development of the centre is long overdue. Selkirk residents, of course, recall only too well that the previous Conservative government ignored the needs of the patients and their families for decades. Plans are underway to fast-track the construction of this new facility.

Mr. Speaker, the centre will be a major improvement over the old facility. It will feature a 30-bed acquired brain injury unit, a living room, quiet lounge, a central kitchen area, spiritual space and new space for occupational, physio and speech therapy. New programs will be on offer in the new

facility such as services for those with acquired brain injuries, a psycho-geriatric program and rehabilitation to assist individuals in returning to the community.

The redevelopment is expected to be completed by 2008. I want to thank the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), the former Minister of Health, the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak) and centre staff on partnering to provide a healthier, more enjoyable environment for staff, patients and their families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Federal Budget**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the federal budget which was delivered yesterday shows the direction that the Conservative Party is heading.

They have cut new funding for child care spaces, clearly not concerned that there will be enough spaces for people in Manitoba. They have essentially brought an end to the Kelowna Accord, an accord negotiated between the federal government and Aboriginal people in this country. This is a black mark on the Conservative government's approach toward Aboriginal people and their neglect in continuing through an accord that was duly signed.

The Conservative government dramatically reduces the funding for environmental programs and dramatically reduces funding for any efforts which would reduce greenhouse gases. It signals the approach that the Conservatives will take to the Kyoto Accord, that they have abandoned any objective of trying to achieve the goals of the Kyoto Accord within a reasonable time.

This Conservative government has increased taxes on those with low income. This is a rather curious move, but it clearly signals that the Conservatives know where their voters are, in the medium and upper incomes. They are not concerned about those with lower income, and they are not concerned about good public policy which would ensure that those with low incomes are well supported.

The budget abandons the approach to ensure we have strong innovation and research and development in our position to be the future. The budget has no mention of Lake Winnipeg, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the Canadian centre for public health, the floodway, many other things. It is a poor budget for Manitoba.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), in subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister for Healthy Living, who has 14 minutes remaining.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Healthy Living):** Although there is so much good news in this budget that I could speak about for some time to come, out of respect for the members of the House and their interest in speaking to this great budget, I will say that I have concluded my remarks.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Indeed, it is an honour to stand here and put a few things on the record in regard to the budget. There are some themes that came out loud and clear: the spend more, get less; spend more, get last. The provincial government continues to spend every dollar it receives. This year the Province will receive \$486 million in new revenue and will spend every penny.

Manitobans are not and should not be satisfied with last place, so why is this government? Manitobans are demanding better. When is this government going to deliver? This government has no long-term strategy to revitalizing Manitoba's economy. This government continues to spend billions of dollars with no accountability of where the money is going and what results it is getting. This government is tired, complacent and taking Manitobans for granted.

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

In respect to finance, debt, based on the province's own numbers, will 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 dollars in new long-term debt since it took power in 1999.

With respect to revenue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Province has now taken in \$2.57 billion in new revenue since 1999. This year the Province will take in \$8.651 billion in new revenue. This year alone we

will see a \$486-billion increase in provincial revenue. Of this year's revenue \$3 billion is coming from the federal government, or 35 percent of all revenue of the Province's budget comes from the federal Treasury. In 1999 federal transfers to the Province accounted for 28 percent of the revenue for the Province of Manitoba.

In expenditures, the Province is now spending \$2.6 billion more than it did in 1999, or 42.6 percent. This year the Province will spend \$8.68 billion, an increase of \$555 million over last year.

Personal income taxes: Manitoba has the highest personal income tax west of Québec for \$40,000 and \$60,000 single-earner families of four. Manitoba has the highest personal income tax west of Québec for a \$60,000 two-earner family of four. Manitoba has the highest personal income tax west of Québec for a \$75,000 two-earner family of five.

\* (14:40)

The Fiscal Stabilization Fund this year will see a \$69-million decrease in the balance of the rainy day fund. This is the second withdrawal the NDP has made in the last two years; \$123 million has been withdrawn over the last two years.

With respect to health care, the Budget '06 increases the health budget by \$217.6 million. Health budget accounts for 42 percent of Manitoba's total expenditure and is increasing at a rate that is not sustainable. The government continues to spend billions of dollars on health care with no accountability for where that money is going. This budget does not provide a long-term strategy for fixing health care in Manitoba. Simply putting more money into a system that is not accountable or transparent where the money is going and what results it is getting will not improve the situation. The Conference Board of Canada report on health care in January of 2006 ranked Manitoba dead last in terms of overall quality of the health care system access to diagnostic services and specialists.

Rural health care: This budget does little to address the health care needs of rural Manitoba. Eleven emergency rooms are currently closed throughout rural Manitoba, forcing patients to travel Manitoba highways to access health care. This budget offers no hope to rural Manitobans who are currently unable to access health care services close to home.

Interfacility ambulance transfers: This budget did not address the need for funding of interfacility



ambulance transfers. This government must stop offloading their failure to retain doctors in rural Manitoba on the backs of the patients.

CancerCare drugs: Budget '06 did not address the need of funding for drugs that can significantly prolong lives of cancer patients, many of which are funded by other Canadian provinces.

Budget '06 increased the Pharmacare deductible for the fifth straight year. This government continues to offload costs onto seniors and low-income Manitobans.

With respect to education, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget fails to eliminate education taxes off residential property and farmland. The Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) recently told the media that he has absolutely no problem with school boards raising property taxes this year. This attitude toward taxpayers is completely unacceptable and offensive. At a time when public school enrolments are dropping in many areas, this budget does nothing to encourage young people, families, to stay or move into our province.

Advanced education and training: This budget falls short in providing the universities with the operating grants they are requesting. Universities are still going to have to play catch-up. The University of Manitoba president said they are still going to have to fund the gap in the year coming up. Universities have been struggling under this NDP government every year since the year 2000, trying to balance their budgets in light of the tuition freeze and inadequate provincial funding. We want to see a clear plan for strategy on how this new funding will be rolled out, one that shows results instead of an ad hoc manner.

Also, we hope post-secondary education institutes are given autonomy, flexibility in terms of where the best use is of this funding. We would like to see a well-defined, accessible, result-based approach to post-secondary education skills and training. There are many partners, individuals, employers and businesses, communities, education and training institutes. The government's role is to facilitate, not assume, this partnership. The move to Assiniboine Community College, the former Brandon mental health institute site, is briefly referenced, but no specifics are given. We will be paying attention to the financial role the Province sees in the City of Brandon in addressing this issue.

With respect to justice, we made suggestions seven months ago for legislation providing parents the right place for their drug-addicted teens to detox facilities. We are glad to see the NDP has taken advantage of our plan and our suggestion. In order for this to be effective, there have to be adequate resources in place for detox facilities. This budget will not provide for those resources.

The budget does nothing to lighten the load for overburdened probation officers. In our action plan, Enough is Enough! Standing Up for Safe Communities, we promised to work for reduced average caseloads of probation officers as well as put in place a team of individuals to randomly check on high-risk gang offenders to ensure compliance with probation orders. Moreover, in the fall, we were told that statistics regarding probation breaches did not exist. It is impossible for government to keep tabs on how well probation works and how well court orders are being enforced if statistics are not kept.

This budget fails to address the issue of court backlogs. We have seen several examples, one as recently as December of 2005, since the NDP government, of criminal charges being stayed due to unacceptable court delays. Furthermore, if the accused is awaiting trial in the Remand Centre and if the accused can serve time in the Remand Centre, it is considered double time.

The announcement of new police officers is simply a re-announcement from the November Throne Speech. Furthermore, there is no plan in place to ensure that recruitment of officers is keeping pace with retirement.

The Hydro issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there needs to be a cost-benefit analysis as to whether Wuskwatim is economically viable when we keep hearing of the escalating costs. Furthermore, we never went before the Public Utilities Board, which determines muddies in the waters and the terms of costs.

The Finance Minister said we are not going to take a dividend from Manitoba Hydro. However, Bill 11 would effectively allow them to take a dividend from Manitoba Hydro.

The MLCC increased \$9 million in projected revenues from MLCC over last year. MPI transfers almost \$100 million to the Province annually in money collected for driver's licence and administration fees. With respect to the WCB, the amount of levy revenue transferred from the WCB to the

Department of Labour has increased from \$7 million last year to \$7.28 million in the year 2006.

With respect to Culture, Heritage and Tourism, spending is up \$1.2 million, 1.8 percent from last year. There is decreased tourism within the province of Manitoba and it cannot even manage one promotional campaign to rebrand Manitoba to a more attractive visit.

Government Services: Funding from the MDC is coming with this department, although funding for Child and Family Services for people with disabilities had increased over 8 percent from last year. EMO has increased approximately \$120,000. Family Services spending crossed the benchmark of a billion dollars, approximately a \$30-million increase from last year, almost a 5 percent increase in administration spending. Family Violence Prevention programs increased \$300 million, a significant amount over last year.

Concern about overspending programs without getting any results for Manitoba is in need. Funding an administrative function does not enhance the lives of vulnerable Manitobans or their families. Accountability for child welfare is the most important factor. Kids are falling through the cracks without appropriate care despite unprecedented levels of revenues.

In the transportation sector there is \$29 million of highway expenditures. That probably will not be enough to address the problems with respect to 75, never mind the rest of the province. We know that the highways within the province of Manitoba are crumbling and need to be addressed. We need to look outside the city boundaries in order to make sure those roads are addressed.

Manitobans are sick and tired of the roads they cannot drive on. There is likely more spring road restrictions, and earlier, because of the state of the roads, currently a \$7-billion deficit. A \$30-million addition is insignificant. This is according to Chris Lorenc from the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association.

The NDP cannot manage their finances when they are increasing funding without using all the funds from last year despite a lapse of between \$37 million and \$59 million into the general revenues.

Agriculture in rural Manitoba, this is a government that is years behind the times. The government is now talking about consulting with rural and northern Manitoba about ways to create

opportunities to increase economic development, jobs, slaughter capacity and value-added processing. This government should have been talking about ways to increase slaughter capacity three years ago when we brought it forward. They are almost too late. What they have done is institute a \$2 levy, a backdoor tax to be based on the farmers, and levy a loan guarantee for their loans that they are going to put forward on this increase in slaughter capacity.

\* (14:50)

This government is all talk and no action when it comes to providing a long-term economic strategy for the revitalization of rural Manitoba. This is a government that continues to ignore the plight of farm families and families in rural Manitoba. This government is now talking about providing more loans to our producers, programs that will only put our producers further into debt, something they do not need.

This budget is simply a re-announcement of previous commitments, including a further reduction of farmland school tax from 50 percent to 60 percent. Manitoba farmers continue to enhance their roles as environmental stewards and leaders.

The Province should be taking steps in developing plans to extend its riparian tax credit, further biodiesel fuel development and increase the number of wind farm projects.

The City of Winnipeg and Mayor Sam Katz applauded the NDP government for tossing \$10.4 million in new cash to various municipal projects, including a million dollars for street work, on top of a \$3.5-million hike in funding for Winnipeg Transit. We have to be happy with this, Katz said, also pointing to an already announced boost in casino revenue, recruiting more cops and \$3 million to help with land assessments. They have addressed some of our key issues, Mr. Katz went on to say.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the meetings that are going on with respect to the \$2 levy that is being proposed by the provincial government to increase slaughter capacity within the province of Manitoba, the Province increased loans to go out to slaughter plants in the last few years; those were not taken advantage of. The reasons for that are loud and clear. The slaughter plants do not want to increase more debt load. They do not want the provincial government meddling in their affairs, and that admission is coming very loud and clear.

They had an opportunity to move forward. They neglected to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is time to move on and get the job done. Thank you.

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** Indeed, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to the budget today. In fact, I am happy to see that the members opposite have finally come to their senses and stopped wasting the time of the Legislature and the money of the people of Manitoba by ringing the bells incessantly for no reason really whatsoever. So, with a change in leadership, maybe they are going to be improving their course of action here.

I do want to congratulate the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) on his accession to the throne, and once his transition period is over we hope to see more of him in here.

I do want to also acknowledge the former leader over there, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), who certainly did his best and was, in typically Tory fashion, treated most shabbily by members opposite, stabbed in the back as happens to so many Conservative leaders, most unfortunate for him. He had done relatively well, I thought, in achieving 20 seats in the last election when the people of Manitoba were quite ready to punish the members opposite. He held his own, and certainly, I think, deserved to run another election against us. But that was not to be. So I wish him well in his future endeavours.

I would like to address some of the issues of the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I would start with infrastructure, something that is near and dear to our hearts out in rural Manitoba. I would like to begin by acknowledging the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) for the \$29-million increase to the highways budget. This government in the years past, and into the future apparently, will be addressing the highways infrastructure deficit in our province. We are looking at work on Highway No. 1, on Highways 75, 59, and, of course, throughout the Interlake we are looking at work on Highway No. 6 and finishing off the Highway 68 project between Poplarfield and Eriksdale, which is absolutely critical to my region in terms of establishing east-west trade routes, something that members opposite never paid much attention to.

The Interlake was a true hinterland when it came to highways capital development. Since 1999, I am proud to say that has changed considerably. We are

awaiting Mr. Harper to step up to the plate. He certainly talked the talk in the election campaign.

I really hope that he does recognize that there is a place for the federal government when it comes to our highways. We have a number of highways that they could address. Some help with 75 or with the Trans Canada Highway would be greatly appreciated, and we would like some of that federal fuel tax back in our province, a hundred and sixty some million dollars a year taken out of here and shipped over to Ottawa. A percentage of that coming back would be most welcome.

This government has also stepped up to the plate on another major infrastructure front, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is drainage. We have doubled the budget this year. We have made incremental increases to this budget in the seven previous years, and this year, in recognition of the hard times that our farmers have experienced due to inclement weather, we have certainly stepped up to the plate and not just incrementally increased it but actually doubled the entire budget in contrast to what members opposite did while they were in office. It was exactly the opposite. Incremental decreases to the budget. Here the party that supposedly represents rural Manitoba, in their minds anyway, what did they do? Massive cuts to this critical infrastructure system instead of addressing it. This government is making that change.

I might suggest that Mr. Harper might also consider getting involved on that front as well. There was a time when national governments cared in this regard. I think back to the time when the Right Honourable Ed Schreyer was the premier of this province, and Pierre Elliott Trudeau was the prime minister. There were federal dollars that came into this province to address drainage needs. I know that because a lot of the drains dug in the Interlake were dug under the old FRED Program. That put in place a lot of the main trunk lines that so greatly improved agriculture in our province.

Leadership of men like Mr. Schreyer and Mr. Trudeau is sadly lacking in members opposite, and we really do hope that Mr. Harper will make a change in that regard and step up and try and help farmers in rural western Manitoba. In that same vein, when it comes to the conservation district program, again a program put in place by Premier Schreyer back in the early 1970s, something that was neglected completely by members opposite in the decade that they were in office, we have picked up

the ball on this, and, since 1999 until now, we have virtually doubled the number of conservation districts in this province from nine to 17, the last one being in my region, the Interlake, the creation of the East Interlake Conservation District.

I always like to take the opportunity when I speak about conservation districts to call upon members on the west side of the Interlake to join us as well in conservation district programs. So I hope that they will consider that. The program adds a lot more capital resources into the system, and it also focusses on a more holistic, comprehensive approach to water management because it is not just drainage. The old saying, "Drain, drain, drain; put in the crops and pray for rain," I think, is appropriate. We have to look at more than just getting the water off the land. There are dry spells in this province as well as wet spells, so we have to look at storage of water. We have to look at retention. We have to look at staged release, and we also have to look at other areas as well.

\* (15:00)

There is a lot of potential for tourism in our province. It is something that this government certainly has put a lot of focus on, in particular ecotourism and, in this regard, we have to maintain our natural resources, our wild lands and so forth. There is a lot of that in the Interlake. We have probably in excess of 25 wildlife management areas in the Interlake, again, put in place when Mr. Schreyer was the premier. It is a treasured resource in our region and we want to maintain that, and proper, well-thought-out water management is a major component of that.

In terms of infrastructure, I think of our farming community and the fact that, when Filmon was the premier here, the old mentality that we were the hewers of wood and carriers of water was the way they did business. We on this side of the House think differently. We want to stop just being producers of primary products. We want to start moving toward processing and so forth, and I think in terms of our clean energy initiatives as something that will be a legacy of our government.

I was a member of the biodiesel task force and I am pleased to see that we will be moving forward on this front. We have developed a lot of wind potential in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A 100-megawatt wind farm is now in place in St. Leon, and over the next decade we plan to increase that to 1,000 megawatts. The recent expansion of the

ethanol plant in Minnedosa to ramp up production to 130 million litres, another step in the right direction, and, of course, we are moving forward on the expansion of hydro as well, something that members opposite had no interest in, apparently. In fact, the only time that they expressed any interest was when they wanted to mothball some of the critical plants and I think back to Conawapa.

On the livestock front this government has certainly taken action as well. We have attracted OlyWest to our province, and if everything passes the Clean Environment Commission hearings, we will soon be processing a lot more hogs in this province instead of merely shipping them south to the United States where all the benefits of processing and secondary development are captured. I would like to take it a step further. Just recently the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) has created the Cattle Enhancement Council, and we will be looking at other methods of expanding slaughter capacity in terms of cattle in this province.

I just have to look over at members opposite and shake my head in disbelief because this is something that we should be moving forward on. We have gone through this crisis, and time and again we have asked members opposite to put aside their partisan politics and be a part of the solution instead of being a part of the problem, but, sadly, their baser instincts rose to the surface and now they are opposing the \$2 checkoff which will play such a vital role in expanding slaughter facilities in this province.

What was their approach, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What was their approach? They wanted the government to just build it, to just spend all the money and put a plan in place without any participation of the industry, which is in direct opposition to exactly what the industry has been telling us since the beginning of this crisis in May of 2003. They want to play a role. They want to own these facilities, not the government, but members opposite, in true Soviet style, want to go ahead with big state plants in direct contravention of their ideology, it would seem, but I guess when you are on the opposition bench you can propose practically anything. To move forward on the old Soviet-style state enterprises that the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) continues to make reference to just boggles the mind. It is the only way I can describe it.

We hope that they change their tune on this, that they start speaking in favour of producer-owned

slaughter facilities, and that they speak to their friends in the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association to try and get the message across to them as well, because we would rather work with groups such as the MCPA, and we are willing to join them in administering the collection of the checkoff. We know that members opposite have great influence over this organization, so I would hope for the sake of our producers, for the sake of our ranchers, for the sake of the cow-calf people in our province, that members opposite would put aside their partisan politics for once and be, as I said earlier, a part of the solution as opposed to typically being a part of the problem.

On the water front, that would segue into that, because, here again, we need a united front in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a critical problem that we are facing here with the diversion of water out of Devils Lake into the Red River, which will be a threat to the ecosystem of Manitoba here. Lake Winnipeg, of course, is within the borders of my constituency, virtually in its entirety. The quality of the water is an issue of great concern, not just to me, but to all members in my caucus as well as the people of the Interlake and the people of Manitoba in general. So we need a united front here again because if the Americans smell blood here, if they sense that there is division within this Chamber, then that just gives them even greater impetus to ignore international law, the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 and so forth.

So we have to remain united on this front and, once again, in typically Conservative style, members opposite have chosen politics over what is right for the people of Manitoba. To listen to the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), it is bizarre at times the way he can flip-flop back and forth in his positions. We saw that on the beef slaughter front, as well, where one day he was saying that we did not need enhanced slaughter capacity in our province and then the next day, of course, completely opposite. It just depends where they are at a particular time. Their positions change like the direction of the wind. The Member for Emerson, his endeavours to put misinformation on the record in this Chamber are deplorable to say the least. To suggest that we have not done everything in our power to prevent this diversion is very unfair to say the least.

I was in Washington myself a couple of weeks ago. The topic of the discussion was energy in the environment, and the staff at the embassy there said that Premier Doer was like the Energizer Bunny

when it came to the Devils Lake file. He has been to Washington literally dozens of times on this file and has done everything in his power to block this process, which, again, is the opposite of what they did while they were in office.

I know that, when I was preparing to run as the MLA in the Interlake, one of the questions I asked was about Lake Winnipeg and the quality of the water and the actions of Premier Filmon, and he was virtually silent on this file. His Conservative zeal to appease the Americans and bow down to them, this was something that he did not touch on hardly at all, and that has certainly changed since we have come to office.

\*(15:10)

For the Member for Emerson to suggest, for example, that there was no testing done, we know that there was a team of scientists that went out there. The water was—[interjection] Exactly, on that lake, they were definitely on the lake, and yet the Member for Emerson and his cohorts over there, it is just silly how they would even suggest that that never took place. But, obviously, it is not important to them. The quality of water in our province plays a distant second fiddle with members opposite. That is backed up by their record while they were in office and continues today on the opposition benches. The people of Manitoba are not fooled by this, which is why they are on the opposition benches, which is why they will, in all likelihood, remain there for some time to come.

Now, we are looking to add value in rural and northern Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we look at the whole province, not just the areas that vote for us, as did members opposite. In fact, rural Manitoba may have been the Sahara Desert as far as they were concerned. They paid very little attention to this region which is not the case with our government in office.

Again, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) has taken action on this front. She created a new committee called the Creating Opportunities committee, and I am honoured to be one of the four task force members. I would just like to take a moment to acknowledge the other members of the task force: the chair, Susan Proven; Gaye Lenderbeck; and Paul Gregory from Fisher Branch. These people have worked very hard over the last couple of months. We have toured across the province doing consultation which is something that we do a lot of. We believe in hearing

what people have to say and then acting on their recommendations. So we have had ample opportunity to hear what our constituents in rural and northern Manitoba have said, and very soon now we will be looking at acting on a number of their suggestions.

One of the things I hope that we move on is on the Aboriginal front. It is unfortunate, but there are very high unemployment rates in Aboriginal communities. This is something that I hope we will address in terms of education, vocational training and so forth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a lot more in this budget that I would like to comment on. For example, opportunities for youth is something that we have addressed as well. Of course, the 10 percent reduction and then tuition freeze for another budget year is remaining in place, and this dovetails well with the expansion of training positions in our province with the new Princess Street campus, for example, of the Red River community college.

We have made considerable movement on the taxation front, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again, I would refer to some of our actions in rural Manitoba. When members opposite were the government, what did they do? They increased the portioning on farmland, putting an even greater burden on the farmers in Manitoba. This government has done the opposite. Not only did we reduce the portioning, but in this budget cycle we have completed the phase-out of the education support levy, completely eliminated a tax, and have gone a long way, as well, on the special levy. We have put in place a rebate program and accelerated that rebate program. We went from 50 percent to 60 percent of education taxes that are collected on farmland that are now being rebated. So we recognize the difficulties that our farmers are in, and unlike members opposite we have stepped up to the plate and addressed that.

Now, members opposite on the opposition bench, they claimed that they would just eliminate all these taxes whatsoever. They have not really fleshed out how that would be effected, probably \$700 million, \$800 million, I believe, that they would have to scrape up somewhere. But, you know, it is easy to promise things like that but actually delivering on them is much more difficult.

But I do remember back in the last election, I think it was, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) may have let slip what their plans actually were going to be, and that was reducing the delivery of

services in education. It was going to be back to the three Rs basically. They would, instead, have a few select centres of excellence, no doubt in places like Steinbach or in good Conservative ridings, where education would be delivered at a higher level in comparison to other regions of the province. Again, I think of the Interlake because that really was the hinterland when these members opposite formed government, which is the reason why this seat has been held for over 40 years by the New Democratic Party.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion I want to once again take my hat off to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the Executive Council of the NDP government for putting forth, once again, a very good budget for the people of Manitoba, a budget that is balanced, not only under the Filmon balanced budget legislation, but also according to the generally accepted accounting principles as was recommended to us by the Auditor General. It is a budget that receives raves, not just here in Manitoba, but outside of our province as well, which is indicated by the continued high bond rating that we are getting by services such as Moody's Investors, the Dominion Bond Rating Service and so forth.

I know my colleagues want to speak on the budget as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I thank you for this opportunity.

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** I certainly welcome the opportunity to put a few words on the record today in regard to the 2006 budget that has been proposed by this NDP government.

Today is very special. We did see a government bring forward a budget yesterday, a Conservative federal budget that really speaks to the wishes of all Canadians, a very good family budget that all Canadians will find something of value in. I think it is an opportune time for us to really contrast what the NDP government has proposed in terms of their 2006 provincial budget.

I think when we review the 2006 budget it is clearly a budget of spend more, get less. It is something that Manitobans have become used to with this NDP government. They know the government can spend money, and to finance their habit they have to tax Manitobans more. So it is just a matter of spend more and get less in terms of services that Manitobans are finding out about. It really speaks about accountability to Manitobans. I think Manitobans recognize this type of budget that

is being brought forward, and they are demanding accountability on behalf of this government.

Before I get too far into my discussions, I do want to make a comment. It has been an interesting time for our party on this side of the House over the last couple of weeks. I do want to congratulate Stuart Murray for all the work he has done on behalf of our party and all Manitobans. I think for the accolades that have been brought forward over the last week, we recognize Stuart as a very honest, hardworking individual that has really put forth a lot of work on behalf of Manitobans. Certainly, I want to thank Stuart for all his hard work. He was certainly a good friend over the years, and I know he will be here for some more time, the Member for Kirkfield Park. I am happy to have the Member for Kirkfield Park join me in the back bench.

I do want to commend our new leader, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen). The Member for Fort Whyte has certainly made his mark, and I am sure he will continue to make his mark as the time goes forward. I heard nothing but accolades and good words from Manitobans in regard to our new leader. We are certainly on this side of the House looking forward to working with the Member for Fort Whyte in acting as our leader. I am sure you will see many good things from that member on behalf of all Manitobans.

It has also been a bit of a pleasure for me, not just to get to know our new leader, but also his family. His parents, Ralph and Leyah McFadyen, actually reside in the fine constituency of Turtle Mountain, and they actually reside in the town of Cartwright. So it has been a pleasure to get to know their family and certainly the roots that they have in the constituency of Turtle Mountain and, in particular, the community of Cartwright.

\* (15:20)

When I think of Cartwright, the community of Cartwright is facing a crisis in terms of their school. It was just found out and determined last week that they have a severe mould problem in the school. The section of the school that has been impacted has been an older building. It is about 55 years old and we found a serious mould problem there. The kids had to be actually physically moved to the other end of the building so the elementary kids from K to 6 are now in the school with the high school kids. So it has certainly been a very stressful situation for not only the kids there but the families of those kids and also the teaching staff. They have had to deal with this

very significant issue, and it has been very stressful and it is a real crisis in that particular community.

Clearly, the community needs to bring this issue forward with the minister, and I do want to commend the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) for allowing us the opportunity to discuss the situation with them on a very timely basis. We do appreciate that. I know the community appreciates that gesture.

So we are looking forward to having a positive discussion with the minister's office and the Public Schools Finance Board, so hopefully we can move this particular issue forward. I know it is a very serious issue there. Of course, we can get through the spring session with the school, but coming forward in September we are going to have to have some provisions and some options put forward for the community. So, as I say, it is a very important issue for the community of Cartwright and they do really value their school.

When we look at the big picture of education and we look, I guess, in particular at what really impacts Manitobans in the rural area, it is the tax structure and how we handle the taxes on property tax to pay for schools. So I think it is important that we have a look at how that process has been developed over the years. We on this side of the House obviously recognize there have to be changes in the structure of the property tax and how we fund education in Manitoba. I know that government has been slowly moving towards that, and we certainly hope that will progress. I know a Progressive Conservative government would certainly move forward and make that a real priority.

As you know, this government is tinkering with that, but, unfortunately, the way the system has developed, I know this government has come forward and said they are spending more and more money on education in Manitoba. The reality is—and I will use Prairie Spirit School Division which takes up a good portion of my constituency—with the combination of increase in assessment and the decrease in enrolment there, the way the provincial formula is based, they are actually receiving less money from the Province to fund education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is, of course, exactly opposite of what the government is saying. So what has happened in reality is, in the Prairie Spirit School Division they have had to increase their property taxes to the tune of about 5 percent. So what happens is the local ratepayers now are actually paid more money in education tax than they were before,

contrary to where this government thinks they are headed. So I think it is important to get the facts on the record. Clearly, the government needs some vision when it comes to how we fund education tax in Manitoba.

Another important issue for the people in Turtle Mountain, obviously, is health care, and I know 42 percent of our provincial budget goes into health care. I think what Manitobans are finding is again where we get that whole situation of we are spending more on health care, but in terms of services we are getting less. When you look at the latest report from the Conference Board of Canada, where did Manitoba rank? Dead last. Quite frankly, Manitobans do not want to be dead last when it comes to health care. I think it is time for this government to step up and actually be accountable to Manitobans about where they are investing their money and how they are investing money. It is time for Manitobans and this government to stop and have a look at how we are delivering the services to Manitobans in terms of health care.

We have a crisis in health care in rural Manitoba. My particular constituency has three emergency rooms right now closed. That is MacGregor, Cartwright and Crystal City. Those emergency rooms are closed. The emergency room in Wawanessa, which also services some of my constituency, has also closed. So there are four emergency rooms that are closed that should be there to serve my constituents.

I want to refer, and I will quote from a letter that I received from a chairman of the Rock Lake Health District, which covers Crystal City and Pilot Mound. I am going to quote here from the letter signed by the chairman of the board, Glen Wheeler. It says: We currently have three vacancies at Rock Lake Hospital for nursing staff. Thankfully, through the dedication and commitment of current staff and support from Rock Lake Foundation, we are able to provide quality patient care. Our problem is physician recruitment.

The letter goes on to say: On February 27, 2006, we were forced to close our emergency and acute care services as we did not have a doctor that was qualified under the rules under the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba. We have been actively recruiting a second doctor for several months and are faced with the same roadblocks of finding a practice-ready physician for our facility.

It goes on to say: Our citizens deserve better than this. The people that live south of Crystal City must travel at least an hour to access emergency services. The doctor in Crystal City is under pressure to see more and more patients and at the same time arrange for a clinical evaluation elsewhere under the supervision of another physician. We will not be able to take this pressure for much longer and she will be forced to leave as well. That would leave two doctors in the Swan Lake area to cover or all or part of five municipalities. That would include about 10,000 people. Our community is very frustrated, angry and very anxious and scared. That was a quote from a letter signed by Glen Wheeler, president of the Rock Lake Health District board.

I know that, when we raise the issue in Question Period, the government comes back and says, oh, there are more doctors practising in Manitoba. But we are asking, where are those doctors? Where are those doctors?

In regard to Crystal City, I want to raise an issue here, and this is a letter signed by the Manitoba Nurses' Union and also the CUPE local there, from the Crystal City area. Again, they are pointing out emergency services have been closed down: We know that our local board continues to actively recruit physicians, but Manitoba Health requirements makes the job very difficult.

They go on to say: We cannot idly sit by and watch our services disappear without a fight. We are in crisis, is what the letter says. This is signed on behalf of the unions that are trying to get something done in their local communities.

When we look at what we are doing in Manitoba here, we are paying almost \$10 million per day into health care and, quite frankly, we do not see a good delivery of health care services to Manitobans. We are talking about \$114 per second being consumed in health care. At the same time, we are seeing Pharmacare deductibles going up. We are seeing our residents being charged ambulance transfer fees. An example from northwestern Manitoba the other day, \$2,100 just for an ambulance transfer fee.

The other issue that has been very important to my constituents is the idea of wait lists. It is one call after another, in terms of people being backlogged on these wait lists. The knees and hips in particular are a very important concern. I think it is time for us to have a look at how we are delivering that health care dollar in Manitoba because it is a very, very important issue to all Manitobans.



Another important issue that keeps being brought forward by rural Manitobans is the idea of highways and roads throughout Manitoba. We have seen a commitment from the federal government to send some more money back to the province to deal with the issue. We certainly hope that will continue to be the case. I think the important thing for this government to recognize is that they will actually take that money and use it for road repairs in Manitoba. That is the important part.

I refer to Highway No. 2. If anyone happens to have an opportunity to take Highway No. 2 from Oak Bluff out to the western part of Manitoba, they will recognize that there is a tremendous need for repair of Highway No. 2. When you get to No. 5, if you are trying to get down to the lake, as the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) would be trying to accomplish, he will know that Highway No. 5 also needs a tremendous amount of work. Then he, too, will have to venture down Highway No. 23, which at times is almost impassable, not only on good days, but when things get really bad we have just a difficult time to get emergency vehicles down that particular stretch of highways. So there have been, certainly, a number of accidents directly caused by the state of those particular roads out there.

\* (15:30)

Another government road we have been talking about is Provincial Road 340, which runs south of Shilo. There is a gap in the hard surface of that particular road of 13 kilometres. It is a very strange thing where the government has paved one end and they have paved the other end, but for some reason they left 13 kilometres unpaved. It is a very important road for the communities there because obviously there are a lot more people working in Shilo now, and it is a fairly important economic area for the farm community as well. There is a provincial park located right on that road, so you would think the government of the day would spend a few dollars and finish the hard surfacing of that road so that Manitobans would have access to the newest provincial park in Manitoba. But we have not seen the government move forward on that. We do need a long-term vision when it comes to infrastructure in Manitoba, and I think it is important that we lay those plans out so Manitobans have a bit of a concept of where the government is headed in the long term.

One thing I do want to point out as a critic for Manitoba Public Insurance, we recognize that

Manitoba Public Insurance is collecting close to \$100 million out of the pockets of Manitobans, collected on behalf of Manitobans on their driver licence fees and their vehicle registration fees to the tune of up to \$99 per vehicle. So that \$100 million is getting turned back into general revenue and we have no idea why. We think that particular money that is collected from Manitobans—and Manitobans believe that that money is going back into the roads—should in fact be used to go back into the roads. So I think that is a very important issue that the government of the day should certainly have a look at.

The other issue which is very important to not only Turtle Mountain but all over rural Manitoba, and certainly impacts Winnipeg as well, is the whole agricultural issue and the crisis we are facing in agriculture. I was happy to see the federal Conservative government recognize the importance of agriculture, recognizing the crisis that agriculture is in, and they are prepared to put forward a billion-and-a-half-dollar investment in agriculture. Hopefully, that will translate to about \$150 million here in Manitoba, which, I hope, will spur on the economy and make things a little better. Hopefully, this will provide enough incentive to get some of our producers through the year.

A quote here is from the president of the Keystone Agricultural Producers, David Rolfe: Farmers are going from one crisis to another. This statement is backed up by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada where they say that the farm income forecast for 2006 indicates Manitoba's net cash income, and this includes program payments, will suffer a 67 percent drop in 2006, adding up to a \$194-million loss across the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this falls on the heels of four years in a row of declining revenue on behalf of Manitobans. So, when you put all those factors together, it is a very, very serious situation in rural Manitoba. We can see this by the number of farm sales that are coming up and certainly the number of auction sales that are coming out. Actually, trying to find some people to work the land is becoming a real issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, look at what kind of a crop you need to actually break even, because the farmers are now facing record-high input costs and at the same time they are facing record-low commodity prices. Just for example, red spring wheat, and this is the government's own guidelines for estimating crop reduction costs, the break-even yield for red spring

wheat is 47.3 bushels per acre; the probable average yield on hard red spring wheat in Manitoba, 37 bushels. You have to have a bumper crop to actually break even in Manitoba. Quite frankly, that is the crisis we are facing in Manitoba.

Let me give you an example. Manitoba Agriculture Services Corporation, the former Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation, their coverage is actually decreasing because of the weather conditions we had over the last year. The yields have been reduced so that the farmer actually has less coverage in terms of bushels per acre. Of course, we know where commodity prices are. The commodity prices are going down so, at the end of the day, the farmer is purchasing less coverage on his insurance. So the crop insurance package is not covering his cost of production. So that is why then, from there, producers looked to the CAIS program for answers, and we have always been told by the government that the CAIS program is the saviour. Well, in reality, the CAIS program is, quite frankly, not working.

I think the federal government recognizes that it is not working, and just tinkering with the program probably is not going to address it, so it is time that we took a really hard look at that particular program, have a look forward in how we are going to design a very effective program because, quite frankly, this program of CAIS is not predictable. It is not something producers can take to the bank. The whole process is flawed, and you could potentially be looking at up to a two-year time period before you get money back out of the program. It has proven to be a very ineffective insurance program so I think it is time we had a look at how we develop a real, plausible program throughout all of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are still feeling the fallout from the BSE crisis here in Manitoba. This government has provided more and more loans to Manitoba farmers, so, in fact, they are getting further and further in debt. This government has not allowed for slaughter capacity to increase in Manitoba. We were hoping there would be some direction come forward in that regard but, quite frankly we do not see that happening yet.

Again, the CAIS program does not work. The Keystone Agricultural Producers are saying the same thing. The CAIS program is flawed. It is time to have a look—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain has the floor. I cannot hear him.

**Mr. Cullen:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that. As I spelled out, there are very serious issues in agriculture, and the government of the day is now looking at imposing another two dollar tax, if you will, on the heads of cattle producers which we know will negatively impact the entire cattle business in Manitoba. We know that Manitoba cattle will be shipped outside of the province to be marketed, so it does not provide for any economic spinoff in Manitoba. It is just another way of this government imposing taxes on the backs of Manitobans.

We need a long-term vision for how agriculture is going to work and some of the economic development that can take place in Manitoba. We need a real will on behalf of this government to move those issues forward.

We need, and farmers are saying we need, an effective program. We do not want bailouts. We just want an effective insurance program that we think will work, and the government of the day has to be there to provide that sort of vision, that sort of hope for them so that they can be engaged in agriculture and be engaged in some kind of economic development. I think there is a lot of opportunity for that but, unfortunately, what we are seeing is more and more young people moving to greener pastures. They are looking for work out in Alberta and B.C. Not only are our young individuals leaving, but now we are finding even our older people, the 40- to 50-year-olds, are also leaving the province.

A lot of our agricultural producers have decided to turn it in, take the keys back to the banker and say, I have had enough; I am moving on. I can get a job out in Alberta, no headaches. That is what they are doing. Quite frankly, it is impacting all rural Manitobans.

At the same time as this goes on, we see the government bringing forward regulations, and I am thinking particularly of the water stewardship regulations and the water quality management zones. We all believe as Manitobans in clean water, but we have a different vision of how we get there compared to the NDP government. We believe there should be incentives. We should be working with our producers to make things happen. We do not believe in ruling by regulation and the hard hand of government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have tremendous environmental farm plans that have been brought forward, and producers are working with those federal environmental farm plans to be good stewards of the land. They are working with the federal government in bringing forward initiatives, and they are using some of that federal money to be good stewards and increase and enhance their own property.

\* (15:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we look at this government here and how they deal with water quality issues. We look at the issue that happened with the spillage of sewage into the Red River on behalf of the city of Winnipeg. Nothing was done. We had another example just lately. I think it was 9 million litres of raw sewage was dumped into the Red River from the University of Manitoba. Nothing was done to look after that issue. So we as Manitobans certainly have a lot of suspicion about what this government really means about having clean water in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do believe that there are opportunities for rural Manitoba. There are opportunities for growth. I look at the wind energy, for instance, as one example of potential opportunity for Manitobans. We are excited to have the one facility up and running in St. Leon. I think, now that we have expressions of interest put forward, the onus is now on the government to come up with some kind of proposal that will move this initiative forward. There is a lot of opportunity. We have billions of dollars of company money that wants to be invested in Manitoba. Quite frankly, if we do not move forward on this initiative this money will be leaving the province. So it is important that the government realize this and allow these companies to move forward in terms of development.

The other issue, too, is the biodiesel ethanol projects. We think there is tremendous opportunity there for value-added production in terms of economic development in rural Manitoba. We would hope that this government would take some kind of a lead role and get these facilities up and running. Again, there are opportunities there. We just cannot allow government to get in the road of these tremendous opportunities we have.

I look at another specific development proposal, and this is actually a company that will bring money to Manitobans. This particular proposal is a horse park outside of Brandon, Manitoba. A company was going to come together, bring \$16 million of

investment directly to Manitoba, to rural Manitoba where we need every asset we can get our hands on. What did this government do? This government turned their proposal down flat. This government refused to even meet with the proponents of the park. This proposal was brought forward two years ago. To my knowledge, one minister met with the proponents of this park in the last few weeks.

So we are just, quite frankly, asking why either the Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau) would not be involved, why the minister of gaming would not be involved in having direct discussions with the proponents as opposed to negotiating through the media. If we have a company coming to Manitoba that wants to invest \$16 million in a facility with a \$10-million economic spinoff, why would you not at least sit down and talk about the proposal? It is common sense. The community of Brandon says it is a no-brainer. The community of Brandon is behind this whole proposal. Why would the minister of gaming not sit down with the proponents and talk about it at least? At least talk about it.

We are not saying on this side of the House more VLTs. We are not saying more VLTs. We can say that this can be done with the redistribution of VLTs. *[interjection]* The MTS Centre, was it 40 or 50 new VLTs? The Canad Inn in Brandon got 40 new VLTs there out of that supposed redistribution. Why can we not at least sit down and talk about redistribution of VLTs?

This government is trying to single-handedly kill the horse race business in Manitoba. This government is misleading Manitobans by calling the facility a casino. Does this government consider the Assiniboia Downs, is that a casino? I ask the minister of gaming, does he consider Assiniboia Downs a casino? There is so much opportunity with over 5000 machines in Manitoba. If the minister of gaming would come to the table, meet with the proponents who are prepared to bring \$16 million to Manitoba, save an industry with a \$10-million economic spinoff, why would he not come to the table? *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The recording will be interrupted. *[interjection]* Your voice is louder than the one who is speaking.

**Mr. Cullen:** I would be happy to have the minister of gaming set up a meeting with the proponents any time at his leisure. *[interjection]* Well, I do not know if he knows his way to Brandon.

While I am talking about the minister of gaming who is also responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, we have had quite a dealing with EMO and the Disaster Financial Assistance program last year. I have tried to encourage the minister to have a look at a lot of changes that have to be undertaken on that particular program. I hope that he will really address those because there are a lot of things that are falling through the cracks. In particular, a lot of farmers are not being covered for the disaster they have faced, and there is a lot of the business community that has not had their issues addressed. So certainly that should be brought forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I realize that my time is short here. There are still a lot of other issues to talk about but I would be remiss if I did not talk about the debt of the province and where this government is taking us. We are now close to \$21 billion in total debt. We are paying interest on \$21 billion. It is hard for the government of the day to ignore that fact, but I think the other thing too, and it really boils down, this budget, to accountability. Manitobans have lost faith that this government is actually accountable to all Manitobans. We look at the scandalous action of this government over the last number of years, the latest scandal, obviously, the Crocus scandal. We have had the Hydra House and we have the Seven Oaks scandal coming forward. In the end the list is endless.

When you look at the Crocus Fund scandal in particular it is amazing to see the government has their fingerprints on all of these scandals. They are associated with the Workers Compensation Board, the Teachers' Retirement Fund, they talk about the Manitoba Property Fund, and they even wanted to get their hands on the public employees' funds. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen the other issue too is with whistle-blowers. You know this government is not handling whistle-blowers, people that bring forward suggestions, and they fire them.

I see my time is out. We are looking forward to having a public inquiry on the Crocus Fund. If the government of the day does not want to do that, let us call an election and clear the air. Thank you.

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to finally have the opportunity to speak on the budget, a budget that has been delayed by the members opposite for some time now. It is regrettable that when we have such important issues here they chose to play games and ring bells

and refuse to address the issues that are important to Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just before getting into the budget I want to talk about this flooding that just happened in southern Manitoba and the significant impacts that happened there. I want to recognize the staff of the various departments that have been involved and Emergency Measures for the work that they have been doing and the efficient way that they have been working. I want to say that I have seen this first-hand because it was not only southern Manitoba that was flooded but there was flooding in my constituency.

In my constituency we had the one community in Manitoba that had to be evacuated this year and that is the community of Red Deer Lake that had unprecedented levels. I want to recognize the community members who worked very hard for a week, and outsiders came in to help them to try to save the community, but in the end the water became too much for them and they had to be evacuated. Most of them are staying in Barrows. They are being very supported by that community. But I am pleased that, when the crisis arose, Emergency Measures came in, the various departments, whether it be Aboriginal and Northern Affairs or Conservation with their fire attack crews, the people came in and supported. There are a few other communities. There was flooding in Swan River. There is flooding at Indian Birch, but the Red Deer Lake community is the most significant one that has been impacted. I want to raise those comments and commend the people for the work that they have done.

\* (15:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have heard members opposite criticize this budget. I am not prepared to speak on it, but I would just like to take this opportunity to just put a few quotes on the record about what people in the public have said about this budget. Mr. Dave Angus, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce says: We are a little bit surprised in terms of some moves on capital tax and, of course, the elimination of the ESL is very impressive. But we do not hear members opposite talk about the elimination of the ESL. Jim Carr, Business Council of Manitoba: Competitiveness is now at the top of the government's agenda. That is a good thing and we congratulate them for that. Very interesting, members opposite do not quote that one. Toronto Dominion Financial Group: Tax incentives are front and centre in this budget.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you look at the comments that people outside of government have made, I would encourage members opposite, instead of being so negative on this budget, instead of delaying as they have—I am glad they are finally talking about it—I am encouraging members opposite to look at some of the good things that are in this budget. The good things in this budget are certainly significant.

Another quote: With regard to co-op education credits for graduates, that is really a great one. That will bring graduates back into the province and keep them here in the province; 5 percent of wages up to the maximum of \$2,500. That is from Evelyn Jacks, The Knowledge Bureau. She made that statement shortly after the budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget is built on three pillars: growing green, growing smart, healthy families, healthy communities; saving taxes for Manitoba families and Manitoba business; and balancing the budget. If you look at the record of the things that we have done in this budget, we have indeed moved forward on greening and growing the economy. We should all be very proud of the steps that we have taken.

I heard the opposition talking about the wind farms, the importance of biodiesels, the ethanol energy. Well, you know, members opposite never moved in any of those directions when they were in government. They never even thought of doing anything like looking for an alternate green energy. Members opposite never moved in those directions at all, but our government recognizes the importance of having green energy in this province and we have moved on it. I hope everyone gets a chance to travel to St. Leon and see those wind farms. It is inspiring to watch, to look, just using the air to create energy. Under this government, you will see many more wind farms established here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, biodiesel is another opportunity and one that we have moved forward on by reducing the tax on biodiesel that is produced, and that, too, has a tremendous amount of interest in rural Manitoba and will be a real economic driver.

The ethanol plant in Minnedosa is certainly significant, and we now hear the members opposite saying we had nothing to do with that plant coming here, but it is this government that is committed to alternate energies and greening our environment, and we will continue to do that.

The proposed Conawapa generation station is also going to be very important in the economy. It will be important for the revenues of this province, but it will have enormous impact in community economic development in northern communities that members opposite have always ignored. This is a government that is prepared to work with all sectors of the province, and certainly the development of the Conawapa dam has to move forward and will be a great opportunity for economic growth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hear people talking about opportunities for Manitoba's youth, and that is an area that is very important. It is my belief and the belief of this government that youth are the future of this province. Manitoba's growing economy does offer training and job opportunities for our youth, and this budget provides new funds and introduces new programs to help our youth reach those goals.

Just a few of those programs: A new three-year \$60-million fund being made to universities and colleges. This is the largest commitment in the history of Manitoba. This budget maintains a 10 percent tuition reduction for students while fully compensating universities and colleges for those reductions. New bursaries, new scholarships, the Graduate Scholarship and Hope Bursary programs are very good programs for young people and are being expanded and funded from the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Fund.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of these issues are very important. The investments, the recent announcement at Red River College for a new visual arts program, new programs to train people in the areas of new technology are the kinds of programs that you have to introduce to ensure that young people have these opportunities to take advantage of new kinds of work that are out there through computers, through technology. All of those are very, very important.

I heard the member opposite talking about water and the environment. I am very proud of the record that we have and the awards this province has received for the work in protecting the environment and high recognition. Who gave us that award? Where did that award come from? Remember that award we got? *[interjection]* Oh, yes, the member opposite asked, it was the international business magazine that recognized Manitoba and the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province for the work that we have done on the environment.

Of course, the members opposite are not always very interested. They talk the talk, but I have not

seen them walk the walk when it comes to delivering on protecting the environment and putting in those kinds of resources that are needed to ensure that we are in fact doing the right thing to protect our environment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to, of course, take a little bit of time to talk about the agriculture industry and the challenges that we are facing in this industry and there certainly are many of them. Low grain prices, high input costs are putting a tremendous amount of pressure on our producers. I want to wish all of our producers the very best. We all hope as farmers that we will have good weather for planting, the right amount of sunshine and moisture so that the crop will grow and, of course, a bountiful harvest. That is always the dream because farmers would much rather get their money from the marketplace than have to come to government for support.

The member opposite talks about the price of fuel. Indeed, that is the other challenge: the high input costs that producers are challenged with. Producers will have to make some difficult decisions in this planting year as to how they will do their operations because of these challenging costs.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a very important issue for producers is drainage. It is not only about drainage, it is about managing our water because I relate this to the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) talking about running the water off and then being worried about droughts. I think there is much more work that has to be done. But there was a severe neglect by the members opposite when they were in power with the way that they cut the drainage budgets. I remember the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) admitting himself that that was a serious mistake on their part, that they had indeed cut drainage.

So we are working toward increasing that capital funding for drainage projects across the province, but we are also working on a water strategy. One part of the water strategy has to be the management of how we store water, how we manage it properly.

I heard the member opposite talk about the environmental farm plans, talking about the federal government. I want to correct the record for the member opposite because the environmental farm plans are funded partly by the federal government, but it is the provincial MAFRI staff that works with those farmers to put the environmental farm plans together. So it is a plan that is in conjunction with the federal and provincial government. Those farm plans

are very important because it helps us, again, do the proper planning, points difficult challenging areas and environmental issues that farmers may have to address. These farm plans are very, very important.

\* (16:00)

Along with environmental farm plans and water management, there is a need to do more soil survey so that we have more detailed farm maps. That is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we put new staff in last year. In this budget that the members opposite have been delaying and do not intend to support, there is new money that will double the number of Manitoba soil survey teams in this province. Again, I would remind members as they think about voting against this budget that these are important tools that will help our farmers.

Of course, I will also remind members opposite that they talk about reducing taxes, and, in fact, this budget does reduce taxes in many areas, but in particular for farmers, it reduces the farmland education property tax by 60 percent in 2006. Again, members opposite talked about reducing taxes, but when they were in government, they did none of that. In fact, they increased the portioning in farmland, increased taxes for farmers. We decreased the portioning and then we moved forward and reduced it first by 33 percent, then by 50 percent. In this budget, when it passes, we will be reducing education tax on farmland to 60 percent, a significant reduction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, members opposite also talked about crop insurance and the levels of crop insurance being decreased. The member opposite has to understand that the level of coverage on crop insurance is set by the federal government, and the federal government gives us a price of what we should be insuring for, based on world prices. If world prices go down, as they have now, then the level of coverage that is offered by crop insurance decreases because the prices have decreased. That is why the level of coverage is decreased. The member opposite also talked about the farmers not recovering their costs of production. Crop insurance does not cover costs of production. Crop insurance covers losses of crop.

But I tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do listen to farmers, and they talked about the excess moisture insurance which this government introduced. Farmers asked us for change, to go from 50 percent to 70 percent and, in fact, we have now put in another option to crop insurance to allow farmers to

buy up to 70 percent. Of course, we have also put in incentives for better management practices in nutrient management zones to help protect our soil and water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are all very important issues and I am very proud of the steps that we have taken here.

We talk about the importance of biodiesel and looking at ways of alternate energy. In this budget we are eliminating the fuel and sales tax to 100 percent on biodiesel, and this is really to allow the industry to expand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of areas I just want to mention. I want to talk about the consultation that we did this year. The Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), along with three private-sector members, businesspeople, travelled around rural Manitoba to talk about what people see the opportunities are for value-added and the opportunities that they see for growth in this province. One of the major issues that people saw as a tool for growth was alternate energies. That is an area that we are working on. The other area that people talked about is value adding to our agriculture products, increasing our livestock production, further processing livestock, and that is why in the pork industry, we have the pork industry and Manitoba Pork Council working with a company from Québec to bring pork processing to this province.

It is very interesting that you can hear the members opposite quietly nattering about the pork-processing facility that is proposed for Winnipeg that has to go through a Clean Environment Commission hearing process, but we never hear anything on the record from members opposite as to what their real position is. We have heard from the Liberals, who have said they want the facility to move to Morris, this despite the fact that Morris does not have the wastewater treatment facility to move the facility there. But, from the Conservatives, we have not heard a position as to where they really stand. I have heard from the pork industry. I know what they have told the pork industry, but I have not heard them put any information on the record.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a government, we have stated very clearly that this issue will be handled through the Clean Environment Commission, and we look forward to the company filing for their environmental licence so all of the proper steps can be taken to have a decision based on science.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in another area, I want to talk about the beef industry where we have been talking about the need to increase slaughter capacity in this province. We have had members opposite tell us that we should be doing something to increase slaughter capacity. Then, when we come up with a proposal of how we could help producers fund slaughter capacity, they tell us that we are interfering in the marketplace. Imagine that. On one hand, when they are in trouble they say, put more money in, keep the industry alive. Then when we start to come up with solutions the members opposite say, oh, you are interfering, let the free marketplace work.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very proud of the position that we have taken, that we have found a way to allow producers to contribute and the government will contribute and we will create a fund that will then have funds where the livestock council can take equity positions in those facilities that are short of equity. Because that is the real problem: the people who are looking to increase slaughter capacity in this province have not been able to raise enough equity. We have found a way to do it. Members opposite choose to criticize rather than to work with the industry.

**An Honourable Member:** Call an election.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) talks about running in an election. I tell you, I would be very happy to run in an election on the budget that has been brought forward by our Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). This is a budget that each one of us should be very proud of, a budget that leads to a green and growing economy, a budget that creates opportunities for young Manitobans, a budget that has sections in it that will protect our water and environment, a budget that is balanced, a budget that builds strong and safe communities and at the same time has \$99 million in new tax savings.

There are many aspects of this budget that the members opposite should look at carefully and should consider supporting because it is a good budget. It meets balanced budget legislation and it allows Manitoba to grow. Members opposite, read the budget, change your mind and support it so that we can move forward in this province. Thank you.

**Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale):** It is a bit of an anomaly. Usually, in my speaking order that I speak either in the Throne Speech or the budget I am following, you know, my colleague from Elmwood. It just seems coincidental that it is always him. But

this time I have the honour of following the Minister of Agriculture. Prior to that it was one of our rural colleagues and I think prior to that it was another rural colleague.

So you are going to get maybe a little bit of a different perspective, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because my constituency is an urban riding. It is in the city here, and as much as I appreciate the comments made the Minister of Agriculture, I have to remind her of her Premier (Mr. Doer), though.

Her Premier was talking about certain things about the rural community and things like that, and I remember him saying, I believe he was saying at the NDP convention just a while ago that they had here, and they were ballyhooing about their great efforts and everything. He was talking about the rural voters. He was saying that the rural voters, he could not believe that they would be voting for the Conservatives. In fact, what he said was, and I had to keep the quip, he says: I do not know why farmers vote for Tories. It is like chickens voting for Colonel Sanders.

\* (16:10)

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

**Mr. Reimer:** That is the mentality of the NDP. In fact, they were saying the quote—I am glad the members were clapping because it is insulting farmers in accusing them of being birdbrains, but they will applaud that because they feel that the rural vote is not important. They are not going after the rural vote. They treat them as a different type of individual out there because you can see what is happening in the rural economy here in Manitoba. It is suffering tremendously. We have all heard that and we are aware of it.

We know that through some of the farm programs—I am not familiar with all of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I cannot really pontificate on them, but I do know that we hear a lot because of the emerging prices in health care in the rural area where so many ERs are closing down and people have to travel to different areas. *[interjection]* One of the members says that we should name where the ERs are closed, and I just happen to have the list, so I appreciate the question from the member of the opposition. In the past three years, ERs that have been closed, we are talking about the ones in Rivers, Erickson, Glenboro, Wawanesa, Treherne, Boissevain, Deloraine and Rosburn. I understand

that even Gimli had a closure for a while. It may still be closed. I am not totally sure.

So, I mean, these are some of the things that are happening in the rural area. There has been more and more concern by the people. We saw how in Brandon the pediatric doctor—I said doctor because I believe there may be only one there now. The people have to drive into Winnipeg if they have problems. They have to pay for their own ambulance. I have heard of one incidence, one of my colleagues was telling me that they had an ambulance bill of over \$2,100 to come into Winnipeg. So these are some of the things that the rural community is suffering from under this NDP. The attitude of the Premier (Mr. Doer) when he says that just because they vote Tory they are like chickens voting for Colonel Saunders, it just shows the fact that they believe in their own values in what they think is best for the economy, and it is not turning out that way.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you recall, the foundation of the New Democratic Party came from the rural roots. It was actually the CCF. The CCF was formed in the rural community. What is happening is that the government that we have here in Manitoba now is primarily an urban-dominated caucus. Most of the members are from the urban area. So I can see how they are losing their rural roots. The unawareness of the members is becoming apparent when the Premier makes those types of comments. So I understand some of their thinking. There is a certain awareness that should be brought forth. They ballyhoo about tax cuts and how they are helping the poor people and all this stuff.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am reminded of a former MLA for the NDP. I believe that she was at one time the Member for Radisson, and then she decided to move on to other areas. She was criticizing the other day in the paper about this NDP government making tax cuts. This is ironic. Here one of their former members, a long-time-*[interjection]* Yes, former member of the caucus—because she could not take the infighting. We saw that she mentioned in the newspaper article how she could not get along with the caucus and everything. They were sort of ostracizing her, so she decided that she was going to write this article and I read the article. Initially it was about crossing the floor and that, but there was also the comment in there about her NDP government being involved with tax cuts and how she did not really appreciate that that was the way the NDP government was going.



You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not say I sympathize with her because of a lot of her comments and her dealings. In fact, she and I used to share a community centre when she was representing Radisson and my constituency was Southdale. One of the community centres that we both served was Winakwa Community Centre, a very, very vibrant, very energetic community centre. We both participated in a lot of events, and we both sponsored functions and events at that community centre so we got to enjoy a lot of the events together.

There are so many things that you could talk about this budget here that I feel that I should make comment about. One of the things naturally is the fact that we have been trying to get this government to call an inquiry into Crocus. I hear on the other side that this call of an election that they are calling for, and we must remember that we on this side are ready for an election. It is the people on that side and the Premier (Mr. Doer) himself is the one who has to make that decision. I would think that the members that are calling for an election on that side, maybe they should talk to their Premier. Maybe they get close to him in caucus. Whether he comes to caucus, I do not know because naturally caucus confidentiality we both adhere to. But maybe if some of the members on the other side in the NDP caucus now that are calling for an election, if they maybe talk to their Premier, well, maybe he might abide by what they are advising for him. That would be different, especially if it came from a backbencher.

Anyway, we were calling for an inquiry on the Crocus Fund because of the fact that there were so many things that were brought to light by the Auditor General that deserve to be cleared. The air deserves to be cleared, and if the Premier does not have anything to hide, then he should call it. Now I do not think he has anything to hide. I do not think he has anything to hide, so I think that he should do it. I am on his side. You know, he should call it because he says that he wants to clear the air, and I agree with him. He should do it. I am sure that what he has said, he is an honourable man. He is a man that is a Premier for all of Manitoba, not just for the NDP. He is my Premier and I believe that if he is an honourable man, which I believe he is, he has nothing to hide. It is just a matter of going across and talking to the Lieutenant-Governor and having the review called for. When he is doing that, he should be aware of what the Auditor General has come out with.

\* (16:20)

The Auditor General will be retiring from his position I guess very shortly. This summer I believe his tenure is up as the Auditor General for Manitoba. He has been busy. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this man has been busy. In fact, he was doing a bit of an interview a little while ago, and the reporter was asking him about his job and everything else like that. He says right now his office has approximately 70 credible allocations in its database. He goes on to say it would take his 45-person staff—he has 45 people working for him, 45 investigators and people that are working for him—he said it would take him 10 years, 10 years to investigate them all. It is an all-time high. This is something that this government is going to be on record for. The amount of complaints and questionable dealings, if you want to call it, that people have with this government that they have made a case to the Auditor General and the Auditor General has said, yes, you have a case, and if we have the time we will review it. But 10 years, that is what he needs.

Unfortunately, his time, his tenure as the Auditor General expires very shortly. He was on a 10-year contract, if you want to call it. It expires. But the new Auditor General that is going in there is going to have automatically—automatically, Mr. Deputy Speaker—10 years in front of him or her. What a legacy this government is handing over to the Auditor General, and the Auditor General, as has been mentioned by some of my colleagues, he has asked for more people. He has asked for more money. But why should he not? I mean, why would he not, when he is swamped like that? The gentleman is overwhelmed with all the work that he has to do. So, you know, the Auditor General is very astute in his awareness of what this government is doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about the budget and what this government has brought down, we have to be very serious about where this government is going and the debt that it is accumulating. The amount of debt that this government is accumulating is at an all-time high. It is climbing and climbing. It is up to almost \$21 billion of debt that has come up. In fact, since 1999, it has run up to \$3.5 billion in new debt or obligations since it took office in 1999. Instead of the debt going down, when we have looked at this tremendous increase in transfer payments that this government has anticipated, they are spending that money as fast as they can get it and they are spending more. They have gone into the rainy day fund. They have gone after Hydro, took Hydro for a bunch of money. They keep going to any place, any of the Crown corps that have got money

and in some way or another are trying to get money. They keep talking about wanting to get more money. They are using user fees and incremental fees that they have added on to various services that they provide. So it is just a matter of their saying that they are not increasing taxes, but they are increasing the user fees.

One of the things that my colleagues have talked about is the amount of money that is spent on roads. Mr. Deputy Speaker, here in Winnipeg, when you are driving down the streets now, boy, if you have a coffee cup in your car holder, you better make sure you got a lid on it, because it is going to spill out all over your car. You have to keep the lid on that coffee cup here in Winnipeg on the roads, because the bumps and the potholes will shoot that coffee right out all over your upholstery in your car. So you have to be very careful.

The Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) gets up and he talks about all the increase in funding, but he forgets to mention the carryover. He says, we increased it by \$29 million; \$29 million. How much was it? How much was the carryover? Thirty-five million. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think there is a little bit of shady interpretation there by the Minister of Transportation. He will not tell us that, though. He never admits that. He does not admit that, but he will stick up and he says, we increased it by \$29 million; we did this, but we did not spend it and we did not spend any extra on it. But that is just something that we will bring to his attention. I am sure he recognizes that in a different venue.

So there are many other things that I feel that I would like to talk about. One of the things I do have to talk about, one more thing that I would like to talk about is balanced budget legislation that we brought in. *[interjection]* We hear applause on the other side now for that balanced budget legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they voted against it. When it was introduced, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), voted against it. I remember the Member for—I am sorry, the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), I forget his constituency, saying this is a foolish thing, a foolish thing, this balanced budget legislation. Now? Oh, it is a different thing.

Anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I am saying is they will vote against things and then they embrace them, the good things that we have brought

in, and now they are taking credit for all the things that we have brought in, and bring it in.

So, with those short words, I know that there are other people who are wanting to get some other words on the record. So thank you very, very much for the time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** I rise today to speak in support of this Budget 2006 minted by our Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget will make all Manitobans very happy, pleased and be supportive of the same.

It is about three years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have been elected as an MLA from Radisson. I will share this once again, what made me to fight this last election and future. I think it was one afternoon around late 2002 that I was flipping the *Free Press* and I read that a health activist was nominated as a Tory candidate in Radisson. I read a little bit more about this activist and found out the name, and then it triggered me, and I was very uncomfortable that evening of that person being called a health activist. So I decided next day, and I went and talked to some people, and I said, I am going to fight the election on that particular issue because this particular candidate was an associate of a person called Connie Curran, who is well known in Manitoba for dismantling the health care system, which we are trying to rebuild now. It was \$4 million paid to her, which my 11-year-old granddaughter could perhaps fix. Her solution was to fire a thousand nurses, close hospitals, get rid of doctors, reduce it and make the platforms such that slowly the American system will, you know, slide in very, very comfortably. That conspiracy made me think, and I fought that particular challenge. I am glad that the people in Radisson chose me and got me elected.

I will share with you once again. I have talked about this many times that fixing health care is a very tough task. It is a task the entire world is facing. It is a global issue. Health care is a very big challenge, but, fundamentally, there are two ways one can look at it. One way is simply to pay by those who are wealthy, who can afford; they are okay. Those who cannot afford, those who are weak in society, let them die. Forty million Americans do not have health insurance in the United States of America. We know how sad that is. We do not want Americanization of Canada on anything, particularly health care issues, which are something that we are very proud of. Canadians, Manitobans and my

constituents would not tolerate anything but universal health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

What was done, as I said several times, that we look at ideology. I have heard members from the opposite side talking about ideologies. Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the difference it makes between two parties. Ideologies are very dear to us. I am very proud of our ideology. Ideology makes a difference in raising your family. Ideology makes a difference in raising a community. Ideology makes a difference in running a country. Ideology makes a difference in running the whole world. Depending on what kind of world we want, it depends on the ideologies, and we are very fortunate to have an ideology which is for all people. It is not for a select group of people who are privileged. It is for all, and that is the ideology that the entire world is changing now intellectually and thereinto.

\* (16:30)

So I am very happy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to speak. I am proud of our government, and I may take back again, in 2003, one of the platforms that the members opposite should perhaps—I am positive they will be careful this time, because one of their supporters told me while I was campaigning in Windsor Park, he said, come here, put your sign, because the Tory platform was to take music, art and physical education out of the curriculum from school divisions. That was a very, very sad platform that, again, speaks of the ideology that party tries to build. See something which is universal, dismantle it. Make it a two-tier system and education need not address the issues of music, art and physical education, which, I think, are fundamentally very, very important part of society and our future children who will be the citizens of this country.

So people of Radisson said no, and I am thankful to them for saying no to that platform of dismantling health care, dismantling the education system, and making the society go back to the dark days of 11 years under Mr. Filmon. I think, you know, this is the idea that we looked at in Question Period.

At times I am suspicious. I get very concerned about the U.S. Republican style of government being thought to be installed in Canada and Manitoba. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can assure members opposite that Manitobans will not accept the U.S. Republican style of government in this province. They would want to have a balanced society, a balanced system, a balanced approach, and Premier Doer has done an excellent job in demonstrating that. This is a

beautiful country called Canada. We want to preserve Canadian values. We want to preserve the character of this country, which is very unique and very dear to us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, health care: again, I would go back and say that it takes seven years for a medical student from the day he or she gets into the college to graduate. It takes 10 years for a specialist like a radiologist, cardiologist and surgeon to be trained.

Now, my children have left; they have been driven out from here during those nineties because there were jobs being cut. Now we have installed more seats into the medical colleges seven years back. So now and a few years from now, you will see these doctors graduating from the medical schools. They will be serving our communities, and we will be much happier, much better because they will be Manitoba graduates that stay in Manitoba. Hundreds of youths were fleeing Manitoba at that time. Now they are coming back here. I am very proud to say that they are coming back because they see this society as very futuristic. We have programs that we think, after we reversed that decision of cutting back a number of seats in the colleges, the medical colleges, you see now the future becoming very bright.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the several programs on health care: the Transcona Health Access Centre, which my colleague Daryl Reid and I are very proud to share, is an example of how health care is being deliverable in the communities.

Colleges: In Steinbach, there is a satellite college of Red River. So we are looking at more community-oriented services in health care and education, which is the vision. I thank the government and the Premier for bringing leadership into our province.

It is what we look for now versus the future. That is what makes the difference between, again, our approaches. If you want to build a future, you may have to sacrifice a little bit now. The present versus future versus sustainable future makes the difference in economic platforms and ideologies and other agendas, which is the planning.

I am also very proud, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to share with the House that the largest-ever Manitoba business trade mission went to India with Premier Doer. I must say that, in the presentations, which we did combine, together with business, myself, the Premier, and the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan),

we talked about how Manitoba is a very unique place for foreigners, for those who have not come to Manitoba, Canada, to come and look at what we can offer.

One of the things that excited them was this *Business Week* award given to our Premier. By the way, *Business Week* is not a union-endorsed magazine; it is an international business magazine widely read and respected by the business community. When they read that our province and Premier Doer were considered one of the best in the world on climate changes strategies, we felt very proud.

The very large commercial body called CII, which is Confederation of Indian Industry, at their luncheon we spoke, and we spoke about why we are so good, about our future of energy, future of science and technology, future of research, hybrid buses, hydrogen buses, new fuel technology, biotechnology. We talked about these signs, the research centre for nutraceutical studies at St. Boniface. All these things make them feel futuristic, and they feel that there is an abundance of resources in Manitoba, there is an abundance of knowledge here, and we will bring that knowledge with industries, we will go together, and we will work with those investors that are looking to find a home for investment and grow their own investment and opportunities. Naturally, that will create a lot of jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Looking at the vision, you want to build your society on a vision. You do not want to build a society, somehow, to live today and then a dark future tomorrow. I am very, very disappointed with Mr. Harper's budget, where he has killed the Kyoto Accord and Kelowna Accord. These two were very, very important accords. The Premier said that he was not happy with both of these accords. Kyoto Accord, our Premier was the one in the whole country to get there first. That was the reason he was declared the international leader on climate change.

Mr. Harper has short vision. He has killed the Kyoto Accord. It is not good. That is typical Conservative vision. Kelowna Accord, also very important, killed. That is a thing I personally take very serious objection to, this kind of thinking coming.

So I think that we have to understand that, if you want to build a future, you have to be visionary. You have to see ahead. You have to think not about today; think about your grandchildren. Then you build a better society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have, in my constituency, visited seniors; I have visited high schools; I have visited junior schools; I have visited parents and workers, and I find the vibration, excitement amongst all looking at today compared to seven years back. They are far better off today than they were seven years back.

So this speaks for itself. What we have been doing is progressive. We are not perfect. We have not achieved everything that we ought to, but we are progressing in the right direction, and I take great pride that we are on the right track.

I have received several e-mails from young people from my constituency, particularly one young high school student who wrote to me, congratulating me that I was doing a great job for Radisson. He said: Make sure, Mr. Jha, that Manitoba Hydro is not sold. I think I made this misstatement once in the past, and I am repeating that this is a fear, my fellow friends on that side, that people think you sold MTS. They think that, if you come in power, you will sell Hydro. People do not want that. This is dear to them, and they do not want this to happen, so they are giving me advice saying, do not let this happen, Mr. Jha. I have told them, yes, as long as I am elected MLA, I will not let that happen. I do not want to use any words that may not be proper here, but, come high water, I will not let that happen.

Now, these young guys, when they write to me, I feel like an academy award winner. These are the letters from young citizens—

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

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

**Mr. Jha:** —leaders of tomorrow. They may be premier; they may be prime minister; they may be the builders of society. They write to me. I feel very, very excited about their notes.

\* (16:40)

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the 2006 budget has a lot of ingredients that are worth knowing. Particularly, I am very thankful, too, because it does not lead to some of the cases in my constituency. Those issues like crystal meth strategy, auto theft, family violence prevention, Aboriginal justice committee prevention, and other justice issues are given full support. I see health care highlights in reducing wait lists, investing in health capital, training more health care professionals, chronic disease prevention and treatment, and healthy living.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me again tell this to my wonderful friends here, honourable members, that Manitoba was the only government that initiated full ministry of Water Stewardship and a full ministry of Healthy Living. Now these are again futuristic. People need to see that their water is very important, and healthy living, prevention of disease is equally important. I think we have seen that vision; we have seen the programs. I would say that this budget—numbers I will not repeat because they can be read by the book. So I would suggest, I would recommend, highly recommend all members to come and support this budget because, just as the Premier says, this is a budget for people who are doers and builders.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Well, I was interested to hear the comments of the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) announcing that he would be supporting the budget that supports hog plants in his constituency. I know that it would be a difficult decision because he is a man of honour. I know that he stands with his constituents, stood for them, and now he is going to have to stand in a different place. So it is going to be a difficult decision for him, but I think he has made it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans are in trouble if this NDP government is allowed to continue their spending ways. This budget does little to lead us into the future, into a vision for the future for Manitobans. Here we are as a have-not province, and what vision is there to get us into a situation where we are a have province? Why do we want to stay on bended knee with our hands out to Ottawa? Why would we want to do that? Why do we want to keep us in a position of having to beg for money from our government in Ottawa.

We have seen it time and time again with this government, it is always spend more, get less. Now it is spend more, get last. This government continues to spend every single penny that they get. Even when they get—[*interjection*] and more. We get more. We see unprecedented amounts of money coming from the federal government year after year, more and more. This government is getting more money so they spend more, but what are we getting? What are we getting for this? We are getting less, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and Manitobans want more than this.

Manitobans do not want to be last. Manitobans want to be first, I would suggest. There is no long-

term strategy for revitalizing this province. We see billions of dollars going into waste—

### Point of Order

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Point of order being raised.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology):** Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I know that all members would want me to note that in the gallery we are joined by Dilan Rocan who is up there with his father, Shaun, visiting us in the gallery, and I want to acknowledge them.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It is not a point of order, but it is a point.

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**Mrs. Taillieu:** Certainly, I could see the attention drawn to the gallery behind me. I did not want to turn around and have a look, but welcome to the gallery.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, where are our young people going? They are leaving this province. They are voting with their feet. [*interjection*] They are going. They are leaving. I can tell you that my own son has gone to Alberta. He has gone to Calgary. His friends have all gone there. My other son is in Australia, and when he comes back, he says, I am going to Alberta because that is where all my friends have gone. That is where there is hope. They talk about Calgary as a city of hope: young people, vitality, everything to encourage young people, jobs, wages, a wonderful place to be, if you are a young person, where there is hope for the future.

Not like Manitoba where there are no jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We do not have the prosperity. We do not see the growth potential here in this province when young people are leaving and businesses are relocating because it is not easy to do business in this NDP climate and culture of government.

Personal taxation: We are one of the highest taxed provinces in the West, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact, for a one-earner family of four earning \$40,000 to \$60,000, we are the highest taxed. We are the highest taxed west of Québec.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, thinking about the jobs here. There is no vision when you think about what is happening with the floodway expansion project. We have opportunities here, but, instead, what we

have is a government that wants to force unionization on to workers to work on this project. This, in itself, has raised the cost of the project. I would like to have any one of the members on the opposite side of this House stand up and say that this budget for the floodway project is on budget. I would love to have someone—I would dare someone to stand up and say that that project is on budget.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

**An Honourable Member:** Ask the question in Question Period.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** The Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) says, ask the question in Question Period. If I ask a question in Question Period, I do not get any answers. I do not get any answers.

Certainly, there are concerns about the floodway from people that are south of the floodway. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we saw flooding this spring. We had a large flood event in the Red River Valley, and that has raised the awareness again with people that have been flooded prior. There were a lot of people flooded last July as well. So there are some fears and concerns around how this expansion project is going to affect the people south of the floodway gates.

For one thing, they are told that they will be compensated; on the other hand, they are told that it is going to be compensated through the province. But the province cannot both work for the the adjudicator and work for the claimant; there is a conflict of interest there, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, we need to look at the artificial flooding that happens south of the floodway all the way down through Morris, through Emerson, where there is a lot of farmland that is flooded, and farmers themselves will say—some of them will say that, yes, after the flood is gone, some of that land is good agricultural land, and they have good crops. But that depends on how close you are to the river, Mr. Speaker. Those people closer to the river that have been flooded still will have a significant amount of time needed to clean away the debris, to get the land in proper working condition, before they can plant their crops.

\* (16:50)

So there are many concerns from the valley still. I know that Highway 75 is now open, and the dike has been taken off the north end of the town of Morris, Mr. Speaker. But, you know, speaking about

Highway 75, all the highways and roads in the province are in a total, total disastrous situation, and that is because they have been neglected, and neglected for six long years by this government. They are in dire need of repair, and, as someone said earlier, if you are going to travel down Highway No. 75, do not take a coffee cup with you that does not have a lid on it, because it will spill all over.

**An Honourable Member:** Order a cup one size too big. That is what I do.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Well, the suggestion is to order a cup one size too big. I guess that will be the next road sign along Highway No. 75. Instead of "reduce speed because of bumps," we will have further warnings as to what we need to do to travel along these terrible highways, Mr. Speaker.

**An Honourable Member:** Find an alternate route.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Well, that has been said too; find an alternate route. Do not take this highway, because it is in total disrepair.

I mean, you just have to look at some of the headlines: Road repair dollars fall short—half of what is needed, say truckers.

I mean, the minister is proud to say that he has put \$29 million more into roadways, but, you know, you talk to people that are in the industry and they say, and I would like to quote a good friend of mine, Chris Lorenc, who says: It is not even a drop in the bucket; it is not even a ripple.

Mr. Speaker, we need \$500 million to fix the roads in this province. Certainly, I have several in my own constituency: Highway No. 75, Highway No. 1, Highway No. 2, Highway No. 3, Highway No. 59—all major roads and highways, all economic drivers leading into the capital city here in Winnipeg from the west and from the south. Certainly, if we are going to be a province that encourages economic growth, we need to have transportation ways and means for products to be transported between other cities and ours. We also need to have this as a viable tourism route and encourage tourists to come to our province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the scandals that we have seen in this government. I mean, when you talk about the number—and I think it was the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) talking about 45 people employed in the Auditor General's office with a backlog of 10 years of work given to them by the actions of this NDP government over the

last six years. That is outrageous. We have government by auditor in this province. We have the Crocus Fund fiasco, and that has tentacles that are so far-reaching we have not gotten to the ends of them yet. We have Workers Compensation Board. We have the TRAF, teachers' retirement fund.

What a tangled web they weave, Mr. Speaker. All the players are so interconnected and so connected to this government that only a full public inquiry, where people can come forward, put their hand on the Bible without fear of reprisal and tell what the truth is about Crocus, then will we find out the details of how involved this NDP government has been in these scandals.

We also have had the Hydra House, and, in talking about issues in Family Services and Housing, we also had an Auditor's report on the Aiyawin housing. That was scathing, to say the least, when all of the red flags that were raised in that Auditor General's report went unnoticed and unheeded by this government for 18 months, while they continued to fund the organization and do nothing and say nothing, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to also talk about the child welfare system and the need to look at how we deliver child welfare in the province of Manitoba. We have had 31 children die while in care, or who had just left the care of the Province in the last five to six years, Mr. Speaker, and nine of those children died last year. That is an outrageous number. It is outrageous. That is the highest number of children who have died in the care of this Province since those types of things were recorded. We are doing something wrong in child welfare. Certainly, the numbers will tell you that. I do not understand why the Premier (Mr. Doer) does not want to get to the bottom of this and save the lives of innocent children. We need to take a look. Let us just take a look. What is happening in this child welfare system?

There certainly are some good things happening, and I know that there are many people working within the system, Mr. Speaker, that do and go to their jobs every day, not because they do not care, but because they care more than anyone else about the welfare of children. But, if you do not provide the ways and means for people to do their jobs, if you do not provide them with the risk assessment tool, if you just tell them to go out and do their job, there are certainly going to be some problems. We have seen it with tragic numbers of deaths that have occurred, and specifically I think what has grasped

the attention of Manitobans, grabbed their hearts, is that a child could have died and been dead for nine months before anyone even noticed, even though she had had extensive involvement with Child and Family Services.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk a little bit about health care as well. The Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) spoke about his ideology on health care, and certainly we on this side believe that it is most important to look after patients first, get rid of this ideology, and put patient care first. What we see is people that are trying to get health care because they cannot wait in pain on these long wait lists, so they want to choose to go to other places, to other provinces, or to other countries to get attention to their medical needs because they cannot sit and wait in pain. What are we doing? Are we telling people that it is not important, that you all have to wait in pain?

Certainly, we need to allow people to take care of their health, and we should be encouraging people to take care of their own health, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the unprecedented amount of dollars that are going into health care, the budget for health care goes up and up every year, certainly we will see nothing left but an entire government with one ministry, and that will be Health, because there will be no money left for anything else.

Yes, we do need money in health care, but money has to go to care of patients and not to administration and boards and needs to go to reduce the wait times and get people the care, the surgery, that they need, Mr. Speaker.

**An Honourable Member:** Justice?

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Well, shall we talk about justice? We hear all the time from this government that there are going to be more training spots and new positions, but, Mr. Speaker, they are not there. There are not enough trained people in the training centres and not enough on the streets to protect us. Further, we know that they cannot train them fast enough because they are going out the other end in retirement. We need to provide safe, healthy communities for our young people to remain here so that they are not afraid to go out on the streets. We need to provide that safety element. We need to get rid of the culture that we have in this province: it is easy on crime here, so let us bring the gangs all into Manitoba because we can set up shop here without fear. The Hells Angels keep coming, and the Banditos keep coming,

Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow that to happen in this province. We need to take this province back, and we need a strong justice system to do it. We cannot allow the Hells Angels to take over Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, this budget does nothing for our province's future or for our children's future. This government should admit that they have failed; they should admit that they are old, they are tired. Why do we not call an election? We are refreshed, and we are ready, and we will win.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines):** I am very pleased to speak—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 29 minutes remaining—30 minutes remaining.

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



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 3, 2006

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