

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, 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.
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MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
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MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
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REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
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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.
VACANT	Kirkfield Park	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 10, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 19—The Government Purchases Amendment Act (Responsible Manufacturing)

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), that Bill 19, The Government Purchases Amendment Act (Responsible Manufacturing), be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lemieux: This bill updates the rules governing how goods are to be purchased under The Government Purchases Act. It also requires the suppliers of certain classes of goods to establish that the goods have been made in accordance with minimum fair labour practices.

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

PETITIONS

Removal of Agriculture Positions from Minnedosa

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Nine positions with the Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Crown Lands Branch are being moved out of Minnedosa.

Removal of these positions will severely impact the local economy.

Removal of these positions will be detrimental to revitalizing this rural agriculture community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider stopping the removal of these positions from our community, and to consider utilizing

current technology in order to maintain these positions in their existing location.

This petition is signed by R. Pederson, C. Nagorski, B. Firby and many, many others.

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

Headingley Foods

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The owners of Headingley Foods, a small business based in Headingley, would like to sell alcohol at their store. The distance from their location to the nearest Liquor Mart, via the Trans-Canada Highway, is 9.3 kilometres. The distance to the same Liquor Mart via Roblin Boulevard is 10.8 kilometres. Their application has been rejected because their store needs to be 10 kilometres away from the Liquor Mart. It is 700 metres short of this requirement using one route but is 10.8 kilometres using the other.

The majority of Headingley's population lives off Roblin Boulevard and uses Roblin Boulevard to get to and from Winnipeg rather than the Trans-Canada Highway. Additionally, the highway route is often closed or too dangerous to travel in severe weather conditions. The majority of Headingley residents therefore travel to the Liquor Mart via Roblin Boulevard, a distance of 10.8 kilometres.

Small businesses outside Winnipeg's perimeter are vital to the prosperity of Manitoba's communities and should be supported. It is difficult for small businesses like Headingley Foods to compete with larger stores in Winnipeg, and they require added services to remain viable. Residents should be able to purchase alcohol locally rather than drive to the next municipality.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act (Mr. Smith), to consider allowing the owners of

Headingley Foods to sell alcohol at their store, thereby supporting small business and the prosperity of rural communities in Manitoba.

This is signed by H. Fetterly, W. Sykes, N. Sykes and many others, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Military Statement

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

I rise today to speak to the role and sacrifice made by our military service people. The tragic loss, earlier this week, of six Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan following devastating roadside bomb attacks serves as a poignant reminder that brave men and women continue to put themselves in harm's way serving our country.

This weekend saw the 90th anniversary of Vimy Ridge. It is fitting that we never forget the sacrifice these Canadians have made for our country. On that day 90 years ago, Mr. Speaker, 3,598 Canadian soldiers lost their lives fighting for our freedoms during World War I.

Yesterday, on behalf of all Manitobans, our Premier (Mr. Doer) had the opportunity to honour Manitoba's soldiers together with their families at the very successful women's hockey tournament in Winnipeg and Selkirk. Over 1,000 soldiers and their families from CFB Shilo 17 Wing and Reserve Units attended and were recognized for their courage, bravery and commitment to protecting our country and freedoms.

Today, I ask this House to remember the men and women who have in the past, and continue to do so today, so bravely faced the horror of war. Mr. Speaker, the sacrifices of our soldiers past and present cannot be forgotten. After other members have made their statements, I would ask that this House join in a moment of silence to recognize these soldiers. Thank you.

* (13:40)

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to thank the minister for his statement and also say that it is with great sadness and a heavy heart that I rise today also to speak with respect to the recent casualties that occurred overseas in Afghanistan. This past Easter Sunday, we received the news that six of our own Canadian soldiers lost

their lives when their LAV-3 hit an improvised explosive device while on patrol in Kandahar province. Six men, ranging in age from 20 to 37, were killed instantly in what has become one of Canada's deadliest days in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the names of these six men into our record to honour their memory: Private David Greenslade, Private Kevin Kennedy, Corporal Chris Stannix, Corporal Aaron Williams, Corporal Brent Poland and Sergeant Donald Lucas. Five of these men were members of the Royal Canadian Regiment, the sixth was a member of the Prince Louis Fusiliers, an army reserve infantry regiment. Some were married with families. One soldier was engaged to be married. All were dedicated Canadian soldiers and all died far too young.

These deaths come at a particularly poignant time in our history. As the minister has indicated, this past weekend, ceremonies were held across Canada and in France to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Battle at Vimy Ridge. In that battle we lost over 3,500 Canadians.

In one weekend, Canadians were forced to both remember the battles of the past and face the conflicts of today. The struggles that called many men and women into uniform during the world wars are still not over. Unfortunately, it is these sorts of tragedies from current conflicts that sharpen the focus on the need and the loss that Canada has known throughout its military history. This evening at Minto Armouries our military history will again be honoured through the awarding of six medals involving the highest national order given out by the French government to foreign soldiers who gave exceptional service in France.

In the coming days, the families of the fallen, and indeed Canadians from coast to coast, will have much to reflect over. In those days, we'll think of the grieving families and friends. We also wish for a speedy recovery to those soldiers who were injured. Above all, we offer support to soldiers currently overseas. They've been trained well for their job, and we appreciate their sacrifices. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join other members of this Chamber in honouring the six

soldiers who so sadly and tragically lost their lives over the weekend. Certainly, these soldiers and the many other Canadians who have been in Afghanistan went there on a mission to help people, and we certainly salute their vision. We certainly salute their good intentions. We certainly salute the hard work that they have done and the fact that they are ready to put their lives on the line for Canada and for people in other countries.

It is fitting in a sad way that it was Vimy Ridge anniversary over the weekend as well, the 90th anniversary, and certainly brings home to us the broader role over many, many years of those who have served in our Canadian forces, their valour as exemplified at Vimy Ridge and their contributions that they have made to Canada as we know it today.

So I join the other members of the Chamber in saluting those who have died and in wishing well all the other soldiers who are working and doing their best on behalf of Canadians and on behalf of others around the world.

Mr. Speaker: Is their agreement for a moment of silence? [*Agreed*]

Please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today 12 students from William Whyte Community School. These students are under the direction of their teachers: Melinda Severa, Brenda Elford, Miriam Weightman, Carmen Mink and Patty Sayies. These students are the guests of the honourable Member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickee).

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

Also, in the public gallery we have from Ruth Hooker School 48 elementary school students under the direction of Chris Minarik. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Flooding in Selkirk Operation of Red River Floodway

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yesterday I had the opportunity, along with our party's candidate for the Selkirk constituency, Gordie Dehn, to tour the Selkirk area. I had a chance to speak with many of the residents in the city of Selkirk and the surrounding area about the concerns, about the level of water and the ice-jamming which is taking place along the Red River in that community.

Many residents raised the issue and concern with me about the operation of the floodway and whether that, Mr. Speaker, may have had any impact on the current events in Selkirk. We noted, just prior to its operation, that representatives from Manitoba Water Stewardship publicly commented that they had doubts about whether the floodway would need to be operated at all this year.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just wonder if the Premier could update the House on the current situation in Selkirk and indicate whether he is aware as to whether there's any relationship between the floodway operations, the subsequent ice-jams and flooding in Selkirk.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I was in Selkirk this morning, and I was there as well on Good Friday dealing with the local community. I want to pay tribute to the mayor and council and all the emergency response people who are in Selkirk and lead that community. They've done an excellent job. I also met with the reeves who are affected in the area and had an opportunity, not only to meet with some of the residents, but also to view and tour the area of the ice and the bridge in Selkirk and, of course, the massive amounts of ice north of Selkirk.

The floodway, the member opposite will know, has always operated on rules that have been governed by federal-provincial agreements going back to 1966 or '67. The rules are in place to ensure a balance between protection of people in the Capital Region which includes to some degree the case of the R.M.s that have some residents inside of the floodway. It's also operated by water engineers on the basis of those rules that have been agreed to and those protocols that have been agreed to by federal and provincial governments over the last some 40 years. I'm confident that the water professionals have

operated consistent with the federal-provincial agreement on the operation of the floodway.

Use of Amphibex

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): We certainly share the Premier's confidence and his compliments to those municipal officials and those involved with emergency measures dealing with the issues in Selkirk. Certainly, we know of the concerns of many residents with respect to the flooding of the Kiwanis residences in Selkirk that house many seniors in that community. We also have seen the damage to the Marine Museum, the golf course and other aspects in properties within the city of Selkirk.

We know that there are judgment calls that have to be made with respect to the operation of the floodway and, certainly, decisions that are made have to balance various interests and take into account various factors. Those are never easy judgement calls, Mr. Speaker, and we certainly recognize that is the case and I simply wanted to ask the question.

The Premier has indicated that the floodway is operated with respect to past rules and protocols. It's not clear whether he has indicated whether there is any relationship between decisions related to the floodway operation and what we now see happening in Selkirk. I wonder, if on that specific point, he might be prepared just to report back to the House so that the residents of Selkirk, and indeed all Manitobans, can have a clear view as to the decisions that were made and the basis for those decisions.

As my supplemental, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that the NDP government assisted the relevant municipalities with the purchase of the Amphibex icebreaker in 2005, contributing \$350,000 to the overall cost. This was an issue also raised by residents of Selkirk with me yesterday when I was there. I just note that the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick), when interviewed by the *Winnipeg Sun* with respect to this purchase, indicated the Amphibex is, and I quote, proving to be an effective approach in helping to manage the potential flooding caused by ice-jams along the Red River. That's the end of the quote.

I just wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier can outline the extent to which the Amphibex has been involved in trying to mitigate the flooding situation in Selkirk and whether it's his view that it has been

effective in the context of the current jamming and flooding in the city of Selkirk.

* (13:50)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I'm glad the member made it to Selkirk yesterday. Our ministers have been there since the middle of last week when the emergency took place.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the floodway does operate under rules that are federal and provincial in nature. They are affected by cfs flows of water at the inlet. The water engineers operate the floodway. The government of the day does not, quote, second-guess the judgment, unquote, of the water engineers. I would recommend against that because people who are water engineers usually, in my view, have the professional expertise and experience to make judgments based on rules that are effective for the total Red River Valley.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that the water levels at the comparable date the floodway was operated—I believe it was below 2000 cfs, because we were looking at the floodway late last week, 2000 cfs. There was 10 times more water in the floodway a year ago without any ice-jamming in the river, so I would point out it's one-tenth the water in the floodway and massive damage—massive amounts of ice, rather, that have caused damage in the Selkirk area.

Some of those areas that we witnessed were fortified after 1997. There was flood protection provided after the '97 flood, after the '96 flood in Selkirk. We certainly will examine the level of protection. The golf course, for example, was diked after the '97 flood. We will look at that protection. The Marine Museum is a very important asset to that community. We will look at that as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, part of what one has to do, and I've been involved with the former premier when he was asking communities to evacuate in Rosenort and other communities; as the Leader of the Opposition, one of the issues always is making sure the public is getting very, very important and accurate information. The mayor of Selkirk is very clear on the operation of the floodway and was very clear with me today in the meeting. He knows, in fact, that the ice levels are unprecedented. In fact, the president of the golf course, who was also at the meeting today, said to me—he's 69 years of age. He said that to me and I don't know whether he wants that public but he mentioned—

An Honourable Member: It is now.

Mr. Doer: I didn't mention his name. He's on the back nine of life, but he's still got lots of holes left.

He said to me, Mr. Speaker, that in his 60 years of observing the river at Selkirk and north of Selkirk, he's never seen that level of ice, the 40-inch ice. We believe that the thawing and the melting of ice and then the massive amounts of freezing that took place and the fusing of that ice has definitely contributed to the situation in Selkirk. But, obviously, if the dikes, the construction from post-'97, need improvement in the future, we will absolutely look at it.

Certainly, protection was put in after '97. People said that will protect the golf course from an event that took place in '97, which was the Flood of the Century, and obviously, we have to look at improving them.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier for that 27-hole answer. It is appreciated.

I want to be clear that we're certainly not second-guessing the judgment of the water engineers. The members opposite don't want us to ask questions on an important issue to the people of Selkirk, and we're certainly not second-guessing the judgment of government or the water engineers, but certainly people in the city of Selkirk are asking questions and they simply would like us to put those questions and have the government respond.

I thank the Premier for his two responses provided to date. I don't think there is any need at all to be defensive. We're simply looking for a factual statement as to what impact, if any, the operation of the floodway may have had on the city of Selkirk. It's not about laying blame. It's simply providing the people of Selkirk with straightforward information about an issue that's very, very important to them today.

Mr. Speaker, just to follow up on the question about the Amphibex icebreaker. We didn't get a response to that supplemental. I just want to ask the Premier this: His Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), on February 20 of this year, just weeks ago indicated, and I quote: It's definitely proven its worth, said the Minister of Education. This year it will really show what it can do. Those are the words of the Minister of Education.

I'm wondering if the Premier can indicate what role the Amphibex icebreaker has played with respect to the current situation, whether in his view

it's been effective in dealing with these very significant issues being faced by the people of Selkirk.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I would point out, on page 683 of *Hansard* last week, his critic on the flood situation commended the government, commended the Emergency Measures people and basically, as a person who lives adjacent to the Red River and has dealt with floods before as a former minister, said that floods can result from Mother Nature's ice creation. He was very aware of the fact, as many of us are on this side, that this was an extremely unusual situation of ice. If the member opposite went north of Selkirk, and I hope he did, he'll see ice that's almost four feet thick that is on that river running around the island area and quite significantly jammed.

Members opposite would know that we did purchase that machine. We did so with the municipalities. We also have used it in the Red River area. The water resources people and the municipalities deployed it to the area north of Selkirk. There is, if you look at the aerial shots, a channel that will be helpful to the residents when the ice melts. How helpful? With that absolutely thick ice, I can't say. The experts tell us it's a safety issue. The machine does not have the capacity to deal with the 40-inch ice and the safety of operators could be affected. The municipalities that helped fund that machine, and I would point out that we're on our own because the federal government said: Go ahead and buy it. And then they said: We changed our mind.

They also acknowledge that the water was running freely and had supported the decision to move it to another area where 80 homes are at risk. Eighty homes are at risk in the Ralls Island area of The Pas. I know that is an extremely important issue for us as well. Obviously, that machine was deployed to the Whitemud River, it was deployed to the North Saskatchewan River, it's been deployed to other areas but it always has to do so because we have a partnership with the rural municipalities. It always has to be dealt with in consultation with our cosponsors and cofunders of that machine.

Flooding in Selkirk Use of Amphibex

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): We know that measures have been taken and put in place to help ensure that the city of Selkirk would be protected from ice-jams and flooding. In fact, the community itself spearheaded the purchase of the Amphibex

icebreaker. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this NDP government decided to take the Amphibex for its own use, leaving Selkirk at the mercy of this government's decision regarding the operation of the floodway.

Will the Minister of Water Stewardship acknowledge today that her decisions on the deployment of the Amphibex have meant it has failed to meet the need for which it was originally purchased?

* (14:00)

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has pointed out that this a partnership between the Province of Manitoba, the City of Selkirk, the R.M.s of St. Clements and St. Andrews. The Amphibex was deployed a month early this year so they could start chopping the ice back from Breezy Point. The Amphibex did work for 36 hours around PTH 4, around the ice that is there right now and did not prove to be effective because of the type of ice.

We are dealing now with river ice which is very, very thick, but it is more in platelets, and it is very dangerous to send the Amphibex out into that water. Also, we are dealing with frazil ice, which is very slushy ice. Again, it forms in a platelet form, goes underneath the river ice and pushes that ice up.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: We know the Department of Water Stewardship is facing considerable reductions in staffing. These losses will result in a significant shortage of valuable resources. This reduces the effectiveness of the department when it comes to dealing with serious issues like the severe flooding in Selkirk. In addition, the Amphibex icebreaker is currently unavailable for use in Selkirk.

Mr. Speaker, given these impediments, what options is the minister exploring to relieve the ice-jams and the impact on Selkirk and surrounding area?

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the press release from the City of Selkirk last week in which Mayor David Bell commented that he was proud of the combined effort of all emergency responders and civic staff. We are working very closely with the City of Selkirk and the R.M.s. There is an emergency office that is located in the City of Selkirk city hall. We have been out there and several ministers have been out there, myself included. There is 24/7

coverage. People who needed to be evacuated have been evacuated. There is work going on every hour of the day to watch what is happening to ensure public safety is at the top of the list. We will continue to work with our partners.

Government Response

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that residents and business owners are facing an immediate need to protect their property. The water continues to rise. We're hearing as late as noon today that many residents can't find sand or sandbags to protect their property.

We're seriously asking the minister: What is she doing today to help these vulnerable residents?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): We have had staff from Water Stewardship on the ground from the first moment. They have been working co-operatively. EMO is involved and they have set up a professionally-run Emergency Measures Operations centre. We are continuing to monitor. We are continuing to work with our partners.

This is a natural phenomenon. I have been out there several times. It is quite a sight to see. I want to commend our partners and I want to commend the staff on the ground for keeping public safety No. 1 and for making sure that security is provided 24/7 for the people of Selkirk while watching what is happening in the Red River. We all have to be very concerned about public safety and make sure that we are focussing on issues of importance here.

Investment in Manitoba Negotiations with Mitsubishi Corporation

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we saw last week, after the government tabled its budget, some very disappointing job creation numbers from Stats Canada ranking Manitoba in seventh place in job creation in 2006, with Manitoba having created only half the jobs of our neighbouring province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we have learned that as part of the Premier's effort to rectify this record, they're in the final stages of negotiations with the Mitsubishi company, with a view toward bringing a major investment to the province of Manitoba with the creation of an excess of a thousand jobs and significant government incentives.

I wonder if the Premier can outline for the House today the details of the agreement with Mitsubishi and indicate when we can expect this announcement to be made.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite indicated there were significant incentives for the company requested, and I can report that the incentives are too high for the taxpayers of Manitoba.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier has indicated then, in addition to the seventh-place performance in Canada last year and having created only half the jobs of the province of Saskatchewan, why was it that Mitsubishi, a major international company, took a hard look at Manitoba and has decided not to invest here?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect, members opposite may have lost some \$40 million in MIOB loans. When we came into office, we were quite concerned about the government shovelling money out of the back of a truck without any guarantee for the taxpayers. I am pleased that our investments in Motor Coach, our investments in Flyer, our investments in other companies in Manitoba have resulted in increased employment. The employment levels are two to three times every month greater than what happened in the 1990s. The census numbers indicate that we were growing at half a percent per year. We're five times greater than that now and still have more work ahead of us.

The big-mouthed members opposite who shovelled money out of the back of a truck, \$40 million in losses; just because the media doesn't cover their loss of money doesn't mean to say we're going to continue to lose money. We don't lose money on those investments, Mr. Speaker.

Interest from Outside the Province

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): One thing we can assure the people of Manitoba is we will not use venture capital funds to backstop government losses as they did with Crocus, Maple Leaf, and as they have done on so many other cases. It's the Crocus shareholders who are now shouldering the losses of their mismanagement on Maple Leaf Distillers, of their mismanagement of a variety of other government investments. We lost Maple Leaf, we've lost Mitsubishi. What other failed projects are in the works right now? What other companies—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I know the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) is being constantly sued for all the failed projects that he's engaged in.

I wonder if the Premier can indicate how many other companies have taken a look at Manitoba and have decided to say no because of the negative investment climate that they've created. Is the Premier going to do with the Jets what he did with Maple Leaf and what he has done with Mitsubishi?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): You know, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Jets left town in 1996, regrettably. When the member opposite asks what more failed ventures, could he please table when he was chief of staff all the other failed ventures we haven't found yet, because we found 40 million of them.

In fact, the member opposite talks about Maple Leaf Distillers. We actually had to take ownership of a building that lost \$2.5 million when they loaned money and didn't have anything behind it. We were actually one of the only creditors that got our money back, plus, with Maple Leaf Distillers. Joint ventures with Crocus. Have you ever hear the term Isobord, Winnport, Westsun?

Just because people don't cover these things they actually happen and there's actually a factual trail. When we came into office, the members opposite created the Science and Technology Fund. The former minister, Merv Tweed, appointed one James Umlah, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Umlah, to be the CEO of this company. I love the way the Tories run around and hide the fact that they hired James Umlah. They promoted James Umlah. Why aren't they accountable for him?

Transportation Infrastructure Emergency Bridge Closures

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, motorists in this province have been heavily inconvenienced because this government has mismanaged our infrastructure needs for the past eight years. Traffic has been diverted into Portage la Prairie for the past six months because a bridge closure has severed our No. 1 national highway. Then, as if a premature bad April Fools' joke, on March 31 in a panic, this government closed the bridge on Highway No. 2 near Wawanesa due to a hole in the top of the bridge.

Can the minister assure the House and Manitobans that there will be no further emergency bridge or highway closures because of this government's eight-year neglect of Manitoba's infrastructure?

*(14:10)

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Here is a member that has a four-lane highway being built running right past his back door.

We're concerned about public safety. We trust the information from our engineers and when there are safety issues, Mr. Speaker, we deal with it. We just don't pass it off like they did in the 1990s.

Mr. Maguire: I remind the minister that the road was supposed to be finished last year in my constituency, but I feel sad for this minister that he's making a mockery of the situation of Manitoba's infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, for the past eight years, the provincial government has ignored warnings and complaints about the deteriorating condition of our transportation infrastructure. The NDP's funding announcements to improve our highways have arrived too late to catch up with the rate of decay, and we're continuing to see emergency closures of bridges as a result.

For the citizens of Wawanesa, Portage la Prairie, Letellier, other areas of Manitoba: How does this minister plan to move ahead on infrastructure renewal when our bridges are falling apart before he can even get to them?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, this government has made progress. We have been moving forward since 1999 on infrastructure projects and transportation projects.

In the middle 1990s, the members opposite raised gas tax, they reduced the amount of funding to transportation in the same breath, and the Leader of the Official Opposition was there as the guiding force. When he was there, why didn't he, at the time, put those gas tax dollars back into transportation?

Department of Infrastructure and Transportation Administration Spending

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Funds may be going towards the department of transportation and government services. But, Mr. Speaker,

administration expenditures have steadily increased, while over the past eight years, \$200 million has been diverted from roads and bridges in this minister's department.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister provide details on why he has allowed his department's administration costs to balloon so out of control when the safety of Manitoba drivers and their families are in such jeopardy?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): We look forward to seeing how they're going to vote on this particular budget.

Every year, since 1999, they've been voting against balanced budgets. Continually, we've put money into transportation and infrastructure, and again, they vote against the budget. Continually, we see their reaction to a government that's moving forward with regard to infrastructure and transportation.

The Gas Tax Accountability Bill, one of the first in Canada that has been brought forward to put gas tax revenues into infrastructure, they vote against that. They stonewall every move the government has tried to make with regard to infrastructure. We've announced a \$4-billion, 10-year program, the first in the history of Manitoba. There is a five-year plan moving transportation forward and infrastructures forward in this province, and Manitobans know it. They did nothing. We're doing—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Provincial Day-Care Funding Day-Care Closures

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, it is a well known fact that southeast Winnipeg is one of the fastest growing areas of Winnipeg with new families needing day care. Last week we heard that a day-care centre in St. Vital has closed after 25 years, leaving parents and 50 children scrambling to find new space. The sign on the door states: Closing due to the lack of funding from the government.

To the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh): Why did this centre have to close?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): One of the things we did find in government is they actually would put a number for child care and then have Treasury Board direction from one person named Julian Benson. You might recall him. You might have recalled Julian Benson who said: Even though we put the number in

the budget, you are not authorized to spend up to \$10 million of this budget amount.

So they would put a budget out, put out a press release and actually tell people not to invest in children. We have increased our child-care budget dramatically. I'll have to check and see whether this is a private agency or a non-profit public one that we're investing in. I'll double-check that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would ask members opposite: We lost \$14 million in investments in child care with the federal Conservative budget. I'd ask the members—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, I find that totally unbelievable. This government is enjoying \$400 million with a new funding from the federal government—\$400 million. They have \$600 million worth of new spending. This day-care centre says it's closing due to the lack of funding from the government. Now how can this Premier (Mr. Doer) stand up and say, just like *Oliver Twist* go down to Ottawa: We want more, Mr. Prime Minister? We want more.

Mr. Speaker: Why did this day care have to close?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the particular child care, I understand that it's a private business. The MLA for the area and the child-care office are assisting the parents. I understand that 30 new spaces have already been identified.

But, Mr. Speaker, it really is something. It's a real sendup, it's a real cut up to hear Conservatives in Canada asking questions about child care. This is the government that has more than doubled the investment in child care for Manitobans. I can say, as a parent who has relied on licensed child care that has enabled our family to get involved in many opportunities, and perhaps one of the reasons why I'm here today to serve, we know the importance of child care.

Stay tuned, Mr. Speaker, there are investments in budget 2007 that will continue to grow child care in Manitoba.

Mr. Reimer: We hear the platitudes from the Premier (Mr. Doer). We hear the platitudes from the

Minister of Family Services that they are spending all this money on child care. But, Mr. Speaker, the truth is you've had 50 children and families looking for new spaces because they've had to close. It mentioned that they're closing due to government funding.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you cannot keep blaming the federal government when they have unprecedented transfer payments of over \$400 million. They say that, well, we need more money because the federal government cut this part. Why did this day care have to close when they say they have all this money for day care?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, businesses can make decisions about closing, but I remind the members opposite that it is this government that has funded 6,600 more child-care spaces in Manitoba.

I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, to confirm to the Legislature that today we made an announcement on child care. As opposed to the Leader of the Liberal Party, today we have reduced the non-subsidized fees—the fees for child care in Manitoba—with a new investment of almost \$3 million. We'll see savings, for example, starting with as much as \$104 per child per year in Manitoba.

I can say this: The name of this budget is *The Building Budget*; it's not the backfilling budget. Stay tuned; there's more coming.

Health Care Number of Hospital Beds

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this government's track record when it comes to accountability and transparency is very poor. On Thursday, the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) stood up in this House and said that there was zero hallway medicine in Manitoba. A few months ago, the Premier (Mr. Doer) stood up in this House and said there was zero hallway medicine in this province. Any nurse, doctor or ER patient will say that they are both dead wrong.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us why her government continues to insult patients and front-line staff with this kind of misinformation being put on the record.

* (14:20)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I believe the Member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) had a caveat concerning her statement on the Swan River hospital. But, seriously speaking, we know that

challenges in emergency departments exist today and we continue to make investments in ensuring that the culture that exists in our hospitals is not one where 28, 27, 29 people, on average, line the hallways.

We have more work to do but we know that today the appearance of people in hallways is down greater than 80 percent. We need to continue to move forward with this and that's just what we're going to do, Mr. Speaker.

Review of Regional Health Authorities

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, even the Minister of Health just acknowledged that the Deputy Premier and the Premier are misleading Manitobans. She's even admitted that there are patients in the hallways.

Accountability by a government shouldn't occur just before an election. This government has refused to review regionalization for eight years. They have allowed the administrative costs in the RHAs to skyrocket over these past eight years with money being taken away from front-line patient care because of it.

I'd like to ask this Minister of Health why this NDP government is waiting just before an election, before doing the right thing and reviewing regionalization.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): It's good to have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to put some factual information on the record concerning numbers of people existing in hallways. That's on the Web site, not being concealed like in the days of the members opposite when on average 27, 28, 29 people languished there for weeks.

Secondly, we know that when we came into office, Manitoba had the third-highest percentage of health spending on administration. We know that CIHI reported last year, December of 2006, we're now the second lowest at 1.3.

We still have more work to do. That's why this external review we announced today and signalled in our Throne Speech on the 10th anniversary of regionalization is going to continue to help us serve even better for the patients in Manitoba.

Mrs. Driedger: This government forces nurses to fudge numbers so we don't even know how many patients there are in hallways, and that's a legacy of this government. Government accountability is needed for good health care, yet we have a Minister of Health who has sat on an alarming maternity

report for 13 months before passing it on to the RHAs.

I would like to ask her today: Why, in this review of regionalization, has she not shone the light on their own responsibility and accountability towards regionalization? Where is the government's responsibility being looked at in this regionalization review?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, we expect members opposite to challenge us in the House and hold the government's feet to the fire, but we don't expect consistently for misinformation to be put on the record.

Indeed, the way that numbers are reported are absolutely consistent with when the Tories were in power, absolutely consistent with the way that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), the former chief of staff, suggested they should be put into place, incidentally the same chief of staff who takes all kinds of accolades for himself for putting regionalization in place in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, we think it's a good time to continue to improve at the 10-year anniversary. We're going to continue to be transparent and accountable, something clearly foreign to members opposite.

Crocus Investment Fund Request for Regulatory Changes

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The Premier (Mr. Doer) and his government have always said they were at arm's length from the Crocus Investment Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I table today a fax transmission dated January 24, 2002. The fax transmission is from James Umlah, chief investment officer at the Crocus Investment Fund to Mr. Eugene Kostyra of the Community Economic Development Committee of Cabinet, one of the Premier's top lieutenants.

The fax transmission is a request for the NDP to make regulatory changes to allow Crocus to put money from its reserve fund into a debt obligation of the University of Manitoba as a backdoor way to fund the proposed Smartpark research park.

My question is to the Premier: Why did the Premier ever think he would get away with trying to hide his office's direct involvement in the Crocus Investment Fund fiasco?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I thank the member for the document. This is another example of a transaction that did not proceed.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the document shows clearly the close links between the highest levels in the NDP government and the members, the principals, of the Crocus Investment Fund.

The Auditor General's report on the Crocus Investment Fund refers to the fact that the principals had direct access to a higher authority when they sought to make changes of interest to the higher authority rather than to the interests of the shareholders or investors of the Crocus Investment Fund.

I ask the Premier: Will the Premier now acknowledge that either he himself or Eugene Kostyra was the higher authority referred to by the Auditor General in his report on the Crocus Investment Fund?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The member opposite knows and is trying to create some kind of illusion of new information. The member opposite knows that CEDC and its role was examined by the Auditor General in the report.

Crocus Investment Fund Public Inquiry

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): If there is anyone in this Chamber trying to create an illusion, it's this Premier. The facts are there. We got yet another yellow envelope today which clearly shows a direct connection with possibly the higher authority.

There is so much that is there. This Premier must think Manitobans are fools to try to believe that he can continue with his grand illusion of innocence. This government is guilty and there needs to be a public inquiry. Mr. Speaker, 33,000 Crocus investors have lost millions because of government incompetence and they're trying to hide. The public have a right to a public inquiry so that we can find all the other hidden bits and pieces of information.

When is this Premier going to have the courage to call the public inquiry?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, one day we are accused of doing too much. The next day we're accused of doing too little. I wish the members would get their story together.

The Auditor's report very clearly indicates that there were communications at several different levels

of government. The important thing is what happened with those communications. The superfund was never set up. The transactions in question did not proceed. What that confirms is the government acted responsibly in the interest of taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Private Andy Patzer

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize Private Andy Patzer, a former constituent of mine who served with the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan and is now stationed in Edmonton.

Andy had a wide variety of experiences as he contributed to the Canadian mission, from serving as an escort for media to providing communications support to the PPCLI. Andy's group also worked with American and Afghanistan forces and he relayed stories of the appreciation that the Canadian Forces received in the country. Specifically, he discussed one Afghanistan officer who tearfully explained his joy that the country was coming together and rebuilding with Canadian help.

The bravery and selflessness Andy has displayed through his actions deserve the utmost respect and recognition. He has been a tremendous representative on the international stage for our local community, our province and our country. His willingness to help those in need halfway across the world represents what Canada and Manitoba is all about.

Andy was recently recognized for his achievements along with 300 soldiers by Brigadier-General David Fraser in a ceremony that was televised by Global.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend Andy for his contributions in Afghanistan and thank him for continuing to make our world a safer place. Thank you.

* (14:30)

Community Newspaper Day

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the upcoming Community Newspaper Day. This day was first recognized unanimously by the House on April 17, 2005. I would like to take the time to recognize the vital role that local newspapers play in facilitating community discussion and providing commentary on

important local issues that may be overlooked by other media.

Mr. Speaker, by sharing stories throughout the neighbourhoods, towns and villages, these papers are not only reporting but are also participating in creating community. Long hours are spent every week by reporters and staff across the province ensuring coverage of the many important stories while still presenting them in an interesting and creative way.

In rural communities, covering stories can be especially challenging due to the many towns and villages the newspaper may cover. This makes the staff of community newspapers a persistent and astute group of people. In my own constituency of St. James, the *Metro* does an excellent job of seeking out interesting and important issues that affect the readers.

They have also recently become involved in an innovative new program called the Citizen Journalist Corps that is meant to facilitate communication between the community and the *Metro*. I have had the pleasure of working with Rick Smith, one of the ambassadors who has shown his commitment to the community with his involvement on the team and brings a wealth of experience, having lived in St. James for the past 36 years.

Groups such as the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association play an important role in ensuring that local newspapers have access to high-quality publishing and maintain their claim to high-quality journalism. They have been doing so for 87 years. This group of 46 papers reaches over half a million readers each week, a commendable feat of community service. By recognizing the work of community papers, we acknowledge the important contribution of local, grassroots media to a thriving democracy. Newspapers create a vital connection between people and ideas, a relationship that cannot be underestimated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pembina Wellness Centre

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about an exciting project that is underway in the community of Manitou.

The Pembina Wellness Centre has announced it will proceed with a new step in its development. The next stage is designed to provide space for an indoor pool, change rooms and exercise rooms. This project will provide therapeutic services for the area and

make a significant contribution to the quality of life of the residents.

The level of community involvement in this project is quite remarkable, and volunteers have played a huge role in its success. People such as Larry Selby, Eileen Vodden and Travis Long have been working very hard and diligently over the last several years. Approximately \$500,000 in local support has already been pledged.

The Wellness Steering Committee has done a tremendous job of planning and co-ordinating the activities and development of this project. They have engaged in the thorough planning, worked diligently to include stakeholders and ensure everyone is involved in the project.

Projects such as this are very important to rural communities. They provide citizens with a local option for these services instead of having to drive to a major centre. However, it takes strong commitment on the part of the community and its leaders to see ideas turn to reality.

Mr. Speaker, this is an example of the community taking the initiative to turn a great idea into a reality. Thank you.

Canadian Wheat Board

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it is with regret and profound disappointment in Canada's self-proclaimed new government that I rise today to speak of the potential demise of one of the farming community's most valuable assets, the Canadian Wheat Board.

Despite the fact that only 13.8 percent of farmers overall across the Prairies voted for an end to the role of the Canadian Wheat Board in the recent federal barley plebiscite, the mean, newly green Tory machine in Ottawa appears intent on carrying out the role dictated to them by their corporate masters south of the border.

In contravention of the law of the land, the Harper Tories have indicated they will impose regulatory change in order to bypass Parliament where support for their initiative to kill the Wheat Board is lacking. Neo-Conservatives across this land are striving to put an end to the family farm in favour of following the corporate agenda.

When a clear, unambiguous question was put to those same farmers here in Manitoba by the

provincial government, 62 percent voted to retain the single-desk selling of barley as opposed to the open market.

The CWB has served western Canadian producers well over the past several decades in achieving premiums for our grains on international markets and in guaranteeing uniform delivery services regardless of where farms are located. In recent years, extremely narrow margins and economy of scale have led to larger and larger farms, which have made it difficult for average farmers to compete. Orderly marketing supply management and farmer-controlled entities, such as the Wheat Board, serve to offset this trend. I'm proud to be a member of a party and a government that will stand up for farmers in defence of the rural way of life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Nominee Program

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Nominee Program was a federal Liberal government initiative back in 1998. This is an agreement that was reached back in 1998 that ultimately, I believe, came up with the best immigration program that the province has ever seen. Having said that, I'm circulating a petition because I do believe there's a need for modifications. This is a petition which I believe most people could get behind and support because they recognize the importance of the Provincial Nominee Program.

I'm going to recite the petition. It reads:

The background to this petition is as follows.

(1) Immigration is critically important to the future of our province, and the 1998 federal Provincial Nominee Program is the best immigration program that Manitoba's ever had.

(2) The government needs to recognize that the unnecessary backlogs in processing PNP applications cause additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

(3) The government needs to recognize the unfairness in its current policy on who qualifies to be an applicant, more specifically by not allowing professionals such as health care workers to be able to apply for PNP certificates in the same way a computer technician would be able to.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier and his government to consider improving and strengthening the Provincial Nominee Program in order to recognize and acknowledge how important immigration is to our province.

Mr. Speaker, I truly do believe that there are many things that could be done that would make a huge difference in ensuring that the Provincial Nominee Program could become a better program. This was a federal Liberal initiative. It's a good program I would like to see. Back in 1998, it was a provincial Conservative, federal Liberal initiative. It can use some changes that would even make it a better program. When we talked about opening the horizons into the future, I think that we should be modifying this program to better facilitate more people being able to come. The Premier talks about the number 20,000 as a goal. It is indeed achievable. We could get 18,000 very easily through this program. Thank you.

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

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), who has unlimited time.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I'm just asking for indulgence of the House. There's been past practice when the past leaders have been ready to speak, and I understand our leader has some commitments out in the hallway, and, as has been past practice, I'll be asking for leave of the House for a 10-minute recess.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Under our guidelines, there's nothing that identifies it as past practice, but if the member is requesting unanimous consent of the House, that would be okay. The honourable member would have to stand and request that.

Mr. Goertzen: I request unanimous leave of the House for a 10-minute recess so that these duties can be tended to.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to recess for 10 minutes? *[Agreed]*

It's been agreed to. So we will recess for 10 minutes. At about nine minutes would you like us to ring the bell once to let everyone know? *[Agreed]*

Okay, well, you'll hear that chime. We will now recess for 10 minutes.

The House recessed at 2:40 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order. As previously agreed, the 10 minutes that we recessed have now expired.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, somewhat of an unusual circumstance, there still seems to be some discussion in the hallway. I wonder if it's the will of the House to not see the clock until the leader returns, and I want to give my assurance to the House it's certainly not our intention that it will be unnecessarily long.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same issue?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the same point of order—

Mr. Speaker: Same issue.

Mr. Chomiak: On the same issue that the Opposition House Leader has raised, I think that, in the parlance of the House, or in the methodology of the House and the standards by which we accommodate each other in order to best optimize the maximum opportunity for the public to both have an opportunity to hear our comments and reflect on the viewpoints of members of the House, and the fact that we all work on this together collaboratively, I think it's appropriate that we in the government respect the opportunity to allow that discourse to happen around the House, within the House, and both during and after the specific period when the media have the opportunity to approach and ascertain the opinions of the public and provide them with information regarding the issues of the day that have arisen and those that may occur in the future.

To that end, I think that all of us are in agreement in this House that that occasionally occurs where we offer the accommodation to members to participate in that particular exercise. Surely, I know from my own experience there have been many occasions when I've been unable to return promptly in order to discuss matters of the nature that we're discussing here, most notably the budget and the importance that it has for Manitobans. There have been occasions where it's been accommodated on all sides of the House.

In fact, I remember one particular instance, during the Estimates debate when I, in fact, had bronchitis and had difficulty in actually phrasing my questions, and the then-Health Minister of the day allowed time for me to take a break. In fact, I was permitted to ask questions away from my seat in order to accommodate the fact that my voice was almost non-existent at the time. That was appreciated in the discourse and in the harmony of the House in order to allow us to all have the opportunity to exchange debate and deal with matters as they come forward.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's notable that members of the House are vigorously dealing with matters of importance and intend to engage in the budget debate as we proceed. I think that it's a reflection on all members of the House that we show respect for each other and afford each other the opportunity when occasions arise for individuals to have their participation here as well as carry out their other functions, the dual functions that one has in many cases in this Chamber. The functions are manifold that we undertake in this Chamber.

So I think that the suggestion of the House Leader for the Conservative Party is useful for all members of the House, and I look forward to continuing this discussion. I know that, for myself, I'm preparing for budget debate for this afternoon which will afford me the opportunity to comment on the budget. I think all members of the House, both experienced and those who are less experienced in the House, look forward to the opportunity of debating the budget, the budget being a fundamental document of government and sets the tone and the direction of government policy and, in fact, is a matter of confidence for the government and is one of the striking features of the parliamentary system that a vote of confidence on the budget is essential to the continuing operation of the government and of the business of the House.

It's not a debate or an issue that should be lightly dealt with, Mr. Speaker. I think it's in the interests of all members to continue and to vigorously deal with this matter. So I concur with the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) on that particular matter.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. We'll resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, who has unlimited time.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the members of the House for their indulgence and thank the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) for his comments. He is somebody that I had the opportunity to spend some time sitting next to at the enthronement of the new Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church last summer. He was good enough through that service to provide translation for me, and I certainly appreciate the fact that he is somebody that I certainly respect and I appreciate his comments today.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just pick up where we left off on Thursday afternoon with respect to the matter before the House, which is the Finance Minister's motion with respect to the 2007 budget. We have certainly indicated that in certain aspects there are promises and proposals within this budget that at first glance look promising and at first glance look like things that are worthy of support. I've indicated to the House some of those items, some of those projects which the government has not taken action on to date but which is now promising to take action on, almost eight years into the mandate of the government.

Mr. Speaker, there are broad issues impacting the province of Manitoba in terms of where we stand today as a province. We were looking to the government and to the Minister of Finance in this budget for some decisive action in some of the areas that are of concern to regular Manitobans, to Manitoba families, to young people who are making their decisions about where they're going to live and work, invest and raise their own families.

We were looking for action to acknowledge some of the mistakes of the past with respect to mismanagement in health care and to take bold steps toward rectifying some of those mistakes and moving forward in the right direction to restore the front lines of health care, Mr. Speaker, to cut back on

some of the bureaucracy that the government has built up over the past number of years and to put the resources where they're needed, which is on the floor of our health care facilities.

* (15:00)

We were looking for the government to acknowledge and take steps to rectify the fact that the Conference Board of Canada has ranked Manitoba 10th out of 10 when it comes to health care. We were looking for some acknowledgment and some action to acknowledge and to move forward on the fact that Statistics Canada, last week, has found that Manitoba is seventh place in the country on job creation, having created half the jobs of the province of Saskatchewan last year.

Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg and Manitoba, regrettably, have become known as the car theft capital of Canada. We were looking for some acknowledgment on the part of the government as to the scale of this problem which has many dimensions to it, and complexities, of course. But we were looking for some indication of understanding and we were looking for some indication of action when it came to dealing with these important issues.

We've seen over the last seven years the outflow of 35,000 Manitobans to other provinces. We've seen the Province of Manitoba become increasingly dependent on the federal government for transfer payments. The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, who we think is doing very good work in all corners of our province today, Mr. Speaker, has launched a campaign just recently making Manitoba a have province. We support the Manitoba Chamber in that very worthy initiative. It's a goal that we all aspire to.

If we look back through the history of our province, the proud history of Manitoba, we know that we have been a province that historically has punched above our weight. We were the greatest of the so-called small provinces in the country. In recent decades we, of course, have been overtaken by the province of Alberta. The oil and gas in that province have provided a great boost to its economy.

We've also, though, always been a smaller province than the provinces of Ontario and Québec. But in that next tier of smaller provinces, Manitoba has always been a leader. Even among all of the provinces, if you look back at the great constitutional debates that have taken place in our country, it's Manitoba that has led the way. I know members opposite recall, and I recall as a younger person who

was not yet a member of this House, the days around the debate over the Meech Lake Accord, the stand that was taken by the former member for Rupertsland with respect to that issue. Mr. Harper is somebody I have had the pleasure of speaking with just in recent weeks. I certainly know that members of this House and leaders of this province from all parties have taken strong leadership roles in important issues facing our country.

So that is why it is disappointing, Mr. Speaker, when I speak to Manitobans and they express to me their disappointment that Manitoba is 10th on health care. They express their disappointment that we're the car theft capital of the country and they express their disappointment that we're 10th out of 10 in health care.

These are not Manitoba rankings. It is not the Manitoba way to trail the pack in so many important areas. We know that across North America, and indeed throughout the western world, we are in a period of unprecedented economic expansion. As I indicated on Thursday, the great nations of India and China and others are in periods of tremendous growth. With that growth certainly come challenges, Mr. Speaker, but it is a period of growth and that growth has spilled over through North America. Every state and province in the country. Every state in the United States, every province in country of Canada has experienced tremendous growth in recent years.

Here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, we have seen some tepid growth. We've seen some very halting steps as the rest of the country has marched forward strongly, and as the rest of the country runs, we've seen Manitoba limp. That's not a position that Manitobans are used to being in. It's not a position that we as proud Manitobans who look back through our history of the great leadership of our preceding generations—we were discussing earlier today, the great sacrifices made by men and women at Vimy Ridge in defence of our country, many, many of whom were from Manitoba. We've talked in this House about the many other great and proud moments in our history as Manitobans where great, bold, courageous steps have been taken by men and women to move us forward.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the great cultural and artistic talent that exists in our province and the leading role that Manitoba has played in that respect. Some of the country's great authors have originated in Manitoba. I had the pleasure some weeks ago of

meeting somebody of whom I had heard previously but had only met for the first time, Ila Bussidor, who has written a book about the relocation of the Dene people from Tadoule Lake to Churchill many years ago and the various and sad impacts that decision had on the people of that community. The writing is powerful and it is moving, and it's a sort of glimpse into the greatness of Manitoba and the Manitoba people.

We've seen so many great examples of Manitobans, whether it be in performing arts; we think of Jennifer Lyon, who's done so much to make our province proud. We think of the many great athletes and other performers, musicians, and others who have put Manitoba on the map; our Royal Winnipeg Ballet, which is receiving some commitment of support in this budget. We support that commitment, Mr. Speaker, and we've seen the other performing arts groups in our province do well, and we, on this side of the House, support them. We certainly want to see them continue to do the great things they do for our province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I was referring to the fact that we've seen growing dependence on the federal government, and it's an indication of the fact that we have a government which seems more interested in going to Ottawa for handouts than in building up the strength and the power of our own province.

Earlier today, we heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) complaining about a \$14 million issue that he has with the federal government at a time when the federal government has increased funding to the province of Manitoba from last year's budget to this year's budget by some \$400 million. So he complains about 14, on the one hand, while he's received the benefit of 400 million new dollars from the federal government from last year's budget to this year's budget.

So we are concerned, Mr. Speaker, about the growing dependency of Manitoba on transfers from Ottawa. The more you get in the form of equalization payments, the more that's an indication of a relative decline vis-à-vis other provinces in the country. It's not a good sign when we continue to have this level of dependency. We make ourselves vulnerable as a province when we rely too extensively on the goodwill of other levels of government and the economic performance of other provinces.

We would like to see, and we would have liked to have seen in this budget, a clear plan and a strategy to build up our own source strength within

Manitoba, the power of the Manitoba economy to fund our government and to provide us with the strength to stand on our feet and punch above our weight as we have done in past years under past provincial leaders.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen a failure in this budget to implement taxation measures to make Manitoba competitive with other provinces as other provinces vault ahead, moving with great strength and optimism into the future with tax reductions, thereby trusting their citizens to spend more of their hard-earned money. We have seen in Manitoba crumbs off the table in terms of tax reductions in this budget, and we know from past history that with every announcement of a minor tax reduction under this government, there have been hidden taxes and fees on the other side that have taken money from the other pocket of Manitobans just as they put money into one. It's the stealth-hidden taxes that have taken their toll on the Manitoba economy, and it's why the majority of Manitobans today believe that they have not received income tax reductions over the past seven years.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're concerned about our tax position vis-à-vis the rest of Canada, and we're concerned about the inability or the failure of the government to entice businesses to Manitoba. We've been concerned about crime and the failure to address seriously issues of auto theft, gang activity, and violent crime. We've expressed concern of the failure to address chronic problems in health care.

Only today, Mr. Speaker, presumably as yet another pre-election ploy, the government has announced an intent to review the regional health authority structure within the province, something that should have been done some time ago.

* (15:10)

Mr. Speaker, we have seen under this government a failure to address the emergency physician shortage that's crippled Manitoba hospitals and is threatening to close even more emergency rooms around our province. We've seen a failure to implement an effective strategy to reduce wait times for diagnostic testing, some surgical procedures, and appointments with specialists. We've seen the failure to address the anxieties and needs of farm families. We saw the *Free Press* editorial by Curtis Brown just a couple of days ago indicating that the budget has failed to deal with the issues of angst in our rural communities.

We've seen the failure on the part of the government to definitively declare an end to their practice of raiding Manitoba Hydro thereby weakening Manitoba's most important Crown corporation, the Crown corporation that will power Manitoba into the future with clean, renewable energy. We've seen the government's mismanagement of the child and welfare system leading to vulnerable—[*interjection*]

We're discussing the issue of vulnerable children. The Premier (Mr. Doer) is heckling from his seat, Mr. Speaker. And we've seen a failure in this budget on the part of the government to address the issue of mismanagement within our child welfare system.

We've seen the failure on the part of this government to embark on a long overdue science-based effort to clean up Lake Winnipeg, contrary to the Premier's earlier promise made just weeks ago. I mean we don't even need to go back to 1999 for this promise, Mr. Speaker, the 1999 famous broken hallway medicine promise. This was just a few weeks ago, and he's broken it already, the promise that the environment would trump all other issues in government. These were the Premier's words just a few weeks ago, and then we've got next to nothing in terms of a science-based strategy to clean up Lake Winnipeg.

We've seen a failure in this budget to acknowledge the government's inaction on the environment. We've seen a 480,000-tonne increase in greenhouse gas emissions between 2004 and 2005, the highest percentage increase in Canada. A 20 percent increase in greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba between 2004 and 2005, and it's no wonder that Al Gore and Governor Schwarzenegger have chosen to fly right over Manitoba when they go on their tours of Canada to meet with leaders on the environment. [*interjection*]

The Premier says stay tuned. We shall look forward to the Premier's next photo op with the governor of California whenever that may come.

Mr. Speaker, the budget has taken a late step—[*interjection*]

I'm going to resist the temptation to engage in some of the very high quality heckling that I hear going on right now, Mr. Speaker. I'm tempted to get involved, but I don't know that that adds anything to this debate.

So I just want to say that we are concerned about the fact that there's been a step taken but not enough to deal with the strength and the competitiveness of our post-secondary institutions.

We've seen a failure on the part of the government to provide clear information about the "Spirited Energy" campaign and other examples of mis- and overspending on the part of this government that even their own Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) thinks needs to be audited. He voted in favour of an audit of the "Spirited Energy" program. That's something we haven't seen in some time, a clear lack of confidence on the part of the Minister of Finance when it comes to the oversight of his Minister of Competitiveness, the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) who isn't sufficiently trusted by his own Minister of Finance to administer the "Spirited Energy" campaign, and that's why the minister has voted in favour of an audit of the "Spirited Energy" campaign, so that we can find out where they've spent the money of those hundreds of thousands of friendly Manitobans who have contributed money to this government over the past years.

We've seen a failure on the part of the government to be accountable to Manitobans for major cost overruns on the floodway expansion project and the Manitoba Hydro office tower.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we have raised the issue previously, both inside and outside of this House, of the pattern of misinformation that's been put on the record by the Finance Minister and the Premier (Mr. Doer) when it comes to the Crocus Investment Fund. It's an issue where Manitobans are looking for answers, they're looking for the truth, they're looking for facts, and we've seen an unwillingness on the part of the Premier and his government to call an inquiry which could've been done two years ago. It could've been over with, done and over with 18 months ago, and yet they've chosen the strategy of stonewalling which has gotten us to where we are today. As recently as an hour ago, yet another leaked document detailing communications between people at the senior ranks at Crocus and the senior ranks of the Premier's office, people who report directly to the Premier, or did report to the Premier prior to his resignation, and Mr. Umlah, who ran the Crocus Fund.

Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons why we have concerns about this budget. We've certainly indicated our concerns about the credibility of the

Finance Minister, who, in his 2003 budget, made the statement that Crocus was doing a great job of investing in the Manitoba economy, a statement that he must have known at the time was a false statement. So we've got a budget today that is tainted as a result of the Finance Minister's record of putting misinformation into his past budget. We've seen a budget that has failed to deal with the many important and significant challenges facing our province.

So, after seven and a half years and after eight budgets, the government is demonstrating that it's tired, that it doesn't have the vision, the boldness and the energy to move forward to deal with the major issues that face our province.

On the basis of all of those comments, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik),

THAT the Motion be amended by deleting all the words after "House" and substituting:

therefore regrets that this budget neglects many of the current and future needs of Manitobans by:

- (a) failing to set out a coherent plan to stem the flow of people out of Manitoba, after the loss of 35,000 Manitobans to other provinces since 1999; and
- (b) failing to make Manitoba a have province, reduce the debt and decrease the NDP government's reliance on federal transfer payments; and
- (c) failing to implement taxation measures to make Manitoba competitive with other provinces; and
- (d) failing to entice businesses to come to Manitoba and spur economic and job growth while Manitoba now ranks seventh in job creation as it falls even further behind other jurisdictions; and
- (e) failing to address serious issues of crime such as auto theft, gang activity, and violent crime; and
- (f) failing to address chronic problems in health care, which has led Manitoba to be ranked 10th out of 10 provinces on health by the Conference Board of Canada; and
- (g) failing to address the emergency physician shortage that has crippled Manitoba hospitals

and threatens to close more emergency rooms;
and

(h) failing to implement an effective strategy to reduce wait times for diagnostic testing, surgical procedures and appointments with specialists;
and

(i) failing to address the needs of farm families, increase slaughter capacity, develop a comprehensive biofuel strategy, and provide a sustainable plan for growth of agriculture and the rural economy; and

(j) failing to declare a definitive end to the NDP government's practice of raiding Manitoba Hydro's revenues, which has negatively impacted the Crown corporation's financial position; and

(k) failing to address the fact that the government's mismanagement of the child welfare system has led to vulnerable children falling through the cracks; and

(l) failing to embark on a long-overdue, science-based effort to clean up Lake Winnipeg, contrary to the Premier's earlier promise that the environment "trumps all other issues" in government; and

(m) failing to acknowledge that the NDP government's inaction on the environment resulted in a 480,000-tonne increase of Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions between 2004 and 2005, the highest percentage increase in Canada; and

(n) failing to make meaningful progress to ensure the strength and competitiveness of our post-secondary institutions; and

(o) failing to provide clear information about the "Spirited Energy" campaign, the subject of yet another investigation of this NDP government by the Auditor General; and

(p) failing to be accountable to Manitobans for exorbitant cost overruns on the floodway expansion project and Manitoba Hydro office tower.

As a consequence, the government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

* (15:20)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity of speaking on the budget debate. As I said earlier, it's a very important debate. I have to admit that it's hard to get fired up—and it's not personal—following the comments of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), but those were so flat and so uninspiring and so lacking in vision that it's even hard as a politician to get up and—there was no vision. It was a retread speech of the old, tired Tory phrases that we've heard over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, this budget, for the eighth consecutive year—I think it's the first time in Manitoba's recent history to have balanced the budget. Members opposite have said nothing about that. The first time a budget is GAAP-compliant, members opposite said nothing. The first budget to ever move towards 80 percent provincial funding of education, members opposite said nothing. You know why, Mr. Speaker? Because they're afraid. They are afraid of how this budget is going to be received by the public of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first budget since the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, since the theft of MTS by members opposite that the only money drawn from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is that dealing with wait times, and that's because it's federally mandated.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Acting Speaker, a point that was hammered over and over again by the Leader of the Opposition was the fact that we have more money in equalization from Ottawa. We have more money and every single province has more per capita funding based on population, but I don't hear the people of Ontario saying, oh, we don't want the money from the federal government. I didn't hear the government of Québec saying, oh, we don't want the money from the federal government. I didn't hear the government of Saskatchewan saying, oh, we don't want—in fact, the government of Saskatchewan wants more, as does the government of Newfoundland, even though they have oil revenues. Notwithstanding that, somehow members opposite take it as it's shameful in a country, a federation of this nature, to deal with equalization funding.

You know, Mr. Acting Speaker, it's strange that we heard a question today from members opposite who were not supportive of day care, to talk about the fact that this budget puts \$14 million in backfill to fill up the gap that had been promised to the Province of Manitoba for day care, that this

government, from our own revenues, put the money in to support families in Manitoba, and members opposite are voting against that. Members opposite are voting against the largest increase in police forces in Manitoba history. They are voting against it, as they did last year and as they did the year before.

Mr. Acting Speaker, how dare they. I was out door-knocking yesterday. They know, the public knows, what the Tory talks and what the Tory does. They know. They know that the federal government is responsible for the Criminal Code. The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) could stand up all they want, all day long, and say, oh, you're not tough enough on crime, notwithstanding that every civil authorization possible has been done on this side of the House to deal with crime. More Crown prosecutors, they voted against. More police officers, they voted against. The safer communities act, which is now being duplicated across the country by, dare I say, Conservative governments and Liberal governments, that was established by my predecessor in Manitoba has shut down 200 sites, 200 sites that were allowed to build up during the dreary Tory years.

The only growth industry during the 1990s was the growth industry in gangs and criminal activity that was allowed to fester in this province, take root in the 1990s, and now we are left with the—and, you know, I'm glad it's a New Democratic government because we're a government of action. We put in place more supports to police, an integrated task force, an auto theft task force that's based on the Regina model; you know, Regina, where unfortunately a young girl was killed by a stolen vehicle a week and a half ago as a result of auto theft. A 57-year-old woman was killed in New Brunswick as a result of auto theft.

Across the country, in various regions, it is a problem. I'm glad we have a program in Manitoba that deals with it. Let me read from an article in the *Brandon Sun*: Auto thefts skyrocket. Auto thefts skyrocket, talking about the tripling of auto theft in Manitoba. When I look, good heavens, the date is January 30, 1998; 1998. I remember being an MLA when the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) would regularly vote with the Conservative government, as he's done with the opposition now; 90 percent of the time they vote with the Conservatives.

Two individuals were struck and killed in my constituency by stolen autos: one at one end, one at the other end, and there were no programs in place like there are now. Thank God we have a New Democratic government that's taking action and will take responsibility even to areas that border on non-constitutionality.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I went a week and a half ago to Ottawa to talk to the Minister of Justice about making it tougher for criminals, and what did the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) say? The Member for Steinbach said I shouldn't be going to Ottawa, that I was wasting my taxpayers' money. I walked through the office of the Minister of Justice, and he thanked me. He thanked me, and he indicated that they were going to take the advice of Manitoba and other jurisdictions and tighten up the laws, the criminal laws that are made by the federal Conservative government. They're onside with our changes, and we're onside with their changes.

The Member for Steinbach somehow misses that fundamental point. He kind of misses that fundamental point that the criminal law is made by Ottawa, in a federated state. Maybe watching too much *Law & Order* where the states make law in the United States has confused the Member for Steinbach, but we don't make the criminal law. In fact, when we try to make criminal law, it's deemed unconstitutional. But the Member for Steinbach stands up regularly, sends up petitions telling Gary Doer to get tougher on crime.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we have more people incarcerated now in Manitoba than any other time in our history. We have more police on the streets than any other time in our history. We have more Crown prosecutors than any other time in our history, and the crime rate went down eight percent last year—eight percent.

Members opposite are following the George Bush strategy: If it bleeds, it leads. Crime. You know, if Willie Horton was in Manitoba, they'd have ads on Willie Horton. I can just see the Willie Horton ads. I remember 1995 when Gary Filmon had ads of jail gates closing on him, saying: We're going to get tough on crime. It's 1995. We're going to get tough on crime. That, by the way, was when our highest rate of crime in history—1992. Then it's gone down since, but members opposite forget that. They forget that. You know, it's convenient for members opposite to use crime as a vehicle because they have no vision.

You heard the speech, Mr. Acting Speaker. Did you hear that speech of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen)? All the speech talked about was the same lame old excuses that we heard for the past few months—the idea of Crocus which has affected many Manitobans, but it's been turned into a political football. I've had many people stop me and, at the door, say: Why are they dragging this out and turning it into a political football when the issue should be resolved and that we should move on with it? The members opposite use it as a convenient political football.

They say: Lower taxes. When they were in office, the small business tax was the highest or second-highest in the country. Eleven lean years: 1,500 nurses later, hundreds of doctors later, hundreds of jobs lost later. We come to office, and we lower the small business tax. And what does this budget do again? It lowers the small business tax. Members opposite are voting against a lowering in taxes. They're voting against the removal of \$125 off property taxpayers for the education tax. They're voting against it. They talk about taxes, and they talk about their philosophy. This government has removed more tax load in the years we've been in office than in an entire 11 lean years of the Conservative debacle.

* (15:30)

They go back to the old worn—I could see it all now. I could see the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) dressed up with his badge and his cowboy hat, and the Leader of the Opposition doing ads saying: We're going to lasso them. I'm Clint, this is my sidekick and we're going to get those criminals. We're going to set up boot camps.

They did set up boot camps, Mr. Acting Speaker, and then they did a report on boot camps that was quietly tucked away that said they didn't work. The recidivism rate was just as high as anything else. Whoops. Then they're going to say, we're going to get tough on crime even though we don't have jurisdiction over crime. Then they're going to say, we're going to get tough on kids, even though they don't have jurisdiction over kids. Then they're going to say, well, that NDP government isn't tough on kids or tough on crime, but we will be, knowing that we don't even have jurisdiction over that. We do not even have federal jurisdiction over that.

Mr. Acting Speaker, \$100 million in social housing programs in this budget, that's more than the entire 11 lean years of the mean, lean 11 Tory years.

A hundred million dollars in this budget in social housing programming. Who does that help? That helps those that are least able in our society to have the means to have a home. A lot of people volunteer and they make a big deal out of Habitat for Humanity, which is a great program, but we have tremendous difficulties with homelessness and lack of shelter in Manitoba. So we have put in place significant resources to deal with homelessness and providing homes and proper environments for individuals. That is a part of a crime-fighting strategy. That is part of an eradication, as well. But members opposite are voting against that as well.

A 50 percent increase for highways, Mr. Acting Speaker. You'd think that members opposite had paved the entire province. I daresay, we have, as I understand it, 10 times the amount of infrastructure funding than the previous members had. Members opposite are voting against this budget. I have been in several election campaigns where I've heard Tory and Liberal leaders successively talk about going to 70 percent funding of education property taxes. We're going to 80 percent, and they are voting against it.

The Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), with his 27-page plan for Winnipeg, Mr. Acting Speaker, is voting against a budget that lowers education taxes. The Member for Inkster, who is preoccupied with skulduggery and playing spy versus spy, is voting against a budget that's going to provide social housing, that's going to provide opportunities for Manitobans in terms of the economy which lowers school taxes, and also provides benefits to retirement plans for teachers.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, members opposite love, when they run out of things to talk about, first of all, they say, well, crime's your fault. Then they say, well, taxes are too high, even though they did nothing on those matters when they were in government. The next thing they turn to is the debt. That's the next one, the debt. I've read all of Sterling Lyon's 1976-1977 speeches. I heard a bunch of them. It's quite predictable. First it's Hydro, and we know what they're going to do with Hydro. Then it's taxes are too high. Then it's crime. Then it was the deficit, now it's the debt. You know, our debt-to-GDP ratio, as I understand it, is actually less than when those so-called fiscal managers left office.

When the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) was, I think, an adviser to then-Premier

Filmon, I am not sure, his resume says he was. When he was an adviser to Filmon, our debt-to-GDP ratio, it was higher than it is now. So they trot out the well-known horses. No vision, no talk about building the Province as we see in this budget for clean, green energy, for the expansion of Hydro, for housing initiatives, for infrastructure, for education and social services to help provide the tools, to help provide the instruments, to help provide the education to Manitobans to allow them to take advantage of the advances in the world today. An educated work force is probably the most important component. Labour shortages because of demographics and because of training strategies are probably our biggest challenge, Mr. Speaker. That's where we need investment. That's why, in Manitoba, we've been rated as the fastest-growing biotech development region in the country. Members opposite forget that. They're voting against that.

Mr. Speaker, I look for the contrary proposals from members opposite. I hear nothing. All I heard was talk about Crocus, talk about taxes, talk about Crocus and talk about taxes. I heard no alternative vision to the fact that we are the fastest-growing biotech region in the country. Go to a bio-conference and see the prominence that Manitoba has. Go to a bio-conference and watch that Smith Carter is building a lab, a three-level lab in New Zealand, or a level-four lab in Australia. Why is that? Because they built the lab here, and they have Manitoba expertise. Go talk to Krause Engineering that are worldwide providing assistance and they're based in Manitoba. I hear no support from members opposite for those Manitoba industries, for our environment rebates that provide and preserve technology here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter if you're a Republican, or a retired Tory, or a New Democrat, or a Liberal. It's very clear that the high-tech biosciences are the leading edge. Thank goodness that a New Democratic government under the leadership of the Premier (Mr. Doer), the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale), have realized that that is crucial. That and educating our work force, providing opportunities to our biggest growing demographic which is our First Nations communities that had to give them the opportunity to advance their skills. Part of what we are doing in terms of providing opportunities is providing more training, more skills to more people to fill the jobs that are going to be needed in the future.

We've created, Mr. Speaker, more jobs. You know, we're considered a leader in our training program. We're considered a leader in our immigration program. You know, I don't know what's happened to the then-Liberal Party. I remember being on that side of the House when they voted with the Tories all the time. Now I'm on this side of the House and they vote with the Tories all of the time. That suggests something to me. That suggests where the Liberal Party is. It also suggests where the Tory party is. I can read back Sterling Lyon's speeches from '76, and I hear the same comments.

In this budget we see growth. In this budget we see expansion of Hydro, we see expansion of technology training, we see expansion of social housing, we see more nurses. We see more doctors. We see more health care professionals across the board, and nary a word is heard from members opposite. Nary a word. The Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) loves to talk about the fact that, yes, we did vote for a Tory budget. We voted for a Tory budget. It was a pre-election budget. It was a pre-election budget we voted for and I daresay, we went through with a number of those expenditures, but boy, was there a whopping bunch of expenditures that weren't included in the budget. I'll never forget opening my briefing book and looking at the fiascos, the fiascos of the \$100 million in SmartHealth and being quite shocked by the hundreds of millions of dollars that had been allocated to ventures that we hadn't been made aware of in the House. I could go on and on about that, Mr. Speaker, as a particular point, but I want to return back to the budget.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen MRIs outside of Winnipeg, CAT scans outside of Winnipeg, surgeries outside of Winnipeg, more doctors outside of Winnipeg, nurses training positions outside of Winnipeg. It's all been during the regime of this government. I might note when I was in Calgary a couple of weeks ago, I happened to note the front page of the *Calgary Herald* saying, "Wait times in ER worst in Alberta's history." "Wait times in ER worst in Alberta's history." Front page, *Calgary Herald*. I don't think it came up in the Leg. I don't think it came up in the Alberta Legislature, but I did note it. I did.

* (15:40)

There's much more I could say about that except to say that when the member opposite talks about hallway medicine and she walked down the hallway

with then-Premier Filmon and the photographer took the picture of her and all those people in the hallway, the difference between then and now is those people in the hallway stayed for days and days and days. In fact, the editorial in the *Free Press* said that a woman stayed in the hallway for 28 days. That doesn't happen anymore. That doesn't happen since we put our hallway initiative in place. As we said many times, we may not be perfect but we have taken action. In my view, it's not a lot about ideology. It's really about taking problems and providing Manitoba solutions to those problems, being active in terms of the solutions, being active in how one deals with these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of this government. I was proud to door-knock yesterday. I was proud to have that opportunity yesterday when I went door-to-door as I did several weeks earlier and to look at the growth, look at the asset growth, the fact that more Manitobans—our housing market is robust. Our employment market is robust. Our immigration is robust. Our training is robust.

Mr. Speaker, we have some of the best doctors in the world. I speak specifically of Dr. Michael West who left in the 1990s, came back and is considered a world leader in neurosurgery and has been able to recruit individuals from outside of the province to come back to one of the best neurosurgery programs in the country—in the country—as a result of the program that we built up. We can't be No. 1 in everything but I do say members opposite are No. 1 in one thing and that is doom and gloom and actually in treating people unfairly.

But I digress. I want to return to the budget, Mr. Speaker, because the budget is a positive infusion to the economy of Manitoba. It's a prudent budget insofar as it balances off tax relief to average Manitobans, of support to working Manitobans and provides programs and education opportunities to build Manitoba. The operative word is "build."

Mr. Speaker, this budget builds on the successes of the past few years. It builds on a Manitoba that will see more employment, more opportunity, more hope, as opposed to what I heard from members opposite in their doom-and-gloom analysis, their inaccurate analysis, their attempt to put blame and to spin—the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said he didn't want to play the blame game and I don't like playing the blame game either. I try to avoid it, but when one sits here and hears day in and

day out how members opposite try to twist facts in order to attribute blame, it does call for a certain amount of resilience in order to deal with members opposite and creativity to try and find out how to answer issues that don't even exist in the jurisdiction for which we have power.

All I can say is I'm very proud of what this government's done. I'm proud of what this Premier (Mr. Doer) has done. I look forward to dealing with this budget during the next year, Mr. Speaker. Now, if that has the occasion to take us to the polls and to the hustings, I feel confident that we'll be judged not only on our record but on the vision that we've laid out to Manitobans of building a fairer Manitoba, building a Manitoba with cleaner water, building a Manitoba that's No. 1 in energy efficiency, as it is now, building a Manitoba that exports clean energy, leads the country in the east-west grid, leads the country in clean energy, leads the country in training of First Nations individuals.

We're the first province to go back to training more doctors, to training more nurses. Now we're seeing the results of that training and I look forward to continuing to build that kind of a Manitoba, a Manitoba of hope, a Manitoba that we will be proud of, that our young people are proud to stay in.

I didn't even get into matters of the tuition issue or the fact that members opposite are voting against a tuition rebate. Members opposite are voting against a tuition rebate, and I think every student in Manitoba, when they do their Clint Eastwood ads in the election campaign, every single Manitoban should be reminded that they're voting against the tuition rebate. Be factual and be truthful to Manitobans. Be honest about the facts that they're going to put forward, but I somehow suspect we won't see that making its ways into their ads.

We won't see the fact, Mr. Speaker, that so much that's been done in terms of justice was as a result of the credible work by the former Minister of Justice. There wasn't a statute that I could find that he hadn't amended to try to go right to the edges of civil law, bordering on criminal law, in order to apply consequences to individuals and not proceed into the criminal law sphere which he couldn't do constitutionally. He did incredible work, and I think the fact that 200 houses of prostitution or sniff or crime dens had been shut down, that hundreds of gang members had been prosecuted, that more prosecutors are out there working.

The fact that we have more doctors and nurses working is a testament to the hard work of this government and something I'll be happy to campaign on, Mr. Speaker, and look forward to both in this debate and future debates in this Chamber.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, you know I had prepared notes ready for a copious and fulsome debate on the budget, and I had to destroy them because I got so much fodder from the Member for Kildonan, who, I'm happy to say, is finally door-knocking in his riding and finally meeting the constituents that he's ignored for so many years. Clearly, he's a bit nervous and I would say that he has reason to be nervous because we certainly on this side of the House hear from constituents not just in Kildonan who are concerned about crime that is hitting his constituency, but really, all across the different NDP ridings that we see. They're looking for change and certainly Manitoba Progressive Conservatives will offer that change in the next election.

I want to start, Mr. Speaker, by recognizing the Member for Kildonan. The Minister of Justice mentioned that 200 homes have been closed down that were drug homes and I want to pay credit to the honourable Vic Toews who brought that legislation in. In 1999 he made some comments about skirting the criminal law, but we know that in fact it was the former Minister of Justice—sorry, the Minister of Justice under the Conservative government who brought in The Safer Communities Act, who saw the vision and said, we actually can take action on these drug dens, on these drug houses, even though members like the Member for Kildonan said that you're interfering with criminal legislation. Had the Conservative Minister of Justice thrown up his hands and said, there's nothing we can do to protect young people from these merchants of misery who are selling drugs in the inner city and around Manitoba, had the Conservative government agreed with the NDP at the time and said, we're powerless, then none of that legislation would be in place and none of those 200 homes would be closed here today. So I'm glad that the Minister of Justice, although I think mistakenly or inadvertently, recognized the good work of the former Minister of Justice Mr. Toews in that area.

I also know that the Minister of Justice raised issues regarding auto theft, and I find it almost incredible that he would have the nerve to raise the issue of auto theft in this Legislature and to hold up a newspaper article from 1998 when the auto theft rate

was almost half, half of what it is today, Mr. Speaker. I think if you look at the current statistics, whether it's from the Winnipeg Police crime statistics or otherwise even from Manitoba Public Insurance, which doesn't put those numbers out as often, you would see that once again this year we're on pace for a record number of thefts and attempted auto thefts here in the city of Winnipeg.

I certainly hear concerns, not just in the city of Winnipeg; I hear concerns in the city of Brandon from individuals who are concerned that nothing is really being done to combat auto theft as one particular crime. Oh, sure, we hear the annual springtime announcements, the annual springtime crackdowns from the NDP government. I wish I would have brought the binder of news releases that I have from this and the former Minister of Justice, but I would have needed a wheeler to bring it into the Legislature here. I wouldn't want to do that to this sacred Chamber.

But the point remains, Mr. Speaker, that year after year, every spring when the auto theft numbers go up as they are again this spring, the current NDP minister of the day or the former NDP minister of the day brings forward what he believes to be a new crackdown and says, we're finally making progress. But 14,500 vehicles are again going to be stolen or attempted to be stolen here in Winnipeg again this year alone. That doesn't make us just the auto theft capital of Canada; it makes us the auto theft capital of North America.

* (15:50)

I can tell you when I travel around North America those occasions that I have to speak to other jurisdictions—some time ago I was in Minneapolis and I talked to officials in Minneapolis about a number of different issues. One of them was auto theft. When I told them that we had over 14,000 vehicles stolen or attempted to be stolen in the city of Winnipeg, they were stunned. There was silence from those officials representing Minneapolis because they couldn't believe it, that a city the size of Winnipeg had that rate of auto theft. It was double or triple what they had in Minneapolis. Minneapolis, by the way, has had very good success with things like bait cars. The bait car program in Minneapolis has reduced auto theft by 30 percent in that city alone while this government just continues to put out news releases and doesn't get anything really done on the issue.

In fact, when I was leaving those meetings in Minneapolis with justice officials there—they were nice enough to walk me to my car that I had there, the vehicle that I drove down in, my own vehicle—and they stopped and they asked in wonderment what that thing was that was on my steering wheel, and I said, well, that's a club. I asked, have you never seen a club before? They said no. They couldn't believe it, Mr. Speaker. I said, well, you should come up to Winnipeg because, you know, at that time there were clubs all over the vehicles, and now there's different forms of auto-theft prevention, but they simply couldn't believe that here in the city of Winnipeg we had to put these clubs on our vehicles, that auto theft was that bad.

I know that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) and other members of the NDP like to talk about how bad everything is south of the border and how bad everything is in America, but this was an American city, a large American city, one of the largest in the United States, and they were shocked at the auto theft rate that we have here. So let it not be said when the Minister of Justice wants to talk about auto theft in other jurisdictions, we recognize, and I recognize full well that there are vehicles that are stolen in every other city of Canada, but if you want to bring forward those statistics to compare how many vehicles are stolen in Calgary compared to Winnipeg or how many are stolen in Ottawa compared to Winnipeg, I can tell you that, in fact, the most recent Statistics Canada reports, the *Juristat* numbers that came out, show that not only was Winnipeg No. 1, but second place, which was Edmonton, wasn't even close. There was a difference between 800 vehicles stolen per 100,000 people between Winnipeg and Edmonton. It's not just that we're No. 1. We're No. 1 by, some might say in this Chamber, a country mile.

So I think it's not only disingenuous for the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) to bring forward those statistics, but I think it's also somewhat insensitive. Insensitive to the many Manitobans who are inconvenienced every day, insensitive to those joggers who we saw who were jogging on Wellington Avenue not too long ago and who were the target of auto thieves with those vehicles that they had stolen. It's insensitive to them to try to come here and pretend that you've actually done something on auto theft. Instead of bringing forward those sorts of rhetorical words which he perhaps doesn't think will ever leave this Chamber, and I can assure him they will. Instead of bringing forward those words

here, I would suggest that he go forward and really put forward a plan, although I know we're almost past spring and near an election. So we can rest assured that the upcoming Conservative government will bring forward a plan that will deal with issues around auto theft.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Kildonan also spoke about gangs, you know, and we've tabled in this Legislature here before from an expert on gangs the exact date that the Hells Angels, the infamous Hells Angels, came into the city of Winnipeg in November of 2000. We brought that forward. You know, the Premier (Mr. Doer) was sort of ashen-faced. He couldn't believe that this was somehow documented by a leading gang expert in Canada, and he still tries to deny it. They still try to twist the facts, and they won't recognize and they won't admit that under their watch not only did the Hells Angels come in but the Bandidos came in. I believe that we're still the only jurisdiction in Canada that has a presence of both of those international gangs here in one city.

You know, it's interesting because I had the occasion, I don't get to watch a lot of TV these days, but I had the occasion to turn on the TV a few days ago—

An Honourable Member: Government ads.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, that's right. You know, every time I turn on I have to see government advertising.

This is one of the few minutes where there's something other than government advertising on, and it was a scene on the news out of Toronto. Mr. Speaker, lo and behold, there were the Toronto police ramming the back of the Hells Angels' clubhouse in Toronto and entering, you know, through the back after having smashed a wall down. Perhaps others in the Chamber saw it, going in and dismantling the Hells Angels' clubhouse.

An Honourable Member: Taking the sign off.

Mr. Goertzen: Taking the sign, as the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) mentions, off the gates. Here in the province of Manitoba, the clubhouse, we all know where it is, we all know which drive it's on, they continue to proudly go about their work, and this government hasn't been able to put forward a real plan.

One of the reasons is simply because of police resources, and I heard the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) talk about, you know, three officers here

and five officers here, but what they fail to address time and time again—you know, the way the NDP is running the budget they could come forward and promise 200,000 police officers in a budget because they know that they have no plan to find those officers. You could announce officers and put them on the funding roll over and over and over again, but if you don't fill those positions, what you're dealing with is a phantom force. Members of the Winnipeg Police Service and other jurisdictions will tell you that they're losing more officers through retirement than they're getting through training, that they continue to be understaffed time after time after time by as much as 10 percent in each particular division. So, while it's a good spin to be out there and saying you're going to be funding officers, if you don't find those officers to fill those positions, Mr. Speaker, nobody's going to be more safe on the streets of Winnipeg because, simply put, funding on a piece of paper in a budget in the Legislature doesn't fight crime. Real officers in uniform on the streets fight crime, and that's the issue this government has failed to address.

Mr. Speaker, it shows up in a number of different ways. Prosecutors, you know, I heard the minister talk about the fact that he was supporting prosecutors here in the province of Manitoba. My understanding, unless something has changed at some point over the last few hours, is that still in Manitoba there is still a negotiation going on between the government and the prosecutors in the province of Manitoba. It's now been more than a year, or very close to a year, that this negotiation has been going on.

During that time, the prosecutors' bargaining group put forward a grievance to government because of the working conditions that those prosecutors are being forced to work under. There is, I believe, just over a hundred prosecutors in the province of Manitoba. At one point, we had lost more than 14 in the course of a year. So, more than 10 percent of the department had actually left prosecutions here in the province of Manitoba. I know I've heard the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak), in the past, say, well, that's a salary issue. It's all because of a money issue. You just want us to throw more money at the problem.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to speak to these fine men and women who are on the justice side of the law working in prosecutions, working to make Manitoba safer, and it's not simply about money from their perspective.

Many of those prosecutors have made a decision, either when they were leaving law school or after some time in practice. They made a decision to leave the private bar and go to the public bar, and many of them gave up money and sacrificed money to go into public prosecutions. So they've already made a decision that they are going to forgo some financial gain to be a prosecutor in the province of Manitoba. They've proven through their actions it's not simply about money for them, and yet they don't get the respect that they deserve from this particular government, going through this bargaining for a year.

We saw the tragic circumstance not too long ago where the one prosecutor was targeted by an individual within the justice system, and certainly we support those prosecutors and ensure that there are measures in place that can ensure that their safety is maintained. But I would ask this government, if they truly are supportive of these prosecutors, to ensure that they have a working environment that treats them as professionals and allows them to professionally do their job.

We brought forward information to this Legislature, much to the angst of the government, Mr. Speaker, about the number of cases that prosecutors were dealing with in the province of Manitoba. Many were dealing with as many as 350 open files, open cases, that they were dealing with at any given time. Some of them were complex cases. In fact, in one circumstance, most of them are complex cases. It's hard to imagine how an individual can prioritize their work as a prosecutor when you're dealing with that many cases, with that sort of workload, without the support staff to ensure that you can deal with each one of these files directly and properly.

There are more than just simply open files for somebody who's been charged. There are also the pre-charge files. We know that the Winnipeg Police Service and other police agencies will bring forward files to prosecutors and ask for advice and say, is this something that I should proceed with a charge on? Is this something that you think has merit? Those pre-charge files are on top of the 350 active files that are open.

But I'm not surprised, Mr. Speaker, that this government has failed so miserably when it comes to the area of justice because I don't believe that they see it as a priority. In fact, the former Minister of Justice, somewhere in between all the news releases

he sent out, was busy doing photo-op announcements. He was always continually trying to pretend that he was getting tough on crime, but over time you can't hide behind the statistics and the facts that show that we are becoming a less safe province, not a more safe province, because this government fails to put justice as a priority.

* (16:00)

I have an example, Mr. Speaker. I have the opportunity, on a weekly basis, to participate in a round table discussion. That round table discussion involves a Liberal member for the Legislature, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). It involves the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who participates in this radio discussion. Last week, on the 5th, in response to a question regarding the budget, the Member for Minto had this to say: Well, you know, the great majority of Manitoba's budgets get spent on health care and on education. Everything else the government does is really around the edges of doing that.

Mr. Speaker, here we have a member of the government who is coming forward and saying that an important issue like justice, or an important issue like family services, is around the edges, is around the fringe of what government does. I don't believe that Manitobans' safety, that Manitobans who want to ensure they are safe in their homes from home invasions, which we've seen, Manitobans who want to ensure that their vehicles aren't being stolen, I don't think that they would appreciate having a government member—in fact, the legislative assistant for the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak)—come forward and say that the area of justice is really around the fringe or the edge of what government does.

I believe strongly, Mr. Speaker, that the issue of justice is really at the heart of what government does, because if you can't feel safe in your home community, if you can't feel safe on your streets, how does that affect the economy? You know, you talk about revitalizing the downtown. How do you revitalize the downtown in any community, whether it's Winnipeg or any other community in Manitoba, when people are afraid to go downtown? How do you revitalize an economic base when people decide that they don't want to leave their homes after 7 p.m., or after any other time, because they're scared about what might happen on those streets? It's very difficult to have that sort of revitalization without a strong justice system, without a feeling of safety.

It's also difficult to attract people to the province. I mean, there are a lot of different reasons why people will come to a province or leave a province. We know that annually there is an exodus of young people from the province of Manitoba. I would certainly say, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that people will take into account why they decide to move to or move from a jurisdiction is the relative safety of those communities. They want to ensure that their families, their children, those of us who have young children, those of us who are perhaps in, I think the Premier (Mr. Doer) said, the back nine of their life, they want to ensure that either themselves or their children can feel safe in the community. They may be reluctant. They may be reluctant to move to a community, or to be part of a province, if they don't believe that that safety is there.

So, unlike the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan), the legislative assistant for the member or Minister of Justice, I don't believe that justice is a fringe issue. I don't believe that it's on the edges of government, Mr. Speaker. I believe it's at the heart of what government should do.

Mr. Speaker, there are other issues, of course. Many Manitobans are concerned about the catch-and-release system of justice that we have here in the province of Manitoba. Time and time again, Manitobans will read the newspapers, and they'll find that somebody who has been charged with a serious offence had previously been charged with a serious offence as well. They were either released on bail, or they were released on probation, or perhaps they got a conditional sentence. They simply don't understand why, over and over and over again, individuals come into the context of the criminal justice system and they're just released again.

I know the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) took great pride in another trip to Ottawa. He might be adding up those frequent flyer points that he's getting from these trips; I'm not certain. But he made another trip to Ottawa, like his predecessor did before him, on the caravan to go and to speak to the Minister of Justice, the Conservative Minister of Justice, Mr. Nicholson, and I would say, Mr. Speaker, we certainly applaud the good work that the Conservatives are doing in Ottawa on justice. I don't think there's ever been a federal Conservative government that's done more in terms of innovative measures with the justice system in such a short period of time as this Conservative government has. They've shown a very clear willingness, a very clear

willingness to take strong measures when it comes to the justice system.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Kildonan flies to Ottawa to try to convince what we already know is a strong-on-justice government, to do even more, when he should have just simply gone down the street to the people that he campaigns for, the NDP members of Parliament, who he raises their hands on election night when he sends them to Ottawa to block the very sort of legislation that he says is important to Manitoba.

There's legislation in Ottawa now on the age of sexual consent. There's legislation regarding minimum sentencing for uses of guns, Mr. Speaker. Yet, time and time again, the federal NDP members block that legislation. The federal Liberal members block that legislation. The Minister of Justice has the audacity to say he's flown there to try to fight and wrestle the federal Conservatives to do more on justice, when, in fact, they're doing as much as they possibly can in this scenario. It's his members of Parliament that he supports time and time again who are blocking those initiatives, who are refusing to let tough-on-crime legislation go through to Ottawa. So I would encourage the Minister of Justice to spend less time on the plane, more time on the streets, and walk down the street to those individuals who he supported federally.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that my time is short. I do look forward, though, to the opportunity—I think the Minister of Justice indicated that I'd be wearing some sort of attire during the election, talking to Manitobans about how to make their communities safer. I won't comment on the issue of the attire, but I will comment on the fact that I can guarantee you that we will see him during that campaign in his riding and others, ensuring that they know that a Conservative government will make Manitoba safer and will make Manitoba stronger for their children.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): This Member for Wellington will serve as the instrumental means for asserting a message, namely that beneath every material and economic thing there lies a foundation of intangible enduring ideas or beliefs, non-economic, non-material, but do not depreciate.

These underlying beliefs and ideas and feelings are called values. How they come about may be written into the nature of man by the Maker or distilled from the environment as a result of

acculturation, sociological absorption or politicization.

No matter how they come about, these are important because they provide notions and codes of right and wrong. For example, during the Depression era, there was a movement in the Prairies founded by one named J.S. Woodsworth. He wrote a pledge that heralded the movement. That pledge was also the beacon light according to the former premier of Saskatchewan named Tommy Douglas.

Remember in the 1940s when he became premier of Saskatchewan, there was the first expression of socialized hospital care, then medicare. He did some experiments in a federal system in one of the provinces and coupled with it his balanced budget. This all happened because he made himself, as premier, Minister of Health. Tommy Douglas said that this has been a beacon light in his personal and professional life. What does the pledge say? We pledge ourselves to united effort in establishing on the earth an era of justice, truth and love.

* (16:10)

The honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) talks about justice, and here is a socialist talking about justice. May it not be that these ideas and beliefs bind all of humanity together looking for such values no matter what their political colours are.

Continue the pledge: May our faces be to the future. May we be the children of a brighter and better light which even now is beginning to dawn. May we not impede but rather co-operate with those spiritual forces which we believe impels the world upward and onward. For our supreme task is to make our dreams come true, to transform our city into a holy city and to make this land, in reality, God's own country.

This pledge contains all the values I'm talking about, justice, truth, love. These are universal values and if policies of government are based on these values, they will endure to the general well-being of all the people. If administrators, elected officials and other responsible officials adhere to these values, then we know that we are in good hands, in good democratic stewardship.

One example, let me point the link between the material and the non-material, the economic and the non-economic. This government has provided in the current budget \$10 million to invest in what they call the cyber knife technology machine. This machine uses high-energy beams to remove cancerous

tumours without an incision, using surgical knives to cut the human flesh which may bleed, thereby mitigating human suffering. This is based on the human value of compassion, human love in the sense of charitable love being promoted through advanced technological facilities. So there is such a link and at the blink of an eye you can see that link between policy development, policy implementation and the material things of the world, the values underlying those policies and things.

How do we know then that there is democratic leadership? How can we tell whether or not policymakers, budget makers, administrators—even in the private sector, there are both kinds. In the private sector, the board of directors are accountable and responsible for the people they represent, the shareholders.

In the public sector, elected officials are responsible and accountable for the constituents they represent. In the private sector, chief executive officers use resources not their own to promote corporate goals. In the public sector, politicians spend resources not their own to promote the well-being of all the people. How do we know whether they are acting in accordance with responsible democratic stewardship accountable to all their constituents for what they do and what they say?

There is an American writer Rudyard Kipling who says: If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you. If you can trust yourself when all are blaming you but make allowances for their blaming too. If you can wait and not get tired of waiting; or, being lied about, don't deal in lies; or, being hated, don't give way to hating, and yet, don't look too good nor talk too wise. If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, or walk with kings and not lose the common touch. If neither foe nor loving friends can hurt you; if all persons count on you but none too much; if you can fill the unforgiving minute with 60 seconds' worth of distance run, then yours is the earth and everything that is in it. Or, we may add, if you fail to apply those moral codes of right and wrong, wittingly or unwittingly, you may have become a cool, callous, calculating hypocrite.

Well, let's talk about the values. The man from Scotland who became Premier of Saskatchewan said—

An Honourable Member: Tommy Douglas.

Mr. Santos: Tommy Douglas. He said: An era of justice, truth and love but because the last shall be first and the first shall be last, let's start with the last which is first—love. The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) said: Bring some tune into it, so I comply. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, if there is no love in me, I am become a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Though I have the gift of prophecy and I understand all science and all mystery and all knowledge, and though I have such faith that I can move mountains, if there is no love in me, I am nothing, and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned, if there is no love in me, it profited me nothing. Love, if I sing it, I don't forget. So I'll sing it. *[interjection]*

* (16:20)

Yes. Love never faileth. Though there be prophecies, they shall fail. Though there be tongues, languages, they shall cease. Though there be knowledge, it shall pass away. Where we prophecy in part and we know in part, but when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part, shall be done away. Love never faileth, bearing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things, love never faileth. Love is not proud or arrogant. It is not envious or jealous. It is not puffed up, it doesn't bound itself, it is not puffed up with self-conceit. It does not behave unseemly. It seeketh not its own. It is not easily provoked. It thinketh no evil. It delighteth not in iniquity but delighteth in the truth. When I was a child, I spake like a child, I understood as a child, I reasoned as a child. But, when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly but then face to face. Now we know in part, but then we shall know, even as I am known.

There are three things now remaining: faith, hope, love. But the greatest of these is love. Now, what kind of love are we talking about? Is that the love of a young man to a dream of his life romantically, kindly, sometimes erotic kind of love? No. Is that the love of parents for their children, children for their parents, grandchildren for a grandparent? No. What kind of love is it then?

Ask the Greeks. The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) meant, I am universal, I deal with universal values, I believe in the unity of all humanity. And all humanity should strive and work co-operatively together to achieve the well-being of his family, himself, his community, the

world and everybody else. Then we will have a better world than what we've got today. *[interjection]*

I said no matter what your political colour is, you believe in justice, don't you? No matter what your political colour is, you believe in truth, don't you? No matter what your political colour is, you believe in love in the sense that the last apostle of the Gentiles was talking about, right? *[interjection]*

Correct. Therefore you said, come over, be a Tory. No, because I believe that the Creator is also on the side of the poor. And he said so.

An Honourable Member: He's an NDP member?

Mr. Santos: Why? Why did I say that?

An Honourable Member: I don't know, you were—

Mr. Santos: Why did I? Where did I find that value? If you know of the New Testament, in the sermon on the mount, in the Beatitudes, why, what did he say there? What did Jesus of Nazareth say? Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

Do you find the wealthy crying and mourning? Maybe in secret, because they are so fed up with materialism that they cannot find peace. What did Bill Gates do, the richest man in the world? He established a Bill and Melinda Gates Learning Foundation, put in billions of dollars, so that he can find peace. What did Warren do? He contributed \$30 billion to the same foundation, so that this management of material things that take all their time and all their energy and all their effort may result in some benefit to humankind. That is what we are talking about.

But let me go to the theme of this. There is a social gospel side of any reform movement and this has been neglected because of materialism. I am probably the messenger to bring this up again, that there is that basis for our budgeting so that we can have peace in the world. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Member for Emerson, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery. We have with us today Ilene Grossman, who is the assistant director of planning and development, Midwestern Legislative Conference - Council of State Governments.

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

* * *

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to be able to rise today to put a few words on the record on the budget that has just been presented, hopefully the last one that this NDP government will be presenting in this Legislature, because when one really looks in-depth at the contents of the budget, it is very evident that there is a huge amount of sleight of hand being used to try and convince the people of Manitoba that this government is actually actively pursuing the economy of this province to build what really isn't being built.

I want to point out some of the inequities, or in plain German language we would say point out some of the huge holes in the document. I don't know whether they are cigarette burns causing these big holes or whether they've been shot through by an air rifle or something heavier than an air rifle in this budget, because it's very evident that this government is trying to tell people that what they are really doing is absolutely nothing. I believe it's imperative that we, when we analyze this budget, are able to demonstrate to the people of Manitoba that there is a lot of sleight of hands in this budget and very little substance.

*(16:30)

I think what they've tried to do is touch every sector of society in word, but very little is demonstrated by action. This is not an action budget. This is a budget that is trying to fool the people of Manitoba into believing that this NDP government really has an agenda. When one really looks in-depth at the budget, one knows that the NDP's agenda is simply to go down the path that they've been down for the last seven years. There is absolutely no development identified in this budget whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, this province during the last eight years has been targeted by those people that would

like to use this province as a home to build industries, to build jobs and to create jobs for our young people. Yet this government has stood tall in priding itself for its low employment or unemployment in this province. When I look at our neighbourhood, I start identifying all the young people that have left our neighbourhood for where? For Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia. One couple even moved to the Maritimes because there were job opportunities that they thought they would like to work in. So I asked him. I said, why would you want to move to the Maritimes when this government is telling us, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) are telling people daily, what great opportunities there are in Manitoba? Do you know what their answer was? Show me. Show me.

Yet I thought, when this new budget was going to be presented, this would be a template for development. Yet I say to the people of Manitoba, take a hard look at this budget and show me where the direction is. Show me where the hard evidence lies in demonstrating a template for Manitoba that will see the growth and the expansion of the employment opportunities in this province. They are not there.

First of all, I want to talk a little about the former Department of Rural Development. I took some pride in the fact that the then-Premier asked me to be the first Minister of Rural Development. What were the first things that we did? We set up a funding program that would encourage young entrepreneurs to take the direction that government was heading in and build, to build businesses, to become young entrepreneurs and manufacture stuff and create jobs. We used programs such as the REDI Program, some of the rural development initiatives that were put forward at the time. We used the Department of Agriculture as a pivotal department to use the very resources that we can renew year after year, after year. We made some massive changes. Yes, we took away the single desk for the hog producers, but what happened? What happened as soon as we did that? The expansion that we saw was forecasted by the then-minister, Harry Enns. He forecast that we would have a livestock industry that would grow. We would have a cattle industry that would grow. One of the main reasons was because the Crow benefit had been done away with and the rail freight would go up, and it would become cheaper to feed animals in Manitoba, livestock in Manitoba, raise livestock,

than it would be anywhere else in Canada, and it happened.

What did this government do when they came into power? The first thing they did was put in place the Clean Environment Commission to start looking at how the industry was functioning. Then they took the Clean Environment Commission and, when a new industry was looked at for the city of Winnipeg, they said to the Clean Environment, take a look at that industry. Then they told the Clean Environment Commission, now we want you to take a look at the whole hog industry. They're using the Clean Environment Commission as a tool to stop development, as a tool to stop development. Why are they doing it at this time? It's my belief, Mr. Speaker, that this government we all know is heading into an election and they want to use this as a stall tactic, not to have to deal with the real issues that are facing us in Manitoba. The real issues are our economy.

Remember, Mr. Speaker, when in 1999 the then-government said, we will put in place a budget and we see that revenues will rise over a billion dollars over the next two years. Our government said—we were dead honest with the people—we said 50 percent of that we will use to reduce the taxes in this province and 50 percent we will use to increase the benefits in health care and education. What did this government do? What did the NDP government do? What did that party do? They said, we cannot see where there will be a billion dollars of increase in revenue, and they laughed.

An Honourable Member: The public didn't believe you.

Mr. Penner: You're right. The public didn't believe us because of the inaccuracies that the NDP party placed before the people of Manitoba. But what has happened? We were not only very conservative, we were extremely conservative in our estimate because revenues have not only risen by a billion dollars. They've risen by multi-billion dollars of revenues. What has this NDP government done with the money?

You know, let me read to you: They've decreased the farm education tax. Right? If that is true, if the per-acre cost of education tax on my farm had been decreased, how come I'm paying more today than I did five years ago? How come I'm paying more? It's the sleight-of-hand budget that we have before us that is trying to create—

An Honourable Member: An illusion.

Mr. Penner: Absolutely, that's the right word—an illusion for the people of Manitoba as they did when the previous Conservative government said there would be an increase in revenue by a billion dollars. The NDP created an illusion and the people were fooled by it. Today, the revenues have not only climbed a billion dollars, but multi-billion dollars of increased revenues.

It's very evident that this budget in one year alone increases spending by \$600 million. Unprecedented. Where did the money come from? Did it all come from taxpayers? Yes, it did. Did some of it come via Ottawa? A very significant amount of it did.

An Honourable Member: Truckloads.

Mr. Penner: Truckloads of money, I hear somebody say, and that's true. Yet the revenues in the province are still climbing, aren't they? Why? Because fees have been increased. Look at your budget. Fees are being increased; little taxes are being increased, and all kinds of things. Yet they're portraying it as a tax-reducing budget: Small business tax decreased by 2 percent. When? In 2008, only if the balanced budget legislation allows for it.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, if this government has a reduction in revenues coming in or should the federal transfers not increase as they expect it to increase further, then the balanced budget legislation has to be met. I'm sorry, small business people, you don't get your tax decrease. This whole budget is premised on the fact that revenues will rise and increase to meet the agenda of the NDP, the sleight-of-hand agenda that the NDP budget has put before the people.

* (16:40)

Now, I see the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is in the building, and I want to say this, that more than \$10 million in new funds have been indicated under Water Stewardship. How much did we increase in agriculture? How much did we increase in agriculture spending? Oh, can't find it. I think what the agricultural says is that we will invest in farm renewal through—and I will read this to you because I think this is extremely important. Remember that agriculture is one of the main economic generators in this province, and the minister has said we're committed to keeping Hydro publicly owned. That's under agriculture now. We're going to keep it publicly owned. I think we're going to give it to the farmers because they're public.

"Community-based energy efficiency programs will be expanded," including Winnipeg, Brandon and Island Lake First Nations. That's another big agriculture program. Then the requests for proposal for 300 megawatts of wind. I think this minister is so full of wind that he doesn't know where to put it. Then we will have geothermal loans increased to \$20,000 and interest rates reduced from 6.5 to 4.9 percent for the first five years. Boy, what a great budget. Everybody will laud that budget.

Then we go to Water Stewardship, Mr. Speaker. Let's see about Water Stewardship: "\$10 million in new funds to address recommendations to the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board, advance sewer and water projects, and improve water management and flood protection. New funding will support." That's all in one paragraph. It says "\$10 million in new funds to address recommendations of the Winnipeg Stewardship Board," but right after that, you have this addendum putting all this other stuff in with it. How much will actually be spent on Lake Winnipeg for the Stewardship Board? This budget says nothing about that.

Then we're going to manage "nutrients to meet the leading-edge"—now listen to this: We're going to manage "nutrients to meet the leading-edge regulations" on nitrogen and phosphates. We're going to regulate this. We're going to put additional staff for inspection and enforcement. We're going to hire more policemen to police these farmers out there.

Then we're going to enhance the watershed planning and programming. We're going to put habitat enhancement, conservation districts. Oh yeah, we're going to keep the conservation districts. That's evident now. Then we're going to put on-site waste management and manure storage facilities—have we got them now? I think so. I think this is all stuff that we've already got. We're going to put Manitoba Water Services Board projects. Did we stop all the projects? We're going to re-ignite them. We're going to re-ignite the fire under that board and get them going again, I think. That's maybe what it says.

"Further scientific research on Lake Winnipeg and beneficial management practices, and . . . strengthening the drainage licensing and enforcement"—more policemen. More policemen for those farmers out there because these guys are bad guys. You've got to put policemen out there.

"This new funding also includes \$2.5 million to help farmers to begin to adapt their operation to

comply with the new water protection regulations," to apply and abide by the laws. Now we're going to pay the farmers to make sure that they allow the policemen on their farms, and maybe we're going to put a policeman on every quarter section. We're not quite sure, but we're going to pay farmers to make that allowance that we can enforce this law.

Then we're going to work with the federal government on plans to fully invest the \$7 million they announced for Lake Winnipeg. Listen, that to me says Gary Doer's going to put that \$7 million in his back pocket. He's going to put it in his back pocket, and then he's going to talk to the feds about how they can develop a plan that they can announce in the future, maybe four years from now when there's another election. Well, heaven forbid, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's time that this government recognizes that the people of Manitoba are smarter than all this. I believe that the people of Manitoba will see through this budget, and I think there will be enough editorials written about this budget and the lack of action, the lack of an action plan, to make investment happen in this province, to encourage investment, but it's certainly not part of this budget.

I want to talk a little bit about the super department that has been established, this super highway department. It appears to me that Water Stewardship has lost virtually its whole department, because a Cabinet document issued a week ago or two weeks ago clearly indicates that virtually everything that was housed in Water Stewardship will now be moved to highways.

An Honourable Member: Oh, why?

Mr. Penner: Infrastructure. All the construction, all the engineering, all that will be transferred into highways. Water Stewardship will be what? Water Stewardship will have a logo on its door, I believe, which will be very similar to the Winnipeg Police Department logo. Water Stewardship will become nothing more than a policing department. I think we warned this government. We warned the people of Manitoba two years ago when this then-Minister of Water Stewardship started drafting legislation and regulations on water enforcement laws that this government was fast on its way to regulating and legislating water and putting in place a police force, the likes of which this province had not seen before.

What I want to end off with is this, and I know the former Minister of Water Stewardship, now the Intergovernmental Affairs Minister—oh, by the way, the Intergovernmental Affairs Ministry has also been stripped of virtually everything he was answerable for till now, or the minister was answerable for till now, and it's also been housed in other departments. I have to wonder why they did that.

However, I want to say this to the House because I think this is important: We have, in the last seven years, seen more damage done to our agricultural institutions by this government than in any previous government. Most of our governments in the past, whether they were NDP, Liberal or Conservative, tried to build on the very foundation that this province was developed on and that's the agricultural capacity within the boundaries of this province, not only the agricultural possibilities, but all the woodlands, the woodland resources that we have, the natural resources, the mining and all those kinds of developmental opportunities we have. Yet this government portrays itself as a government that will want to put a stop to everything until they have proper policing in place to ensure that the people that are doing the developing will be properly—that there will be proper enforcement authorities and proper legislation and proper regulations put in place to allow the government to control.

* (16:50)

Agriculture is feeling the brunt of that now. Our barley growers, our corn growers, our oat growers and feed wheat growers depend on a vibrant livestock industry in this province. You cannot stop production or the production line as you can in a factory. In a factory you can pull a switch and you can stop an assembly line, but once you have started a livestock industry it has to continue or it dies. This government is fiddling and meddling in a process that has tremendous growth opportunities, not only for livestock, not only for hogs and cows and chickens and all the other livestock, but for the whole industry. The grain industry is totally dependent on some form of feed being produced from that grain and fed to something, or flours being milled to feed the human element, or potatoes being produced. But it needs two things: it needs proper management, and it needs a proper nutrient balance to be created to ensure that the productivity of the soil will remain such that it can actually produce crops, because if we don't produce the crops, we have no livestock. If we have no livestock, we have

no employment, and if we have no employment, we have no profits.

This government has failed to understand the realities of how dependent one is on the other. If we want our young people to stay in this province, we'd better recognize that the more industries we build, and the more of the natural products that those industries will utilize to manufacture, produce or package, the more young people we will keep in this province. I believe it is time that this government recognize that it has badly, badly failed their young people. You can talk education all you want. I see there is a lot of discussion in this budget: Competitiveness, Training and Trade. It talks about education and it talks about family services, housing persons with disabilities and those kinds of things. Yet, how can you keep growth? How can you expand your economic base if you don't put the fundamentals in place, if you take away the fundamentals?

Our farmers, I think, have done an exemplary job during the last 20 or 30 years in changing how they do business, and it didn't take an NDP government to put in place laws, restrictive laws and regulations. It took only good education and the ability for those farmers to understand what it meant to keep their soil on their land and on their fields instead of letting it run down ditches and blow away in the wind. But this government doesn't understand that. They have no concept of how that works. So we had farmers over the last 30 years buy new equipment, buy tillage equipment that kept the straw on top of the ground, covered the soil, didn't let the soil blow, didn't let the soil run down the ditches—

An Honourable Member: Zero tillage.

Mr. Penner: Zero minimum tillage. But does this government understand that? Does this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) understand any of that? No. No, she doesn't. If she did, then why would she want to put a stop, just to halt—why would she want to take a whole year to stop the assembly line, and say: Hold it. We're not going to do this any longer. We're not going to allow the expansion of this to meet the needs of that. That's not going to happen. That's what this government did. That's why you members in the back benches there, you have an obligation to sit down with your minister and tell your minister how wrong she is.

We finally finished three years of testing of hog manure applied to pasture land in the Marchand area in my constituency. What did those tests prove? That

all the rhetoric that this minister and his department under Water Stewardship and others have tried to portray those farmers as contributing huge amounts of phosphate and nitrate through the spreading of manure—the manure, by the way, is the most natural nutritional product that you can buy, the most natural, the most environmentally friendly, I would suspect, if it's used correctly. What did this government portray it as now? These farmers out there are looking at themselves and said: Are we really dirty farmers? Well, the tests prove that they're not. The tests prove that there is absolutely no residual effect of natural products, organic products, manure being applied to grasslands beyond the root level.

Where does the Minister of Agriculture stand on this? She is supposed to be the person that the farmers can depend on to be the spokesperson for them in her Cabinet. Yet she sits there and waves her hand and says, ho, ho, ha. Well, sorry about that—

An Honourable Member: That's not fair.

Mr. Penner: —you haven't. You have not been a supporter of the agricultural community.

Where does the Minister of Water Stewardship now stand, and all the regulations and legislations that he has passed to put a stop to all this production? Where does he stand today, when the science proves the exact opposite to what he has told the people of Manitoba?

We have constantly said, Mr. Speaker, that we need science before we take action because some of the water scientists told us three years ago: Be careful what you do because you might create more damage than the good that you do. So I say: Ah, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton) can sit in his place and speak very loudly. However, I say to him that he should have paid attention to the reality, the scientific evidence, before making all this noise about how he's going to put a stop to farming in Manitoba.

I believe that this former Minister of Water Stewardship will be known over the next 20 years as the guy that did more damage to the economy of this province of Manitoba by simply sitting in his place and bringing forth papers that had legislation and regulations drafted on them, and not doing anything with those regulations and legislation except stalling and putting a stop to the agricultural community.

Mr. Speaker, it has been an extreme pleasure for me to be a representative of the constituency of

Emerson and the constituency of Rhineland over the last almost 20 years now, and it's been a real pleasure to serve the people of Manitoba. I just want to say this to you, Mr. Speaker, there's been very little time spent in my lifetime in this place and my time in this Legislature that has been as adverse as what I've seen from this NDP government in the last five years. They have finally come into their own. They have finally demonstrated to the people of Manitoba that they know not how to create development, and so they try and hide behind the regulations and the legislation that will put a stop to the real forces of development in this province of Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On the tremendous words of the Member for Emerson, I wonder if it's the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

Okay, the time being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until—and when we reconvene the debate will remain open.

So the hour being 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 10, 2007

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