

Second Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	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.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 21, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 207—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 207, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides for legislative screening through a legislative committee of appointees to the Manitoba Hydro board to improve the accountability of Manitoba Hydro and assure that we've got a competent board representing all people of Manitoba in the Manitoba Hydro board.

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

Bill 25—The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Amendment Act

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 25, The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les embaumeurs et les entrepreneurs de pompes funèbres, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce this bill today. This bill amends The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act to better protect consumers at a time when they are making a very difficult decision about the purchase of funeral services. The amendments will allow the board to prescribe a code of ethics for funeral directors and embalmers. It will include regulation-making powers on the disclosure of information regarding services and will give the board authority to impose reprimands, fines and costs.

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

PETITIONS

Dividing of Trans-Canada Highway

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 seven-kilometre stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway passing through Headingley is an extremely busy stretch of road, averaging 18,000 vehicles daily.

This section of the Trans-Canada Highway is one of the few remaining stretches of undivided highway in Manitoba, and it has seen more than 100 accidents in the last two years, some of them fatal.

Manitoba's Assistant Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation told a Winnipeg radio station on October 16, 2007, that when it comes to highways projects the provincial government has a flexible response program, and we have a couple of opportunities to advance these projects in our five-year plan.

In the interests of protecting motorist safety, it is critical that the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is completed as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider making the completion of the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley in 2008 an urgent provincial government priority.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider evaluating whether any other steps can be taken to improve motorist safety while the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is being completed.

This is signed by Lori Beaudin, P. Thomaschewski, J. Thompson and many others.

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

Personal Care Homes—Virден

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virден): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial government has a responsibility to provide quality long-term care for qualifying Manitobans.

Personal care homes in the town of Virден currently have a significant number of empty beds that cannot be filled because of a critical nursing shortage in these facilities.

In 2006, a municipally formed retention committee was promised that the Virден nursing shortage would be resolved by the fall of 2006.

Virtually all personal care homes in southwestern Manitoba are full, yet as of early October 2007, the nursing shortage in Virден is so severe that more than one-quarter of the beds at Westman Nursing Home are sitting empty.

Seniors, many of whom are war veterans, are therefore being transported to other communities for care. These communities are often a long distance from Virден and family members are forced to travel for more than two hours round trip to visit their loved ones, creating significant financial and emotional hardship for these families.

Those seniors that have been moved out of Virден have not received assurance that they will be moved back to Virден when these beds become available.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider taking serious action to fill the nursing vacancies at personal care homes in the town of Virден and to consider reopening the beds that have been closed as the result of this nursing shortage.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider prioritizing the needs of those seniors that have been moved out of their community by committing to move those individuals back into Virден as soon as the beds become available.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by B. Stephenson, G. Myers, Meryleen Mitchell and many, many others.

* (13:40)

Power Line Development

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The reasons for this petition are:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct a third high voltage transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Lake Winnipegosis instead of the east side of Lake Winnipeg, as recommended by Manitoba Hydro.

The NDP detour is more than 400 kilometres longer than the eastern route recommended by Manitoba Hydro experts.

The line losses created by the NDP detour will result in a lost opportunity to displace dirty coal-generated electricity, which will create added and unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to an additional 57,000 vehicles on our roads.

The former chair of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee has stated that an east-side bipole and a UNESCO World Heritage Site can co-exist contrary to NDP claims.

The NDP detour will cut through more forest than the eastern route, and will cut through threatened aspen parkland areas, unlike the eastern route.

Former member of the Legislative Assembly Elijah Harper has stated that the east-side communities are devastated by the government's decision to abandon the east-side route, stating that this decision will resign them to poverty in perpetuity.

Manitoba MKO, an organization that represents northern Manitoba First Nations chiefs, has stated that the government has acted unilaterally to abandon the eastern route without consultation with northern First Nations despite repeated requests by MKO for consultations.

The NDP detour will lead to an additional debt of at least \$400 million related to the capital cost of line construction alone, to be left to future generations of Manitobans.

The NDP detour will result in increased line losses due to friction leading to lost energy sales of between \$250 million and \$1 billion over the life of the project.

The added debt and lost sales created by the NDP detour will make every Manitoba family at least \$4,000 poorer.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to abandon the NDP detour on the basis that it will result in massive environmental, social and economic damage to Manitoba.

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the route originally recommended by Manitoba Hydro, subject to necessary regulatory approvals.

This petition is signed by Howard Rybuck, Betty Ann Hossack, Brian Leon and many, many other Manitobans.

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by Bob Friesen, Gerry Hoepfner, Justina Hoepfner, Lydia Hildebrand and many, many others.

Crocus Investment Fund—Public Inquiry

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

The 2007 provincial election did not clear the NDP government of any negligence with regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

The government needs to uncover the whole truth as to what ultimately led to over 33,000 Crocus shareholders to lose tens of millions of dollars.

The provincial auditor's report, the Manitoba Securities Commission's investigation, the RCMP investigation and the involvement of revenue Canada and our courts collectively will not answer the questions that must be answered in regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Manitobans need to know why the government ignored the many warnings that could have saved the Crocus Investment Fund.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his NDP government to co-operate in uncovering the truth in why the government did not act on what it knew and to consider calling a public inquiry on the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by O. Hnatyshyn, S. Saulog, and J. Macalino and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Lake Dauphin Fishery

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Fishing is an important industry on Lake Dauphin.

To help ensure the sustainability of Lake Dauphin fishery, it is essential that spawning fish in the lake and its tributaries are not disturbed during the critical reproductive cycle.

A seasonal moratorium on the harvesting of fish in Lake Dauphin and its tributaries may help create an environment that will produce a natural cycle of fish for Lake Dauphin, therefore ensuring a balanced stock of fish for all groups who harvest fish on the lake.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) to consider placing a moratorium on the harvesting of any species of fish on Lake Dauphin and its tributaries for the period April 1 to May 15 annually.

To request the Minister of Water Stewardship to consider doing regular studies of fish stocks on Lake Dauphin to help gauge the health of the fishery and to consider determining any steps needed to protect or enhance these stocks.

This petition is signed by Frank Perzylo, Archie Boguski and David Standrick and many, many others.

Lake Dauphin Fishery

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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This petition is signed by Irv. J. Kehler, Dale Hamilton, George Richardson and many other worthy Dauphinites and Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the following annual report: Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2008-2009 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Adult Learning Centres in Manitoba 2006-2007 Annual Report.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I'm pleased to table Infrastructure and Transportation, 2008-2009 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

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 the Ageless Amethyst Red Hat Group. We have nine visitors under the direction of Mrs. Barbara Homenko. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Seniors Pharmacare Premiums Increase

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): My question is to the Premier who has abandoned his pledge to Manitoba seniors to end hallway medicine.

I want to ask the Premier today why it is that when he's getting bucket loads of cash from Ottawa that he's increasing Pharmacare premiums for Manitoba's seniors immediately after the election, his first budget after the election, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, again, the preamble of the Leader of the Opposition's question is fraught with difficulty. The whole issue of—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Pharmacare and medicare program, as stated in the budget, and I don't

know whether—the member probably hasn't read the budget yet.

The budget very clearly states that Pharmacare and the cost of pharmaceuticals are not covered by the national medicare program. In fact, it's a co-insurance program, Mr. Speaker. It's a co-insurance program in terms of the public investing X number of dollars in the program and the individual consumer also being required in this co-insurance program to pay money to the drugs. So this is not covered by a national medicare program.

I believe that we've increased the number of drugs that are covered under the formulary by 2,000 in the last recent period of time. We've increased to consideration of home care patients to have palliative care drugs covered in that program, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to the disincentive to being home with your family as opposed to being in institutional care.

And, Mr. Speaker, yes, in past years and in this year, we have increased the deductible as part of the co-insurance program, but the most recent study of the federal—or the independent reviews of coverage of Pharmacare have indicated that Manitoba's coverage, as a percentage of the co-insurance, is the highest in Canada at close to 54 percent.

* (13:50)

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, there was only one point in the preamble which is not in dispute, which is that he's abandoned his commitment to end hallway medicine for Manitoba seniors.

The fact is that it is a co-insurance plan, and this Premier and his Finance ministers have increased Pharmacare deductibles on Manitoba seniors in six out of the last seven years. They did it in 2002; they did it in 2003; they did it in 2004; they did it in 2005, 2006. Wait a minute. Something happened in 2007 to cause them to freeze premiums that year, Mr. Speaker, maybe an election campaign. And the first budget after the election, where he went out and promised seniors that he would look out for their interests, the first budget back, he betrayed Manitoba seniors. He increased the Pharmacare deductible.

Will he take the opportunity this afternoon to vote against the budget that's punishing Manitoba seniors, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the increase in the pharmaceutical investments in Manitoba is over 200 percent since we've been elected, and the budget, again, includes investments in expanding the list of

drugs. There's ongoing expansion of the number of drugs that are covered under the formulary.

It is a co-insurance program. Both parts of the co-insurance have gone up. I said in my previous answer that it's gone up in previous years, as well, Mr. Speaker.

I would also point out that when there was a review done on I believe one of the drugs of a specific disease just 18 months ago and last year, they reviewed all the pharmaceutical programs in Canada—I believe it was for some of the drugs covered in diabetes; I'll double-check it—and they actually found that Manitoba's pharmaceutical and Pharmacare program was the most progressive in Canada.

In other words, if you were at the lowest income level or if you were seniors on fixed income, Mr. Speaker, the pharmaceutical program in Manitoba was less expensive than a pharmaceutical program for people in other provinces west of us and other provinces east of us. Again, it's a co-insurance program. We've raised the deductible before, but, far and away, the majority of the money that is raised in the Health budget for the co-insurance program goes to increase coverage of drugs, goes to a progressive system of coverage, and, as I said—[interjection] The Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) can never leave you alone. I digress.

The bottom line is over 250 percent increase in the coverage for drugs. We think that's a great program for Manitobans, but it's a co-insurance program. We were honest about that in the budget, Mr. Speaker, but I'd ask the member opposite to read the budget. It's a novel thing to do, read the budget.

Mr. McFadyen: The increase that they put through was put through by stealth on April 1, two weeks before they even introduced the budget. It was done retroactively with no announcement, no public communications, no news release. They went onto the Web site and they changed the calculator so that seniors—which is the only way that people would have known about the increase, Mr. Speaker. They weren't up front about it. They tried to sneak it through. Shame on them for treating Manitoba seniors with such contempt.

I want to ask the Premier: Given that he talks about increases of over 200 percent, but he's had an increase of more than 300 percent on his transfers from Ottawa, with all of the cash flowing in from the federal Conservative government in Ottawa, how is

it that he can find money for Spirited Energy while he taxes Manitoba seniors through Pharmacare deductible increases above the rate of income growth for those seniors? He's putting them further behind, first budget after the election.

Why is he betraying Manitoba seniors? Why won't he stand up today and vote against the Finance Minister's budget?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that last week the member, of course, the tax cut day he says one thing about spending and then the spending day he says something else. Last week, he alleged in this House that his position was not inflation but the rate of growth of the economy for the Tory alternative. Well, we went back to *Hansard*, and twice the hedgecock crowed with the statements that have been proven to be inaccurate.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. All members in this House should be addressed by their constituency or ministers by their portfolios.

I just heard the comment of "the hedgehog crowed." I don't think that's very parliamentary.

I ask the honourable First Minister to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Doer: I wasn't referring to the member, but I do withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker, the record of facts is clearly contradictory to the statement made by the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) on two occasions in *Hansard*, the official record of this Legislature, and that is the reference I was making.

CIHI has said that Manitoba has the best coverage all in Canada, the most affordable coverage all in Canada, and, Mr. Speaker, I would point out, the members opposite in government cut \$20 million out of the Pharmacare program. Many of the coverages were decimated under Conservative years. That's why—you know, the people of Manitoba are smart. They know that the member opposite, his inflation promise for health care would be a layoff of nurses, a layoff of doctors, a layoff of technologists, longer waiting lists for surgical procedures and, of course, another cutback in Pharmacare programs in Manitoba.

The people are smarter than the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Seniors Pharmacare Premiums Increase

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the Premier (Mr. Doer) doesn't realize that this is budget 2008, and he obviously doesn't recognize—the Minister of Finance doesn't recognize that he has difficulty keeping his hands out of the pockets of pensioners and seniors.

Effective April 1, seniors will be required to pay an additional 5 percent in Pharmacare deductible. This is the sixth increase and a whopping 34 percent increase in the past seven years. The only year, ironically, that was missed was the election year.

Mr. Speaker, why couldn't the Minister of Finance wait until this budget was passed to grab more seniors' cash? Better yet, why didn't he take some of the additional \$237 million in equalization and not raise the Pharmacare deductible at all?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this is the first year that the income-splitting for senior citizens is fully annualized in the budget. It was announced last spring. We were the first provincial jurisdiction in Canada to move on that measure for income-splitting among senior citizens. It's paralleled with the federal government's measure in that regard.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the education property tax credit has been increased another \$75 in this budget. This is a tremendous benefit to seniors all across Manitoba. The personal exemption is up for seniors. The lowest rate for income tax has been reduced to 10.8 percent for seniors, and the ESL has historically been removed from the tax rolls.

Seniors get very good value for the money in Manitoba, both on the tax side and on the program side all across the province.

Seniors Tax Increase

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I find it rather laughable that he's taking credit for something that the federal Conservatives put into place with income-splitting. As a matter of fact, this government had to be dragged kicking and screaming to do their portion of the income-splitting.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just Pharmacare, by the way. This government gives little in one hand and takes a whole bunch on the other hand.

Seniors on fixed incomes have felt the heavy-handed tax grab on their vehicle registration, on their camping fees and, yes, even their angling fees.

Mr. Speaker, rather than spending foolishly on a self-serving ad campaign or the ongoing Spirited Energy fiasco, why not help seniors' rollback by rollbacking the punishing tax grab that this minister and this government has placed on senior citizens?

* (14:00)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite would look at the Manitoba Advantage, he will see that the cost of living for a senior across Manitoba, almost on virtually any income measure, is in the top three in the country.

Their overall costs, all things in, their taxes, their property taxes, their health-care costs, unlike the other provinces to the west and east of us, there is no health premium in Manitoba. That was removed under the first NDP government in this country and has been maintained ever since. That makes us very affordable when it comes to health-care costs. With respect to all other costs of living, we are in the top three for the country.

Manitoba remains one of the most affordable places to live, not only for seniors but for families, as well, all across Manitoba.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, Mr. Speaker, given the opportunity, this Finance Minister certainly will change any of those advantages that seniors have in this province. As a matter of fact, he can spin it any way he wishes, but according to the Province's own personal tax-saving estimator, seniors in this province collecting an old age pension, CPP and a modest pension would save only \$25 as a result of this year's budget. This is quickly gobbled up by the \$72 increase in the Pharmacare deductible and the \$20 that they're going to have to pay in additional vehicle registration.

Mr. Speaker, how can this minister stand behind a budget that fails seniors so terribly, seniors in this province, who, by the way, eventually are going to have to leave in order to maintain any kind of standard of living?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, one of the first measures that the first Minister of Health brought into place in this government was to give coverage to seniors for a period of time when they were outside of the

province during the wintertime. That allowed them to maintain their Pharmacare coverage.

When you take a look at the auto insurance costs, the lowest in the country; their energy costs, the lowest in the country; their taxes, among the lowest in the country; their property tax credits, among the best in the country, and their gasoline tax is the *[inaudible]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: –lowest in the country, and it's a flat tax that does not escalate when the price at the pump escalates.

The cost of living for a senior in Manitoba, for a senior couple in Manitoba, remains in the top three for the entire country.

Liquor Licences Fee Increase

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): The NDP has hiked the cost of annual liquor licences for restaurants, cocktail lounges and other licensed establishments. Not only that, but they've doubled the application fee for a new licence and tripled the late-filing fee. This is a tax grab plain and simple. It hurts small business, in particular, like Juliana Pizza here in Winnipeg whose licence fee has jumped by 50 percent.

Why is this minister punishing small businesses with these licence fees?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act): I thank the member for the question. We had a very good dialogue the other day on issues involving liquor in Manitoba. We're very pleased actually; we listened to the recommendations of the Manitoba Hotel Association and took away the 2 percent supplemental fee that was paid in Manitoba on wine and spirits.

We thought it was a very good idea to put more money into the hands of liquor operators in Manitoba. I'm not sure why the member opposite doesn't think that's a good idea.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, anytime that you take money out of people's pockets and replace it with more tax is not helping anyone.

Mr. Speaker, I've been contacted personally by many small-business owners who are outraged at this government's arrogance. Small businesses won't see any benefit from the elimination of the 2 percent supplementary licence fee. Instead they will have to

pony up double or triple what they paid last year just to keep their doors open.

Why is this government forcing small businesses to pay the price for NDP mismanagement and the inability to keep administrative costs under control?

Mr. Swan: Again, Mr. Speaker, we worked close with our partners, with the food and Restaurant Association and the Hotel Association. The advice we received is that they wanted the 2 percent supplementary cost for wine and spirits taken on.

So that was done and even after the additional fees are taken into account, there is an extra quarter-million dollars going back into the coffers of our hotel and restaurant operators across the province. On this side we think that's a good thing. Again I ask: Why doesn't the member think that's a good thing for his constituents?

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, it's appalling that the members on the opposite side of this House applaud underachievement. Licence fees are just one example of the unfair tax grabs being made by this government. The NDP has also hiked vehicle registration fees by nearly 150 percent since 1999. The vehicle registration is \$70 in Alberta, \$68 in Saskatchewan, \$37 in northwestern Ontario and \$28 in British Columbia. With the budget of 2008, Manitoba now tops them all at a whopping \$119.

Why is this NDP government punishing Manitoba families with this 150 percent backdoor tax increase, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, as I understand, most of the hotel and restaurant operators that my friend across the aisle is talking about are small-business people, and I'm very pleased that Manitoba has the smallest, the lowest small-business tax in the entire country at 2 percent.

I know I'm still filling in my Cabinet minister's duties; my friend is still learning his critic's duties. He would know the discount given by the Liquor Commission on the sale of beer to hotels and restaurant operations across the province, the discount is actually the greatest in the entire country. So, certainly, the member opposite will also know that the rural hotel operators and restaurant operators receive among the highest commissions from VLT sales in the entire country.

So what I would suggest my friend do when he's forming his next question is to see the big picture

which we on this side of the House do, so then he'll know we are supporting small business in Manitoba.

Government Advertisements Cost

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I think it's the intent of this government to take big businesses and make them into small businesses.

Since the budget, the NDP propaganda machine has kicked into overdrive. They've put out hundreds of TV, radio and print ads trying to convince everybody that they are spending taxpayers' money wisely. In fact, as an example, on one TV station last night, there were 17 ads in just one and a half hours. I'd like to ask this government—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask this government: How much taxpayers' money are they spending to pay for all these ads that they're putting out, all their propaganda ads? How much are they spending?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the announcements put forward to explain to Manitobans what the budget means to them is comparable—the amount that is put forward to explain is comparable to the amount the Conservative government spent in 1999. It's comparable to the '99 amount that the members spent when they were in government. In other words, it has absorbed all the inflation and still does a good job communicating to Manitoba the truth.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this NDP PR campaign is misleading Manitobans. They have deliberately left out some very important information. Despite relying on their federal sugar daddy to give them 40 percent of their dollars, they're picking the pockets of Manitobans.

I'd like to ask the government why they didn't, in their ads, tell Manitobans that they've increased Pharmacare deductibles by 34 percent since 1999. Why didn't they tell people that vehicle registrations have gone up by 150 percent since 1999? Why aren't they telling people about the increase in fishing licences, park passes and camp permits? Why so selective in their advertising, in their propaganda, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it is true that these ads can't tell everything that was in the budget. I did not mention earlier that the personal tax credit has gone up this year which is a tax credit available to the lowest-income Manitobans.

I did not mention that the caregivers' tax credit is introduced for the first time ever which will help people pay for the expenses of looking after loved ones within their community. That's on our tax credit. Unfortunately, we did not put in the ads the fact that fishing licences for senior citizens in Manitoba are free, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:10)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, in this budget the government has ramped up spending; they've added to the debt; they've raided the rainy day fund. They're picking the pockets of hardworking Manitobans and they have charged almost \$10 million more for permits, for registrations and for fees.

So I'd like to ask this government, again a government that does not seem to respect taxpayers' money: How much are they spending on their propaganda campaign trying to justify their spending spree?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I indicated earlier that the amount of cash being spent in 2008 is equivalent to the amount of cash that was being spent in 1999-2000. The amount has remained absolutely flat.

Mr. Speaker, the budget increases are reasonable compared to provinces to the west of us. I note this year, for the first time in many years, they didn't compare us to Saskatchewan on budget increases, because the spending increases in Saskatchewan are just about double what they are in Manitoba.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've actually reduced taxes for the ninth consecutive year in this budget, personal income taxes, corporate income taxes, small-business taxes, and we've introduced tax credits which help in the responsibility of caring for loved ones in communities.

Violent Crime Government Initiatives

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Another violent weekend in a province that under this NDP government has become the violent crime capital of Canada. On Saturday morning, three criminals pulled into a farmyard in the R.M. of Whitehead and kicked in the door of a home, another brutal home invasion.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Why has this budget failed to reduce violent crime in Manitoba?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to be part of a government that introduced a budget that not only puts more police on the street but expands programs for children and other individuals that are troubled and helps to deal with seniors' safety, another program that's expanded in this budget.

I do not and fail to understand why members opposite don't support us when we go to Ottawa and want them to toughen up the federal Criminal Code and why the member sits on his hands and doesn't take the same course that we have working with all of the provinces to try to change the Criminal Code in addition to the other benefits that we've brought in, including additional policing, 150 additional police officers that they voted [*inaudible*]

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, one weekend in Winnipeg, three homicides. It started in a quiet neighbourhood in east Elmwood when a young mother was bludgeoned to death with a hammer. Her five-year-old child is now without a mother.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: How many victims are necessary before he makes safety a priority?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the increase that was proposed by members opposite to the Justice and to the family social services budget that deals with domestic violence and related matters was inflation. We've increased it by 6 percent or 7 percent. That means more social workers, more police officers, more community programs.

When I walked around Point Douglas, which is in Winnipeg, on Saturday night, Mr. Speaker, I felt safe and I was glad the community has brought back that community. We intend to do that in all the parts of Winnipeg and rural Manitoba through our programming and working with the community, not condemning people, not attacking people, but working with people to bring back their communities.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the fact remains: one weekend in Winnipeg, three homicides. That's the record. This time, on a quiet street in St. Vital, a couple shot to death in their own home. Their young daughter is now without parents. The homicide count in Winnipeg is now 14, a 75 percent increase over the same period last year. We're on track to register

42 homicides in Winnipeg this year, another tragic record for this NDP government.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: There's nothing in the budget to address the escalating violence in Winnipeg. Why has he addressed the violence in Winnipeg?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, in the murder capital of Canada, which is Edmonton, a 77-year-old man was viciously murdered this weekend on his anniversary.

We have talked with all of the provincial governments of the country and, you know, Alberta, Saskatchewan and the other provinces are following Manitoba's lead in putting in place preventative programs. In addition, members opposite are voting against a budget that will see an increase in police officers around the province—as they have done—20 additional police officers.

Mr. Speaker, when I went to the police officers' awards on Friday and saw some of the bravery and some of the reaching out the police have done in this city, I was very proud to be part of the government that supports police, not criticizes them for what happens on the streets of Winnipeg.

I also want to congratulate the people of Winnipeg for bringing back some of the community spirit in places like Point Douglas, and we're going to expand to other areas of Winnipeg, bring back the community we grew up in.

Violent Crime Government Initiatives

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, we know that the police are doing their job. It's this government that isn't doing its job.

Another weekend, another violent weekend and startling headlines in our newspapers: A vibrant life ends violently. "One family, five slayings."

It's only April and already we've seen 14 homicides in 2008, and that's just in Winnipeg. At this rate we're on track to breaking the record set three years ago under the NDP government's watch.

Why is Winnipeg's rate of violent crime not a priority in budget 2008?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the safer communities act, members opposed; the Spotlight program, members opposed; the electronic monitoring, members said we weren't moving on; the

auto theft strategy that we introduced that lowered auto theft 40 percent, they were against.

Mr. Speaker, police officers, 150 additional police officers are on the street. Before we came into office, when the member was in office, it shrunk. We have put in our part and we asked the federal government to toughen up the Criminal Code, and where was the call to Ottawa to deal with the federal Criminal Code that governs the criminal law in this country across the country?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a point of order, not a single statement was accurate—

Mr. Speaker: Order. In this House, points of order are not going to be used for dispute between members. If the honourable member has a point of order where a member breached or broke a rule, draw it to my attention and I will deal with it, but points of order and matters of privilege are not to be used for disputes between the answers and the questions.

Does the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition have a point of order? The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. McFadyen: Whether I have a point of order or not I think is probably in the Speaker's judgment. Mr. Speaker, it is a question related to the blatant inaccuracy of his statements, which I will concede is a dispute over facts.

I know it's called question period and not answer period for a reason. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the member has a point of order, and I don't think that there's any other place in the world where every time there's a death members of the opposition stand—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that when members rise on a point of order or a matter of privilege, it's to point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure from our practices.

The honourable member does not have a point of order. It's a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member that had the floor—the honourable Member for River East.

* (14:20)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The facts speak for themselves: 14 homicides in Winnipeg this year, in 2008.

Jöel and Magdalena Labossière were parents to a one-year-old girl. Magdalena was pregnant with her second. This weekend, they were shot to death in their St. Vital home. In January, another expectant parent, Joanne Hoepfner, was shot through the door of her home on Magnus Avenue. She, too, was killed.

Violent crime, Mr. Speaker, is out of control and still this minister and this government offer nothing but the same tired old answers that we've heard for years now. It seems that nothing will spur this government into action.

When will this government take the violent crimes seriously and make reducing crime a priority?

Mr. Chomiak: When we have taken measures that are in our jurisdiction as a province, such as the immobilizer program, members opposite mailed letters out to all their constituents saying people shouldn't be required to have immobilizers, Mr. Speaker, yet we were able to reduce auto theft by 40 percent.

Mr. Speaker, when we brought in measures to expand police, as is in this budget, 20 additional police officers on the street, members opposite are voting against it. When we brought in our Turnabout program, the only one of its kind for children in the country, members opposite made fun of it. When we brought in the Spotlight program for offenders, members opposite said we were wasting money. When we brought in the intelligence funding that led to the arrest of Hells Angels, the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) said we were wasting our money, and yet we were able to put 13 people in jail. The facts speak for themselves.

Mrs. Mitchelson: All that rhetoric and the violent crimes in the city of Winnipeg continue to climb.

This government hasn't made our communities safer and this budget isn't going to make our communities safer. Reducing violent crime is a top priority for Winnipeggers, but, unfortunately, it's not a top priority for this NDP government. They're completely out of touch. Mr. Speaker, the government, the minister, have to get their heads out

of the sand, quit burying their heads in the sand and trying to pretend that violent crime doesn't exist in our city.

When will this government get its act together and address the violent crime that's plaguing our city of Winnipeg?

Mr. Chomiak: When organized crime really moved into Winnipeg in the 1990s and the Hells Angels and the drug trade moved in big time into Winnipeg, and when people were killed on Semple Avenue in my constituency, I said if we formed government we would put in place measures.

We have made 11 recommendations to the federal government about gang violence. This weekend, in Point Douglas, the police and the community got together Sunday morning for a run, and they ran past the crack houses that have been closed down as a result of legislation brought in, the first time in North America, by the Member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), Mr. Speaker.

I walked the streets of Point Douglas this weekend near where I grew up, and I felt safe because the community and the police had gotten together to work against these kinds of elements. That's what we intend to do in the rest of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, and members opposite are coming along.

Manitoba Hydro Underwater Power Line

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, last October, in legislative committee, I asked Mr. Brennan, president and CEO of Manitoba Hydro, about a high-voltage line under Lake Winnipeg as an alternative to what the government is proposing. Mr. Brennan then said it wasn't feasible. It was cost prohibitive, but John Ryan has now shown that such a line is feasible and would be hundreds of millions of dollars less than the government's line down the west side of Lake Winnipegosis.

I ask the Premier how it was that he, Manitoba Hydro and his Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) all missed the boat and launched our province into a more expensive option when a cheaper, safer, shorter and more secure option under Lake Winnipeg was available.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, we're aware that in some other countries underwater transmission takes place. We asked Hydro that

question, I think, for the last at least two years. The answer we got is the same answer the member opposite has just provided out of *Hansard* in the House.

Mr. Speaker, we're aware that, as I say, in other jurisdictions, this has been an option. That's why we asked the question for the last couple of years. We do rely on the management, Mr. Brennan, to provide the answers to us. He provided the same answers in the committee to the member opposite about the question he posed.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Brennan has also met with Dr. Ryan on a number of issues he's raised. They said they'll go back and look at it. I certainly believe that those questions were asked by the member opposite. They were asked by us two, three, four years ago, and the same answer was provided to us.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that Manitoba Hydro should have looked properly at a line under Lake Winnipeg before committing to the more expensive west-side option.

Sadly, the Premier has put political appointees on the board of Manitoba Hydro without paying attention to their knowledge base. The reality is that the appointees to Manitoba Hydro should have been knowledgeable enough to know the technological assessment of what's happening with up-to-date hydro-power transmission lines in this world.

I ask the Premier: When will he support Liberal efforts to make sure that the board appointees are properly screened here at the Manitoba Legislature in legislative committee and are not just political appointees who don't know as much as they need to know?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Schroeder was the Minister of Finance when the issue of Limestone was dealt with. Members opposite called it "Iemonstone." It came in well under budget. All the questions were asked that should be asked.

Mr. Speaker, the former comptroller of the provincial government and the CEO of the telephone system was on the board. The head of Friesen Printing is on the board. There are a number of people on the board of directors.

I also would point out that it's the responsibility of management of Hydro to provide the numbers to the committee, as they have, and to the member opposite. He's presuming, I would suppose, that everything about cost savings on the underwater

route is going to be cheaper than the overland route, and I would suggest he awaits the results of the second due diligence that Hydro is doing on the question posed by Dr. Ryan, in the public appropriately, and a question we asked well in advance three, four years ago on the same issue.

Government Advertisements

Cost

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, whether it's advertising in the form of print, radio, television, what we do know is that the government has spent an exceptional amount of money in terms of promoting this particular budget.

Mr. Speaker, we believe Manitobans have a right to know how much money this government has actually spent on promoting this budget.

We know the Minister of Finance knows how much money has been spent. Will he share with Manitobans, who have the right to know, how much money is this government spending on advertising to make Manitobans feel warm and fuzzy about this budget, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to Estimates. We can discuss the details, but I can tell the member right now that the amount of money spent this year is 16 percent less than it was in '99-2000.

Climate Change

Government Initiatives

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): My question is for the minister responsible for climate change.

Mr. Speaker, when confronted with this massive global problem, some people stuck their head in the tar sands and said, we can't do anything about it.

Still other people have said, you can't change the status quo. You shouldn't try and adjust climate change, even going to the point of misrepresenting the facts of the matter when the science is irrefutable, and not to mention any names specifically, some other people will attack the true leaders that emerge and say, we like what you're doing, just not the way that you're doing it.

I'm wondering if the minister might be kind enough to share with everyone in Manitoba the incredible leadership that our province has made on addressing the most important environmental issue of our time.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): I thank the member for the question.

I'm pleased to say that in demand-side management—that's saving energy—we went from nine out of 10 under the former government to the first in the country in the last few years.

I'm pleased to see that we went from zero manufacturers in geothermal to two manufacturers, 30 percent of the installations with only 4 percent of the population. That's a wonderful story.

* (14:30)

I am pleased to see that we're going to work with multiple industries to save energy, to save money and reduce greenhouse gases, and I'm pleased to see that we'll co-operatively work with other groups, with businesses, with individuals through Power Smart on saving energy, with municipalities on capturing greenhouse gases, et cetera, so that we become the greenest jurisdiction in—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Harold Buchwald

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the life of Harold Buchwald, an extraordinary Manitoban. A lawyer by profession, Harold was a dedicated husband, father and grandfather. He was also a writer, made a member of the Order of Canada in 1993, a leader in the Jewish community and a long-time advocate for Manitoba and our arts community.

Harold was born here in Winnipeg in 1928. He graduated from the University of Manitoba with a BA in 1948, receiving his law degree and passing the Manitoba Bar in 1952, and earning his Masters of Law degree in 1957.

Harold was married to Darlene, they had two sons, Jeffrey and Richard, and they have three grandchildren.

At 80 years of age, Mr. Speaker, Harold was as active in the community as he had been in his earlier days. He contributed to the cultural life of Manitoba in numerous ways throughout his life. He helped with the campaign to bring the Canadian Museum of Human Rights to Winnipeg. He was a chairman of

the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, a member of the boards of the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba, the Health Sciences Centre Foundation, the Canadian Consumer Council, the Business Council of Manitoba and the Arts Stabilization of Manitoba.

He was most recently also instrumental in preserving a vital piece of Manitoba's history: the area around the Upper Fort Garry Gate at Broadway and Main. Harold was a true leader, generous with his time. He was compassionate, passionate and committed to our life here in Manitoba. His contributions to the cultural, artistic and economic life and vitality of our province are unparalleled.

Mr. Speaker, we have lost a truly extraordinary citizen. His leadership, enthusiasm, commitment to our province and friendship will be greatly missed by all who knew him. Thank you.

Spencer Reavie

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I rise today to recognize and congratulate a constituent of mine and of Russell, Mr. Spencer Reavie, who is the recipient of this year's Bowl of Hygeia award. This award is given annually in appreciation of the time, personal sacrifice and outstanding contribution of pharmacists to the welfare of their respective communities.

Spencer graduated from the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Saskatchewan in 1973. In 1978, Spencer and his wife and family moved to Russell and purchased Reavie's Pharmacy.

Spencer has been devoted to maintaining the town's viability. His leadership in bringing new businesses and services to Russell has resulted in the growth and sustainability of the community. He was a key member of the organization that established the Asessippi ski and winter park, serving as president in 2000. He has been, and continues to be, an active member of the Russell and District Chamber of Commerce where he served as president for two terms and has been an active member of the executive board. He's also been an active member of the Russell and area Lions Club since 1983, serving as president for two terms and as a director numerous times. His countless hours of volunteer work and leadership in the community and his professionalism has made him a very deserving recipient of this award.

On behalf of all Russell constituents, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to Mr. Reavie for his tremendous contributions to the community. Mr. Reavie is indeed very deserving of this prestigious

award and we thank him for his countless hours of volunteerism and his outstanding leadership.

Good Neighbours Senior Centre

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, a very well-known organization is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year. Good Neighbours Senior Centre has been an important part of the fabric of the community since the day they opened their doors. Their caring attitude and commitment to bringing people together make them a welcoming place for new and established area residents alike.

Good Neighbours Senior Centre is a multipurpose senior centre serving the North Kildonan area of Winnipeg. Seniors in the area can enjoy a variety of programs and services to assist them in their daily life. The task of Good Neighbours Senior Centre is to provide programs and services which support and enhance the health, dignity, independence and well-being of older adults. This includes physical, intellectual, social and spiritual well-being.

One of the very exciting developments for Good Neighbours Senior Centre is that it will be moving to Bronx Park Community Centre. This development will help bring together programs for seniors in an effective way. I know that Good Neighbours is keen to move into this new location and continue to provide the very best in services to our community's older citizens.

Seniors are an extremely important part of Manitoba. They have been the builders who have brought Manitoba the prosperity that we are realizing today. They deserve the very best in services, and I am thrilled to support the ongoing efforts of Good Neighbours Senior Centre as they provide meaningful services to our seniors.

I would like to thank the dedicated staff and board of directors and all the volunteers for their hard work. The commitment they show to area residents is making a real difference in our neighbourhood. Congratulations to Good Neighbours on their 15th anniversary and I wish them many more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Good Roads Association

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, having attended the Manitoba Good Roads Association's annual banquet on April 15, 2008, in Brandon, I would like to extend congratulations to all

the organizers, award winners and everyone involved who made the evening a success. Specifically, I'd like to congratulate Manitoba Good Roads Association president and chair for the evening, Mr. Lawrence Morris of the R.M. of East St. Paul, and Executive Director Tara Van Deynze, for all their work.

The evening began with an exceptional presentation by Mr. Chris Lorenc, president of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, who discussed the importance of an infrastructure system in promoting Manitoba's position in world trade and transportation systems. Following Mr. Lorenc's edifying presentation, the award winners were presented.

While I would like to thank all of the deserving nominees, I'd like to specifically congratulate the following provincial winners: for Best Farm Home Grounds, Mr. and Mrs. Bilinsky of the R.M. of Rossmore; the Best Country Non-farm Home Grounds Award was presented to Fred and Donald Thompson of the R.M. of Russell, who also received the Antonation Trophy as provincial winners for the Best Farm Home Grounds.

The Urban Beautification Award for a town population of over 1,000 was presented by Mr. Rob Ehnes of Airmaster Traffic Signs, and it went to the town of Winnipeg Beach. The town of Boissevain won the Urban Beautification Award for the 1,000 to 2,000 population category.

I'm proud to state that many awards were earned by citizens, towns and rural municipalities in Arthur-Virden. The Provincial Cup Award, given to the best-maintained system of provincial municipal roads, was presented to the R.M. of Morton.

Vivian Kenderdine was presented with the Best Urban Home Grounds, the Carels Shield, for the 2,000 to 7,500 population range, and Vivian comes from Virden.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Mrs. Dale Van Loo of the R.M. of Sifton who was awarded best Farm Home Grounds for district 3.

As well, I would like to thank all the judges whose committee was chaired by Mr. Roger Dennis. Their expertise and volunteer time in making this awards event successful is extremely appreciated. Travelling across Manitoba to hundreds of entrants throughout the summer months takes time but is a rewarding responsibility.

In closing, I would like to also thank the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), the critic for Intergovernmental Affairs who accompanied me as critic for Infrastructure and Transportation for this important gathering. We had a great evening of fellowship, with community leaders and award winners and a wonderful opportunity to discuss the many needs and challenges of municipalities, businesses and individuals throughout Manitoba.

Once again, congratulations to the Manitoba Good Roads Association for another successful awards banquet.

Vaisakhi

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I rise before the House today to recognize Vaisakhi, one of the most significant holidays on the Sikh calendar. It marks the festival which celebrates the founding of the Sikh community known as the Khalsa, the order of initiated Sikhs in 1699 and is celebrated on April 14 each year.

The Sikh community in Winnipeg, along with Sikhs throughout the world, celebrated Vaisakhi this month. Among the events around the city that I was able to attend for Vaisakhi, I was privileged to be present at the annual ceremonial raising of the Sikh flag at the City Hall. It was truly a time of great festivity and joy and brought the community together to celebrate its culture and to commemorate the birth of Khalsa.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, one of the key elements of Khalsa is the idea of social equality. At the ceremony, where Khalsa was born on Vaisakhi day in 1699, each individual was given a new surname to replace their old names which had distinguished them by caste. With this distinctive identity, Guru Gobind Singh gave all Sikhs the opportunity to live lives of courage, sacrifice and social equality, teaching them to dedicate their lives to the service of others and to the pursuit of justice for people of all faiths. In this way, he worked to give ordinary citizens the courage to achieve great things and to work for the improvement of all society.

The ideals of respect, equality, social justice and service to others that is celebrated on Vaisakhi are principals we can all strive on. It is these ideals that we celebrate here in Manitoba and upon which strong communities are formed. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE (Eighth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that this House approve the general budgetary policy of the government and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Tuxedo, who has 28 minutes remaining.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Regrettably, Mr. Speaker, I have to echo the statements that were made by the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) today with respect to another prominent member of our community who has passed on. I just want to give my condolences to the family of a well-known constituent of mine and a well-known and respected Winnipegger and Manitoban, Mr. Harold Buchwald. Mr. Buchwald has been a long-time contributor to our community and will be sadly missed by many. On behalf of myself and my husband, Jason, and our family, I want to pass on our condolences to his wife, Dee, to his son Jeffrey, to his son and daughter-in-law, Richard and Tracy [phonetic], who are very close friends of ours. Our children have grown up playing together, and to Serena [phonetic], Rachel [phonetic], and Adam [phonetic], it's not easy—and I've gone through this fairly recently—to lose a father. Certainly, I hope at this time that they can remember the many fond memories that they share as a family and that these memories will give them the needed comfort that they need to get through this very difficult time.

Just getting on to the debate at hand, I know I started off last time by discussing the fact that, when I first came into being an elected member of this Chamber, back in November of 2000, one of the first budgets we went through, I think the budget was around \$6 billion at the time. Mr. Speaker, I am just absolutely outraged that we've gone, in a very short period of time, from a budget, an overall operating budget of this province, of some \$6 billion to now almost \$10 billion.

We believe on this side of the House, as Conservatives, that bigger government isn't necessarily better. We need to have proper

management of government. I think that it's unfortunate one of the things we need to ask ourselves as Manitobans today is: Are we really better off today than we were nine years ago? I know members opposite will try and spin their way out of this and say that we are better off today than we were nine years ago, but, Mr. Speaker, I think the facts will speak louder than their rhetoric. So I would like to go through a few examples of how I believe that this government has not brought our province any further along despite the record numbers of transfer payments, despite the record increases in revenues to this government. Spending more money and getting less for it is no way to be governing our province.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I think one of the first areas that I'd like to start off with is with respect to the environment. I think if we're looking at our lakes, we've been asking this government questions with respect to Lake Winnipeg for the last number of years, Madam Deputy Speaker. Each year we continue to live through growing algae blooms. It seems to be getting worse and worse each year despite the announcements after announcements made by this government. What we're seeing is that there have been so many announcements, but there's been very little in the way of action that yields real results with respect to the water quality in our lakes and rivers. I think it's extremely concerning. It seems to be sort of a theme with this government. I think what happens, and it really goes across all areas of government, whether it be about the economy, crime, education, health care, the environment, there were a lot of empty promises made by this NDP government over the last nine years, and very little has been yielded in the way of positive results with respect to our province.

With respect to the environment, we continue to get increases in boil-water orders in various communities across our province. It is very concerning to me and to members on this side of the House, because what we want to see is real results with respect to all of these areas, whether it be the environment, or crime, or education. We want to see that our citizens are getting to be better off as a result of actions of government, not the status quo or even worse for the amounts of money that are being spent by this government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I need only look to a *Free Press* article that states, back in 2003, that the provincial Clean Environment Commission said that

the City, Province and Ottawa should each pay an equal share in the waste-water upgrades. I remind this government that that was five years ago that this provincial government, under the Clean Environment Commission, mandated the City of Winnipeg to upgrade its waste-water treatment facilities. That was five years ago, and only just now are they announcing in their budget that they're going to put up one-third of the funding.

But now we see that the amount of money that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) is quoted as saying that he is offering is some \$235 million. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is nowhere near one-third of the cost of \$1.8 billion. I would strongly suggest that the Minister of Finance go back to the drawing board and figure this out, that that is nowhere near a third of the cost.

I think it's incumbent upon this government if they're going to mandate other levels of government, i.e., in this case, the City of Winnipeg to upgrade its waste-water treatment facilities, when they've mandated such a thing and they've said that a third of the costs are going to be borne from the provincial government, the city government and the federal government, five years ago this government should have come forward with their one-third of the cost of this upgrade in the waste-water treatment facility.

What's happened has continued over the years, Madam Deputy Speaker. We continue to get worse and worse off. We continue to dump raw sewage into our rivers. It is continuing to cause very serious problems out in beaches. I know that various colleagues of mine who have small children, we've often talked about this in our caucus office, how the situation is getting worse, how children and families can no longer enjoy our summers, our limited summers, out at our lakes and our beaches as a result of this government's inaction. They love to talk the talk when it comes to the environment, but, unfortunately, when it comes down to actually yielding real results and doing what's right for Manitobans so that our children can continue to enjoy our lakes and our beaches, unfortunately, this government does not yield the real results. I think it's unfortunate, because the people who do suffer, again, are the children.

But I think, then, there are so many issues, we could go on and on and on with respect to the environment. I mean, certainly, if we want to talk about Kyoto, they said that they will reach 2000 greenhouse gas levels by 2010. Well, that's fine, but

it's not Kyoto. Reaching the 2000 levels requires a reduction of about 0.1 megatonne, or 0.5 percent. Essentially, what that says is that they're going to do 5 percent of the work over the next three years and then 95 percent of the work in order to reach their Kyoto targets after the next election. So, again, it's aiming pretty low. They're only talking about reaching 5 percent of the Kyoto targets over the next three years and leaving the rest for after the next election. Well, it's pretty easy to reach that 5 percent—0.5 percent, sorry, target, and doesn't that make them look good? But it doesn't bring us any closer, and it doesn't do anything with respect to our environment. What we want to see from this government is that they bring forward actions that yield real results and stop with the empty rhetoric but that's all we seem to get from this government.

*(14:50)

Madam Deputy Speaker, when it comes to spending and finance and competitiveness and trade with our province, I found it somewhat alarming when I read the budget and was here while the budget was being introduced that for every \$9 in spending there's only \$1 in tax relief. When it comes down to there's \$100 increase in a basic personal exemption which is less than the rate of inflation, and I think what's unfortunate is again we fall below.

What we would have said actually, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that we would have brought Manitoba up to the same level as Saskatchewan and again, we fall below our neighbour to the west of us. It's very alarming that, you know, not only are we falling behind Saskatchewan, but we're the last have-not province left in western Canada. I think that's nothing to be proud about and I think this government should really go back to the drawing board and start to come up with some policies to really make us competitive.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the debt has increased from 18.3 billion in budget 2007 to 19.5 billion in 2008. This is a 1.2 percent billion increase, and, certainly, this is not sustainable. We're essentially mortgaging our children's future with the way that this government is managing our fiscal affairs here in Manitoba.

We're also getting dangerously close to the 40 percent provincial revenues coming from our federal government, and, clearly, this is unsustainable. You know, we should not be relying on 40 percent of our revenues coming from another level of government. We should be relying on our

local economy to be driving up revenues within our system here in Manitoba. We should not be relying on handouts from Ottawa, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think that pretty much sums it up with respect to this government, that everything is about a handout from the government.

Just want to touch on, there are so many things to touch on, and I know that there is limited time here, but there are a couple of things with respect to education. We've discussed the tuition freeze time and time again, and I know that members opposite were toying with doing away with the tuition freeze, and back and forth on that issue. I think that, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's time that we just say, I mean, students are now saying, we can't get the classes that we want, that we need, in order to graduate in the faculties that we want to graduate in. I think it's time that we do away and phase out with that tuition freeze. It should never have been put in in the first place.

I think it's unfortunate because it's crippled our universities. It's allowed for our students to, in the end, be the people who have suffered as a result of the policies of this government. Again, you know, it was sort of an announcement that was made that they thought sounded really, really good, but, at the end of the day, after nine years of government, we see what the real results are as a result of sort of backward thinking policies with respect to this government.

When it comes to education, really, in this budget, Madam Deputy Speaker, nowhere does it talk about the quality of education in our province. The Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), the minister likes to talk a lot about taxation and likes to talk a lot about, you know, passing off their responsibility on to the school divisions and so on. When it's convenient for them or when it's convenient for them to stand up and take credit for things, they will, but I think it's incumbent upon a minister to focus on what is the quality of education in our province. That is what he should be doing.

Unfortunately, in this budget, nowhere does it really talk about the quality of education. It's all just about taxation and so on, school taxes and so on, but what I really want to see and what this minister of government has sort of failed to do is stand up for our children in our province, make us one of the best provinces, which, I believe, we can be with respect to education and start providing a real quality of education for our children.

Unfortunately, what we have seen from some of the grade 3 testing—although they've done away with a lot of testing so it's very difficult for us to be able to see how our children are doing, Madam Deputy Speaker, but, from what little testing is done out there, I think it's unfortunate that what we have seen over the years is that there has been a decline in the quality of education.

I think it's unfortunate because we do have a huge opportunity for our children. They are our future in this province. I can't recall right now what the last testing was, but when it came to grade 3 education testing, when it came to the addition and subtraction facts to 10, you know, it was somewhere between 45 and 65 percent of children in Manitoba in our school system in grade 3 could not add or subtract to 10. That is absolutely alarming to me, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I think that it shouldn't matter where children live in our province; it shouldn't matter what school they go to. They deserve to have a top-quality education in our province.

I think I'd be remiss not to mention, to spend a few minutes on where we're at with respect to child care in this province. It is absolutely alarming the number of deaths that have taken place with respect to children who have been under the care of this provincial government, and I think it's more and more children are being put into hotels. What is so alarming here is that they're not able to stand up and recognize that there is a very serious problem here.

All they ever do is stand up and make announcement after announcement after announcement, more funding, more funding, more funding, but what are we getting for it? Children continue to fall through the cracks within this province, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I think it's absolutely shameful. It's not about how much money that you're putting into a system. It's about how it's working for those who are the most vulnerable within that system. I think what's unfortunate here is that, with the NDP, it's all about inputs. It's all about how much money they're spending. Oh, we're spending this amount of money on this program, this amount of money on this program. Isn't this great? Another press release, another announcement, blah, blah, blah.

Well, I'll tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, what's happening is that all of those children are the ones that are really suffering as a result of this government's inability to manage the system, and I say inability to manage because I do believe that they

are kind-hearted people. I believe that they mean well, and I believe that they want to do what's best for the children, but I think what's unfortunate about this is they think that by just throwing more money at a system, it is going to help those children. It's obviously not working. What they need to do, again, is to go back to the drawing board and figure out how do we better manage this system to prevent those children from falling and continuing to fall through those cracks.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to talk briefly about health care as well. I think it's no secret it's been nine long years now since the Premier of our province stood before Manitobans and made the announcement and the promise to Manitobans that he'd end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million, that he would fix our health-care system. Nine years later, billions of dollars later, spend more, get less out of this system. I think it's extremely unfortunate that this is happening, and, quite frankly, it's now—you know, the Premier (Mr. Doer) just shrugs his arms and says, yeah, I guess there are people in the hallway. Well, so what.

Well, you know what? It's wrong. He made a promise to Manitobans, a promise that he couldn't deliver on, and I think it's incumbent upon premiers to at least try to live up to their promises, but the problem with the Premier, with the NDP, is they make these ridiculous promises and somehow get away with it. The only people who suffer, Madam Deputy Speaker, are the citizens of Manitoba. I think it's extremely unfortunate for Manitobans.

When it comes to our justice system—I've got a lot of ground to cover here; I know I've got a very short period of time, but, with our justice system, people are being gunned down in their homes. People are being stabbed in the streets. This is not getting any better, and it's not about more announcements. It's not about more money into the system. It's about better managing the system and making sure that it's there for our citizens when we and when they need it.

* (15:00)

I think what's unfortunate, when we look all across the board, whether it's justice, health care, education, family services, whether it's our economy, you know, what we need to do is grow our economy here in Manitoba, not by spending more government money, but by building and growing a real economy here in Manitoba that's based on growth of business and private-sector growth within our province. That,

in turn, then, helps to pay for the social services that we need here for our most vulnerable in our society, whether it be seniors or children, whether it be our sick, and families.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that's what we should be driving toward. I think, unfortunately, this budget does not go in that direction. We continue to go in the wrong direction of this spend-more, get-less kind of NDP government.

I think, with that, I am unfortunately out of time and will have to leave it there, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of the budget, because this budget is taking Manitoba in the right direction.

There are deficits and there are deficits. Some of them show up immediately on the balance sheets, while others don't.

In question period last week, the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) claimed that our budget barely made mention of public safety. He professed his concern for the needs of the justice system.

The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) asserted, somewhat rashly perhaps, that, quote: "We're not going to vote for this budget because . . . he did not provide . . . enough police officers for Manitoba." This is the so-called Tory vision for Manitoba.

Yes, Manitoba needs more law enforcement personnel. That's why our government has provided for 150 more police positions, and will add another 100 by 2011. We are expanding the Milner Ridge Correctional Centre. We are fully aware of the role that deterrence plays in containing crime.

We believe in being not just tough on crime, the only approach that Conservatives seem aware of, but also being smart about crime. The Tories see only a narrowly defined justice system deficit. They rant about the needs of the justice system, but not about the needs of Manitoba citizens and communities. They fail to see the social deficit that underlies much of the crime. Our government, however, sees that deficit and continues to address it. That is the smart approach.

The honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) calculates that two minutes of her budget speech dealt with justice issues. Justice to her and

her colleagues is all about jails and police. To the NDP, it is also about social investments. It means, for example, as reaffirmed in the budget 2008: investments in recreation directors in inner-city neighbourhoods, as well as remote First Nations; investments in our First Sports initiatives to provide sports equipment in low-income areas; investments in affordable housing, child welfare, and crime reduction, as part of our Neighbourhoods Alive! work; and in our Lighthouse after-school programs. Had the honourable member been capable of making the connections between these investments and community safety, she would have found a much bigger slice of our budget devoted to justice. She would need a big clock, rather than an egg timer, to gauge our work.

It is apparent, however, that Conservatives just don't get the connection between these investments and community safety. That was apparent, for instance, in 1993 when the Filmon government cut completely the core funding to the province's 11 friendship centres. Our government, however, did connect the dots, and, in our first budget in 2000, we restored the funding to Aboriginal organizations.

Let me cite another example. The Filmon government did not get the connection either when it cancelled funding for social housing in 1993. But we saw the link, and, when we formed government in 1999, we joined forces with the City and the federal government to fund the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative. And these are only examples.

Tell me, if criminal activity is a matter of police and jails, why do large stretches of suburbia, such as south Winnipeg, have relatively lower street-crime rates? Are there more police in these areas? Do more people from these areas go to jail?

Just a few weeks ago, Michael Chettleburgh, a Canadian crime-reduction specialist, was in Winnipeg to address staff working on the various programs for high-risk youth in Gilbert Park that our government is funding. As he told the *Winnipeg Sun*: "If we are not making those social investments now, we are going to continue having a growing gang problem. It is not one you can arrest your way out of."

I would like to talk about Manitoba's social deficit in a larger context, in the context of overall provincial government spending. In their response to this budget, as to every other Doer government budget, the members opposite can be counted on to

drone the same mantra: Government spending is out of control. They do this in spite of what the Province's books say, what Statistics Canada says and what the financial experts say.

We have reduced the debt as a percentage of our economy by 30 percent, and it is now at a record low. The Doer government has delivered the largest personal and business tax cuts in the province's history and continues to make further cuts. Manitoba has seen no fewer than six credit upgrades under our watch. Statistics Canada crunched the numbers and says we have the fourth lowest total expenditure per capita of all the provinces. In response to budget 2008, TD Economics commended Manitoba's well-contained debt burden and solid fiscal management. Scotiabank referred to Manitoba's productive balancing of fiscal repair, tax cuts and new spending.

The facts are totally at odds with the Tory rhetoric, but the members opposite don't let the facts get in the way of their special-interest-motivated calls for yet more tax reductions and, implicitly, a reduced role for government in social programs.

This is what we are seeing right now at the federal level, as Stephen Harper re-engineers the system to make it more and more difficult for Ottawa to invest in public well-being as opposed to skeletal governance functions.

Failure to invest in social programs now only creates a social deficit further down the road. It is true, not only in the case of justice, but other areas, be those health care, early childhood development, education, housing or community development. There is a price to be paid for sitting back and letting problems develop. The price is paid in terms of our economy, our competitiveness, and the well-being of working Manitobans.

This is not necessarily a matter of total spending, as our province's continuing fiscal health demonstrates. It's just as much a matter of how we spend, or rather what we invest in, for the well-being of our communities is not a cost, but rather an investment.

I would like to quote from a recently published analysis by a U of M professor, Gregg Olsen, who has done extensive scholarly research on social policy in the Nordic countries. He writes that, in countries such as Sweden, taxes are widely viewed as an acceptable price for a safer, cleaner, more egalitarian and more civil society and as a central

means of promoting the freedom of Swedish residents via the wide range of benefits they furnish.

Professor Olsen also notes that, like many Canadians, Swedes are astutely aware that promises to cut taxes constitute a threat to cherished social programs and living standards.

*(15:10)

Whether you turn to the *Reader's Digest* or a British think-tank such as the *New Economics Foundation*, you'll find that Nordic countries, which keep their social deficit in check, score the highest in terms of life satisfaction or quality of life.

With the needs of my constituency always in mind, I fully endorse budget 2008. The Doer government knows about deficits, both fiscal and social, and acts accordingly. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Madam Deputy Speaker, first budget after an election you would expect new and innovative ideas and solid leadership in developing new strategies in industries. This NDP government has told Manitobans to stay tuned on several of these critical areas, and this province is tired of staying tuned.

So what did this government do all winter? We're not sure, but we do know that they believe in and have pulled through in spending more, but, again, we see less. Expenditures were up by 6.2 percent from the budget of 2007, and the NDP have been saying that the spending increase is 3.3 percent, but this is 3.3 percent above the forecast for 2007. They went over budget by \$264 million in 2007, and we're going further, further into debt. If it hadn't been for the higher-than-anticipated tax revenues in 2007, the NDP would not have been able to cover their over-expending, and, for every \$9 spent, there is \$1 in tax cuts.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as someone who spends a lot of time working in the area of rural development in the past and continues to take a keen interest in that area, I was very disappointed to see that the words "rural development" were not even contained in the budget speech. What a tremendous oversight that is, as a strong rural economy is a key component of a healthy, provincial economy.

We were extremely disappointed to see the government's lack of recognition of the very serious

crises in the livestock sector, and rural Manitoba as a whole, especially with the cattle and hog producers who have spin-offs in the community through different types of businesses that provide supports to many people in rural Manitoba. When our primary producers are hurting financially, the impacts are felt throughout our rural businesses and our rural communities. Instead of meaningful strategies and commitments aimed at moving the livestock sector forward, we've seen recycling of announcements regarding loans and interest rate deductions.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when we saw recently through a FIPPA reply that, when you have 400 percent increase in calls and hits to a Web site asking for help and support, then, definitely, there are some serious concerns about the programs and supports that are being provided to rural families.

In a related vein, this government is circulating a document regarding the roles and responsibility of conservation districts. I think the boards and staffs of our conservation districts are doing a great job protecting the landscape, but they're doing so with very little leadership and support from this government, but lots of regulations.

When you look at the conservation district consultation document, it looks like the provincial government is trying to offload a lot of their responsibilities on the conservation districts. We're hearing that throughout the province, yet it does not seem as though this government is going to provide the accompanying financial commitment to help conservation districts take on these new roles.

Recently, at a meeting with a conservation district in the southern part of the province, it was clearly stated, and should be clearly understood by this government, that anything that's coming from that area of the province is going to directly affect the city of Winnipeg. So, if they do not provide the supports and the education, and support the producers in the area with incentives, then anything that's going to be happening downstream south part of the province is definitely going to have an effect on Lake Winnipeg, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I do know that there have been concerns raised to the Ombudsman's office. I do know that we are patiently waiting for something to come from the Ombudsman's office to clearly indicate that this government has been lacking in its leadership in the area of water stewardship and the supports that are available to Manitobans in moving forward.

So, a green budget, yeah, a lot of recycled announcements and no commitment to a lot of the people in the province who have a key role in understanding of the importance of the landscape and the economic impacts that play a role in purifying water and keeping our waters safe and clear and non-pollutable.

Clean energy, Madam Deputy Speaker. I found that rather interesting that the *Souris Plaindealer* had a heading in their recent paper, saying: "Project Blowing in the Wind." I think that pretty much sums up this government. Their ministers and the Premier (Mr. Doer), when they come into my communities and make big promises, put out press releases and then disappear. It was rather interesting that there was a meeting in my community recently with people from the department on wind power. They had indicated they were totally taken by surprise that the decisions were made by this government in a totally different direction than where they were headed. So I think that there seems to be a disconnect between what is being told to my communities, what action is being taken in my communities, and it's definitely not in line with what's being spun from this government.

I spoke earlier about the Farm and Rural Stress Line. I think that was a really good indicator, a really excellent red flag being shown to this government that the programs and services that are being provided to rural families are not working. I found it rather interesting that the government would be saying, our programs are working, we're listening to the farmers. Well, I know that, when we had our debate, our MUPI on agriculture, the minister had security guards in front of her door. To me that was a real clear message that I think was being said to my communities and to the producers of Manitoba. She said her door is open; she's listening to farmers, but she's got two burly security guards outside her door indicating not business as usual. We're not going to let you into this office. We're concerned about our personal safety on this very serious issue. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I find that rather a contradiction from this minister, and I think that she owes Manitobans more than just press releases and spin.

This budget does nothing for women entrepreneurs. During the budget presentation, I found it extremely offensive that the number of times the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) used the word "regulate." When I hear from the women leaders in our province, and it was confirmed by several

women entrepreneurs that I met with recently, both urban and rural, and the fact is that they were clear in saying that the burden of excessive government regulation and the number of taxes that have been created are creating major obstacles in their struggles to run their business ventures. This comes from women from rural Manitoba, from urban and the north. So this is a clear message that I think the government should take heed to, is that women entrepreneurs are not happy with what this budget presented and are not happy with the lack of support or vision this province has for women in business, Madam Deputy Speaker.

In the area of health care, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in young women aged 20 to 44, and one-in-four women who develop it will die within five years of diagnosis. A safe vaccine has been developed and approved for us in Canada that will protect women from the virus that causes cervical cancer. My daughter has been vaccinated. I believe that this option should be made available to other families who believe that this vaccination will make a difference in the health and well-being of their children.

Cervical cancer immunization programs are being implemented across the country. In 2007, our leader and the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) announced that we would support this health strategy initiative that focuses on prevention in women's health. Manitoba has received funding from the federal government targeted to this important strategy, but not a word has come from this minister or this government on those dollars and how they're going to be spent.

* (15:20)

Parents of children in Manitoba have taken on this issue and have put their dollars in support of this vaccination. Norma Bouvare [*phonetic*], a constituent of mine, has immunized her 11-year-old daughter, Emma [*phonetic*]. She has refused to wait for this government to take action.

She has written and has said: As soon as I found out that I might be able to do something to prevent my daughter from one day getting cervical cancer, I took her to the doctor in Souris to get the HPV vaccination. Then, last spring, I heard the government was going to offer the vaccine across the province, but their program still is not in place. I wonder what's taking so long, especially when the federal government dollars are being provided for funding that program.

This immunization has the potential to reduce long-term cancer treatment costs and, more importantly, save lives, and I suggest that this minister stop the spin and respond to the needs of our Manitoba families.

Ensuring Manitoba families have access to affordable, high-quality child care is a priority of our caucus. A strong child-care system benefits children, benefits families, and benefits employers within the child-care system. Long-term planning with a multiyear commitment is what was expected from this government, but it was one of those stay-tuned announcements.

In my communities alone, we have two issues. Minnedosa is trying to jump through all the regulatory hoops that have to be in place in their efforts to get a centre up and running. We need that centre, the community needs that centre, and all we seem to be getting is government rhetoric.

Souris has a day-care co-operative that has been serving the community for 35 years. My children and I have enjoyed and appreciated the care that they've received, and we want this centre to continue to provide that. However, the centre faces ongoing staffing shortages and, at times, near crises with staff shortages and waiting lists.

So what I'm hearing from local families and from the child-care community is families need and deserve access to high-quality child care, and they're looking for enhancements to the existing child-care system.

An Honourable Member: Talk to your buddies in Ottawa.

Mrs. Rowat: In Winnipeg—oh, the member opposite is indicating, talk to the people in Ottawa. You know what? We've got 40 percent of our spending coming from the federal government, and all that this government can do is stick out its hand and say, we need more, we need more. I'm sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker, but if this government was committed to child care they would have a plan in place, they would have a five-year strategy in place, and they would be dealing with the issues at hand, not like the Member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) who answers a call from her constituent and says: Why are you going to the media? I respond to child care and issues within this community. Why are you going to the media?

I'm sorry, but, as a representative of this House, I found that extremely offensive. If you're not going to

be responding to the needs of your communities, and you're going to give criticism to the community when they come to you for help, I think this government needs a reality check.

Since 2002, the NDP government has increased Pharmacare deductibles by 34 percent. That is shameful. I think what needs to be done is this minister needs to be looking at, not only her constituency, obviously, but looking at what is being offered to the individuals within the communities throughout the province, the seniors who are on fixed incomes and looking for this government to provide some leadership in the area of deductibles. Pharmacare deductibles are the most insulting example of this government's inability to manage its finances.

Many Manitobans on fixed incomes, especially seniors, cannot absorb these increased costs. But medicine is not optional, it's not a luxury, and, when these increased deductibles are forced on Manitoba seniors, they have to choose. This is not an easy decision for these individuals on fixed income.

In fact, a nation-wide assessment of drug coverage in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* found that Manitoba does not, in fact, have the most comprehensive drug coverage in Canada, as the minister was leading people to believe. It is not. We are finding that a comparable senior who's on fixed income is paying \$508, comparative to \$8 in Ontario for the same medication. That is not a comprehensive and quality care program. That's an insult to the seniors of Manitoba.

While we're on the topic of medicine, this government is painfully slow in approving generic drugs. Generics are cheaper, and it's better for seniors and the Pharmacare program for the government to make an effort to get these drugs on the formulary sooner, when they become available, Madam Deputy Speaker. But, under this NDP government, the committee that approves these drugs doesn't meet frequently or regularly, and, as a result, Manitoba is often one of the last provinces to approve drugs that have been available in other provinces for months.

I think that we've heard from Manitobans, including Mr. Rice [phonetic] from Brandon, who has asked repeatedly to have a drug that would help, could possibly help his daughter, who is suffering from cancer, have less pain and possibly provide a quality of life that she desperately needs. She's a young mom who is looking for help and leadership

from this government. It should be mentioned that, when Mr. Rice [phonetic] approached the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell), Mr. Rice [phonetic] had indicated that he was pretty much blown off by the Member for Brandon East and was pushed away when he was looking for some help and support from the member there.

So I think that, when Manitobans are looking for help, there seems to be a common trend, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the care and the support they're receiving from their representatives at times. It's a wake-up call to not only the government side, but to the members opposite that things have to change. People deserve solid representation, and they're failing to get that.

It's been well established by now that this budget hasn't made crime a priority, but, in particular, it's a failure to seniors who are often victims of violent crimes, vicious home invasions, assaults, stabbings. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes, Madam Deputy Speaker, and especially our seniors, who have spent their lives paying their taxes, raising their families and building our communities.

In my communities, just this weekend, in the R.M. of Whitehead, in the little community of Alexander, a home invasion at 7:30 in the morning on Saturday. So vicious attacks are happening throughout the province. Very serious crimes and murders are happening in Winnipeg. Pregnant women are being murdered for reasons that are needing to be addressed by this government and are failing to be addressed by this government.

I guess, in closing, I just can't support a budget that has failed seniors, has failed my communities, has increased user fees in an outrageous way, backdoor taxes, and has done nothing to encourage me or my family that this government is working in the best interests of Manitobans. So I'm definitely not supporting this budget and am very disappointed with a government that has been in power for most of my young daughter's life and can't seem to get their act together. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Madam Deputy Speaker, it's an honour, again, to speak to the budget. It's, indeed, an honour to follow the Member for Minnedosa because this Friday, again, in spite of the doom and gloom words from the member opposite, we will be opening the new Husky plant that wouldn't be possible, it would not be possible

without the long-term vision that we had on the new fuels and their benefit to the agricultural economy, to cleaner emissions, and to partially improve the grain prices in Manitoba.

I know the member opposite is heckling, but, you know, I'm really happy that she put my picture in her pamphlet in the last campaign, Madam Deputy Speaker. You know, she talks a good game in here, but out there, the picture's worth a thousand words. I think I'm flattered, but she can keep heckling. She can keep heckling. That's what she does best. She is the heckler from Minnedosa, and we know that very well. We're the positive team from all the rest of Manitoba.

* (15:30)

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Point of Order

Madam Deputy Speaker: On a point of order, the Member for River East?

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Yes, a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm wondering, in the spirit of Earth Day tomorrow, whether the Premier might consider picking me up and we could carpool to work.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on the same point of order?

Mr. Doer: Madam Deputy Speaker, if she got up as early as I did, I'd be more than happy.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: As you know, I'm going to be attending the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce tomorrow morning at 7 a.m. I'm—*[interjection]* quite welcome. I'll pick you up at quarter to seven. That would be in our hybrid vehicle.

You know, I will start off my speech in a different way than her seatmate two seats over. Two Wednesdays ago, he got up at the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer:—and said, we're like vulture capitalists. We only exist on bad news. I will not be saying that at the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce. And the member opposite also should know that, two seats over, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) at the same forum said, you know, it's really hard to

come into this room. There's so much confidence in this room; so much confidence in this room.

If the member opposite also would like, I go for a walk with Ginny on Bunn's Creek. I know that's really early, as well.

An Honourable Member: I know, I'm getting up when you're coming home.

Mr. Doer: Well, you know, that's probably very true. A little stamina goes a long way, but that's why we have the energy, Madam Deputy Speaker, on this side of the House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: Sorry, I just digress, but I was going to talk about the—

Madam Deputy Speaker: For the record—

Mr. Doer:—Leader of the Opposition's comments, so it fit very well with my comments. I am, of course, addressing it to the Madam Deputy Speaker.

I would also point out, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I just heard the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). I was awaiting my appointed spot on the speaking order before the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) and the member of finance and, you know, I heard the slogan: spend more and get less. Well, that should have been the Tory theme song from the last provincial election because they spent twice as much in advertising as Stu Murray, and did they get more or did they get less in the last election campaign? *[interjection]* No, they didn't.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Thank you. For the record, the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) did not have a point of order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: Madam Deputy Speaker, I certainly want to say that spending more and getting less is, as I say, the Conservative theme song in the last election campaign.

But, you know, I can't believe their pathetic effort to go and talk about putting Brandon on the map. Only the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba could have a map of this province that left off Minnedosa, it left off Swan River, it left off Russell, it left off The Pas, Thompson, Island Lake, Churchill, Flin Flon. You know, that's why, when we

got elected, we had to actually put Churchill back onto the provincial map.

You know, if you don't think we're going to Arborg and Riverton and all those other communities in Manitoba and say this is the Conservative plan, you have got another think coming. So, only they can plan a publicity stunt that leaves out two-thirds of the land mass of Manitoba. That's why they're on that side, and that's why after the budget three years from now, they will be on that side, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As the Leader of the Opposition said at the Chamber of Commerce, it's hard being an opposition leader because there's so much optimism and confidence in Manitoba.

You know, that's not the speech he made a couple of weeks ago. You know, actually, he didn't know that anybody was in the room. He actually condemned—he looked around the room and didn't see a *Free Press* reporter, and then he dumped all over the *Free Press*. I mean, my goodness, what kind of editorials does he want out of the *Free Press*, Madam Deputy Speaker? But I guess if they were in the room, he wouldn't have done that. No, he wouldn't have done that at all.

In terms of the budget, you know, the optimism is very positive. We have more growth in population, growth in economic development, growth in business, private sector development.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, we have considerable amount of activity, and I'm also proud—you know, when we're dealing with our recreation proposal, again, members opposite wanted to have reckless tax cuts. They didn't want to put money into recreation in Manitoba for children, for youth, for the Y, et cetera.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if they would have followed through on their election promises, they wouldn't have had any money for the downtown Y in Brandon. They wouldn't have any money for the redevelopment of the North Hill because of, quote, above inflation. They wouldn't have any money for the new potential wellness centre at Brandon University. They wouldn't have money for community clubs that we've committed money for.

But, you know, they wouldn't have had money in that area of town they've never been to: the inner city of Winnipeg. I am proud that we are putting \$500,000 into recreation directors in the inner city.

We can get a hundred editorials against that policy, and we're going to still make sure the lights go on on the weekend and evenings for the kids in the inner city with that investment we have made in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, there are some challenges in Manitoba. Certainly, we recognize that the largest over-expenditure in government in the last fiscal year, mostly in February and March, was for agriculture. Some \$68 million. We were over-expended by over 50 percent, putting money into livestock producers. We're over-expended by putting money into hogs and cattle, and we recognize the difficulty, in spite of the great growth in the revenues in the grain and oilseed sector, we recognize the difficulty that people have. We also recognize, with the country-of-origin legislation under NAFTA, that we have to (a) oppose what is being proposed and (b) have more food processing in Manitoba.

So members opposite are voting against \$20 million. They're voting against the second-shift funding at Brandon. It's in this budget. The member opposite is going to condemn this budget. He's voting against the second shift in Brandon and he's voting against the new development in Neepawa. Five things he's voting against today are all good for the people of Brandon. He will give us his doom and gloom and he will read out his newspaper clippings and mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the loudest of them all? But we know that things are going quite well in his own community.

Mr. Speaker, the tax cuts, you know, the member opposite talked about the manufacturing sector. When was the last time a Conservative government in Manitoba reduced the corporate tax in this province?

An Honourable Member: Never?

Mr. Doer: Never. So, when we came into office, it was 17 percent. It's going down again to 12, proposals to look at 11. The federal corporate tax will go to 15.

The manufacturer capital tax, eliminated in this budget. They're voting against the elimination of the capital tax on manufacturers. That's what they're voting against. I guarantee you every worker working in a manufacturing company is going to know the Liberal position and the Tory position. It may not get front-page coverage. It may not be in the editorials, but we go out to the people in the plants

and in the workshops and we'll point out the voting record of the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), voting against the Boeing workers in his own community, and we'll point out that record.

Mr. Speaker, there are also great tax reductions for people, people that are starting small businesses. The lowest small-business tax rate in Canada. What have they got against that? It's not chopped liver. The lowest tax rate in Canada for small business, \$75 off your property tax, income tax reductions, and, again, for the first time ever, a caregivers' tax credit. Instead of trying to privatize home care, which didn't have a word of opposition from the former mayor, we are providing a caregivers' tax credit for the benefit of the people of Manitoba. Debt-to-GDP is down—

* (15:40)

An Honourable Member: Call an election.

Mr. Doer: I wish I could call an election, you know. I wish I could. It would be a little too early, Mr. Speaker.

An Honourable Member: One year.

Mr. Doer: You know, in fact, it is almost the anniversary of when we called the election.

Mr. Speaker, debt-to-GDP down, spending based on inflation rejected to invest in the largest infrastructure program in the history of Manitoba, over a billion dollars. That's what they are voting against. They are voting against a billion-dollar infrastructure.

Education and training. Oh, the member, the deputy leader gets up and says, oh, the 7 percent for universities was not enough. Then their leader goes up and says we shouldn't spend more than 7 percent. Their critic on Justice says, oh, not enough money for Justice; 7.5 percent is not enough for Justice. They want to spend 3 percent on Justice. They want to spend more money on public education. They've also been on record of that. They want to spend more money on health care, but they're clearly on the record of only wanting to spend at inflation. They won't tell us how many nurses we have to lay off. They won't tell us what it will mean for the universities and colleges. They won't tell us how many Crown prosecutors will have to be laid off, and how many police officers won't be hired.

But, of course, that wouldn't be inconsistent. There were fewer police officer positions between '95 and '99 than there was—Mr. Speaker, there have

been 150 more. They went down in police; we went up. They went down in prosecutors; we went up. They turned off the lights in community clubs; we're turning them back on with this budget.

Now, look at the whole issue of hydro. The mothball party is at it again. The negative nabobs, they're standing up there. They're standing up there opposing everything, and they should, because they never built a megawatt. In 11 years they didn't build a megawatt. They are the no-build party, the no-guts party, the no-vision party. In fact, their vision is a nightmare. They talk about dreams. It's a nightmare because it would be a nightmare for Manitoba to have mothballing all this development, all this potential, and have a situation where, eventually, they'd meet their ideological cousins from England and sell corporations, like they've done in the past. They are the mothball party.

We are investing billions of dollars in hydro. We have the revenues based on sales. You know, that old-fashioned idea, go out and sell it because you've got a good product. Have the revenues build it. That's what we are doing. That's what we announced last week. That's a vision. That's a vision for the future of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I know I have limited time for the address because we have great words to come from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), but I want to say that, if you care about health care, you'll vote for this budget. If you care about public education, you'll vote for this budget. If you care for post-secondary education, not just words based on bitter, bitter feelings, you'll vote for this budget. If you care about having more police officers in this province you'll vote for this budget. If you care about having more Crown prosecutors, you'll vote for this budget. If you care about fair treatment for northern Manitoba, that place that's left off the map, and Aboriginal people with the University College of the North, you'll vote for this budget. If you care about agriculture, really care, you'll vote for a tax reduction for farmers when they really need it, and more money for food processing, which we really need.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, you'll vote for a caregivers' tax credit, the first one in Manitoba, and you will vote for \$500,000 for recreation directors in the inner city to make a difference to our kids and our future. That's why you should vote for the budget. That's why we're going to.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): It's a pleasure that I get an opportunity to stand in this House.

It's the first time I've experienced a budget that was presented by the NDP government. I can honestly say that it was underwhelming, and we'll get into some of the areas as to why this budget should be voted against.

But, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity, because it is my first opportunity, to thank the constituents of Brandon West for allowing me to be in this august House. I am very proud and very pleased and, in fact, somewhat humbled to be able to stand and represent the good people of Brandon.

For those of you who do not know me, I have a great affinity for my community of Brandon. I've been involved in it at a very young age and, certainly, to the age that I've reached now. I should say, Mr. Speaker, that I feel a very closeness to the community. I believe it's probably one of the best communities that we have across this country, and there are some very good things that are ongoing in my community.

I know a lot of the members have been to our Keystone Centre, which is a one off. There's nothing of its kind anywhere in the country. We now have the Manitoba school of culinary arts, which is a state-of-the-art school, which is being recognized across this country.

Brandon has hosted, on many occasions, the world, through world curling and world baseball, junior hockey. We are known, Mr. Speaker, for our wonderful basketball teams at Brandon University and the Brandon Wheat Kings. Whenever I go anywhere across this country, the first comment I get is certainly about the Brandon Wheat Kings.

I also have, Mr. Speaker, a great love for this province, and I've proven that on numerous occasions. As a matter of fact, I've had the opportunity of living in other communities across this great country of ours. When my wife and I first got married, we left Manitoba and we moved to Alberta and British Columbia, and, when we decided we wanted to raise a family, I thought the best place to raise that family would be in Manitoba. So we returned home to Manitoba and very happy to do so.

Not too long ago, I had the opportunity, once again, of moving out of Manitoba. I resided in Calgary and Toronto, and we moved back, once again, Mr. Speaker, for the reason that I felt, and my family felt, that there was a great quality of life to be achieved here in the province of Manitoba. As a

matter of fact, I wanted to raise my children in Toronto. There's a saying: do you live to work or do you work to live? Well, in Toronto, you actually live to work. In Manitoba, you can work to live, and you can achieve an awful lot in the quality of life in this province.

A lot of people, Mr. Speaker, have left the province, unfortunately, in the last little while, and they aren't returning. And they aren't returning, unfortunately, because they've lost, perhaps, some of the idealism and some of the opportunities that we should have in this province. I speak of my own two children. In fact, they had a cadre of friends around them. Of those 10 friends, very good friends, six now live in Alberta, one lives in Saskatchewan, two reside in Brandon and one moved to Winnipeg.

I asked my children if they would ever consider moving back closer to home, moving to Winnipeg. They both live in Calgary, and, Mr. Speaker, they said, Why? Why would I ever move back to Manitoba? Why would I move back to Winnipeg? It's nothing for me. It doesn't allow the opportunities that they want to achieve for themselves, and they're going to stay in Alberta.

The problem is there are a lot of those children who have moved to Alberta because of the lack of opportunities in this province. The problem with that is not only are our children not coming back to this province, but the parents are going to follow those children to locations that they are right now. We're going to lose not only the opportunity of the young, but we're going to lose the opportunity that we've had of those people, those seniors who've built this province, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I have a vision that isn't in this budget. I have some beliefs that I would like to share at this point in time, and I can't see them in this budget, Mr. Speaker. I want, above all, to have this province be known to have the most effective and the most cost-effective and the best delivery of health care. That's what I would like to see. I would like to be able to go across this country and say, in Manitoba, we have the best health care of anywhere, but I can't say that.

As a matter of fact, the Conference Board of Canada just did a survey, Mr. Speaker, and they said that we in Manitoba spend, on a per capita, more money on health care than any other province, but they also went on to say we have the worst service delivery of health care anywhere in the country. So I can't say that we have the best health-care system. I

would love to be able to do that. I would love to be able to go out across this country and be proud of my province with the health-care system.

Mr. Speaker, I would love to have the best post-secondary education systems and institutions in this country. I would love to have Brandon University, the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg held up on a pedestal as an example of the best post-secondary education. But, when I go out into the country, I hear about Acadia. I hear about Queen's. I hear about St. F-X. I hear about McGill.

* (15:50)

Do you know what *Maclean's* magazine says about our institutions? Mr. Speaker, they put them at the bottom of the list. There are children now, there are very bright children leaving this province to go to those other institutions, not because they have a cheaper tuition rate, but because they deliver a better education. That's what I would like to be able to say to Manitobans. I want to have the best education, post-secondary education. Under this government, under this budget that has even refused to get rid of the tuition freeze that's handcuffing our post-secondary education, they've refused to do that in this budget, we're going to have mediocrity and continue to have mediocrity.

I would love to be able to say to the people across this country that I live in the safest province in this country. I would love to be able to walk downtown Winnipeg and not be afraid. I would love to do that, but this budget doesn't deal with that. This budget hasn't put anything on the table that's going to be able to say that Manitobans live in the safest, most crime-free environment in the country. In fact, it's quite the opposite. We're now the second-highest murder capital in Canada in the city of Winnipeg. We have, Mr. Speaker, on a regular basis, violent crimes that are being performed against our residents and our constituents, and we're not doing anything in this budget to be able to reflect a change in that.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I would love to be self-sufficient as a province and a contributor to this country. Wouldn't that be lovely? Right now, I go to Alberta, and you know what they call us in Alberta? They call us the black hole. We're a black hole because they keep on funneling money from Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Ontario into this province. Now, I would love to be able to go back to those

people and say, hey, we are self-sufficient. We are a contributing member to this country. But we're not that, Madam Acting Speaker. We're not that. Unfortunately, 40 percent of our total budget right now is made up of transfer and equalization payments from the federal government. We're the only one in western Canada that has an equalization payment coming to us right now. That's an embarrassment, and I would like to change that if I could. If we could be in charge of that budget, that's one of the visions that we would look at, one of the strategies that we'd be putting into place to get off of the welfare system in this country.

Madam Acting Speaker, I would love to be able to say to business that this is the most business-friendly environment in the country, and I can't say that. I can't say that, because we have things like a payroll tax, the only payroll tax in western Canada. So, when a large corporation wants to set up a business somewhere in western Canada, they're going to look at Manitoba as being a friendly business environment? I think not. As a matter of fact, that's reflected in the private investment that's coming into this province, as opposed to the public investment that is in this province. We are not being competitive, and it's not a friendly business environment. There are no changes in this budget to make that.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) talks about how we've reduced the capital tax. What he fails to tell you is we were the only province that had a capital tax. So now, all of a sudden, they're the white knights by taking away something that should not have been there in order to be competitive.

Madam Acting Speaker, there is a vision, and my leader said it. He would love and I would love nothing better than to have this province grow to a population of two million people. I would like nothing better than to have my community grow to a population of 200,000. But, in order to do that, you have to put into place the proper strategies to attract those businesses, attract those people and have some opportunity in this province. We have to make sure that we set the standards so that people will, in fact, move to our province.

I want agriculture in Manitoba to be known as producing the best quality product at the best price. I would like to be able to go across this country and say that Manitoba has always been and continues to have an economic backbone of agriculture. But what happens? This government places moratoriums on

agriculture production. What happens is they keep on throwing regulations in front of agricultural producers so that they become, unfortunately, much less competitive than they are in other areas. I would love nothing better than to see my agriculture in this province be seen as the best in the country.

Madam Acting Speaker, I want my children in this province to have the best care. I want a Child and Family Services that would be second to none. I want our children to be protected in this province. I want our children to feel safe in this province. Right now, with this government and the mismanagement of that portfolio, I cannot say that's the case. That is a travesty, an absolute travesty.

Madam Acting Speaker, I want our seniors to be dealt with respect. I don't want to have their pockets picked constantly by this government with nickel and dime tax increases, where, in fact, the seniors of our society, who have been the contributors to our society, on fixed incomes, are continually asked to pay more and pay more and pay more. This is what I would like to see. I would like to see that, and I would like to be able to sell that across this country, but I can't do it. This budget doesn't reflect any of that.

Madam Acting Speaker, I've had the opportunity of listening to other budgets being presented in another House. I can honestly say that this budget, not only was it underwhelming, but it was mediocre. I've heard other Finance ministers make presentations of budgets, and there was an excitement, there was an enthusiasm, there was a plan that they laid out for the next 12 months based on that budget. There was none of that that was put into this budget. The presentation was Pablum that was being forced down the throats of the backbenchers across there, and they ate it. They ate it all up. It is nothing but a mediocre budget. They talk about how everybody's accepting it. Well, I have, in fact, gone through all of the press clippings and, by the way, I have not found one positive comment on this budget.

Vic Grant calls it like watching snow melt. Is there too much government in Manitoba's economy? Payroll tax takes its toll; the transfers trap. Madam Acting Speaker, I hear, Ottawa sugar daddy. These are the headlines on this particular budget that they have sat down, and said, oh, it's so wonderful. Saskatchewan takes the Grey Cup while Manitoba earns GAAP designation. That's an embarrassment, an absolute embarrassment that this Finance Minister

would put forward a document that generates that kind of headlines.

What did the budget do? I'll tell what it did. It spent and it spent some more, and it taxed and it taxed some more. Right now, Madam Acting Speaker, we have a 6.2 percent increase in spending, 6.2. Our GDP is anywhere between 2 and 2.5 percent but, no, we're going to spend 6.2 percent. And why can we spend 6.2 percent? Because Ottawa keeps sending money in shovelfuls to this government. They're going to continue to take it and spend it, \$9 in spending to \$1 in tax cuts. That's not sustainable. It can't be sustainable.

What else did this budget do? It didn't plan for the future. Madam Acting Speaker. They may or may not know, but there is a possibility of an economic downturn right now in this country and, particularly, in this province. There's an old adage that I learned a long time ago in business, and it goes like this: The best investment you can make is to retire debt. You should also have reserves of up to six months in order to look for any kind of emergency. This government has neither. They didn't retire the debt. As a matter of fact, this year, in this budget—by the way, in this budget, if you've read it, all of those people over there on the other side, if you've read it, your debt is going up \$500 million. A half a billion dollars is going to be increased in the debt load, a net debt of this province. So debt's going up.

By the way, the fiscal stabilization program is being reduced by \$50 million. So we're not only not saving, we are actually going into more debt at a time when there is a possibility of a downturn in the economy. So our own source revenues could be reduced. By the way, the transfer payments could be reduced in coming budgets, too, but there's no plan. There's no forward thinking as to how we should be dealing with that. So there's no savings plan and there's no debt retirement plan, none, that has been reflected in this budget. That's why we're going to vote against the budget, because it is a terrible financial strategy for this province.

We talk about taxation. The Finance Minister is so happy to say that he's increased the personal basic exemption by \$100. Well, what he didn't tell the Pablum-fed backbench is that the rest of the provinces to the west of us have indexation on their marginal rates. What that means is the marginal rate increases as does the personal basic exemption. So, in Manitoba, right now, he increased the personal

basic exemption by \$100. The inflation rate on that exemption is \$160. Once again, Manitobans are behind their compatriots in western Canada.

* (16:00)

So you can say how wonderful you are and you raise the basic personal exemption. The fact is we're going further and further and further behind the competitors in the Saskatchewan and the Alberta where our children are going, Madam Acting Speaker, and this isn't going to stop that exodus.

What else did this budget do? It took advantage of seniors and people on fixed incomes. What it did is it raised Pharmacare premiums by about \$72 per person, per family, \$72. So he gave on one hand and took away on the other. Equalization and transfers, and the Finance Minister loves to get up and say that Manitoba isn't doing as badly as everybody says they are because other provinces are getting more. Well, Madam Acting Speaker, that's not the case. As I mentioned earlier, the only province west of Québec that gets equalization is the province of Manitoba.

By the way, I suspect when the Premier goes to his First Ministers' meeting, he would be accepted as the biggest squeegee kid anywhere in the country. He continues to stand on the street corner asking for more and more so that he can spend and mismanage more and more. Well the truth of the matter is, Madam Acting Speaker, that Manitoba does get substantially more than any other province. As a matter of fact, I think most of the people here would say, well, Québec is the biggest squeegee kid. They seem to get money funnelled to them constantly by the federal government and it's Québec; they're the bad guys that get all the money from taxpayers across the country.

Well, Madam Acting Speaker, the truth be known—and you maybe want to write these numbers down if you have a pen—Québec, on a per capita basis, receives \$2,582 from the government of Canada in transfers and equalization, \$2,582 to Québec. Remember, that's the big province that gets all of the largesse.

Ontario receives, write it down, \$1,683 in transfers from the federal government. Manitoba receives \$3,225 for every man, woman and child in this province from the federal government. Saskatchewan, which is our next door neighbour, receives \$1,621, exactly one-half, on a per capita basis, of transfers and equalization from the federal government. Yet we're very happy to be able to stand

and say, our budget's going to be funded by our federal cousins, 40 percent. Our budget's going to almost \$10 billion, \$9.8 billion, almost \$10 billion. We're going to receive almost \$4 billion from the federal government.

Now, that's good. If you're a socialist and you want to spend and tax, that's probably really good. Why would anybody want to contribute? Why just take, take, take? The problem with that is that it's not going to continue the way it has been over the past eight years. There is going to be a reduction at some point in time, and put this on the record, I will be back and I will point to this comment. At some point in time, there will be a reduction of equalization payments to the province of Manitoba, and when that happens, there's no plan in this budget to react to that. That's why we're voting against the budget.

We're voting against it because it is a poor fiscal strategy. Those people over there don't care. They're just going to be like Alfred E. Neuman, and they're going to say, what, me worry? Somebody else will take over those problems when we get to it. That's the unfortunate problem, Madam Acting Speaker, someone else is going to have to pick up this house of cards in the not-too-distant future. But they'll be able to walk away and say, oh, no, we did such a wonderful job of spending other people's money and taxing other people.

Yes, Madam Acting Speaker—we do have another five minutes. Okay. Maybe I'm going to just tell a little story. I'll tell a little story. It's sort of like an Aesop's fable.

We have two people; well, they're brothers, actually. One's Brad and he lives in Saskatchewan just over the border. Brad's doing a pretty good job. He works really, really hard, Brad does. He earns a fairly reasonable salary, and he makes more because Brad's prepared to work some overtime, he's prepared to be very industrious. So Brad over there in Saskatchewan is doing really, really well.

But he's got a brother, Gary, and Gary lives over here in Manitoba. Now, Gary doesn't work quite as hard as Brad does and he's not quite as industrious as Brad is. So you know what, rather than work overtime and make more money, what he likes to do is put his feet up and kick around with the boys and drink a few beer.

But you know what? Brad and Gary, they have a father. Their father's name is Stephen. Stephen looks at Brad and says Brad's doing really, really well, but,

you know, Gary's not doing quite as well, so I think what I'll do is I'll top up Gary's income because he can't do it for himself. Brad can look after himself. Gary, we're going to top him up. We're going to give him 40 percent more than what Gary makes. We're going to give him 40 percent more because that will bring him up to the level of Brad.

Now Brad goes out and he says, You know what? Things might be turning a little bad, maybe my job's not going to be there, maybe I'm going to lose my overtime. So you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to pay down some of my mortgage. Gary, on the other hand, he said, nah, I'm going to go out and borrow some more. What the hay, Stephen keeps sending it; I'm going to go borrow some more. So he pays the mortgage down, and Gary keeps on borrowing. Brad says, I'm going to put some money into a savings account because I don't know what's going to happen in the future and I want to be prepared. What does Gary do? He takes the savings money out; he spends the stabilization fund because, what the heck, Stephen's around, Stephen's going to keep paying me more money. Now, Brad, he is really a smart kind of guy, so he cuts back and he does things realistically.

Now, Gary, he wants to build a sidewalk. He wants to take a sidewalk from the front door to the street. So what does he do? He builds a sidewalk out the back door around the fence and all the way back to the front door again. What a great idea because he doesn't mind. Stephen's going to send him money anyway. But his girlfriend said he should build this sidewalk all the way around the fence line. Doesn't need it, shouldn't do it because it's a waste of money, but it doesn't matter because Stephen's going to pay for it anyway.

So that's the story of Brad and Gary. Brad is really a smart guy, and he's going to be prepared for what's going to happen. Gary's not that smart. He's been around a long time, maybe too long. Gary's a little arrogant. He just thinks it going to happen and continue to happen, but it doesn't happen.

Madam Acting Speaker, in closing, we're going to vote against the budget because there's no vision for a vibrant economy. We're going to vote against the budget because we did nothing with the payroll tax. We're going to vote against the budget because there is nothing in here to reduce the personal income tax. We're going to vote against the budget because our streets are no safer today than they were when they took office. We're going to vote against

the budget because it does not allow our universities to compete, it doesn't deal with the tuition freeze.

We're going to vote against this budget because there is no plan for debt reduction. We're going to vote against this budget because it does not reduce our dependency on transfer payments. We're going to vote against the budget because it does not reduce waste. We're going to vote against the budget because it is a foolish expenditure of money like the Bipole III that we have to vote against because it is just a foolish way to go. We're going to vote against this budget because they did nothing for seniors. The only thing they did for seniors is to pick their pockets, and that's why we're going to vote against this budget.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I just want to remind the member that he was the one that put on the record that you work to live in Manitoba, unlike many other places in the country where you live to work. He's absolutely right. Manitoba does have a high quality of life at an affordable cost of living. This budget, once again, has increased the personal disposable income of all Manitobans, which allows them more choices on how they want to live their lives, knowing that they have a secure health-care system, knowing that they have a quality education system behind them, knowing that they have a day-care system that will support them when they want to go to work, knowing that they have recreational opportunities unprecedented anywhere else in the country and knowing that all of that will continue to be supplied by this government on this side of the House, Madam Acting Speaker.

* (16:10)

Now, the member seems to think that there's been a loss of young people in the last nine years. The facts of the matter are exactly the opposite. There's been a gain of 12,500 young people in the province since our term in office. We are seeing more young people come back now and more people staying in Manitoba than ever we have seen before, including in places like Brandon.

I know the member doesn't go out very often when he's in Brandon and doesn't see very many young people 'cause he doesn't go to places where young people congregate. I suggest that he go to the university; he will notice that there's a 30 percent-plus increased enrolment at the Brandon University. He will notice that there's a record number of people at Assiniboine Community

College out there, and he will notice that there are capital investments that have made a difference in the facilities that those people enjoy. And their cost of going to university or community college, in the case of community colleges, they have the lowest tuition fee costs in the country. In the case of universities, they have the third-lowest tuition fees in the country, and they have a record number of bursaries available to them in terms of the opportunities that they can take advantage of.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Now, some of the commentators on the Manitoba budget have said the following: This budget maintains Manitoba's formula of balancing sequential tax cuts and program-spending initiatives with significant fiscal repair each year, generating considerable cumulative momentum for the province. I think that's a lot more accurate than anything the member opposite has put on the record.

We're building momentum, which is why the economy is growing faster than the Canadian average. We're building momentum, which is why transfer payments are below the Canadian average. We're building momentum in terms of more people living in Manitoba than we've ever seen in the history of the province, and we're building momentum in such a way that we're creating doors for all Manitobans to go through to participate in labour markets and to participate in the economic growth of this province. We're not just doing it on a postage-stamp map, which leaves out more than half of Manitobans from even the barest consideration that the residents of this province that have rights to participate.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at northern Manitoba, a place rarely frequented, rarely visited by members opposite, you will see training opportunities, you will see the University College of the North, you will see a training program of \$60 million, which is preparing northern Manitobans to share in the prosperity of \$11 billion of hydro development over the next decade, and an opportunity for them to share in the development of that resource, a clean energy resource which will generate over \$7 billion of export revenues in the next 25-30 years, which will keep Manitoba's hydro rates among the lowest in the country.

Now, the member opposite talks about debt. Our debt-to-GDP ratio has declined by 30 percent, from over 31 percent to 21 percent. He forgets that the

cost of servicing the debt was over 13 cents when the members opposite were in office. It is now down to 6.5 cents on the dollar. We have cut the debt servicing costs by 50 percent since we've been in office, and, yes, we are investing in roads, we are investing in hospitals, we are investing in educational facilities, we are investing in technology, all of which modernizes our ability to produce more economic wealth in the future, to grow our prosperity advantage here in Manitoba. Unlike the '90s, when the only growth in the west was in Alberta, we now see all of western Canada pulling ahead, and Manitoba is a full partner in that development as we go forward across this country.

Now, members opposite, they complain about spending, Mr. Speaker. They would like to keep spending down to the rate of inflation, somewhere 2 percent or less, because we have one of the lowest inflation rates in the country. That's what they'd want to do. But, if you listen at the beginning of every question period, there are petitions for more personal care homes, there are petitions for more highways, there are petitions for more bridges. The member opposite gets up and, in the Brandon newspapers says, those facilities should come on-line even faster. He doesn't want to pay for them, but he wants them to come on-line even faster.

The reality is that you have to put your dollars in front of you if you want these investments to occur. If you want better bridges, if you want better schools, if you want better universities, if you want investments in education, you have to be prepared to spend the money and then be accountable for the results. And we have done that, Mr. Speaker.

Full-time job creation: 9,500 jobs have been created in '07; 93 percent of them have been in the private sector. Private sector capital investment, Mr. Speaker, is up 22 percent. What's it for the rest of the country? Under 4 percent. It's at least six times higher than what's going on in the rest of the country. Global capital invested in Manitoba is up 17 percent. Those capital investments are the things that will make prosperity stay with us for many years to come.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit of 70 percent fully refundable. It used to be zero percent refundable; now it's 70 percent refundable. We have eliminated the capital tax as of July 1 for all manufacturers in Manitoba, accelerating that by two years to make sure that manufacturers can stay competitive.

Manitoba's manufacturers have shown remarkable resiliency in the last several years as the Canadian dollar has appreciated against the American dollar. Manitoba's manufacturers are seeing net increases in exports in this province, unlike other provinces where exports have been going down.

What else is going on in Manitoba? We're seeing one of the best provincial immigration and refugee programs in the country bar none. Those immigrants have gone from 2,000 a year to 11,000 a year, and we're going to keep accelerating the number of newcomers coming to Manitoba from other parts of the world until we hit 20,000 people, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you, provinces to the west and east of us are looking at what we're doing in this regard so they can copy it and imitate it, and imitation is the most sincere form of flattery when it comes to good government programs.

Now, the member opposite didn't mention a word about property tax credits because, when they were in government, they actually cut property tax credits from \$325 to \$250. We have taken those property tax credits and we have more than doubled them from \$250 to \$600. Over \$800 for senior citizens so that they can have an additional advantage on that. Those property tax credits have kept property taxes actually flat or going down. Manitoba was the only province in the country last year that saw a decline in property taxes year-over-year.

So the reality is that, when the member looks at the whole story, he will see that the cost of living for all Manitobans, including senior citizens, has dramatically improved. He never mentioned, Mr. Speaker, the Farmland School Tax Rebate. It started out at 20 percent; it is now up to 65 percent. It will go up even further in the years to come, and the farm tax rebate for school property taxes for farmers will go up to a full 80 percent. What happened under them when they were in office? They actually increased—they actually increased the portioning rate so that farmers had to pay more on their property taxes when they were in office.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: Now, on personal income taxes, Mr. Speaker, the lowest rate is going down to 10.8 percent—lower than Saskatchewan. The threshold has increased. The middle threshold, the middle rate is going down as well, and the threshold is increasing. This will save Manitobans another

\$15 million in personal income taxes this year. He's right. The personal exemption, the personal amount has gone up another \$100, taking 2,100 Manitobans off the tax rolls, saving them \$7 million. He forgot to mention that the personal tax credit has been increased, which will benefit over 281,000 Manitobans. Those with the lowest incomes will get the greatest benefit.

He completely ignored the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit, which will be up to \$80 a month per individual that a caregiver looks after. Most of these caregivers are women. Most of these caregivers are people that give of their own personal time to care for a loved one, a sister, a parent, a neighbour. That has never been recognized before as a form of work in Manitoba. Members opposite don't recognize caregiving as a form of contribution to our community, to our society. It is one that will be fully refundable, available for looking after up to three individuals, and it will be worth \$1,020 per individual.

* (16:20)

Many caregivers look after more than one individual in their community. I know a person in my community whose spouse is looking after their sister who has cancer and is staying with her while she receives treatment; is looking after their mother who lives in the neighbourhood, who never had any support before, other than the home-care program, which members opposite always ignore when they talk about health-care tests. When they look at health-care evaluations, they ignore our Pharmacare program. They ignore our home-care program. They ignore the fact that they tried to privatize it, and they couldn't privatize it because nobody could do it cheaper than the public employees of Manitoba, and nobody had a better program across than country than we have for Pharmacare.

Now, one of our renowned tax experts, who writes books and is very well known across the country, said the following: Manitoba's starting to shine as a place where we have low corporate tax rates—shine as a place where we have low corporate tax rates. That's an individual who brings a very objective point of view to what she does in her business of doing taxes every year and writing the book on how you can do taxes and save yourself the most amount of money.

Also ignored in the members opposite review of what we put in the budget this year is the Co-operative Education Tax Credit, which has now

been expanded to have a journey-persons hiring incentive. An employer right now, if they hire a journey-person in Manitoba, or a graduate of a co-op education program, many of which are being offered at community colleges and universities, they can get a \$2,500 tax credit for hiring somebody that graduates from a journey-person's program or a co-op education program. No other province in Canada has this benefit. No other province has this strategy for retaining young people, and no other province has a graduate tuition fee tax rebate worth \$2,500 a year. Up to 60 percent of your tuition can be rebated to you for the simple act of living and working in Manitoba after you graduate, and 93 percent of our college graduates do live and work in Manitoba. The result of that tax rebate is that they're marginal tax rates. The tax rates for young people are the lowest in the country. The member opposite hesitates to mention that because that would disprove his point about taxes in Manitoba.

Now, the member likes to talk about transfers. The member likes to talk about transfers without any historical recognition of the role of transfers.

First of all, our transfers are growing low, less than the Canadian average. When the member opposite was the mayor of Brandon, his transfers went up 79 percent. I've never heard him complain about that. He never complained about transfer increases when he was the mayor of Brandon because they helped him do what he was trying to do, which was to make the city of Brandon a city where business would thrive, where people could live with a good cost of living. He doesn't want to mention that. Just when he's in opposition does he want to slag transfer payments.

Transfer payments came out of the Second World War. During the Second World War, all provinces in Canada gave tax room to the federal government, so they could mount the Second World War effort. After the Second World War, they didn't give that tax room back. They entered into fiscal arrangements with the provinces where they would transfer to the provinces some of the money that they kept at the federal level. If you look at your tax form, for every dollar you pay in provincial income taxes you pay two dollars in federal income taxes. Two dollars in federal income taxes. The evidence is clear. Some of that money comes back to Manitoba. The member opposite says, what do Manitobans contribute to the rest of the country? Manitobans are net contributors of employment insurance premiums to all other Canadians. We always collect more employment

insurance premiums than we take advantage of because we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, and we have one of the highest participation rates in the economy. Mr. Speaker, 70 percent of working-age Manitobans are working in Manitoba, which is a testament to their desire to improve their quality of life. So we make a contribution to the rest of the country through employment insurance.

We make a contribution through our high-income earners to transfer payments, including equalization. There is no transfer from another province to the province of Manitoba. There is only a transfer from the federal government to all provinces, and the fastest-growing transfers have been to the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. They have received the highest percentage increase in transfers because this federal government has increased transfers on a per capita basis, and they've done that to the most populated provinces, which are the ones I've mentioned. As Manitoba's population grows, we will get our share of those transfers as well because they need to be restored, and they need to be on a fair basis all across this country. That's the glue that holds a country together. We will be always happy to contribute our share of that, even though our share of the transfer pie is actually down from what it was in '99-2000. That's 7.1 percent of the transfer payments in '99. We get 6.9 percent of the transfer payments now, and the largest increases have been to the province of Ontario, which grew by over 18 percent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite didn't mention that, in our budget, we laid down the foundations for a climate change strategy, and then, a few days later, the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau) brought out the best climate change policy in the country. We will be carbon neutral for the first decade in the millennium, carbon neutral. Other provinces aren't moving on this as quickly because carbon is not in any way considered as an external pollution cost in the calculations that businesses make.

We brought in the first coal tax in the country, the first coal tax, which will start to price into the base. When you want to use a dirty fuel, you're going to have to pay for it because everybody else pays for it in terms of the pollution. So we've moved on that, but we also have incentives. We have the hybrid incentive. We have support to the geothermal industry. The geothermal industry has the highest per capita participation rate of any province in Canada.

It's a very thriving small business sector in this province and, as we move forward, you'll see further incentives to "incent" the geothermal industry in Manitoba.

So our climate change plan will allow us to meet our Kyoto targets by 2012. We'll be the first province to do that while "incenting" ethanol use. We were the first to move on ethanol. We're the first to move on biodiesel, and, all of these things, when you add them up will be more diversified revenues for rural Manitoba.

Rural Manitobans, rural producers will have access to a biodiesel market for the first time in history. They'll have access to an ethanol market for the first time in history. They will see the investments of private wind power in this province, 100 megawatts, \$200 million in St. Leon. Another, at least, 100 megawatts, if not 300 megawatts, in the Letellier area, which could be up to an additional \$600 million in private investment, all of which will help rural Manitoba thrive and diversify itself.

Mr. Speaker, those are just some of the many things we will do to help rural Manitoba thrive as we go forward, not to mention the investments we will make in roads and highway infrastructure, \$400 million a year. Members opposite raised the gas tax three times when they were in office and put less than a 2 percent increase into roads. We have never raised the gas tax while we've been in office, and we are putting more money into rural infrastructure than we collect in gas taxes coming out of there.

Mr. Speaker, we've created the first ever Healthy Living portfolio in this province with a minister responsible for that, and we've now had three ministers lead us forward on that. Our Manitoba in Motion program, along with our contributions to Rick Hansen, has shown that Manitobans are willing to take responsibility for their own health outcomes by getting involved in recreational programs, by getting involved in healthy living programs, by getting involved in chronic disease management programs. Our seniors in Manitoba are taking responsibility for their health outcomes as well, and we will work with them to ensure that they have a high quality of life in this province.

What about poverty, Mr. Speaker? Members opposite never talk about that, no. Poverty reduction is part of what we want to do. We've seen a 25 percent reduction in child poverty in this province. We've seen a 43 percent reduction in poverty for lone-parent families living in Manitoba.

We've put \$70 million into the base to help people move off social assistance into work. There are work incentives. There are employment incentives. There are day-care incentives. There is additional money for the shelter benefit. This year's budget had an additional shelter benefit of \$200 a month for people with mental health challenges, a benefit that's portable, that will allow them to find affordable housing wherever they wish to live in this province, something that has never been done before to provide that kind of money for those people in those circumstances.

What about schools? Public schools have seen the largest increase ever in the annual contribution of \$53 million, \$53 million, a stronger equalization formula, a tax-incentive grant to keep property taxes down. All of that goes to supporting our public schools system which will allow them to do their job. There's more money for English as an additional language. There's more money for persons with learning disabilities in this budget. There's more money for smaller schools and rural schools—

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 32(6), I am interrupting proceedings to put the questions necessary to dispose of the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government and all amendments to that motion.

Therefore, the question before the House is a proposed subamendment of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the subamendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the subamendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the subamendment has been lost.

Formal Vote

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I would request if we could have a recorded vote.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support? We need four for a recorded vote. Okay.

Recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Division

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

Yeas

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Fauschou, Goertzen, Gerrard, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Nays

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 21, Nays 35.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the subamendment lost. We will now have a vote on the amendment.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House now is the proposed amendment moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Some Honourable Members: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): I request a recorded vote.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Division

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

Yeas

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Fauschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Nays

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Madam Clerk: Yeas 21, Nays 35.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger)

THAT this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Formal Vote

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, recorded vote?

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

The question before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance

THAT this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

* (16:40)

Division

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

Yeas

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Nays

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk: Yeas 35, Nays 21.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Order, please.

House Business

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Would you canvass the House, please, to see if there's agreement for the House to consider bills tomorrow afternoon concurrently with two sections of Supply meeting in rooms 255 and 254 with no recorded votes or quorum calls to be held?

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for the House to consider bills tomorrow afternoon concurrently with two sections of Supply meeting in rooms 255 and 254 with no recorded votes or quorum calls to be held? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: Would you also canvass the House to see if there's agreement of the House for the House to sit in three sections of Supply on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons until 6 p.m., instead of the usual 5 p.m. adjournment, with this arrangement to be in effect for this week.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement of the House for the House to sit in three sections of Supply on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons until 6 p.m., instead of the usual 5 p.m. adjournment, with this arrangement to be in effect for this week? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I say with a sly grin, shall we, with the pleasure of the House, call it 5 o'clock?

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

So the hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 21, 2008

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