

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
First Session—Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
VACANT	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	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.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 30, 2003

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Highway 276

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. The background of this petition is as follows:

Grain farmers require a safe, dependable and efficient means by which to transport their grain to market. Grain elevators have been closed at McCreary, Ste. Rose and Makinak. Due to grain elevator closures, farmers north of Ste. Rose are required to use long-haul trucks to transport their grain to market. Load limits are in place on Highway 276 north of Ste. Rose, preventing grain farmers from using long-haul trucks to transport their grain on this highway, causing considerable additional cost. Farmers north of Ste. Rose have no alternative route to hauling their grain on portions of Highway 276.

So we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Smith) to consider the reduction or elimination of load limits on Highway 276 north of Ste. Rose to permit grain farmers to haul their grain to market using long-haul trucks.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider upgrading Highway 276 to enable farmers to drive long-haul trucks and remain competitive.

I present it on behalf of Robert Brunel, Jean Brunel and Germaine Brunel.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

Supported Living Program

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I wish to present the following petition. The reasons for this petition are as follows:

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government's Supported Living Program provides a range of supports to assist adults with a mental disability to live in the community in their residential option of choice, including a family home.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government's Community Living Division helps support adults living with a mental disability to live safely in the community in the residential setting of their choice.

Families with special-needs dependants make lifelong commitments to their care and well-being and many families choose to care for these individuals in their homes as long as circumstances allow.

The cost to support families who care for their special-needs dependants at home is far less than the cost of alternate care arrangements such as institutions or group and foster home situations.

The value of the quality of life experienced by special-needs dependants raised at home in a loving family environment is immeasurable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

Mr. Speaker, to request that the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Caldwell) consider changes to the departmental policy that pays family members a reduced amount of

money for room and board when they care for their special-needs dependants at home versus the amount paid to a non-parental care provider outside the family home.

* (13:35)

To request that the Minister of Family Services and Housing consider examining on a case-by-case basis the merits of paying family members to care for special-needs dependants at home versus paying to institutionalize them.

Mr. Speaker, this is presented on behalf of Esther Hildebrand, Annie Ketler, Martha Fehr, Tina Peters and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table, in accordance with Section 28 of The Auditor General Act, the Auditor's Report on the Dakota Tipi First Nation Gaming Commission and First Nation Gaming Accountability in Manitoba.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 15—The Gaming Control Amendment Act

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 15, The Gaming Control Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Commission de régie de jeu, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, this legislation will increase the transparency and accountability for gaming operations, will clarify, strengthen and increase the role of the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission in regulating gaming.

Mr. Speaker, it will require charitable gaming licence holders to provide audited financial statements to the MGCC. It will require First Nations video lottery terminal siteholders to provide annual audited financial statements to

members of the First Nation and to the corporation. In addition it will strengthen the role of the Gaming Control Commission by expanding the role of the commission to include regulatory control over gaming conducted and managed by the Manitoba Lotteries commission and by increasing the authority of the MGCC to better address breaches and contraventions of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, in presenting this legislation for the consideration of the House, I want to draw attention to the work of the board of the commission which began in 2001 to address weaknesses in the act and presented me with a very full set of recommendations in this regard last fall. We immediately saw the wisdom of acting on their recommendations and drafting legislation to strengthen the act as we are presenting to the Chamber today.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 17—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming)

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Education and Youth): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Caldwell), that Bill 17, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques, be read for a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Education and Youth, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services and Housing that Bill 17, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming), be now read a first time.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, this bill requires school divisions to provide appropriate educational programming to each pupil and in respect to programming allows the minister to establish standards and a dispute resolution process.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker, prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we

have with us from Forest Home School two Grades 9 and 11 students under the direction of Mr. Alan Warkentin. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings).

Also in the public gallery from West Kildonan Collegiate we have 19 Grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Barbara Tascona. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak).

Mr. Speaker, also in the public gallery we have from Devils Lake High School, from Devils Lake, North Dakota, 21 Grades 11 and 12 students under the direction of Mr. Al Henry.

Also in the public gallery we have from Salisbury Morse Place School 19 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. John Thompson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer).

* (13:40)

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Nursing Profession Full-Time Employment Opportunities

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this Government's Budget provided young Manitobans with no hope or optimism for the future. There was nothing in the Budget to make Manitoba more competitive.

Last week hundreds of nurses graduated, but there was no guarantee that they will have the opportunity to stay and work in our province. During the last election the Premier (Mr. Doer) promised that his party would hire full-time nurses. The fact is, according to the Manitoba Nurses' Union, the nursing shortage has doubled under the NDP government. This Government has broken its promise. Now we hear the Health Minister making claims that he wants at least 65 percent of nurses to remain in Manitoba and that they should all be full-time nurses by the end of the year. Manitobans do not trust you when it comes to health care.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I just want to correct the member. The 65% ratio was a joint agreement between the Nurses' Union and the Government of Manitoba and the RHAs to achieve a 65% full-time ratio of nurses in this province and to achieve that by next spring.

I know members opposite do not understand the concept, but we did it together with the nurses. It was part of the collective agreement that we negotiated with the nurses, that members opposite voted against, and there are more nurses working in Manitoba today than when the members opposite were government.

When we left office, the number of nurses graduating per year in Manitoba was around 200 per year. This year 600 nurses will graduate. The facts speak for themselves.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, we heard from the Premier that he made a promise to Manitobans in the last election that he would hire more full-time nurses. According to the Manitoba Nurses' Union, that nursing shortage has doubled under the NDP government. Now we hear that they have negotiated, that the fact is that there is going to be an agreement, so they are promising.

I ask the Minister of Health: Is he saying that there is a guarantee that 65 percent of nurses will have full-time work by the end of the year?

Mr. Chomiak: The Manitoba Nursing Research Institute reports that the number of graduates who are finding full-time work has more than doubled since 1999, from 23 percent, when members opposite were government in 1999, to 55 percent in October 2002. That same independent report indicates that, while there is work to do, our agreement with the nurses to achieve targets of 65 percent, the same report shows that 90 percent of grads have found work in Manitoba.

They do not have to go to the States anymore. They do not have to listen to Connie Curran. They have jobs here in Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Health, during the election campaign

they promised to add more full-time nurses. The Manitoba Nurses' Union has said the nursing shortage has doubled. This Government said: Elect me, we will slash waiting lists. Well, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority says that those waiting list have grown.

Now we hear the Minister of Health putting out. Is it another promise to Manitobans? Is he promising Manitobans they will guarantee 65 percent of the nurses who graduate will have full-time work by the end of the year?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, we negotiated a collective agreement with the nurses where we work with the nurses and together have targeted a target of 65 full-time nurses.

* (13:45)

Mr. Speaker, just let me quote from the Nurses' Union on Monday, the president of the Nurses' Union, that members opposite quote daily. Let me quote: The election of Premier Gary Doer brought an end to over a decade of systematic abuse of patients and their caregivers. For thousands of nurses it signalled the end of anti-nurse government policy.

Let me repeat what Maureen Hancharyk of the Nurses' Union, whom the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) quoted, said on Monday of this year: The election of Premier Gary Doer brought an end to over a decade of systematic abuse of patients and their caregivers. For thousands of nurses it signalled the end of anti-nurse government policy.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Prior to recognizing the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), I would like to remind all honourable members, when quoting from a paper or making reference to members, it is by their constituencies, or ministers by their titles, not by their names. I would like to remind all honourable members.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, on a point of order.

Mr. Chomiak: Would he like me to correct that quote by just changing the quote to say that the

election of this Government brought an end to over a decade of systematic abuse of patients and their caregivers?

Mr. Speaker: Order. When I make a ruling or a caution to the House as the Speaker, I expect all members to follow it and not to debate it or to mock it. I ask the full co-operation of all honourable members.

Fiscal Stabilization Fund Transfer Payment Return

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, as we continue to see the abuse of Manitobans in at least three separate financial department documents, the Minister of Finance's \$150-million transfer from the rainy day fund to his operating account was referred to as transitional and temporary and was committed every time to be, and I quote, replenished.

Mr. Speaker, when the minister was asked why, despite stealing hundreds of millions of dollars from Hydro, he refuses to refund it, the best he could come up with was: Things change.

When is the Minister of Finance going to live up to his promise and replenish these funds?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the legislation we tabled in this Legislature to have a transfer from Manitoba Hydro was absolutely clear on the purpose of that. It was to stabilize the revenues in the Government of Manitoba during a time of economic downturn after September 11, and it was to ensure that we continued to provide the essential services Manitobans needed.

Furthermore, it was indicated that there was a \$1.3-billion amount of retained earnings based on the tremendous success of the Limestone project built by the former NDP government; and, as a result of that successful project, we had the retained earnings that we could use to stabilize the finances of Manitoba. We did that while balancing the Budget and ensuring Manitoba had those essential services.

Mr. Maguire: How can this minister expect Manitobans to believe anything he puts in these reports, these Budget documents, but his only

excuse for failing to repay this \$150 million is to shrug his shoulders and say things change. This is money that he stole from the rainy day fund.

Mr. Selinger: You must remember that the members on the opposite side had a water power rental agreement whereby Hydro financed government responsibilities. Hydro secretly financed government responsibilities—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: From the comments I hear, the members are admitting to the fact that they had a secret financing of government responsibilities shown in the footnotes in the back pages of the Hydro report.

Unlike that approach, we tabled legislation. We debated it in the Legislature. We made it entirely clear to Manitobans what we were doing and why we were doing it. We have followed through and been accountable for that.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Finance simply tell the truth, that he never intended to pay the \$150 million back to the fiscal stabilization account and that he simply lied?

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker: Order. The word "liar" or "lied" has been ruled unparliamentary by many Speakers. I remember in this House as an honourable member, when facts are brought forward by honourable members in this House, we take it as factual information. Calling a member that he lied, or a liar, is very unparliamentary. I ask the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden to withdraw the word "lied."

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw the word "lied." I meant that the minister simply misled Manitobans.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the Member for Arthur-Virden for withdrawing that comment. If the member had taken the time to read the reports carefully, he will notice that in every fiscal year there are many adjustments that are made to both revenues and expenditures. In the second-quarter report for 2002-2003, equalization was down

\$106 million. In the third-quarter report, it was up \$46 million, for a net loss in the year of \$84 million.

Mr. Speaker, similarly, there were changes in PIT revenues. There were changes in retail sales tax revenues, there were changes in corporate income tax revenues, both up and down. As a net result, there was a change of revenues down \$101 million during the year. These are all reported in the quarterly reports, which is the purpose of them. Then of course we balance at the end of the year. We report it to the Legislature and we are accountable. The member knows that. All he has to do is read the reports in a fair and objective manner and he would draw the same conclusions that we have.

Point of Order

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order because I feel that as a member of this Legislature my privileges have been breached. Moments ago, we received the copy from the Auditor General with respect to the Dakota Tipi reserve. I asked whether or not another copy could be made available to me as a member. I was told there were no other copies available.

We checked, Mr. Speaker, with the Clerk's Office and were denied copies because they said they did not have any. At the same time, I note that the media are receiving copies of the Auditor's report.

We are the members of the Legislature, Mr. Speaker. I feel as a member of this Legislature my privilege has been breached as a result of not being able to get a copy of the document that was tabled in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Russell, there were three copies delivered to my office under Tabling of Reports. As soon as I tabled them, the Auditor General's office was supposed to immediately give copies to the Journals clerk's office and obviously that did not occur.

I will be happy to follow that up and we will ensure that it does not *[interjection]* I cannot give any further information because I have not

spoken to the Auditor General. I will speak to the Auditor General, I will find out what happened and I will report back to the House.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the rights of the members have been squashed in this House today by one of the representatives of this House by the looks of it if you are telling me it is the Auditor General's fault.

* (13:55)

When the media receive a copy of it after we had requested it, there is a problem. We were told that they were not available for us in this House, yet the media has the copies up there and we are seeing them reading them.

For this Government to be controlling the Auditor General and making sure that we do not receive copies, that is what we call the ultimate control. The Auditor comes under the jurisdiction of this entire Legislature, not under the Government's jurisdiction. There is no reason that they should allow the media to receive it before members of this Legislature. I call that a miscarriage of justice and I want to see some results and I want to see them today.

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Just speaking to the conspiracy theory, I understand that members on this side have not been provided with copies, but it is my understanding that the distribution of that document is entirely within the ambit of the Auditor General. Quite frankly, we share the concerns of the Opposition. If there is a process agreed on, we expect it to be followed and we expect the Auditor General to adhere to practice.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: I have to deal on the point of order first before I can entertain any other. The honourable member was rising on the same point of order, to add new information to the same point of order?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act): I am the minister responsible for the area that the Auditor General is reporting on and I do not have a copy of the final report either. I think that is inappropriate. I believe it is inappropriate and I agree with members of the Opposition that it is inappropriate. Whatever went wrong in the distribution, I think we need to find out, but I understand how they feel. Perhaps they could understand how I might feel as the minister responsible and I do not have the final report.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, for clarification purposes, the Auditor General does report to Legislative Assembly Management Committee. As the chair of Legislative Assembly Management Committee, I will gladly check into it. When I get some information I will be more than happy to bring it back to the House.

I have no further information than any members in this House because I have not had a chance to speak to the Auditor General. I will gladly check into it and I will report that information back to the House. If there is any further action, I am sure that Legislative Assembly Management Committee would agree to meet and to discuss this with the Auditor General. I am sure of that, but I will check into it and I will report it back to the House.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Breach of House Rules

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege today because I believe that this Assembly is a place for procedure, protocol and justice, if you like, of the ultimate importance. All members of this House have privileges which are important to us as a society, not just individual members of this House.

This afternoon, when you tabled the documents from the Auditor General, I specifically asked for a copy of the document because I had been asking questions, and, as a matter of fact, I had approached the Auditor General to investigate a particular issue as it relates to Dakota Tipi. Because I had a concern about it, I asked for a copy. I was told there were no other copies

and that the only copies that were available were the ones tabled in the House. I assumed that to be true.

So, Mr. Speaker, I proceeded to go to the caucus room to have some copies made of the document. I received mine from the leader. At the same time, our staff checked with the Clerk's Office and were denied further copies because they said there were no other copies available.

Upon entering this Chamber, we noticed that copies were being distributed to the media. Now this was less than a minute or two after we were told that there were no other copies available. Once the table recognized that there was a problem, immediately copies appeared on our desks.

* (14:00)

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter because I am not pointing the finger at the minister, I am not pointing the finger at the Government here, but it is the process of this Chamber that is in question. That is of greater importance, of greater seriousness to me, than simply blaming a government for a particular action, because whether you are a government member or whether you are a member of the Opposition, this is a breach, a serious breach of the privileges of an elected member of this Assembly and thus of our society.

Mr. Speaker, this cannot be tolerated in our society. There are rules that have to be played by. I go back a few years ago when I was the Minister of Education and, inadvertently, a bill had been shared without my knowledge with an individual of the Chamber before it was tabled in this House. The Opposition at that time moved a motion that this be dealt with by the Committee of Privileges and Elections.

This is not a case that is different than that. As a matter of fact, it is a case that is far more serious than that, Mr. Speaker, because in my view you can not go out of this Chamber and start sharing documents with the public before members who are elected duly by the citizens of Manitoba have had an opportunity to examine those documents and have had access to those documents right here in this Chamber.

So the question now becomes: Whose responsibility is this? That is why I think that

you must take it far more seriously than just dealing with it as a matter of regular privilege. Mr. Speaker, I am not reflecting on you as the Speaker of this House in any way, shape or form, but I am saying to you that there has been a serious breach of the rules of this House under your control.

Therefore, I humbly request that you and I would move that this matter, because of its seriousness, be moved to the Committee on Privileges and Elections and then be reported back to this House, so that this matter can be cleared up once and for all. I thank you. *[interjection]*

I am being advised, Mr. Speaker, that the appropriate committee is Legislative Affairs, so I would move that that change be made and that, following that, a report to this Chamber be fully addressed.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the member, I will just remind the House that contributions at this time by honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): We certainly will not argue with whether the matter was raised at the earliest opportunity, nor whether it is a matter of privilege. It certainly is a matter that is important.

Mr. Speaker, I comment that until very recently, as a result of legislative change, the reports from the Auditor General, the provincial auditor, as he was then known, are no longer given to the Finance Minister of the incumbent government for early perusal, study and preparation of response and then provided to the House. The new procedure is that the report now comes directly to the Legislature, I understand.

An Honourable Member: We get a look at it, but it is tabled through the Chair.

Mr. Mackintosh: It is tabled through the Chair now, Mr. Speaker. So I think what we have to do is ensure that this new process works for all members. We would certainly support that there be a review of the process and a report back to

the House and that the Auditor General have some guidance from this House in terms of how he can best provide information to the members of the Legislature.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I would just comment that I think this is an appropriate matter, that it was raised at the earliest convenience, and that referral to the Committee on Legislative Affairs is an appropriate way to deal with this so that we can prevent this sort of problem in the future.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): I do believe that you have probably heard enough on this matter, Mr. Speaker, but I think it would be important that it did go to Legislative Affairs, so we can have a thorough look at the matter and resolve it.

I do believe there is support of the entire House.

Mr. Speaker: A matter of privilege a serious concern. I am going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities, and I will return to the House with a ruling.

Mr. Speaker: Now we will carry on with Question Period. In case people lost track, we are now on question No. 3.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Ministerial Inquiries

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I have serious concerns about the way this Government deals with Crown corporations and the manner in which they—*[interjection]* Mr. Speaker, I have a very serious issue that has been raised with me regarding MPIC and ministerial inquiries. Does the Minister responsible for MPIC believe that he has the authority and the ability to inquire about individual personal injury claims?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I know the practice has been, to my knowledge, that where correspondence comes in related to a particular claim, the minister has an

assistant that looks into those claims and a draft response will be prepared for the individual claimant and the person who wrote the correspondence. That is the process that I am most familiar with.

Mr. Cummings: I have copies of e-mails here that indicate that ministerial inquiries were made about the file of Steven Fletcher very shortly after it appeared in the newspaper that he was seeking nomination for the Progressive Conservative Party in Tuxedo. I ask the minister how he can square what he just said to the e-mailer who says: Can you tell me more? Steven is privy to this information and no one else. Why would he be inquiring? Who are we releasing this to?

Mr. Mackintosh: If the member could table that correspondence and we will review it and put it in the context of the inquiries.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that the individual spoken of has met with me and expressed certain concerns about The MPI Act and its application. If it is related to that, I will certainly get back to the member in terms of what the context is.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question: Who is inquiring? This e-mail—*[interjection]* You do not want it read into the record? In response to the inquiry, the original message indicates that the inquiry is coming from the minister.

Mr. Mackintosh: Perhaps the member would give the context of the time period that we are speaking of and the correspondence and I will reply to the member. I will take a look at it and reply accordingly.

First Nations Casino Plebiscite Vote (Brandon)

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, in October voters in Brandon voted to reject a Native casino. They spoke very clearly on this issue. Can the Minister responsible for Transportation and Manitoba Lotteries indicate if that plebiscite result will be honoured into the future?

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question. Certainly,

that was part of the criteria in development of the Native casino initiative that we had that we follow along with the Bostrom report. Certainly, it is something that we had paid close heed to and certainly had abided by during the time that the process was in place. That was something that was voted on by folks not only in Brandon but in other jurisdictions. It is something that we felt was very important to be part of the process. Certainly, it is something that we paid attention to.

As we move forward on the process, we will pay attention to people and communities like we always have, not like the members opposite.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has described the municipalities as being obstacles in this process. Will they leave this process unchanged for future casino applications?

* (14:10)

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act): In conjunction with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, with whom the original agreement was reached in terms of how we would work with First Nations people around gaming, we have a commission in place with one member appointed by the Assembly and one member appointed by the Government. They are both very capable people. They will be receiving a great deal of input and advice during the next period of time.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important that we learn from what we have done. As the Premier has said, there are things that we did very well in the selection process. We are proud of Aseneskak's success. At the same time, there are things that we can learn from the process, and we are a government that tries to learn.

Casino Development Winnipeg

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for clarifying that plebiscites will no longer be used into the future. The Premier has also said there will not be another casino built in Winnipeg. Is that still the case?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act): First of all, I correct the member. I did not say that there would not be plebiscites in the future. Certainly the Premier has made it very clear that the centre of Winnipeg, which the previous members abandoned when they closed the Crystal Casino, they abandoned the city of Winnipeg, they closed the casino at the Convention Centre, they closed the casino in the Fort Garry Hotel. In terms of the centre of the city, it has always been abandoned by the members opposite. They have always fled somewhere else. I think they should reflect on the needs of this city. The Premier has been clear. There will not be a new casino in downtown Winnipeg.

Dakota Tipi First Nation Soaring Eagle Agreement

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, last session we asked questions of this Government about the involvement of the Premier's brother, Mr. David Doer, at Dakota Tipi and its gaming centre. We asked that an independent inquiry be launched into the activities of Mr. David Doer as they related to his involvement at Dakota Tipi First Nations.

I would like to ask the Minister of Gaming what advice they provided to Mr. David Doer prior to his entering into the agreement on the gaming issue at Dakota Tipi since it is quite clear that Mr. David Doer did seek advice from the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, the Opposition made allegations last year that were blatantly wrong and inaccurate and, frankly, they were an attempt to be damaging to the Premier of Manitoba. I think that they need to apologize for the fact that the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission never hired Soaring Eagle, contrary to what they said. Manitoba Lotteries Commission never hired Soaring Eagle, contrary to what was said by the members opposite.

This is confirmed in the Auditor General's report. There are no allegations in the Auditor General's report, no findings with reference to any kind of inappropriateness or misconduct or anything negative that either Soaring Eagle did

or that Dakota Tipi did in retaining Soaring Eagle or that the Government of Canada did in retaining Soaring Eagle. Their allegations were blatantly incorrect. They were an attempt to smear our Premier. They are despicable.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Censure Request

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I have to go on another matter of privilege today.

Mr. Speaker: Is the honourable member rising on a matter of privilege?

Mr. Derkach: I certainly am.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, moments ago, in this House, the Minister responsible for Gaming stood in his place and said to this House that he did not get a copy of the Auditor General's report. He left the impression that he had not seen the Auditor General's report and that he, too, as a member of this House, had his privileges breached.

Now, I just asked him a question with regard to his involvement in terms of giving advice to Mr. David Doer, which is referenced in the Auditor General's report. He, again, references the Auditor General's report and says that that kind of situation that was alleged by us last year is nowhere referenced in the Auditor General's report, which tells the House that he has seen the Auditor General's report, that he has had the privilege of reviewing it.

Mr. Speaker, in the time that he rose in his place to say that he had not seen the Auditor General's report and my question of him he has not had the opportunity to read the Auditor General's report. So I say to you that this member has misled this House, and he has done so knowingly and he has done it deliberately.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you cautioned all of us moments ago that we should not be calling honourable members in this House liars because that is an unparliamentary phrase, but what do you say to a member, a minister of the Crown,

who is caught in deliberately misleading this House? No one can deny that that was deliberate. It just shows how desperate this minister has now become and how low they will stoop to be able to mislead the public and the members of this House and the media.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to prolong this matter of privilege because I think it is very serious, but if we have degenerated in this House to the point where ministers cannot tell the truth, and I say this is not the first example of it, but it is an example that is so blatant that you cannot ignore it, no one can ignore it, what does it say about the term "honourable member" in the Province of Manitoba, in this House?

Yes, the minister waves me off because it does not matter to him. It does not matter what he says anymore. That is the level of arrogance that we have seen this Government rise to, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) says: All right, all right already. Well, I know that they would like to slough this off, sweep it under the carpet of the Chamber and move on, but deceiving Manitobans is not the way to go in this province. *[interjection]* Oh, yes, the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) comments from his seat as well. He should look at himself in the mirror.

Unfortunately, once again, I move that this Minister of Gaming and his comments be censured for misleading this House deliberately and that this matter be referred to the Committee on Legislative Affairs and then be reported back to this House.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that contributions at this time by honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a *prima facie* case has been established.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act): First of all, the member would I think be helped by remembering that the department and the Finance Minister commissioned Deloitte & Touche to do an independent review of Dakota Tipi First Nations gaming.

That independent review was then used by the Auditor General in his work, and the report

of the Auditor General which the former minister and the member has seen contains the findings of the Deloitte & Touche report which the Auditor General used, verified and worked collaboratively with during his investigation.

* (14:20)

Furthermore, the member would remember, I think, that when the Auditor General of Manitoba prepares a report for a minister of the Crown or for the Minister of Finance on request, that report is always, always shared with the body that is responsible prior to its finalization. That was the practice under the previous government; that is the practice under this Government.

Those are draft reports. They do not contain the Government's comments, and, as I said earlier from my place, I have not received the final report. I do not have a copy of the final report. I have received the Deloitte & Touche report which is incorporated in the Auditor's report. The Deloitte & Touche report contains all of the information to which I alluded and now forms an integral part of the Auditor General's report.

So I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this is not in any sense a matter of privilege. It is at best a dispute over the facts, but really it is a failure on the part of the member opposite to remember the standard practice that the Auditor General of this province has always followed with a government report.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I think that this matter continues as the one that we have recommended, all three parties, be referred to the Committee on Legislative Affairs. Clearly it was raised within seconds or minutes of when the issue first came up and, clearly, this is a matter which is potentially of significant importance.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the matter which is under discussion, which is clearly a matter of the Auditor General's report, which is the relationship between Soaring Eagle accounting and the Dakota Tipi First Nation is clearly a subject of the Auditor General's report. There are findings by the Auditor General that this relationship was inappropriate. There are findings by the Auditor General that when this relationship, the agreement between the First Nation community of

Dakota Tipi and Soaring Eagle, was first provided to the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission, that it was not immediately reviewed, so that on July 12 it was not appropriately recognized to be an inappropriate agreement, and that subsequently led to all sorts of events which are detailed in the Auditor General's report and the recognition that the agreement on July 29 was inappropriate.

So this is a subject which clearly needs to be assessed by Legislative Affairs in terms of proper procedures in a broader sense than was originally approached but, clearly, it can be done within the sort of review which was recommended a few minutes ago when we were discussing the first point of privilege raised by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

Mr. Speaker: I have probably heard sufficient argument. If the honourable member is rising because he feels that there is some point that has not been touched upon, I will hear him briefly, but I think we should move on in this matter.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I think it is very obvious. The minister claims that he did not have the report and he has not seen it, and the very first question he gets he makes comment on it. He reports on it, Mr. Speaker. It is obvious the minister lied.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before recognizing the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh), I would just like to remind all honourable members about unparliamentary language in this House. Unparliamentary language should not be used under the guise of points of order or privilege or quoting from other sources or quoting from newspapers. I would just like to remind at this point all honourable members about the use of unparliamentary language. A matter of privilege is a very serious concern. I am going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities, and I will return to the House with a ruling.

* * *

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, coming back to questions of the minister with respect to the involvement of Mr. David Doer and the Dakota Tipi Gaming Commission, I want to ask the

minister what advice his department provided to David Doer, president of Soaring Eagle, prior to David Doer entering into agreement with Dakota Tipi First Nation.

Mr. Sale: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that the best I can say in that regard is that I am not aware of any discussions between the staff of MGCC and Mr. Doer before he entered into an agreement with the Government of Canada and with Dakota Tipi First Nation. If the member is able to provide me with information in that regard, I would be glad to receive it.

Waywayseecappo First Nation Soaring Eagle Agreement

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, can the minister of native and northern affairs indicate to this House what agreement Mr. David Doer and Soaring Eagle had with Waywayseecappo and what was the out-of-court settlement which was entered into after Waywayseecappo filed a court case against Soaring Eagle with Manitoba?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act): Well, perhaps the member from Russell is confused and thinks he is in the federal Parliament. Waywayseecappo is a First Nation. Any agreement that they entered into with a third party would be presumably something that the minister, the Honourable Robert Nault, might be able to help the member with, but perhaps he is indicating where he is going to run in the next federal election. Who knows?

Granville Lake Sewage System

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question is to the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Ashton). On August 28, 2001, the minister's department wrote to the Department of Family Services and Housing to indicate that there were major concerns with a leaky sewage system installed at Granville Lake under the mandate of the Department of Family Services and Housing.

The letter, which I table, says as follows: Since the sewage systems are not operating as intended and they are creating an insanitary

condition, this is a contravention of both environment and public health legislation. This letter serves as a legal warning that the failure to comply with measures under The Environment Act and The Public Health Act to the satisfaction of this department may result in prosecution.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Conservation is: Since the system in Granville Lake is still 20 months later not operating as intended, why have the minister and his department not yet taken any legal action against the Department of Family Services and Housing for its gross breach of the appropriate action on behalf of the people of Granville Lake?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): I am pleased to answer this question from the honourable member opposite. I can advise him, first of all, I acknowledge the mayor and council from Granville Lake and also the mayor and council from Leaf Rapids who have worked very hard together ever since this problem arose in January and February. I can advise the member that we have the situation in Granville Lake under control at this time.

On March 23, I travelled to Leaf Rapids. I met with the mayor and council from Granville Lake and also with the mayor and council of Leaf Rapids. Steps were taken to accommodate the people from Granville Lake and Leaf Rapids. The people from Granville Lake are being housed in Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation units in Granville Lake.

Mr. Gerrard: Is he calling "under control" a situation where people cannot even live in their own community?

* (14:30)

I table, Mr. Speaker, a second letter dated June 19, 2002, and I ask the Minister of Conservation, from whose department this originated: Why did the Department of Conservation not take legal action when a letter of June 19 says the legal warning stands and resolution of this insanitary condition must happen by August 30, 2002, when it is still not resolved, when people cannot even live in their homes? Why did you do nothing as Minister of Conservation?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, as I was about to indicate to the member, there has been a plan

that was developed in conjunction with the mayor and council of Granville Lake. The mayor and council were totally involved in the development of this plan, along with staff from the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. They signed on to the plan.

What we are doing currently, there is work being done at Granville Lake with a view to correcting this situation. Lines have been thawed out and also the sewage that was coming to the surface is being temporarily placed in a borrow pit that was dug up right beside the community.

So we are currently monitoring the plan to ensure that it is completed in a timely fashion. I have also made a commitment to the people of Granville Lake that I will visit the community again to review with them the progress that has been made thus far in relation to the plan.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Minister of Conservation: I table photos provided to me by residents of the council of Granville Lake showing the sad situation in which there is sewage spilling all over the place, all over. These photos show the tragedy of a situation which has resulted in people being dispossessed and moved out of their home communities so they cannot even live there.

I ask the minister: Is the Government so ineffective in dealing with this incredible situation that a whole community is dispossessed because their community is literally swimming in sewage? How could you let this happen, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, these same pictures were shown to me when I met with the mayor and council of Leaf Rapids on March 23. I just finished advising the House that there is a plan that was developed together by the members of the mayor and council of Granville Lake and the Department of Northern Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I can further advise the member that the Department of Housing has facilitated the relocation of those residents from Granville to Leaf Rapids. They are being housed in Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation units, all expenses paid. We are working very hard in conjunction with the Department of

Health and also Conservation to make those improvements that are required. We think by late spring the work will have been completed.

SAFE Manitoba Program Update

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, many people entering the building this morning have noticed that there is a large display regarding SAFE Manitoba. Can the Minister of Labour and Immigration tell this House how and why the brand SAFE Manitoba was developed and what it will be used for?

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the cornerstone recommendation of the Workplace Safety and Health Review Committee that led to the workplace safety and health legislative changes that the Opposition voted against last session was that the Workers Compensation Board and the Government lead a sustained effort to build a strong workplace safety and health culture in Manitoba.

The model that we are using is called Spot the hazard, Assess the risk, Find a safer way, Every day. The first initiative focusses on young people. It was organized through the co-operation of my department, the Department of Education and training and the Workers Compensation Board. It includes a number of curriculum resources for schools that will be under way throughout the province. There will be a public awareness campaign to make this even more broadly known later this year. We are very pleased with it and sorry that the Opposition chose not to support this kind of Workplace Safety and Health initiative.

Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes Services en langue française

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Monsieur le Président, la province du Manitoba, le gouvernement du Canada, la Corporation de développement communautaire Lourdion et le village de Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes viennent d'inaugurer un troisième centre de services bilingues dans la région de la Montagne afin de faciliter l'accès aux services gouvernementaux offerts dans les deux langues officielles.

Je demande au ministre responsable des services en langue française quels services sont offerts au Centre de services bilingues de la région de la Montagne, situé à Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, the Province of Manitoba, the Government of Canada, the Lourdeon Community Development Corporation and the village of Notre Dame de Lourdes have just opened a third bilingual service centre in the Mountain Region to provide easier access to bilingual government services in both official languages.

I ask the Minister responsible for French Language Services: What services are offered at the Mountain Region's bilingual services centre located in Notre Dame de Lourdes?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister responsible for French Language Services): Je suis heureux de répondre à la question du député de Carman. Un nouveau centre de services à Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, dans la circonscription du député de Carman, offre une gamme de services aux citoyens et citoyennes de la région.

Au centre, il y a une gamme de services et d'information. Dans le domaine de la conservation on peut y trouver des renseignements au sujet des parcs, de la pêche et de la faune. C'est aussi un endroit où on peut faire faire des analyses de l'eau potable.

Le ministère des Services à la famille y offre ses programmes de services de garde de jour pour enfants, d'aide à l'emploi et au revenu, des services spéciaux pour enfants, et son programme d'aide à la vie en société.

Le centre offre aussi des services des normes d'emploi, les liens à d'autres programmes, subventions et ressources, et puis, on peut y trouver des renseignements concernant le développement des entreprises.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer the question from the Member for Carman. A new service centre at Notre Dame de Lourdes, in the

constituency of the Member for Carman, provides a range of services to the citizens of the region. A variety of services and information is available at the centre. In the conservation area, there is information on parks, fisheries and wildlife. It is also a place where you can have drinking water samples analyzed.

At the centre, the Department of Family Services offers its programs in child daycare services, employment and income assistance, special services for children and its supported living program.

The centre also offers employment standards services and links to other programs, grants and resources, and you can also find business development information there.

Mr. Rocan: Mr. Speaker, as the former Speaker of this Legislature, having heard many debates in many hours in Question Period and as the president for the French-speaking Parliamentarians association, I would like to commend the Minister responsible for the French Language Services Secretariat for his grasp of the French language.

As a member of Her Majesty's loyal Opposition, my job is to engage in debate which leads to better public policy, not to take cheap shots at the minister for his proficiency in French.

Monsieur le Président, je remercie le ministre pour sa réponse, et en passant, en tant que Francophone, je tiens à dire que je n'ai pas de difficulté à comprendre son français. Je le félicite de faire l'effort de parler avec nous, dans notre langue, ici à l'Assemblée ainsi que dans nos collectivités.

Je me demande si le ministre responsable peut nous expliquer comment l'ouverture de ces centres de services bilingues situés à Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, à Saint-Pierre-Jolys, et à Saint-Boniface, s'accordent avec les recommandations du rapport du juge Chartier, qui ont été mises en oeuvre par le gouvernement Filmon.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer, and by the way, as a Francophone, I would like

to say that I have no difficulty understanding his French. I congratulate him for making the effort to speak with us, in our language, here in the House as well as in our communities.

I wonder whether the minister responsible can explain to us how the opening of these bilingual service centres, located in Notre Dame de Lourdes, in St. Pierre Jolys, and in St. Boniface, conforms with the recommendations of Judge Chartier's report, which were implemented by the Filmon government.

Mr. Selinger: Monsieur le Président, j'aimerais dire merci au député de Carman pour son commentaire. C'est bien apprécié. Le rapport Chartier a été initié par l'ancien gouvernement conservateur. Dans le rapport le juge a indiqué deux principes clés pour l'offre des services bilingues ici au Manitoba. Premièrement, les services doivent être offerts dans les collectivités où il y a une concentration de francophones. Ça, c'est raisonnable, c'est normal. C'est la pratique d'une politique à l'avantage des Manitobains. Et deuxièmement, dans les centres de services, qui regroupent les trois paliers du gouvernement et des organismes de la collectivité, le personnel doit être bilingue. Ils doivent avoir la capacité de travailler dans les deux langues officielles du Canada, soit le français, soit l'anglais, et d'offrir les services dans la langue du choix des citoyens et des citoyennes de la région.

* (14:40)

On l'a fait dans trois centres: Saint-Pierre-Jolys, Saint-Boniface, et maintenant Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes et, si on a l'occasion, on fera trois autres centres dans l'avenir. J'apprécie l'appui du député de Carman. Il a fait un beau travail dans cette question.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say thank you to the Member for Carman for his comment. It is very much appreciated. The Chartier report was initiated by the former Conservative government. In the report, the judge indicated two key principles in regard to the offer of bilingual services here in Manitoba. Firstly, the services must be offered in the communities where there is a concentration of francophones. This is reasonable

and normal. This is the practice of a policy that is to the advantage of Manitobans. And secondly, in the service centres, which bring together the three levels of government and various community agencies, the personnel must be bilingual. They must have the capacity to work in the two official languages of Canada, in either French or English, and to offer services in the language of choice of the citizens of the region.

This has been done in three centres: St. Pierre Jolys, St. Boniface, and now Notre Dame de Lourdes. And if we have the opportunity, we will create three other centres in the future. I appreciate the support of the Member for Carman. He has done good work on this matter.

Justice System Penalties/Sentencing Policy

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): My question is in the portfolio involving Justice. A constituent of Portage la Prairie wrote to the Justice Minister on February 5, asking for the minister's response in regard to her 16-year-old son who was accosted and robbed of his night's proceeds as a delivery person for a local pizza restaurant. This particular 16-year-old went to court and addressed the assailants, and these assailants were consequently released on probation. My constituent wants to ask this minister: Is this a continuation of this Government's catch-and-release policy?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that decisions made from the bench of the courts are entirely within the jurisdiction, of course, within the independent ambit of the judges of the Provincial Court. In terms of the individual circumstances, if there is any policy implication, I will certainly look into the matter and report back.

I might just add that I am very pleased to report to the House that a new prosecutor position has been assigned to Portage la Prairie. It is a position that is set out in the Budget. I hope that the Member for Portage la Prairie will support the Budget accordingly.

Mr. Faurshou: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is one that is enclosed within the

letter that asks the minister why her son is confronted each and every day by one of the assailants in the high school and has been threatened and yet this minister is refusing to do anything to safeguard this individual's safety, and that at the present time this individual cannot continue with his studies because this Justice Minister has not provided justice in this case.

Mr. Mackintosh: I find the question disturbing, Mr. Speaker, for this reason: I trust that the honourable member, who understands how the justice system works, I am sure, has advised this constituent and this youngster that the police should be contacted in such circumstances. I know that the police of Portage la Prairie have an excellent reputation of responding to circumstances. As well, I might advise that if this is a case of bullying and other forms of intimidation that the authorities in the school system in Portage la Prairie, I am sure, will be responsive. If bullying is based on a prohibited ground of discrimination, the Human Rights Commission is also available.

Mr. Speaker, this sounds like a police issue, and I trust that he has given the proper advice.

Midwifery Training Program Funding

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, we have seen a disturbing habit from the Minister of Health of making these fancy announcements and then years later we find out that he has not carried through on any of the promises that he has made to Manitobans.

I would ask this minister: When he proclaimed The Midwifery Act back on June 12 of 2000, why would he have indicated to the people of Manitoba that he felt this was such a tremendous offering for the people of Manitoba? In fact today, almost three years later, when somebody who is interested in becoming a midwife phones the School of Nursing, the answer they get is: Funding was not received for a midwifery program so it will not be starting this year.

Why has the minister not funded a program at the University of Manitoba to train midwives?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, first—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First I would like to remind the member opposite that when we came to office the number of nurses hired under the former government's midwifery program was zero. We expanded, we put in place a program for 24. We have now expanded to 30. The point I think the member is making, and I have to be careful because he has been inaccurate on a number of points he has made, is: Would we have and should we have a school of midwifery here in Manitoba with respect to training midwives, et cetera?

When the task force came together that reviewed midwifery in Manitoba and proclaimed that we should have a midwifery program in Manitoba, it looked at a case of accreditation. It looked at a case of developing midwives. It looked at a case of credential verification from other jurisdictions. I think there is only one or two actual midwife courses that are offered in this country, Mr. Speaker, in other provinces. The question as to whether or not Manitoba should have a specific school that would only offer training in this particular area is one that we continually look at. I might add, for members who cut the School of Nursing and abolished it, that is a strange question indeed.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Charlie Clifford

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I rise with great pleasure today to recognize a constituent of mine, Mr. Charlie Clifford, who recently received the Lieutenant-Governor's Make A Difference Community Award at the 2003 Volunteer Centre of Winnipeg Volunteer Awards Dinner.

Mr. Clifford is an exemplary citizen who has demonstrated a true devotion to the community

of Portage la Prairie through his numerous volunteer commitments. Some of the organizations to which Mr. Clifford has dedicated his time include The Manitoba Teachers' Society, the MacGregor Ambulance Service, the Association for Community Living, Circle of Friends and the Portage la Prairie Rotary Club.

Mr. Clifford has not only had a tremendous impact on many people whom he has assisted through volunteering, he has also touched numerous young hearts through his capacity as an educator. I might add that I am one. Although now retired, Mr. Clifford taught at nearly all of Portage la Prairie elementary schools and served as a principal at LaVerendrye, Fort la Reine and MacGregor elementary schools.

The Mayor of Portage la Prairie, Mr. Ian MacKenzie, described Mr. Clifford as a person who works hard to see that things are completed and done to benefit other people. I would like to take this opportunity to describe Mr. Clifford as the ideal constituent whom I truly respect as well as one I am most proud to represent in the Legislative Assembly and acknowledge here today.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Clifford for the invaluable work he has done to the benefit of the people of Portage la Prairie and the community in which he resides and to wish him the very best as he continues to be of service to the people of Portage la Prairie and the province of Manitoba. Thank you very much.

Riverton Community Health Centre

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It is with the greatest of pleasure that I rise in the House today to announce that the construction of a new Riverton Community Health Centre has been approved and will commence in the very near future.

Mr. Speaker, phase two of the Primary Health Care Transition Fund was initiated by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), the MLA for Kildonan, this morning. It amounts to almost \$12 million in programs and upgrades which will be invested in 17 different communities across the province. The Riverton facility, which will cost approximately \$900,000, will be rolled out in conjunction with an advanced practice

nurse initiative which will facilitate the placement of two advanced practice nurses to serve the northeast and northwest regions of the Interlake. Placement will occur in the communities of Riverton and St. Laurent. The College of Registered Nurses and the Department of Health are working on the regulatory change necessary to facilitate this change which should be complete within a month or two.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Gail Fones of the college for her assistance in this regard as well as the CEO and chair of the Interlake Regional Health Authority, Mr. Kevin Beresford, and Mr. Bud Shiaro, respectively, for their valuable input. As well, the mayor of Riverton, Mr. Colin Bjarnason, should be acknowledged for his tireless lobbying on behalf of his people.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, on behalf of all of the people of the Interlake, I thank all concerned for their efforts to improve the delivery of health care in our region. Thank you.

* (14:50)

***Les Misérables* Theatrical Production**

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): It was my pleasure to recently attend the Vincent Massey Collegiate presentation of *Les Misérables*. A production such as this highlighted the musical talents that exist within our high schools in Fort Garry and the youth of tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the 2003 company of *Les Misérables* for providing an enriched performing arts atmosphere for not only myself but also for the many others who were in attendance at the final performance that left the crowd in a standing ovation. I commend Ms. Joanne Parker-Gibson, producer and director of *Les Misérables*, a drama teacher at Vincent Massey, for her tireless dedication and commitment to high school musicals. I also commend Ms. Willa Wade and the musicians that played such beautiful music during the production.

The teachers have provided an enhanced high school educational experience and lifelong skills to those students involved in the many capacities that are required for hosting a high

school musical. Vincent Massey Collegiate has a long proud history of presenting many wonderful musicals to the public. In fact, there have been over 40 years of Massey musical memories. I know that the people of Fort Garry are very proud of the strong performing arts presence within their Fort Garry community at Vincent Massey Collegiate. I wish all of the students the very best in their education and their future endeavours.

Dr. Carl Ridd

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to pay tribute to the late Dr. Carl Ridd, citizen of Winnipeg and the world, who was a friend, a mentor, a teacher and an inspiration to many.

Carl began his career as a United Church minister and academic but was transformed into and became best known as a social activist. His activism was not limited to social causes but also to economic, and his outspokenness is one of the best arguments for academic freedom. He was not a person who just tried to make a difference, although he did. Rather he doggedly pursued justice in the Christian prophetic tradition, prophetic meaning not forecasting the future but forthtelling the word of God to today's society, which for him meant removing the chains of oppression whether it was Central Americans, gays and lesbians, the Palestinians or any country that was threatened with the ultimate oppression of invasion and war.

He lobbied politicians relentlessly, Mr. Speaker, but respectfully, wanting to engage us in dialogue rather than haranguing us. This task he never gave up on and he continued to raise important concerns about public policy regarding the Middle East even from his hospital bed.

To say that he will be missed is a great understatement. He will long be remembered by United Church folk and the Moslem community, by students and faculty, by basketball players and coaches, by the movers and shakers of this city and the kids at Rossbrook House whom he coached, by editors and readers of letters to the editor and most especially by his family to whom I express on behalf of members of the Manitoba Legislature our heartfelt condolences.

Granville Lake Sewage System

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): On March 24 of this year the residents of Granville Lake were evacuated from their homes because the provincial government delayed in fixing the sewage system and septic fields it installed in the year 2000.

Despite a letter from Manitoba Conservation threatening prosecution, the Department of Family Services and Housing has failed to act to protect the citizens of Granville and the environment from the leaky sewage system. I met yesterday and today with representatives from Granville Lake over their concern that the NDP government has abandoned them. This is another example of NDP mismanagement. It has the most extreme consequences to the community of Granville Lake and for all Manitoba taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, when will this Government figure out that delays on environmental issues increase the severity of their impact, not only on the environment but on the lives of people in the community and the cost to clean it up? It is astonishing that the provincial Department of Family Services and Housing has broken its legal responsibilities and has been derelict in its carrying out of its responsibilities to ensure the most basic human services to people in Granville Lake. It is hard to believe that the provincial government could treat the needs of citizens and the environment in this fashion.

The historic community of Granville Lake is located about 50 kilometres from Leaf Rapids. In 2000, a sewage system using septic fields was installed to service homes and the community hall. Tragically, improper installation led to widespread leakage and the need to evacuate the whole community in March of this year. There was a letter from the Department of Conservation, April Gravelle, in August of 2001, which said there was a major problem. It was not fixed. There was a second letter June 19, 2002, saying the problem had not been fixed and it needed to be fixed fast or there would be legal action. The problem was not fixed. There has been no legal action. The Department of Family Services and Housing has failed to act; the NDP government has failed to do its job and has left the people of Granville Lake dispossessed, unable to live in their community because of the failure of the NDP government.

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

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the Government and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Education and Youth (Mr. Lemieux).

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Education and Youth): Mr. Speaker, it is always indeed a pleasure to be able to stand in the Legislature and speak. It is certainly a privilege and an honour to all members. I know that they feel the same way because many have been in this House longer than I, but they understand when people elect you and put you into this particular building, into the Legislature, it is indeed an honour, and it is certainly a privilege and everyone respects that fact.

Just on that note, before I make my comments on the Budget, I want to try to be brief in those comments and remarks. I might just restrict my remarks possibly to the area of my own portfolio, and I might touch on a couple of other areas.

Before I do that, I want to take the opportunity to wish my colleagues who are retiring and members who will be leaving this Legislature after the next provincial election, whenever that may be called—I just want to pay my respects to the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), also Mr. Helwer from Gimli, also Mr. Gilleshammer from Minnedosa and also Mr. Enns from Lakeside. There are a few others that I wish to make comment on. Jim Penner from Steinbach is another one I wish to comment on. At this time, I just want to say that to each and every one of these individuals I have had the pleasure over the last about four years to have occasion to meet with them, to speak with them. They are certainly dedicated professionals, dedicated politicians, and they will be sorely missed, I know by their party, but they also will be

missed by this building. Democracy was far better with them being involved in the process.

A comment I want to make about Jim Penner, the MLA for Steinbach. I had occasion to meet Mr. Penner many years ago when I was working as a young salesperson for a company by the name of Proctor & Gamble and Mr. Penner owned a couple of stores that I had to visit. I know his party will certainly miss him. His family, I am sure, is very upset to say the least with regard to an illness that he has encountered. He is a person, he was very soft spoken, and he had an extremely large heart in the sense that he was very, very generous in his own community. He also worked extremely hard in his short time as a politician and almost seemed out of place in the Legislature because his approach was not one of confrontation but one of some pragmatism in the sense of wanting to get the job done, which is an approach that I certainly adhere to as well. So I wish his family all the best and certainly to him. Anyone who has to face an uphill battle like he has to face is one that we should all get behind and wish him all the best and to his family.

Mr. Speaker, before I make my remarks directly on the Budget, I just want to say that we as well will be missing colleagues on this side of the House, and I certainly will as well. I have had the pleasure of working with Ms. Cerilli from Radisson and also Ms. Asper from Riel. They will definitely be missed.

* (15:00)

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Ms. Cerilli, I know that, as caucus chair and certainly prior to that, anytime she had an issue to discuss she certainly would not refrain from holding back in any way, shape or form. She would make sure she was very forceful in making that point, and she would also provide the evidence why something had to be done in a very, very constructive manner. So her criticisms and suggestions were always trying to forward the agenda of making Manitoba a better place for all its citizens, whether they be environmental concerns, whether they were dealing with families in poverty and so on. So in my short tenure

in working with this person, Ms. Cerilli will be sorely missed, certainly from our caucus, but also I know Radisson will very, very much miss her.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Ms. Asper from Riel, a colleague that sits behind me in the Legislature, I do not think her sense of humour is often appreciated. She always had a good word to say about all members in this House. Again, I think the pragmatism that she showed in wanting to get things done and achieved not just in a partisan way, but looking to see what was best not only for her own constituents, but for Manitobans, I think, is certainly a way that most members, when you take a look at that particular style that Linda had, is something certainly to be copied.

I want to say a couple of special remarks for Ms. Barrett and Ms. Friesen, for Becky and Jean, two Cabinet colleagues. Both of them, I can tell you, have worked extremely hard.

Prior to my getting elected to this Legislature, Becky Barrett would come out and assist me in my own constituency, and not of my asking, but of her own free will. I know many of her colleagues on this side of the House really appreciated her coming out and working with them as novices to politics and not knowing the ropes and not knowing many protocols with regard to the simplest things of door knocking and going around and how to approach possible constituents. It was very, very helpful.

I know, Becky, I really appreciate all the hard work that you did in coming out to La Verendrye, and you are remembered. During the election campaign people remembered you and really appreciated someone from so-called, you know, the inner city inside the Perimeter would actually come outside the Perimeter and venture their way into the wilderness of La Verendrye to assist someone—*[interjection]* And even though she did not have a gun rack or a half-ton truck, it was still appreciated that she came out to La Verendrye.

I just want to take this opportunity to thank her not only for myself, but I know my colleagues feel the same way. She will be sorely missed, but I know that she has a long life ahead

of her and many other challenges that she wants to certainly tackle. I know we will wish her the best. We always look forward to her advice. We know that she will be leaving here in body but not in spirit and she will be with us all the time.

Jean Friesen, the MLA for Wolseley, is a person that I know many other colleagues have mentioned. A great deal of respect is shown this minister and also the Member for Wolseley from right across Manitoba. She has dealt with all the municipalities in a fair way, has been very inclusive and has always listened to their input and has not brushed off comments, whether they be ones that may not be so positive. She has worked closely with all the municipalities in rural Manitoba as well as the City of Winnipeg and Brandon and some of the larger urban areas.

Ms. Friesen has always been an activist all her life and certainly a well-known historian in her own right and a very well-respected person in the Legislature. I know she will be very sorely missed. I appreciated working with her and all her counsel that she has given me as a new member of the Legislature since being elected.

So my message to all the people leaving is that this building will not be the same certainly, having you not here with us. Democracy was far better with you participating in it. You will be missed and your records speak for themselves, and your constituents will miss you, and we in the Legislature will miss you in our own way.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a couple of comments with regard to the Budget. I am sorry I was so long-winded with regard to the people retiring or leaving the Legislature, but I think it is important that we recognize each other for the hard work we do. We may take different paths to get to the goal, but overall we have the best interests of Manitobans at heart, each and every elected official in this Legislature.

With regard to the Budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is our fourth Budget, and we have taken a very balanced approach in the truest sense of the word. The Budget is not just balanced, but it is balanced in its approach, its approach to many of the initiatives that we feel are important to Manitobans, to families, to

people who are elderly, as well as many youth in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make a couple of comments because time is short, and I did realize coming back that time would certainly impact on many of our statements, but just in my own area of education, I have heard a number of comments made by members opposite in their comments they have made on the Budget.

I guess, you know, politics does not always have to be confrontational, and politics does not always have to be an adversarial system. If members opposite were fair when they take a look at some of the initiatives that we have had with regard to education, in my own portfolio, you would have to take a look at—and that is not saying that they did not have tough times in the 1990s financially. They did. There were some tough economic times in the nineties and they had some tough decisions to make, but when we came into government some of the priorities we made even prior to being elected were health care and education. We felt those were the two pillars that would certainly not only have us recover financially but certainly would be the cornerstone or the pillars that would lead us into this new century, into the new millennium and have Manitoba take its rightful place as one of the leading provinces in the country.

With regard to education, when you take a look at the amount of monies for example just in the capital area that we have spent in our years in government, almost four now, we have put in approximately \$225 million in capital over that period of time compared to \$125 million that the previous government put in from '95-99. Now, those dollars are taxpayers' dollars and we hear those comments from the Opposition often. Yes, they are, but do you know what? We have balanced our Budget. We just made a priority, that education would be a priority, where those dollars would go. The previous administration decided that they would flow the dollars for different sources. That is fine. That is their prerogative, but we made a choice when we doubled that amount that they spent on capital, fixing schools, fixing leaking roofs, fixing mouldy schools, sometimes rebuilding, sometimes renovating, refurbishing, doing new

electrical and mechanical. It is a choice that we made.

Now, most of the schools in Manitoba were built in the 1950s or early sixties, and many of them have outlived their time. Some of them were better built than others, and so we were able to refurbish them. But just that amount alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a substantial sum of money, but it is an investment, not a cost, and that is a term that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has used, the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and other ministers of the Crown, as well as the Premier (Mr. Doer) has used. It is an investment in our future, an investment in children. The children who go to school have to have the tools and the environment in which to learn and to grow and to thrive and become the leaders of the future. Our goal was to make sure that we would do whatever we could within our financial capabilities to ensure that that environment that they are in would be taken care of and we would try to fix it the best that we could.

I just want to say that just in one area alone, taking a look at school capital, it is double to what the previous administration did, and I just want to make sure that is on the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it is important in this fourth Budget. I would wish that there are members opposite, when I talk about how it does not always have to be an adversarial system and confrontation, but this Budget, certainly taking a look at this Budget, either in-depth or just taking a first look at this Budget, it is a very fair, balanced Budget, not extremely flashy, but it is fair and balanced. It addresses all the different corners of the province and all the different sectors in the province. I know that it will be well received by the community as a whole in Manitoba.

* (15:10)

Another point I wish to make with regard to school divisions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yesterday I was listening quite intently to a member opposite from Seine River. She made comments about her own particular school division that she is most familiar with. That is Louis Riel and one of the amalgamated school divisions. This Government never said that amalgamation and the benefits of amalgamation would happen

overnight. We know it takes some time and there is a process involved with regard to amalgamation. There are some hurdles and challenges that all divisions face.

I have to tell you, when you take a look at some of those amalgamated divisions and you take a look at the taxation that has been involved over the years, and today in Question Period and tomorrow and the day after and the day after and the day after that, I look forward to questions coming from members of the Opposition about taxation on property and taxation in school divisions.

I will use Louis Riel as one particular school division. Louis Riel, for those that do not know, is made up of two divisions, St. Boniface and St. Vital. From 1990 to 1999, taxes increased by \$347. That is based on a hundred-thousand-dollar home, and that includes the changes to the special levy, the ESL and property tax credit. That is after that has all been taken into consideration.

Under the previous Conservative government, the taxes increased by \$347 in St. Boniface. In St. Vital the taxes increased by \$267 between 1990 and 1999, based on a hundred-thousand-dollar home. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you take a look at that, that hardship that was placed upon those taxpayers in the ninties, and when you take a look at our Government, it is modest in its approach. We are not attempting to solve everything overnight. Again, we are not perfect, but we are trying and we are doing the best we can under our financial situation that we have.

We have put an unprecedented amount of money into the public education system. We have, based on the ESL reduction over the last two years, is \$27 million. What we are trying to do is trying to address the issue of taxation on property. We are doing it in a methodical, steady way. Yet we know that that is not the be-all, end-all. Everyone asks for more. We understand that maybe it is just human nature, but it is always more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you compare the record of the previous administration compared to ours, whether it be in monies in capital,

putting monies into rebuilding and refurbishing or renovating schools or whether it is in operational, the previous administration could not compare on our commitment where we not only just talked about it, but we put money where our mouth is. We felt that it was very, very important to back up what we were saying about the importance of education. It was just a priority for us. We think that education is very important and we felt that we had to back that up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go through many, many school divisions in the province of Manitoba and go through the increases that were heaped upon them in the 1990s, and compared to what we have done in our short four years, we win absolutely hands down, if someone was taking a look at tax increases compared to the previous administration compared to us.

I will not belabour the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it is a point that maybe needs to be made more than once and certainly will if we get the opportunity. We look forward to any questions that the Opposition may want to raise with regard to taxation. We would be pleased to tackle it, because that gives us the opportunity to stand up and compare our record compared to theirs.

I just want to say that the reason I raised Louis Riel School Division in the old St. Boniface, St. Vital, was because the member opposite from Seine River was making a few disparaging remarks with regard to some of the MLAs that currently represent the area. Somehow they were nowhere to be seen when it comes time to talk about the school division or amalgamation. The MLAs for Riel and St. Vital are more than happy to debate anytime with regard to what we are doing in education. Given the opportunity to do so, they will make the points exactly as I have today about how successful we have been, but we have a lot more work to do yet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there are other speakers who wish to stand and put their points of view on the record. I just want to say that for my part as the Member for LaVerendrye, I just want to comment about just my constituency alone and how we have seen a change by virtue of the commitments we have made,

whether it be in education, agriculture, conservation and so on. Health care is another area, it is a huge area, health and education, that we made commitments on. But, again, it is an area where I can look at my own constituency and then I look at other constituencies of members opposite, and they are also receiving the benefits of different policies that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has put in place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my particular case, there is a \$9-million personal care home, the Villa Youville Personal Care Home, that was built and opened just recently. Also, we took a look at renovations to the hospital in Ste. Anne, Manitoba. Today I understand that there was an announcement made with regard to the community health centre, a primary health centre which is going to be up and running in Niverville, Manitoba, in the very near future. They are going to be looking at a number of different services there. But, again, health care, education, two large areas, not only K to 12, or K to Senior 4, but also post-secondary with the downtown Red River College and many other initiatives.

This particular Budget that we are going to be voting on, I hope members opposite will support us in voting with us on this Budget, because it is a balanced budget in every sense of the word, and it lays out a very, very good I think economic platform to build on. Manitobans will look at this Budget and they will see it as it is, not flashy. It is not over the top where governments going into their fourth Budget have reached the end of their particular mandate, but it is a very, very balanced approach to governing which the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has had in the four years as Minister of Finance. He has taken a very prudent, pragmatic approach to being the Minister of Finance. He is well respected, not only in Manitoba but across the country, for his approach to finances and not being over the top but being steady and true and very methodical in his approach to finances. He is extremely tight-fisted and watches every penny that is being spent in the province today.

I want to say in conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank again the members for allowing me the opportunity to speak. It is always an honour and a pleasure to be able to

speak on behalf of the constituents who elected one and put a person into the Legislature. To all those MLAs who are going to be retiring and leaving, again I want to wish them all the best. We do not always have an opportunity to see them and talk to them in person, but I want to take this opportunity to say that they will be missed in the Legislature, and I know that they will be welcome back anytime. They may be gone in body but not have left this building in spirit. I know that we look forward to seeing them when they do so.

So, again, congratulations to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) for a very, very strong and balanced Budget that the people of Manitoba will look upon and say now we know that seniors, that children and youth, that rural and city and people from remote areas, farmers, men, women can take a look at this Budget and say that Budget is a budget that is extremely balanced for all of us. The Government of Manitoba is thinking of us and thinking of the challenges that we have and trying to be very prudent in their approach to governing.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome this opportunity and the privilege to be able to debate the Budget this afternoon. It is a privilege to represent the constituents of Lac du Bonnet and to be able to make representations on their behalf with respect to this Budget which was brought down, of course, by the Government last week. I would like to start by extending my best wishes to the nine members who are retiring and deciding not to run in the next provincial election. I know that they have always kept Manitobans' best interests at heart when debating in this Legislature, and of course, they have looked after their constituents' needs very well. I congratulate them for all the hard work and dedicated service to their community and to their constituencies, and I wish them well and I wish them the best in the future.

* (15:20)

I will start by saying that the Budget, as I have noticed, I have only been here a year, but the Budget is the most important and significant

thing that happens in the Legislature. Secondly, that is in the spring, but in the fall we have the Throne Speech, which really is full of pomp and ceremony and is a lot of flowery language and has no substance to it as I see it. So, the first opportunity of the Government to determine which way it is going to go in terms of policy is through the Budget.

A budget, I believe, should contain some vision and some direction, the vision and direction that the Government is going to go with their policies in the coming year. I think, as well as I believe most Manitobans believe, particularly after they have studied the Budget, that they found this Budget really deficient in terms of a vision for the province. It is very much a status quo budget and really not intended to offend anyone, intending instead to sprinkle a little money here and a little money there, which, of course, adds up to a lot of taxpayers' money, but a little money here and a little money there just to satisfy different interest groups. For that reason, I would indicate that there really is a lack of direction and a lack of vision from this Government.

The Government appears to intend to coast into an election based on their record. The Budget has no vision and wrong priorities. I believe that the biggest failure of this Budget is, in fact, the lack of tax cuts. Tax cuts can drive the economy. It puts more money into the pockets of Manitobans. It increases consumer confidence. It will stimulate the economy. It will create jobs, jobs for our young people, jobs which are necessary in order to keep our young people here and working in the province.

I think one of the headlines in the paper last week certainly exemplifies the Budget, and I quote directly from *The Winnipeg Sun*, April 16, where the headline read: NDP tax cut a joke. The Doer government is still picking your pockets. That is one of the articles that was written by Tom Brodbeck on April 16 in *The Winnipeg Sun*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba is the only province west of Nova Scotia that still picks taxpayers' pockets through the back door by refusing to adjust provincial tax brackets to inflation. That is called bracket creep. If left

unchanged by the Doer government, it will actually net the Government millions of dollars in new money. The federal government and almost every other province have indexed their income tax systems. This means each year taxpayers' brackets are raised by the rate of inflation. What that does, to index by the rate of inflation, is it protects taxpayers against artificial tax increases. If you get a raise of 2 percent, 3 percent, 4 percent or 5 percent as a cost of living increase and the tax brackets do not change, a portion of your income that you make that year, a portion of your increase actually goes into a higher tax bracket.

When you look at it after inflation, you are actually worse off than you were before. That is why most other governments have done the right thing in recent years and they have indexed brackets to rise automatically with inflation. Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, those are the only other three provinces in the country that do not index their tax systems. I think you have to look at that in terms of tax policy, that the Province really should be indexing the tax brackets in order to ensure that inflation does not eat up any increase that one gets in terms of salary increases.

The NDP, as well, has trimmed the ESL, the Education Support Levy, by a reported 19.2 percent. It may sound impressive, 19.2 percent, but a house assessed at \$100,000 will actually receive a break on their property taxes by \$60, \$5 a month. That is all it means, and the trouble is that those savings, \$5 a month, will be more than wiped out if you received a cost-of-living increase because of bracket creep.

Meanwhile, the Government continues to pick our pockets in other areas. We have seen in the last session they have increased propane taxes. They have put a new tax on plumbers and electricians, on their wages, and they have also increased tobacco taxes. I know during the last session they ridiculed the fact that we were criticizing an increase in taxes on propane. Really it was a very serious issue, but they treated it very flippantly. They said that it would add 12 cents to every backyard barbecue.

While that is true at a backyard barbecue, it increases taxes and increases the cost of doing

business substantially in rural Manitoba. In fact, I have a hotel owner in Powerview, Pine Falls area, who heats his buildings with propane. That did not just cost him 12 cents during the last Budget; that cost him \$5,000. In a market where it is difficult to pass on that cost, that extra cost, to the consumer, he had to absorb that \$5,000 cost on his own. So really it was a tax on rural Manitoba.

The irony, I think Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that while the Doer government is trimming the Education Support Levy on your property tax bill, they are passing laws that will end up forcing school divisions to hike their taxes even higher. I know we have heard from the Education Minister (Mr. Lemieux) yesterday in Question Period who said that in Sunrise, because of amalgamation, we are going to have lower property taxes. That is absolute nonsense. I challenge him to find one taxpayer who is going to be paying less taxes this year than they did last or less taxes this year than they did the year before or less taxes than they did 10 years ago. I do not think there is anyone out there. Amalgamation of the school division, forming the new Sunrise School Division, will definitely cost taxpayers money. Property taxpayers will have to bear the brunt of that decision.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Province forcibly amalgamated the school divisions. They should be solely responsible for the cost of amalgamation. It is not the fault of the property taxpayer in Sunrise School Division. It is not their fault that the Province forcibly amalgamated their school division. Because of the amalgamation, it is reported that simple salary harmonization over three years, that salary harmonization over three years will cost taxpayers \$1.2 million over that three-year period.

Now, the Government has responded by saying, we gave school divisions, amalgamating school divisions, \$50 per student. That works out to \$250,000 of funding to Sunrise School Division. It is a far cry from the actual cost of \$1.2 million. During the last Sunrise strike, where two unions were striking, it was reported in the newspapers that the Government gave \$85,000 toward the cost of harmonizing the two unions' salaries.

When I asked the minister whether he was prepared to put more money into Sunrise School Division for the other 11 unions who were going to be asking for increases this year, there was silence, absolute silence. So I take from that, that he expects the property taxpayer in Sunrise School Division to bear the cost of the forced amalgamation by the Province, and that is totally unfair and it is unreasonable.

* (15:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government is trying to make much, of course, of the announcement that it will reduce the middle-income tax bracket by 6 percent, but they forget to mention that that is not till 2004. Very little happens in 2003. This proposal though has to be looked at a little more closely. In 2002, the Province collected \$700 million in taxes from the middle of the tax bracket. With that 6% reduction that they propose, \$42 million less will be taxed into the provincial coffers in 2004. However, thanks to bracket creep, \$34 million that would not have been taxed would continue to flow in, meaning there is only a tax savings to taxpayers of \$8 million. So that 6% cut that is widely touted by the Doer government is actually only a 1% tax cut. This analysis was given courtesy of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

I would like to comment on a number of departments within the Budget, first of all being Agriculture. It is clear from the Budget that agriculture is not a priority for this Government. There are 3300 less farmers in Manitoba than there were in 1999, and this is after the Doer government promised in 1999, during their campaign, to save the family farm. Do you save the family farm by chasing people off their farms, by making sure that they do not have the money to run their farms? Thirty-three hundred farmers were lost from 1999 to 2003. This is of particular concern when you consider that the number of bankruptcies as well in Manitoba's agriculture and related service industries jumped to 43 cases in 2002 from 22 cases in 2001.

The most glaring omission for the agriculture sector in this year's Budget was the Government's failure to provide Manitobans with its share of funding under the 40-60 formula that in fact the Province signed on for under

the Agricultural Policy Framework agreement. The Province signed on that agreement, but no money has ever flowed. Are our farmers worth 40 percent less than farmers in Saskatchewan or in Alberta? I do not think they are. I think the Province should put in the 40 percent. They agreed to do that and they have not.

It is unfortunate that the Doer government has chosen to balance the books or try to balance the books off the backs of Manitoba farmers and to treat them as 40 percent less valuable than their counterparts in Alberta, Ontario and Québec. Those governments recognize the importance of agriculture to their provincial economies and they flowed that transition funding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition, in agriculture, the Government failed to outline a plan to deal with bovine tuberculosis which continues to threaten our multimillion-dollar livestock industry.

With respect to rural development, the Budget contains a number of recycled announcements including funding to the Food Development Centre in Portage la Prairie and support for the Prairie Grain Roads Program, as well as the continuation of the sales tax exemption on manure slurry tanks and lagoon liners. These are not new initiatives. They are indicative of a government that is out of touch, I believe, with the needs of agricultural producers and rural entrepreneurs.

In the Budget, there is more money for conservation districts, but there is more money only after years of stretching their resources thin because the funding has not kept pace with the expansion in the number of conservation districts. In the Department of Conservation, the NDP claim they are going to put more money into drainage, but where is it going to be spent? Will it be spent within the city of Winnipeg to help combat the West Nile virus or will it be distributed around the province in areas of greatest need for farmers?

If you look at the line item for waterway maintenance in the last 20 years, it has been at \$4 million. And you know what? Under this Budget it has not moved either. It is still at \$4

million, the same amount they allocated last year.

Drainage maintenance is that part of the drainage Budget that hires the backhoes. Without hiring the backhoes and the equipment, you do not move dirt. If you do not move dirt, water does not move. Drainage maintenance is an important line in that Budget. That has not changed from last year at \$4 million. Even the year before, in the last 20 years it has not changed from \$4 million. Yet they are touting that they are putting more money into drainage. Where is this extra drainage money? It looks like some of it has gone to bureaucrats and water licencing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, drainage is an important part of the agricultural infrastructure that is required. The reason it is an important part is farmers do not have any control over input costs. Input costs have increased dramatically with petroleum prices. Farmers do not have any control over commodity prices. That is controlled generally by the world markets. They do not have control over increasing input costs, decreasing commodity prices. They are being squeezed in the middle. Add to that improper drainage and it will turn a potential profit for a farmer into a loss. That is something that they cannot suffer. We need to put a substantial amount of money into drainage maintenance, not just into bureaucracy and not just into administration.

The NDP claim to be interested in protecting the environment, yet they have cut funding to the Clean Environment Commission. This is on the eve of the Clean Environment Commission being asked to examine major hydro dam projects, as we have heard in question period over the last couple of days. Moreover, funding for sewer and water programs have been cut by \$450,000. This is incomprehensible, given that many rural communities in Manitoba are still struggling with boil water orders.

The NDP remain committed to driving the Kyoto initiatives. As the Energy Minister said before in this House, it still seems that cost is irrelevant, as the Budget failed to outline the cost to Manitobans of meeting the Kyoto targets.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, under Health, the Doer government has spent almost a billion more

dollars on health care since 1999. Manitobans still do not have health care improvements to show for it. Manitobans are more and more on waiting lists to see specialists, waiting lists to get tests and to have surgery. There are more than 4500 Manitobans waiting nearly seven months for cataract surgery. There are more than 900 Manitobans waiting more than six months for hip or knee surgery. Waiting that long for health care that is supposed to be universally accessible certainly has a negative impact on individuals' quality of life.

These long waiting lists for health care services show that the Premier (Mr. Doer) does not have his health priorities straight. For the second year in a row, Gary Doer has increased Pharmacare deductibles. This will have a negative impact on those who have limited incomes such as seniors who live on fixed incomes. The Doer government has spent nearly \$1 billion more in health care since 1999-2000. Manitobans still do not have health care improvements to show for it. The Government is receiving \$275 million in additional health care funding from the federal government over the next three years, but continues to cry that the federal government is not providing its fair share of health care funding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even though health care funding has increased more than 7 percent since the 2002-2003 Budget, with the Doer government contributing \$218 million more, Doer still has not provided Manitobans with a plan to solve problems in health care, which included growing waiting lists for tests, surgeries and appointments, shortage of trained health care professionals, especially but not limited to nurses and specialists, hallway medicine fudged numbers and the troubled cardiac care program.

I know in Question Period over the last couple of days we have heard the Health Minister say they are now graduating 600 nurses in the province. My daughter was one of them. She started in 1999, before the election. The numbers of people who graduate from the baccalaureate degree nursing program at University of Manitoba actually started during the Conservative administration. We should be taking credit for those numbers, not the Doer government.

* (15:40)

My concern for her is whether there is going to be a full-time job in the province. I can tell you that there are very, very few full-time jobs for nurses in Manitoba. I think that was borne out by the statements made even by the president of the Nurses' Union. You can see it by the advertisements in the newspapers as to how many full-time jobs there are. There are very few. There is a 0.2 here and a 0.3 there. We are not going to keep our new graduates in Manitoba by offering them a 0.2 position in one hospital and a 0.3 in another. It is not going to happen. While we applaud the fact that there are 600 nurses that are graduating this year, we certainly appreciate that, we also have to keep them within the province. If we are not going to offer them a full-time job, they will go elsewhere where they will offer them a full-time job.

In terms of Family Services, since 1999 the number of people on social assistance has decreased 8.1 percent. The savings achieved by paying social assistance to fewer people is being used to increase welfare payments by 4.5 percent. Many social service activists, including David Northcott, are saying this is not enough even to buy a bus pass. While the Doer government has increased funding for health care by \$6 million, other activists such as Susan Prentice felt the amount was not enough. My concern is will this increase the number of day-care spaces or will it simply increase salaries for day-care staff?

In terms of Finance, spending increases by \$358 million in this 2003 Budget. Since the 1999 Budget, spending has increased by \$1.27 billion, a whopping \$1.27 billion. In the 2003 Budget, it is noted that there is \$11 of new spending for every \$1 of new tax relief, a total imbalance in this Budget. The rainy day fund has gone from \$285 million when the NDP took office in 1999 to \$145 million by the end of 2003. They are also projecting a further \$39-million draw on the rainy day fund for next year. Despite a written commitment by the Doer government to replenish the rainy day fund of the \$150 million that they temporarily or transitionally withdrew, as they said, in 2001-02, it was never replaced. The Doer government as well continues with its

raiding of Manitoba Hydro to the tune of \$52 million this year.

Middle-income Manitobans are now the highest taxed west of New Brunswick. They pay 37 percent more than taxpayers in British Columbia, 44 percent more than taxpayers in Alberta, 17 percent more than taxpayers in Saskatchewan, 37 percent more than taxpayers in Ontario and 5 percent more than in Québec. That is with a one-earner family of four earning \$60,000.

The NDP like to gloat over their so-called tax cuts. In 2002, a middle-income, two-earner family of four earning \$60,000 a year paid \$3,409 in provincial income tax. In 2003, the next year, the same family pays \$3395. They save a whole \$14. That is tax cuts? That is not tax cuts.

Manitoba's business climate continues to be uncompetitive with corporate taxes well ahead of Alberta, B.C. and Ontario. The chairman of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce was noted as saying the other day that it is very unfortunate. In his comment on the Budget, he says: Manitoba's business case for investment just got weaker today. It is a very good day for our competitor provinces and our competitor businesses outside the province. We are still losing people to other provinces and suffering net migrations. We need to have a competitive tax structure in Manitoba that does not penalize success but rather rewards it, a structure that does not dissuade high-income earners from moving to the province to establish businesses or work in high-income fields.

That is his comment, the chairman of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce.

With respect to education, the NDP makes a commitment in the Budget to provide \$1 million to address the issues of class size and composition, not very realistic because according to the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, to achieve a class size of 18 students will cost \$114.3 million.

The NDP like to talk about their reduction of the Education Support Levy and increases to the property tax credit, but several divisions have

double-digit increases, including Transcona with a 13.61% increase. Sunrise School Division, which, in fact, has not put into the budget to any great extent the cost of the harmonization of salaries, is increasing the mill rate in our school division by 8.46 percent.

There is no mention in the Budget of the promised \$10-million saving that they promised for school division amalgamation. You know why? Because they cannot deliver. There is no way there is going to be a saving of \$10 million. In Sunrise School Division alone, the cost of salary harmonization is reported to be between \$1.2 million and \$1.5 million over three years.

In addition to that, there will be extra amalgamation costs such as the construction of seven new French immersion classrooms at a cost of between \$1 million and \$1.5 million within the next three years, the cost of hiring seven French immersion teachers at a cost of between \$300,000 and \$400,000 annually, the cost of renovating and increasing the size of the school division administrative offices in Beausejour, probably in the neighbourhood of a million dollars, the cost of the property taxpayer and the Province having to foot the bill to build a regional school which is likely going to be required within the division at a cost of perhaps between \$5 million and \$6 million.

All of these costs ought to be taken into account when we are dealing with amalgamation, not just part of the costs and not just part of the costs of satisfying two unions out of thirteen in terms of their salary negotiations.

The Doer government also talks about funding public education at the rate of economic growth, but they fail to note that the provincial share of the operating costs of public education has fallen each year under the NDP. It has fallen from 60.9 percent in 1999 when they took office to 50.5 percent in 2003. The NDP are maintaining the 10% tuition rebate and freeze, but they are still chronically underfunding our post-secondary institutions.

Under justice, while the NDP claim that our communities are safer, statistics and headlines do not support this claim. A recent headline on the front page of *The Winnipeg Sun* stated: Gang

warfare is feared. Story after story has been reported in the papers about the revolving door of justice under Gary Doer and, in fact, of this Justice Minister's (Mr. Mackintosh) soft approach to crime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the president of the Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys, Bob Morrison, has lamented that lenient sentences plague our justice system. His very own employee, Bob Morrison, called the Justice Minister soft on crime. Many other employees have done the same.

There is lots of talk about the programs the NDP have brought in, but not one mention was made of getting tough on criminals and holding them accountable for their actions. There is also no mention about protecting victims.

There is no vision, as I stated before, within this Budget. There is no plan delivered by this Budget. I believe it is a do-nothing Budget, and it will not stop the flow of people out of this province.

I would like to, in terms of ending this Budget debate, for myself I would like to again mention my best wishes to all the retiring members, all nine of them, this side and that side of the House. I wish them well in the future, in their future endeavours. I thank them on behalf of all residents of Lac du Bonnet constituency for all their hard work and dedicated service to their community and to their constituency. Thank you.

* (15:50)

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to be able to put a few words on record regarding our Government's Budget, which, I think, is an excellent budget and which is a Budget that I support.

Before I do that I would like to also thank, I guess the word is retirees, those nine people that will not be seeking re-election. When the next election happens, maybe there will be more that will not be here in this building, who knows, but I am just talking about the ones that are voluntarily retiring. I want to particularly thank those nine people for their hard work on behalf of the citizens of Manitoba.

I would even more particularly like to thank two of them, because I heard their speeches last week and I was really impressed. One was the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), who is the acknowledged dean of this House, who, I thought, gave a wonderful speech and a powerful speech. I want to thank him. He is certainly going to be missed.

Also the Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), who, I thought, gave one of the best speeches that I have ever heard. I think she spoke from the heart and she spoke truly. She ended it with poetry, and I am a literature teacher, so I really appreciated that. I really think we all should read that speech, because it was a speech from the heart, and I compliment her on just a wonderful, wonderful delivery. I also want to thank her for the work she has done on behalf of this province. I like it when people speak from the heart and speak the truth. It makes us all feel good, because there is a lot of rhetoric in this House. Some of it we get carried away with and some of it, I do not know if it will stand the test of time, but the words that I heard from the Member for Radisson I think will stand the test of time.

Now the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) has said that the people of this province have lost confidence in this Government and this Budget. That is what his amendment is about. I personally believe nothing could be further from the truth, but when you are dealing with select statistics and claim and counterclaim, it is sometimes pretty hard to decide what is the reality. There is a very simple test actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The simple test is, let us take it to the people. We will see if they have confidence in this Budget. It is my belief that they have quite a bit of confidence in this Budget.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) speaking the other day. He said he was concerned about the arrogance of the Opposition. Usually, it is governments that are arrogant. I do not think this Government has ever been arrogant, but the Opposition seems to sometimes take the tone that they rule by divine right. You get a fair bit of shrieking and a fair bit of yelling and all kinds of indignation, feigned or otherwise, real or otherwise, even temper tantrums and intemperate language and so on, certainly some vicious

heckling, which is part of the give and take, but I think we have to be careful.

No one government, no one party has the divine right to rule, but somewhere out there in Tory land is the belief that they actually speak for the real people of Manitoba and it was some kind of fluke that the New Democrats were elected in 1999. It was nothing that they had done wrong in the past; it was just misguided opinion of the people of Manitoba, a temporary aberration in the thinking of Manitobans. Well, if you continue to operate like that, you are going to be facing problems again fairly soon. There is no divine right to rule. The people choose, and what the people decide is right.

Now the Leader of the Opposition, although I certainly respect the Leader of the Opposition, keeps making these ongoing references to Saskatchewan: we are behind Saskatchewan. I think he mentions taxation or interprovincial migration, whatever, but there is this tone about we are behind even Saskatchewan. As a person who lived in Saskatchewan half his life, I kind of take exception to that.

You know, Saskatchewan is also the cradle of social democracy. In 1944 Tommy Douglas and the CCF were elected in Saskatchewan. It is the cradle of social democracy. It is the cradle of medicare. Maybe the members opposite should take a look at how positive Saskatchewan has been. I have been privileged to know some of those positive leaders like Tommy Douglas and Woodrow Lloyd and Allan Blakeney and Roy Romanow, and Lorne Calvert. In fact, I knew all of them.

I would like you to compare that to Mr. Grant Devine. Then perhaps you would have a little bit of sympathy or, perhaps, the Leader of the Opposition would have a little bit of sympathy for Calvert and for Romanow when they had to clean up this incredible mess left by the Tories in Saskatchewan, Tories, in fact, in Saskatchewan that do not even dare to use the name Tory. The Progressive Conservative Party does not even dare to use the label anymore. I mean, that is pretty scary. Now it is true that some of the Tories from Saskatchewan were thrown in jail for whatever they did wrong. I am sure there were also some very honest Tories in

Saskatchewan, but nonetheless they do not dare to risk the label "Progressive Conservative" in Saskatchewan anymore. We have the Saskatchewan Party.

That really kind of concerns me a fair bit because Tories seem to jump in phone booths and they emerge as something else. You know, sometimes they emerge as—[interjection] No, they do not come out as super Tories; they just come out as Saskatchewan Party or Reform Party or Alliance or in the past there was Social Credit or in B.C. it is the Liberals. In fact, I found it astounding that some of the members opposite used to talk about Stockwell Day and they were rooting for the Alliance. I thought they were Tories. I thought they were two different parties, but apparently not over there. You can shed your coat and you can become somebody different instantaneously. That worries me.

Anyway, I do not appreciate the connotation that somehow Saskatchewan was a yardstick that we should not be using. The province of Saskatchewan or the people of Saskatchewan and the former CCF and NDP governments of Saskatchewan, I think, have been beyond compare. They have done some wonderful things and in fact we are trying to measure up to that yardstick. So I am kind of disappointed, I guess, that the Leader of the Opposition would talk about Saskatchewan in those kinds of terms, as if being behind even Saskatchewan was some horrible kind of thing. Saskatchewan has been fairly progressive except for the horrendous Devine years. I guess if you cannot handle a name also, it kind of concerned me if you cannot stick with your name, how do you handle a vision, how do you handle an economy, what do you really stand for?

I reiterate again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this Budget is a good budget but whether it is a good government or a bad government is academic. As I said before, the people will decide. In my opinion this is a balanced budget, it is a fair budget, it makes sense fiscally. We have lowered taxes. We are paying off debt. We are aware of our pension liabilities, something that the other group never was aware of or ignored. I would ask the question: Why would Moody's Investors Service upgrade our credit rating if we were doing a bad job? I do not remember them

upgrading the credit rating for the Tories when, in 1992-1993, they saddled the province with an over three-quarter-billion-dollar deficit. I do not remember anything like that.

I think that this Government is responsive to the needs of all Manitobans, not just the elite. We have been responsive to the needs of all regions of the province, including northern Manitoba, not just Tory strongholds. I think that that is important. Northern Manitobans between 1988 and 1999 often felt like they were the neglected region of the province. They often felt that they were not even Manitobans. Yes, the hydro flowed south, the minerals and the wood and the taxes, but the province, Winnipeg particularly, particularly the Tory government, never really considered us on the same level as they considered southern Manitoba. They used to say, well, you are whining. No, we were not whining. When you were spending 4 percent, or a little bit more, of the highways budget in northern Manitoba, when it is two-thirds of the province, you know, we have some concerns.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will give you an example. When I first ran in 1995, the Tories promised to put in \$90 million in roads in northern Manitoba, basically because of the Repap, later Tolko expansion. The expansion took place but the road money never arrived. The fact that they used \$90 million was very interesting because I think that is what was needed to fix the roads in northern Manitoba, but we never did get the money however. They promised it. They never delivered. We have devoted at least 25 percent of the capital road budget, the highways budget, to northern Manitoba, at least 25 percent, and that was no accident. We said we were going to do that and we did it.

It was also no accident that in April of the year 2000, the northern MLAs met in The Pas, Raites Lake airport meeting, and we decided to start the Northern Development Strategy. We worked long and hard at it. It was a strategy to develop the North because we wanted a fair share of the services. We wanted to be real partners. We wanted to be part of Manitoba, and I can honestly say we have made quite some strides forward.

I will give you just a couple of examples. The very first thing that the Minister of Transportation, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), did was something as simple as the road map of Manitoba. We put all of Manitoba on it. Before that, under the Tories, we had a road map where northern Manitoba, a good chunk of it was missing. That always irked us. Why should a significant part of the province be absent? Some people argued, well, there is nobody up there. Well, yes, there are people living there, Dene people and Cree people. There are industrial communities and there are isolated communities. There are winter roads. Also, winter roads never appeared on the Tory map. We put it on. It might be symbolic, but for us it meant an awful lot.

* (16:00)

When we met that April in the year 2000, we identified five key areas that this Government would have to look at. The Northern Development Strategy would have to deal basically with those five areas: health; housing; transportation; education, employment and training; and, lastly, economic development. Those were our priority areas, those five priority areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did not re-invent the wheel however. We built on previous consultative processes. I will give you some examples. We used the report of the Northern Manitoba Economic Development Commission which was a \$1-million report commissioned by the Tories. I think it was finished in 1991, if I am not mistaken. That was a \$1-million report that was shelved, never used. It was an excellent report. We also used the AJI, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report, which was also shelved by the Tories. We also used the recommendations from the Northern Mayors and Chiefs conference, which was held in Thompson. Using that information, we made sure that we focussed on those five priority areas and that we would address the needs of northerners through those five priority areas.

The first one was health. Let me talk a little bit about that first area, that health area identified in the Northern Development Strategy. Since we have come into office in 1999, we have had many northern, well, I should not say many,

but several northern and rural areas connected to Telehealth communities. *[interjection]* Twenty-three of them, my honourable colleague says. Now, we do not have Telehealth in Snow Lake, but we would certainly like to expand it to some of those communities. You would not believe the number of letters that I get from Snow Lake and from Flin Flon where people say how wonderful it is to have the Telehealth facility, where a loved one is hurt or needs a heart transplant or whatever, and they come North and they cannot run back to Winnipeg for a check up every two weeks, but they can do it via Telehealth. It really makes a big difference for northerners. So that was a wonderful introduction of a new program.

We have done strategic hospital expansions and equipment purchases as well. We now have children's dental surgery in Thompson. We did not have that before. The Province purchased 80 new ambulances. Many of them went to rural and northern Manitoba. Snow Lake has an ambulance, for example, Cranberry Portage and many other places. Talking about Snow Lake, I was there the other day for a \$300,000 expansion to a personal care home.

Those are all positive initiatives for northern Manitoba. We know that the North, as well, is stricken with I guess you could say almost an epidemic of diabetes. There are a whole host of reasons for it. I will not go into that, but we do have to deal with dialysis on a daily basis in many communities. So I can note that this Government has introduced a dialysis unit in Norway House sometime ago and is working on one in the Garden Hill/St. Theresa Point region. We need them in other places as well. There is possibly a need for it in Pukatawagan, and we are seriously looking at that. So this Government has responded to the health concern that northerners had.

Housing was another priority area that we identified as northern MLAs, and I would like to point out to the members here that I was proud to be able to tour the model house in Thompson, a house built for the North, energy efficient, mould free, made for northern conditions. A hundred of those houses are planned in conjunction with the federal government. This is the

kind of housing we need in northern Manitoba, that we need on reserves.

The federal government is also involved in the affordable housing agreement with us. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$50 million will go into housing over the next five years, and 2500 new units will be built for low- and moderate-income families over the next five years. That is extremely important in the North because housing is an issue, particularly in remote and isolated communities, particularly on reserves.

We talked about transportation before. Transportation was a serious area of concern for us. I am happy to say that over the next five years the highways budget for this province, capital, will go from what it was to \$120 million a year, or \$600 million over five years, and we are well into that process, which translates for the North to roughly \$30 million or more for northern Manitoba.

We are spending three times as much on winter roads as the former government ever did. For South Indian Lake, under the Northern Flood Agreement, we spent well over \$13 million to build them a road. That road is ready to be opened right now. The road is complete. The ferry is in place.

The Tories talked about it in 1991, 1992, 1993. I know when I was Transportation critic, I asked the then-minister: When are you going to build that road? Every year it was the same answer. We are studying it. We are looking at it. We are doing engineering studies. Nothing. By 1999 they still had not built the road. There was a 10-year frame. We had to get that road built between '91 and the year 2001. The Tories did not do it. By 1999 they still had not started. We built that road. We said South Indian Lake deserves that road and we built that road.

We have upgraded airports. We have lengthened runways. There is much better lighting on airports right now. It was not there before. We built a new terminal in Lac Brochet and other places and winter roads. In conjunction with the federal government, we improved the winter road system in northern Manitoba that used to be a toll road system in northwest Manitoba, actually. So Tadoule Lake and Lac Brochet and

Brochet are connected by a winter road which runs mainly over land, not over ice as it did before. This will be a precursor over an all-weather road which, in the future, will be built.

But at least we made the step from ice to overland. That does not mean there are not lots of challenges. There are. There is climate change. Sometimes winter roads are almost impossible to construct before things start to melt. But I am sure that in the future there will be an all-weather road linking Lynn Lake, Brochet, Lac Brochet, Tadoule Lake, and probably further north eventually to Nunavut.

We need a road to Pukatawagan, because we are very seriously concerned about the future of the railroad, the Sherridon line to Lynn Lake. The people of Pukatawagan, 2000 of them, need reliable access. Right now there is only a winter road and sporadic, I guess I could call it, sporadic rail service. But we are seriously looking at those issues.

We are supporting the Port of Churchill and the Hudson Bay railway, as transportation is so critical to northern communities. This Government was involved in the Manitoba Transport Vision 2020. I am on the steering committee, along with my honourable colleague from Selkirk, and it is headed by my colleague from Transcona, who, by the way, also did a sterling job on the Graduated Driver Licence Task Force.

So we are seriously looking at how do we improve the transportation system in this province, and we are not just doing it in ivory towers. We have gone to 22 different communities. We keep consulting with the people before we do anything.

Another priority area from the Northern Development Strategy that we identified in April of 2000, the northern MLAs identified, was education, employment and training. We are spending \$10 million right now towards training for the new hydro developments that are coming up, that is, of the anticipated \$60 million that will go into training.

Northerners, as you know, find it difficult enough to pay for post-secondary education, particularly when they have to send their students,

their sons and daughters, south to Winnipeg or Brandon or elsewhere. So we are looking forward, are really looking forward, to a university of the North that will be created, a degree-granting university. I also note that public school funding has increased this year in this Budget by \$24 million, as we have increased funding every year since we have been elected in 1999.

Also, we identified economic development as a key area for the Northern Development Strategy. Now, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) likes asking rhetorical questions, and he asked one the other day. He said: When was the last time since 1969 that the Tories built a hydro dam? We all know the answer. They have not built a hydro dam. They managed to mothball a few of them, such as Limestone and Conawapa, but I think it shows where the Tories are at. They do not have any confidence in the North or they do not seem to believe that we can develop the economic potential of the North. Somehow they do not realize that clean hydro energy is to Manitoba what oil is to Alberta. We have to expand that, because that is our natural strength. It makes a lot of sense. Why they pussyfoot around it, I do not understand. It seems to me that hydro development is a no-brainer. Hydro development is a critical part of the economic development of this province and of northern Manitoba. That is why I am happy that we are going to develop Wuskwatim. Even though it is only 200 megawatts, it is still an important development. Kiask later on, or Gull, perhaps Notigi, certainly Conawapa, another hydro development that the Tories mothballed or that they did not want to proceed with.

* (16:10)

I cannot believe, sometimes when I hear people on the opposite benches whining about, well, you allegedly used or whatever Hydro dollars to fund government operations, health, education, social services. What is wrong with it? What is wrong with taking a dividend from profits that are derived from Hydro? They do it in other provinces. Certainly oil is used in Alberta. What is wrong with that? In talking about that, would they rather that we did not develop hydro or that we did not use Hydro money, that we would sell Hydro, as they sold MTS. Perhaps there lies the answer. Take a look.

The Tories sell MTS for what I think was a bargain-basement price. Then they use the money for whatever they need it for, but you cannot get MTS back. Now you have rate shock.

Take a look at what the NDP did. They did not sell Hydro; they developed Hydro. Not only that, the Tories claim we are going to raise hydro rates. We have not. They are frozen. Did the telephone rates increase? Oh, yes, they increased considerably. They increased from \$12.80 in Cranberry Portage prior to the selling of MTS to I think it was \$24.45, almost double. Certainly the MTS basic monthly rates have changed and increased, but have the Hydro rates increased? No. Not only that, they have gone down. We have equalized Hydro rates and, in fact, in northern and rural Manitoba, the rates have gone down to the tune of \$14 million.

The Tories should thank us. Basically we have gone and helped the rural Tory strongholds. We have said, look, you guys are going to pay less for your hydro, and we are very happy we can do that. But I do not hear them out there campaigning saying, you know, those darn NDPs, they reduced your hydro rates. Vote against them. I think you should be thanking us that we reduced their hydro rates. Why is that possible? Because we support strong public utilities and corporations. We do not go and sell them off in a quick spree and do the quick-fix thing. That is not our way of doing things.

The Tories believe that they are great fiscal managers, the same people that in '92-93 racked up an over three-quarter-billion dollar deficit, but are they really? I mean, they sell MTS. If you are going to sell it, which I do not think you should, but if you are going to sell it, sell it at a decent price. Do not sell it at a fire sale price. So they sell MTS low and they buy Centra Gas high. Why did they buy Centra Gas? I am not against that. Maybe in the long run that will make sense, a one-place energy shop, but it was kind of a questionable deal the way they proceeded with it. On the one hand, ideologically, they feel they have to sell Crown corporations, then quietly, behind the scenes, they buy one. It is never good economic strategy to buy high and sell low, which is what they are doing. Sell MTS low, buy Centra high. That makes no sense at all.

The New Democratic Party and this Government will develop Hydro because we know that Hydro will create jobs. We know that Hydro is central to our economic strategy. We cannot do anything with MTS. You guys sold it off. It is unfortunate, but that is the reality we have to live with.

I want to continue by saying that we feel that developing Hydro is optimistic, not just for northern Manitoba, where it is going to be a massive boost to the economy of some of the smaller communities, Nelson House, Cranberry Portage, Snow Lake and many other communities. There is an optimism. I think the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) made reference to it the other day. He could not understand why there is doom and gloom over there when obviously in northern Manitoba there is tremendous optimism.

Take a look, for example, at basically my home community of Flin Flon, although I live in Cranberry Portage and I commute. Flin Flon, the future of Flin Flon—the Triple Seven project gives Flin Flon a lease on life that is well into this 21st century. That is the longest lease on life that that community has ever had. I am very proud that that happened.

When you drive into Flin Flon, 10A, into town, it is a new road, courtesy of the Minister of Transportation who made that courageous decision a few years ago to pave that road which was on the books for years under the Tories. They did not do it; we did it. Now, when you drive into Flin Flon, you drive on a decent road.

When you look to the left, you see a shopping mall, a new shopping mall. That is ironic because that huge shopping mall which was not there before was an empty space that was, I think at one time, controlled by Peter Pocklington, a well-known Tory out of Alberta. Peter Pocklington was going to build a shopping mall there. He never did. It took the New Democratic party, it took the City of Flin Flon, it took the provincial Government, it took the federal government, working together, particularly with infrastructure money, to make this project a reality. People in Flin Flon now have a great shopping centre that is expanding and will continue to expand and Flin Flon will become a

service centre, a shopping centre. People from other areas will come there and we need that. We need that economic boost, but that was not there before.

In 1999, when you drove there, there was not a fixed road. There was not a good road, there was not a shopping centre. Now there is. Those are just some of the things that have happened since 1999. I am proud of Flintoba Mall because I know it will bring economic prosperity to Flin Flon.

There are challenges as well, though. I do not want to say that there are not some major challenges, particularly in northern Manitoba. Leaf Rapids, a mining town, basically faced hard times when the ore was no longer needed by Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting. The ore basically ran out so we had to support that town and we did. We did not desert the town; we supported it. We did the same thing to Lynn Lake. We will need to support the Hudson Bay Rail Line and the Port of Churchill if something difficult should happen in the near future. We are aware that.

We need to make sure that the line to Pukatawagan, the Sherridon line, and to Lynn Lake, if it does not stay intact, that we support the communities. We are concerned about those transportation links. They affect not only the people of Pukatawagan and Lynn Lake, but also affect the forest industry because a lot of wood is shipped through that Sherridon line. Those are some of the challenges that we face.

We have certainly faced challenges in housing in many areas. Water and sewage, in fact, was raised today in the House. With Granville Lake, we do have a problem with water and sewage in Granville Lake. We are trying to address it. We can use it for partisan political purposes to raise a few points on one side of the House or the other, but the reality is it is a problem and we have to work with it. We have got to deal with it and we are dealing with it.

We are going to leave, I think, the gloom and doom to the Tories over there. We will just keep marching on. We will just keep being positive because the people of Manitoba are positive. They seem to think we are doing the right thing.

We do not operate under the false assumption we have the divine right to rule. I think you have to earn the right to rule. I think the voters will make the decision. Whatever decision they make, we will have to accept it because they are right.

I think fundamentally when I hear the Opposition criticize us across the way here, it is a difference of visions. I heard some of my colleagues discuss that earlier. Our vision is an inclusive one. All parts of the province are involved, all people are involved. It is not a narrow vision. It is not strictly business only vision, although that is very important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to include all peoples, all regions, and I think we have done a good job of it. I think this is a Budget that the Minister of Finance should be congratulated for. It is balanced, makes a lot of sense. Manitobans like it. I support it and I heartily recommend that you do, too. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an honour to once again stand in this House. It is a privilege to be able to address the Chamber and put some comments on the record, reflect on the Budget that has been presented and the motion that is before us right now.

Before I get too far into my remarks on the Budget, I would like to take a moment and express my thank yous to those who have served over the years and have decided for one reason or another not to return. I would like to wish members across the way well: the Member for Inkster (Ms. Barrett), the Member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), the Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), the Member for Riel (Ms. Asper). They have served their constituents as best they could and have spent a lot of time as we do away from our families, have put a lot of effort into this.

* (16:20)

Every time one of our colleagues steps down, they should be commended for their service and their time. The Member for Riel (Ms. Asper) has already resigned her seat. I happen to be a friend of hers, and I think that she has done well in the years that she has been here. She has

been a moderating voice whenever you spoke with her. She always preferred the reasoned and balanced approach, and we certainly wish her well in her career that she has chosen. I believe it is in Brussels. It is an exciting opportunity, and certainly we wish her well in the years that she is going to put in there. I had the opportunity to travel with her and some of my other colleagues in the Chamber to Washington, D.C., and we had many meetings there. She was just an outstanding person and I have to say, I really got to know her well and of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you were there as well. We had a wonderful time and were able to put partisanship aside and just had a great time together. So we will certainly miss the Member for Riel and again, we wish her well in her new position that she has accepted in Brussels.

I would also like to wish the Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) well. He is one of the neighbouring constituencies to my seat. We worked very well together. He has served a long time in this Chamber, put a lot of effort into it. He felt that it was time to step back and spend more time with family, with his wife, his children and his grandchildren, and he needs to be commended for that.

The same goes for the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura). Certainly he has served. He also served in the Cabinet, served his community well, decided also that it was time to test out the retirement years, and we would like to thank him for his time here.

I would also like to congratulate the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gillehammer) for the many years that he has served. He began as a very stabilizing force in the Chamber. He is very well spoken. He served in the Cabinet of the 1990s and did a very good job in whatever portfolio was handed to him.

I would also like to wish my colleague the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner) well. He made the decision not to run one more time. Unfortunately, due to health concerns, he has decided that he will not be returning, and I certainly wish him well and that God may give him the health that he so deserves. We certainly wish him the best and our prayers are with him and his family. He got elected the same time I

did in 1999 and we sort of came in the rookies of '99 and it was a lot of fun being together. I had the opportunity of being in his home after a meeting. He is just the most generous and he always has been a very open individual, you could approach him at any time with an issue of concern. Certainly the contributions that he has made to Manitoba, whether it is the Variety Club or any number of organizations, he was always there, always willing to help and he has contributed a lot to the well-being of the province of Manitoba.

I save, of course, my last congratulations to the dean of the Legislature, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns). I have had the opportunity over the last two years to sit almost directly behind him. We have had many, many interesting conversations. He has often taken me into his office and shared his viewpoint in politics. Whether you agree or disagree with the honourable member, he always puts forward a well-thought-out, historical-based opinion and he has been, if anything, very colourful in this Chamber. He has added a lot. He certainly has, over the years, made a big difference. He has made a lot of changes in Manitoba. A lot of things can be directly attributed to the honourable member from Lakeside, and to think that this is now the end of an era. This is the last of the Roblin-era politicians in this Chamber. In fact, he will be, I believe, the last one of the Walter Weir era. In fact, I do not know if there are many even from the Ed Schreyer era left on the other side. I believe he might be the last one even from the Ed Schreyer era, and he might be one of the last ones even from Sterling Lyon era of politics. There is one other one left after that, right? Yes.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly, with the honourable member from Lakeside leaving, a lot changes in this Chamber; we lose a lot of that historical perspective. He is to be congratulated. He has earned his stripes. He has earned his right to retirement, and we certainly wish him all the best, and all the others—whether they have served since 1999 on down—we certainly wish all of them the best and appreciate the years and the time they have put in here in this Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to now take some and put some thoughts, some

reflections on record in regard to the Budget that was presented. I sat and listened to the speech that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) gave, and the first thing that struck me consistently throughout the Budget is the question: Where is hope? The entire Budget left one with a sense of hopelessness. The other question that kept coming to my mind is: Where is the vision for youth? It is something that it lacked terribly, and overriding, where is the vision for Manitoba?

I have had the opportunity to befriend many immigrants who have come via Russia, through Europe, and have now settled here in Manitoba. They have an interesting saying, and it goes: No money, no problem; no hope, big problem. I think one of the things that lacked about this Budget is that it did not give hope, certainly not a vision for youth, and no hope of a vision for Manitoba.

One of the areas that was addressed in the Budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, I believe, is addressed in the amendment that is before us, is the entire amalgamation issue. I know why the Doer government came up with the amalgamation concept, because the Premier wanted to present himself as a Duff Roblin premier. Like Duff Roblin, he was going to change education, and follow in the footsteps of Duff Roblin. He was warned about the pitfalls of amalgamation, that it was not the same as the era of Duff Roblin, where you had the one-room schoolhouse, and you had a board of trustees running the one schoolhouse. It is much different today than it was then. They took out multiple school divisions, just an unbelievable amount of school divisions, and amalgamated them. There was a process that they had gone through. The Government thought that they were going to be cute by half. They were going to take a report, not follow it but say they based it on that report, without consultation. My honourable colleague who just spoke before me talked about: On everything, on everything we did, we spoke to the people. Clearly not, because on amalgamation, if they spoke to anybody they certainly did not listen, and to have suggested that they spoke to them is hardly the case.

We warned in this House that the Norrie report, which had been presented to the previous government, was seen to be problematic in that

at no point in time did it ever realize any savings. There would be no savings, No. 1, and, No. 2, it would, in fact, create hardship. The problem with what happened was that this Government did not even choose to follow the Norrie report; they just choose to use it as a basis and then do whatever they wanted to.

In the case of my constituency, where Transcona-Springfield was split up, Transcona was added on to River East School Division, and of course, East St. Paul being part of River East School Division. Springfield was then added into Agassiz, and Sunrise School Division was created.

We warned the Government. We warned the members across the way. We warned the minister. We warned over and over and over again that there were clear problems and the first area that was going to be very problematic for the school divisions was going to be the harmonization of wages. We pointed that out, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, now the Government is in the whole harmonization of wages mess. For political reasons, pure crass, brass-knuckle political reasons, they walked in and forced a settlement in the Sunrise School Division to the cost of the taxpayer, so far as far as we know of \$85,000. I guess if it was just about money, it would not be as bad as the fact that it is fewer services.

* (16:30)

The punishment to the students, to the teachers, to the staff and to the voters, to the parents of the school divisions, that has got to be the worst thing. Now you have parents with children who are almost within a stone's throw away from a high school in Transcona living in Springfield, once the grandfathering runs out, will be forced to bus their children up to an hour, hour and a half away when the school is almost right on their doorstep.

It was these kinds of details that we laid out in front of the minister and then there was this arrogant glib, oh, the devil is in the details. The only thing we have left now is the devil. We have nothing but bad, and parents are so angry at this Government. The people of Springfield are so angry at the Doer government for what they have done. They feel so betrayed by this Government.

Unfortunately, what has happened is that in the end who pays for a politician's mess is the taxpayer. In the case of Springfield, tax is up by 9.07 percent. In fact, that is not even an accurate number based on normal counting. Springfield has actually been kind to the Government. What they have done is rather than basing it on a house of \$100,000, which is what is normally done in the city, they are basing it on a house, because of inflation, worth approximately, I think it is \$107,000. So actually, the increase is far greater than 9.07 percent, and that is only this year because they are not even factoring in all the hamonization. We know full well, after this next election, then the full cost of hamonizing of wages is going to come into effect.

Who bears the brunt of the Doer government's desire to be the next Duff Roblin of education? Who bears the brunt of this ill-fated plan, of this pipe dream that the Premier (Mr. Doer) concocted to be this education Premier? Who pays the price? It is the local ratepayer. Transcona, 13.67% tax increase. That is brutal, brutal for a family to have to shoulder. That is so tough.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have three little children at home and I know the expense of raising them and the demands on the treasury and our personal finances; 13.67% tax increase is brutal. We warned the Government about this, and you know what? The other shoe is yet to drop because we have not seen the end yet. What is so terribly offensive, what is so terribly hurtful is two days ago, the last day in fact, the Premier and his entire Cabinet and caucus cheered wildly about the tax increases, laughing, making fun about it, the fact that the people of Springfield and anybody else, Transcona included, have to pay these horrendous tax increases.

The people of Springfield have not had the chance to speak yet, and they will. I can tell you that this will not go unnoticed. They are paying more for far less. That is what they have gotten. If you have noticed in the last three, four, five weeks, any mention of \$10 million in savings, at least they stopped that insult. At least they have stopped insulting Manitobans with that kind of nonsense.

I feel very badly for the school boards of our province, because basically they are caught be-

tween an uncaring Government and rising costs. My colleagues, some of them share the same school division, River East-Transcona. I am sure they have spoken to the board.

Natural gas increases have hit the school boards fiercely; the kinds of demands that are being put on school buildings; the upgrade of Transcona. I am sure the honourable Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) is quite in favour of the million-dollar expenditure and upgrading of computers in his constituency, which the River East-Transcona School Board is doing in his schools. That is only right. When I was on that board, we made sure that there was a standard, and that standard should be raised to that point. But they are getting caught between a government that is cutting funding to them on the one side, rising costs on the other, and they are still expected to do all these good things with no relief from this Government. That is where you end up with a 13.67% increase for those poor people. I feel so badly for those poor people in Transcona. I feel so badly for those poor people in Springfield who have to have a 9.07% increase, who are struggling, who want to feed their families, who maybe would like to have a little a bit of extra cash to go on a little holiday this summer instead of being hit with these kinds of increases. You cannot do it all. Your personal account cannot take it all. I know what that is all about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the entire education system is in chaos because of what this Government has done. That is what has been wrought upon our system. I would actually go so far as to say that is what radical socialism has brought our education system. It is very, very unfortunate. It is very unfortunate that we have seen a strong, healthy, good education system that was built up over the nineties destroyed in a very short time with the Gary Doer government, in a very short period of time brought to its knees and chaos raised throughout the school system.

The economy, I would like to move on. I know time is short. I would like to refer to an article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* which talks about the kind of job losses we have seen in this province. Again, it was surprising that this Premier, the Doer government Cabinet, the caucus cheered the fact that a hundred jobs were

created in this province in one year, a hundred. It is noted in here that nearly 450 000 new jobs in the same period were created in Canada; Prince Edward Island 800 jobs; Nova Scotia 9000 jobs; Saskatchewan 12 000. What do we have? A government that created 100 jobs. That is most unfortunate.

There is also the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, 1999-2000, 113 Manitobans left; in 2000, 3006 people left; by 2001 it had doubled from '99 to 5000; in 2002, 4360 had left. That is an average of 12 people a day, yet somehow the brain trust of the Doer government cannot seem to figure out that there is a correlation between job loss, people fleeing the province and the high taxes we pay. Instead, they go and they tinker with the education system and ensure that property taxes go way out of sync, way out of proportion to anything we have seen historically, what we have seen in some of the areas in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and instead, that is what we get.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have pointed out to the Government on numerous occasions that taxes are too high and they keep going up with this Government because of bracket creep. Because other jurisdictions have improved what they are doing, we actually fall further and further behind. Instead we see a government that has realized over a billion dollars in extra money. I think it is just incredible. Gary Filmon ran on a campaign that there would be an extra billion dollars in four years. You know what? He was wrong. It was in three and a half years, the extra billion dollars.

* (16:40)

What has the Government done with that extra billion dollars? They are so, so hungry for money. They keep going into Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$288 million cleaned out of Manitoba Hydro. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund cleaned out more money. They tried MPI and they have not succeeded. Heaven forbid they get re-elected a second term. I know that is doubtful. People will come to reason and they will not be re-elected. The Workers Compensation Board will be the next one that they will take a run at. Mark my words, they will make sure that they clean it out.

An article in the *Free Press*, Gerald Flood mentioned a few things, and I would like to just quote from him. He mentions the amount of graduates in the nursing school that we are not retaining here and then he moves on. He talks about the kind of money that seems to be squandered throughout the province. He ends off by saying: "So, in one week, the province has demonstrated that it has failed on three major policy initiatives that comprise the core of its existence. Should an election be called Friday and should the Government win re-election, it will demonstrate the power of flagrant spending over the power of good policy to influence voters." That, I think, comes down to the crux of what we are seeing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some of my colleagues here on the NDP side said, well, what would you cut? Mr. Deputy Speaker, so far, the money is there, and all that we have had from this Government is announcements. They have run around and they have announced things three times and four times. There is no need to actually have to cut anything. In fact, at the rate they are going, they are not spending a billion extra dollars; they are going to have spent \$3 billion and \$4 billion.

The question that we have to ask the NDP government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is: When all is said and done, what are you going to cut to even be able to do a quarter of what you have promised? They are spending \$4 for every \$1 that is there. That is what they have to account for. This is the hundred million dollar a day government. You open up every newspaper and it is another hundred million dollars. It is unsustainable. It is radical socialism gone completely awry.

You know what? The only growth we are seeing right now is government spending. I warn this Government, they are going to bring us to where Howard Pawley brought us back to the Dark Ages. That is exactly where this party is taking Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the finances of this Province were in excellent shape in 1999. Now we have spending increases by \$358 million just in the 2003 Budget. Since the 1999 Budget, spending has increased by \$1.27 billion. In the 2003 Budget there is \$11 of new spending for

every \$1 of new tax relief. Then they wonder why we are actually seeing our job market contracting, and people leaving the province. They cannot figure that out. They cannot figure out that there is a correlation between high taxes and people actually leaving.

The rainy day fund has gone from \$285 million when the NDP took office to \$145 million at the end of 2003. The NDP are also projecting a further \$39-million drop in this next year. It goes on and on, and it is very unfortunate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They have gotten themselves into this radical socialism. They cannot see their way through it, and, unfortunately, as I said, heaven forbid, —and I know it will not happen—that they get re-elected, this province would go into a spiral like we have not seen since the Pawley years. *[interjection]*

My time is running out. Health care—end hallway medicine, six months and \$15 million. Shall we talk about that insult? Unfortunately, Agriculture, the minister completely abandoned the farmers. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 3300 family farms gone, bankruptcies up. Will they live up to the Agricultural Policy Framework? No, no, no. She is not interested in that. Her urban colleagues have her so hoodwinked, she has not a clue what she is doing to farming. The whole farming industry in this province is going to be brought to its knees, it is going to be bankrupted while this minister is being whispered all kinds of sweet things about how good she is doing by her urban colleagues. She has no understanding of agriculture.

Rural development, it is not even existent in this Government. Shame on them. Conservation? What a joke. There is all kinds of raw sewage floating all over the place, we heard in Question Period, and the minister has not got a clue what is going on.

Justice, photo radar, you want to talk about a government that is so hungry and lustful for money? Now they have got a \$15 surcharge on every red light camera, every ticket that anybody gets. It is a shame what we have done already with that. That was supposed to be for construction zones and for school zones, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now, they have gone so far, they have a red light camera, and two blocks later a van to

snap the pictures of anybody who might speed up a little bit. This is all in the lust for more money, and that \$15 surcharge, heaven forbid they get back in again, will equal the ticket in time.

Immigration, they have got it wrong. We are just becoming a stop-off point for immigrants. They are not making it a priority to keep immigrants here. The list goes on and on. This is not a Budget that is good for Manitoba. It lacks any hope, it lacks any vision for youth, it lacks any vision for Manitoba, and it furthers the kind of punishment politics we have seen in the last three years. I tell you, the people of Manitoba will see their way through, not just seeing this Budget defeated, but this Government defeated. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak briefly on this Budget. It is a good budget. It is a fair budget. It is one that I think will have an impact on all parts of the province, and it is one that is representative of viewpoints right across the province, and I am very proud to support it.

But first, before I begin, I wanted to take this opportunity to express my thanks to all the staff of this building and of your office. Many people work in this building whose contributions, certainly, do not go unnoticed by those of us who are here, but perhaps we do not have the opportunity always to express it. I did notice that the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), in his speech, spoke about the welcome that is given to every member as they come into the Legislature and to all our visitors as well, by the security staff. It is a very open building and the security staff go to, I think, a great deal of pain to ensure that people are welcomed into this building, but at the same time that we have a sense of security. The Member for Lakeside, retiring at this time, certainly had a long experience of working with staff in this building.

* (16:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am always impressed, and I have said before, about the way in which the building is kept. Come in at any hour of the day, and there is somebody with brass

polish, there is somebody cleaning the floors. There is a tremendous pride in this building, not just by members of the Legislature, and not just by members of the public, but by the people who work here as well. I want to thank them for all of the work they do. The business of the House could not go on without the many people who work, often unacknowledged, at the table of the Legislature, the pages who have served us over many years, as well as the translation and Hansard people who are perhaps much less visible, in general terms. So all of those, I think, are important. They are not just the staff of the building, but they are part of an institution which has a very long history.

Just as Manitobans built this building with a great deal of pride, looking to the North, looking to the future and expressing the sense of a young and relatively small province at that point, on the cusp of expansion, on the cusp of growth, they built a building that they wanted generations of Manitobans to be proud of, and so they are. But we are also shaped by this building. We are shaped by the institutions and the building that we create, whether it is the Speaker's chair itself and all that that represents in terms of continuity with traditions from the 17th century, or whether it is in the wonderful and beautiful, and perhaps tragic, mural of Frank Brangwyn that is in the entrance to this building, and that reminds us of the tremendous toil that wars have taken in our history, not necessarily on our own soil, but of which we have all been a part.

So, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to express my appreciation for the years that I have been in this Legislature, and for the work that everyone has done to make that an interesting experience. I cannot say that I have always enjoyed it. I remember some very bitter debates in this House. I remember some very poisonous exchanges not befitting this House, and certainly not contributing to the grandeur that perhaps all of us would hope for in it.

I notice that the member from Minnedosa spoke, in his speech, about the civil servants. He spoke about the people in the Treasury Board and the staff of Treasury Board, and I welcome that. I have had a similar experience, I think, to the member from Minnedosa, in Treasury Board, not, obviously, as Minister of Finance.

Selinger). But, certainly, I have had the opportunity to work with people in Treasury Board and to understand the great continuity that is there, of experience and of consideration for the future of the province, and also, I think, to admire, along with the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), the kind of experience and skill that all of those staff bring to that. I think that was representative of the civil service in general. We have, all of us, had an opportunity to work with many kinds of civil servants in different parts of this building and in government, and to recognize their role, those who traditionally speak truth to power. I hope that all governments in this province maintain that sense of a neutral and an impartial civil service, that we value that in the extreme. That ability for civil servants to speak truth to power is one that we should treasure and welcome.

In particular, I want to thank the deputy ministers that I have worked with, Winston Hodgins and Marie Elliott. Both of them have made my job possible, and, although sometimes I have liked to tease both of them, and other deputy ministers, with Sir Humphrey stories and Sir Humphrey quotes, nevertheless my appreciation is deeply felt, and I know that none of us could do our job without them.

In fact, I remember very early on in being a minister and watching a group of deputy ministers together and being very impressed by the skill of all of them, the level of their expertise and the way in which they were, each of them, holding their ground in this exchange. It was quite a heated exchange, but it was all done in extremely polite tones. I remember saying to my deputy minister at the time—it was Winston Hodgins—is this as tough as it gets with deputy ministers' debates? And he said, oh, this is blood on the floor for deputy ministers. This was very fierce. From my perspective, it was a very civil exchange but one where everyone was firmly holding their ground.

So I want to express my appreciation to deputy ministers and assistant deputies throughout the civil service and to wish them well as they continue to speak truth to power.

I also have the opportunity to say farewell to a number of people. In particular, I want to begin

with the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner), not somebody I know well but I know who is facing some health issues, and I think everyone on this side has him in our thoughts and his family as well.

The Legislature is losing as well his colleague, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), the Member for Minnedosa and the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), who I will always remember during the flood of '97 and I have said to many people privately I think that the previous government was very fortunate to have the Member for Morris as the minister during the flood. It was a very difficult time. I am sure it is something that he will always remember. I think the government was very fortunate to have the Member for Morris at that point. The Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) as well, after a long service, longer than mine, is also departing, and I know he is looking forward to spending time with children and grandchildren.

On our own side, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett), the members for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) and Riel (Ms. Asper) are also departing, and I will have other opportunities and perhaps some more personal opportunities to speak about them. But I will be particularly mindful and I think obviously all of my life I am going to remember that class of '90 on our side that came in with us. There is a group of us who are still left and some who will still continue. That was a group of people who came in to make that caucus up to 20, and boy, did we work hard. I think I work hard as a minister, but I know that I worked hard in opposition. We shared opposition for nine years and how hard we worked. We travelled, we caucused, we met with people, we had caucus deputations and delegations. We travelled, we listened, we respected. When all of that was over, then we went canvassing. And we did not canvass just in our own areas, we canvassed wherever we were needed and wherever we were requested.

We spent a great deal of time away from our families and we were led by the now-Premier (Mr. Doer), who was tireless in that. And whenever I felt that I had done enough for the day or the week or the month, I knew that the now-Premier, tirelessly, would be out there and urging us on to others. He built a team. He built a

caucus. He has now built a Cabinet and a government, and his energy and his commitment to work hard on behalf of all Manitobans is, I think, to be commented on. He melded us into a team, taught us. Very few of us had any experience in the Legislature. He had been a minister; all of us had a great deal to learn. So I want to pay my respects to him and to recognize what he did in those years.

But I also want to recognize what we did in those years, because democracy and Manitoba are served by a good and strong opposition. It is served by an opposition that works hard. It is served by an opposition that does good research, that knows when it raises a question in the Legislature that it has all the facts and the truth at its disposal, that it can back up where it stands. I am making an abstract argument here about the importance of Her Majesty's loyal Opposition and there seems to be a little anxiety on the other side as to where this direction is going.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I am saying is a loyal and strong opposition has been and always will be very important to democracy in this province. I am struck by how often in government I have used that experience in opposition. An issue will come up, a particular location, a place, a family, an issue, and I would say there is not a day that passes that I have not been able to say: Oh, yes, I remember, three years ago or two years ago. I was there. I did a tour. In fact, you know, we were so long in opposition that I actually did several tours as I did begin to see places more than once and from different perspectives as I moved from various critic positions to the last five years being Education critic. So it is important and time in opposition, I think, can be well spent and we should recognize that a strong opposition, well researched, is important to all of us.

* (17:00)

I want to turn, as I should, to the debate on the Budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to briefly touch on a number of issues here, one of which the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) has just raised. I think he is echoing the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) when he says that there is nothing for rural Manitoba here. In fact, there is no discussion of rural Manitoba.

In fact, the Member for Russell says there is not a REDI program. If you look at the Budget lines for REDI, he says there is no REDI program. I ask the members to read their Budget. Well, frankly, I ask the Member for Russell to read his Budget. Has he got the pages missing that talk about REDI, that indicate the \$19 million that is there for REDI? What did he miss? He knows that Intergovernmental Affairs deals with REDI. Well, it is right in the Budget. It is that old oxymoron: Tory research. It is about people who should be able to read to the end of the page, to read to the end of the section and to look for what is there.

An Honourable Member: End on the high road.

Ms. Friesen: Well, I would love to end on a high road, but, unfortunately, I have to talk about what he said about Grow Bonds as well, and he did say we have only done one Grow Bond. Well, we have done five Grow Bonds in three and a half years, and I have talked about those in this Legislature. I have talked about those when we have done Estimates. So I am not sure why the member has not been able to absorb that. I do welcome the opportunity to speak after him in fact and to correct that because it is certainly in the Budget and I am sure as we move on to Estimates that we will have the opportunity to talk about that.

I know that members opposite have written a number of letters to rural papers about how there is no department of rural development, whereas, in fact, I have said many times in this Legislature that the budget is there, that the staff are still there, that the offices are still there in rural Manitoba in exactly the same places. Mostly the same staff. A few have moved on to other opportunities in other places, but for the most part those kinds of concerns that they have established about rural development are really quite false.

I was actually quite cheered by one of the rural newspapers this week who said that the Tories simply were not getting that issue off the ground. They had raised it and people were not paying a great deal of attention to it because it does not conform with the facts. It does not conform with people's experience. Rural Economic

Development is there. The Grow Bonds are there. The REA program is there. The REDI infrastructure program is there. We have added opportunities within it for tourism and besides that we have done a great deal more in rural development as well.

I wanted to ensure the members are aware of the kinds of things that we have been saying in rural development. I know that they do not care to repeat them, and I know this is difficult for them, but I think one of the difficulties for them has been that rural development was seen by the previous government only in terms of sort of the large-scale mega-projects, if I can put it that way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have certainly continued with Maple Leaf. There will be an expansion as everybody knows. We have certainly provided and worked well with, provided assistance to Simplot, and I do not know how anybody can drive that Trans-Canada Highway and tell me that there is no rural economic development in Manitoba because it is growing apace, whether it is in irrigation matters, whether it is in potato and vegetable growth, whether it is in the various other projects that we have, and supported, and growing, in Portage la Prairie. I know the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) always welcomes those kinds of opportunities to speak. I know that he recognizes, particularly in Portage, that there has been support for rural development and for those larger projects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, McKenzie Seeds, Alcan, Alchem in Virden, as well as the kind of support that we have been able to engender right across rural Manitoba by the equalization of hydro rates. The use of a community resource, of a public resource, for the benefit of all Manitobans, not just in the city, but across rural and northern Manitoba as well. So, even if we take the Tory definition of rural economic development, the mega project, the large-scale projects, we have been supporting them; we have been growing them. I think people generally recognize that right across rural Manitoba.

We have, indeed, been strengthening agriculture. We have been expanding diversification opportunities. We have been investing in rural

jobs. We have been supporting industry in rural Manitoba. We have been improving crop insurance. We have been looking at the issues that are raised so often, particularly, with young people of the transfer of farms, the new generation program, and my colleague the Minister for Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) will have the opportunity later to speak much more extensively on this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to make the point, as we look at rural economic development, that, yes, there are mega projects. We are proud of those. We are proud to grow those and to support them. Yes, agriculture, right at the fundamental, the diversification of agriculture, agriculture and the agricultural sectors, has been seriously affected by the kinds of changes in the global economy, coupled with the very dramatic and rapid changes that the federal government brought in with the reduction of support for transport, and for the grain economy. They have had to make some very rapid adjustments. It has been very difficult in rural Manitoba. The effects of globalization have been, I think, felt there much more dramatically and much more quickly than it has in the city of Winnipeg. I recognize the issues, and I think the Minister of Agriculture will have the opportunity to speak to many of those.

As we look at the new economy in rural Manitoba, it is not just mega projects; it is not just diversification, but it is, as well, tourism. We are seeing, I think, some interesting developments in tourism, whether it is in support for the Narcisse snake dens in the Interlake, whether it is the Watchable Wildlife initiative, whether it is the expansion of campgrounds and cottages, or whether it is in the expansion of provincial parks that we have heard about very recently. All of these contribute to growing diversification in rural Manitoba.

In addition, we are looking to the future in two areas; one of these is in ethanol. I think members opposite, the very same ones who will say, on the one hand that there is no rural economic development, will then speak, on the other hand, I believe, in support of the ethanol initiative of the Government. Something which is very well received, not just by those people who are, I think, supporting us in our support for the Kyoto initiative, but also by those people in rural

Manitoba who see that there is a genuine, and, I think, a very quick opportunity for them here to increase their efforts at diversification.

In research, again, we do not put this into a silo. Research: The support for nutraceuticals, the support for agricultural research, the cooperation with federal agencies, in the growing of research opportunities at the very grass-roots level as well as in the laboratory, these are all part of what are necessary, and what we are growing in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, looking to the future, the improvement of communications, the rolling out of broad-band, I think, is very significant. As well, what we look at in rural Manitoba is the same kinds of opportunities that we want for people elsewhere. People are looking for jobs. They are looking for healthy communities. They are looking for the kind of communal supports, whether it is for young people, or whether it is in the emergency medical services, or the opportunity to have physicians and nurses, and the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has spoken a number of times, just recently in Question Period, upon the maintenance of, in fact, the expansion of rural ambulance services—70 ambulances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how can people say there is no rural economic development, when we are talking about the growth of ambulance services, the provision of services and diagnostic services in Brandon General Hospital, the expansion of surgical operations in Ste. Anne and Steinbach, the expansion of diagnostic services in northern Manitoba, the provision of nurses and the provision, as my colleague the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) spoke of, in Snow Lake, the expansion there of longer-term care. Building that health infrastructure, ensuring that we have healthy communities where people can have the same opportunities, equalizing those opportunities across Manitoba is one of the ways in which we approach economic development.

Education: If there is one area where Manitobans have a clear choice in the future, it is in education. This is a government which put education at the heart of its endeavours. We do that in rural Manitoba as well as in the city of Winnipeg.

* (17:10)

The expansion of agricultural programs at Assiniboine Community College. The expansion, overall, of our college initiative. On the other side, they were prepared to have growing waiting lists at every community college. They were prepared, and they did preside over 169% increases in university fees. This Government has reduced those fees and maintained that through three budgets. We have growing enrolments at universities and we have an investment, not just in the rural and agricultural research infrastructure at the university, although we have done that, but also in places for students. We have growing enrolments and a growing hope for people through education. That applies both to rural Manitoba as well as to the city of Winnipeg.

Brandon University, for example, the Rural Development Institute. Originally, support began from the other side of this House when they were in government. I recognize that. That was a very good idea and we have continued that. We have continued to grow Brandon University. If you drive past Brandon University, you will see the expansion in the health facilities there and the expansion of health programs at Brandon University.

I want people in this House, as I have spoken across rural Manitoba as well, and, again, at a very successful rural forum that we held on the weekend, to think of rural policy, not just in the very narrow sense in which it was previously defined, but to think of it as maintaining a way of life and ensuring that rural Manitobans have the same kinds of opportunities for jobs, to retain their young people, to have access to broadband and to have access to increasing diversification opportunities. All of those we will find in Manitoba's rural policy, and we will find it in the kinds of programs that are supported in this Budget.

Underneath all of this is soil and water conservation. Again, rather than thinking of soil and water conservation and drainage as something separate, something you deal with in another department, it is fundamental to the kind of tourism that we can maintain. It is fundamental to the kinds of programs that agriculture can diversify. It is fundamental to the way in which rural Manitobans can see their future.

The Drinking Water Strategy. Clean water. We have a choice between a government which reduced support for drinking water tests. The previous government did that. We have a choice between a government which did very little with conservation districts, they did not take them away, but I do not think there was very much support for conservation districts in the previous government. We have seen the growth of conservation districts by 16. We have been growing them at the rate of two and three a year since we have been in Government, and that, the local people making local decisions about local resources, is something which is crucial to the development and growth of the province as a whole. I am a very strong supporter of conservation districts, and I look forward to seeing that movement grow. We have supported it to grow very rapidly in just over three years.

We are taking action on climate change. Again, looking to the long-term and the fundamental issues that we are all facing, as well as the livestock stewardship initiative and the very strong support that we have from rural Manitoba for the changes and the maintenance of local decision making that we are maintaining through that initiative.

I have, perhaps, gone on longer on rural issues than I should have done because I wanted also to talk about urban issues. Of course this is a—[interruption] How much longer do I have? Five minutes? Okay.

When we came to Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I want people to cast their minds back three and a half, nearly four years ago—we were faced with headlines everyday in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and *The Sun* about arson. We had, by some counts, close to 1000 boarded-up houses in the city of Winnipeg. We were being portrayed in the national media as the arson capital of Canada. I do not want to pretend that all is well in the inner city. There is a great deal yet to be done, but we have made that beginning.

With the assistance and the energy that we have found in inner-city neighbourhoods in Winnipeg, we have begun to rebuild that, as well as to make contributions through Neighbourhoods Alive! to both Thompson and Brandon. It is a rebuilding that is beginning at the grass roots.

We have neighbourhood development corporations and a wide range of very innovative projects that are involving people at the local level in a very practical way in so many areas, whether it is in culture, whether it is in community patrols, whether it is in community gardening, whether it is in lighting up their neighbourhoods.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is so much that is going on in those inner-city neighbourhoods that is making a difference about how people feel about the future, to their commitment to that neighbourhood, as well as to, I think, a changing image of the city of Winnipeg. That is important for all of us, and I always say that in rural Manitoba as well, and it is. One of my deputy ministers said, that is a very courageous thing to say, but it is important to build those bridges across the Perimeter, to say, in rural Manitoba, that the city of Winnipeg and economic health of the downtown and the inner-city neighbourhoods is crucial to how this province is going to be portrayed and to the kind of investment that it is going to attract.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is equally important to say, in Winnipeg, as I do when I speak to Winnipeg audiences, remember where your food came from; go through the plate that is put before you at this dinner and recognize the contribution of the farmers of this province and the contribution of all of that supply chain that gets that food to your plate, and remember the importance of rural Manitoba to the growth of this province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud to support this Budget. It is a social democratic budget, and I am proud to support it for that.

I went through the eighties and nineties and I sat in this House and listened to some of the members, who have now gone, who talked about government getting out of the way, but let me tell you what government getting out of the way meant. It meant that they dropped the support for clean drinking water, that they dropped the support for ACCESS students. There were no bursaries anymore for rural students or urban students. They commercialized and privatized in the school system. Remember one of the first things that the Minister of Education did, and

that was YTN? That is what getting government out of the way meant. They cut the drainage Budget and they sold the telephone system, the biggest transfer of public resources into private hands that we have seen since the treaties.

So I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that government is us, that government matters. It is interesting that we are coming back to what was essentially a mid-19th century—I am not getting into history; I will stop—but we saw a decade of radical neo-liberalism from the other side of the House. I think government matters; it matters especially to those who are disadvantaged; it matters especially to those who have less of a voice, who start from a different point in life than many of us do in this House, and that is why this is a social democratic budget. It is fair, it is balanced, and I am proud to support it.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): I have had the honour of getting up to speak after a lot of different members from time to time. Usually, it is someone that is fairly profound in the Government, this time getting up after the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), someone whom I have got to know over the years. I will start off my little preamble by saying that we are going to be missing a lot of members this time. We are going to be missing some people, as was mentioned by the Member for Wolseley, that came in, in the same class, if you want to call it. I came into the Legislature at the same time as the Member for Wolseley, at the same time as the Member for Inkster (Ms. Barrett) and the Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli). We were all of the same class coming in here.

* (17:20)

I came in on that side, they came in on this side. That is the only difference in a sense. Now they are going out on that side, and I am still here on this side. But the thing is, things will change whenever the writ is dropped, whenever the Premier (Mr. Doer) decides that he wants to go to the people. As always, there is that seesaw. Things may change again and some of the class of '90 will be back on this side again. But that is just something that is the nature of the game that we are in, if you want to call it.

I would like to say to the members that are leaving, I would like to say a specific note to the

Member for Wolseley. I have got to know her over the years. She was a critic actually of mine when I was the Minister of Urban Affairs. I got into some small debates at times in regard to the direction that she has figured we should be going and what she figured that was the right way to go. She is a formidable member, and she will be missed by the House for her background, her wisdom and her input into debate and now with decision making as a member around Executive Council.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The Member for Inkster is another member, the Minister of Labour and multiculturalism, Ms. Becky Barrett, leaving also. Also a class of 1990 when we came in here together, and the one thing that she and I share a lot of is events. We went to an awful lot of events together. We would be sitting at the same table or we would be sitting at the same function. It just seemed that if she was there, I was there, and vice versa. We went to a lot of different events, and so I got to know her quite well. I remember some of the anguish she was going through a couple of years ago when we were trying to get out of here and her daughter was having a baby. She was quite antsy trying to get out of here.

The Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) and I, actually, part of the constituency that I lost she took over in the last election. She and I actually worked together, and I have to give credit to the Member for Radisson. She works very, very hard for her constituency. She worked an awful lot with events when I was Minister of Housing. She kept me informed of a lot of things and I know she worked very hard for the Triplex Association in Transcona, and I tried to help as much as I could as minister. Her main concern was trying to help the people.

We shared a community centre together. The constituency of Radisson and the constituency of Southdale overlap to an extent of one community centre in that particular area, which is the Winakwa Community Centre, a very, very active, very large community centre. She and I worked a lot together in functions, events and in trying to help in some small way in some of the fundings that were available to her constituency and through my constituency. She worked very,

very hard with that community centre and again, we used to cross paths with a lot of events in regard to what was happening.

The Member for St. Vital who has left us, has gone on, I understand, to a different career—

Some Honourable Members: Riel.

Mr. Reimer: Oh, pardon me. Riel.

An Honourable Member: The other side.

Mr. Reimer: Yes, the other side, the Member for Riel, Ms. Linda Asper. In fact, I got to know Linda before she was even in this House. When I first ran for the Legislature in 1990, she was the lady that ran against me in my riding, at that time called Niakwa. She was the Liberal candidate at that time. We sort of got together back here, but she was under a different stripe. I was still under the Conservative banner.

Linda was a formidable foe, a very knowledgeable lady, very well respected in the community because she was involved with one of the first programs in Canada with regard to the French immersion program at Collège Bêliveau. She was the principal at that time, and she worked very, very hard to bring that program into being. It is recognized as one of the best in Canada, and it is still highlighted a lot, as a school that is very, very well accomplished. When I go in there, the parents in my constituency all recognize that the program that has evolved out of Collège Bêliveau is one of the best—I will say one of the best in Manitoba, not only because it is in part of my constituency, but I think the evidence is in the number of students that have come out of there that have gone on to bigger and better things.

On our side of the House here, some of our members are leaving. The Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) has decided that he is going to go on to other things. He was the former Minister of Government Services and went through a very, very trying time, if you want to call it, when we had the flood of 1997. His daily involvement with the flood, and what was happening there to keep everybody on top of the preparations, and the forecasts, and everything was constant for

Mr. Pitura. Frank brought a lot of experience and calmness to a lot of decision making.

I got to know the Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) quite well through caucus, naturally. He was our caucus whip for a number of years. He was formidable. When he said that you had to be there, you had to be there. That was just Ed's way.

Minnedosa is losing a very, very good friend and a very good member in Harold Gilleshammer, who has decided to step down. Harold brings a calming effect not only, I believe, to this Chamber, but also his wisdom and his attitude in caucus and in Government was something that I think everybody recognized, and they had a great respect for him as a gentleman and a person with a lot of wisdom that he brought forth within, as I say, not only our caucus and our Government and Cabinet but, I believe, in this House here. He was very, very well respected for his efforts.

I would like to mention my seatmate here, a fellow that I just got to know a while since he came in in '99, Mr. Jim Penner. Sitting next to him, there was always room for a lot of little jabs and quips and comments. He brought a different perspective to what the Chamber is, or what it should be. His comments to me, I think, will be very, very precious in the sense that it was a fresh approach; it was a different approach. I think that sometimes we as legislators get wrapped up in our own milieu. We forget that there is a human side to a lot of the things we do, and that is what Jim brought forth. He brought the human side into decision making, and the attitude of the good will of people, and the hard work of people and the endeavours that we are here to serve the people. Jim is a good friend, and I wish him all the best in his new journeys that he is on. It is a tougher road, but I have confidence in Jim Penner that he will persevere on this one.

The last person that I would like to mention is actually the dean of the House, the fellow from Lakeside, Harry Enns. Harry had a wonderful speech here just a little while ago. It seems that any time he got up to speak there was a certain aura that took over this Chamber, and

his wisdom and his background, and his ability to relate to all kind of subjects—

An Honourable Member: Especially if there was a gallery.

Mr. Reimer: That is right. If there was a gallery, or people knew that there was something that he could draw upon, he would draw it out. He had a way of bringing back memories that a lot of us will never, never realize or experience or have been exposed to. I know that the mantle, if you want to call it, of the dean of the House now passes over to the other side of the House, and it is the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) who will now be the dean of the Legislature.

An Honourable Member: At a ripe old age.

Mr. Reimer: At a ripe old age. If he partakes of the wisdom of the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), this House would be all the wiser, but his sharpness and his parrying with some of the members here sometimes is a little sharp so the Member for Lakeside will be missed. I know his contributions within his constituency and to Manitoba because of his involvement with the various portfolios, the various efforts that he brought forth made Manitoba a better place for people, not only in his constituency but throughout.

* (17:30)

It was always entertaining and very enjoyable when there was talk of any type of procedures or programs or things like that that he could rely back on to areas that he could remember. In essence, we are losing some very, very good members, a wealth of experience. I do not know if anybody has sat down and figured out the amount of years of experience we are losing out of here, but I would think that it has to be pretty close to just under a hundred. As our friend, Mr. Downey, used to say, it was always just under a hundred or over two hundred. It is a tremendous amount of experience that is going to be leaving from this Chamber.

But then, on the other hand, I am sure that there will be new members coming in here with the same type of enthusiasm and work commitment towards not only the Chamber but also

towards their constituents because that is what they are being elected for.

I would like to speak a bit on the Budget itself. I could say right from the very beginning, I will not be voting for this Government's Budget. I believe that the amount of effort that was put forth and the direction that this Government is taking is one that is going to bankrupt the province if they were re-elected again. I think they are working on a very fine line of

accountability in the sense of where the money is coming from and where it is going.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 18 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 30, 2003

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