



Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

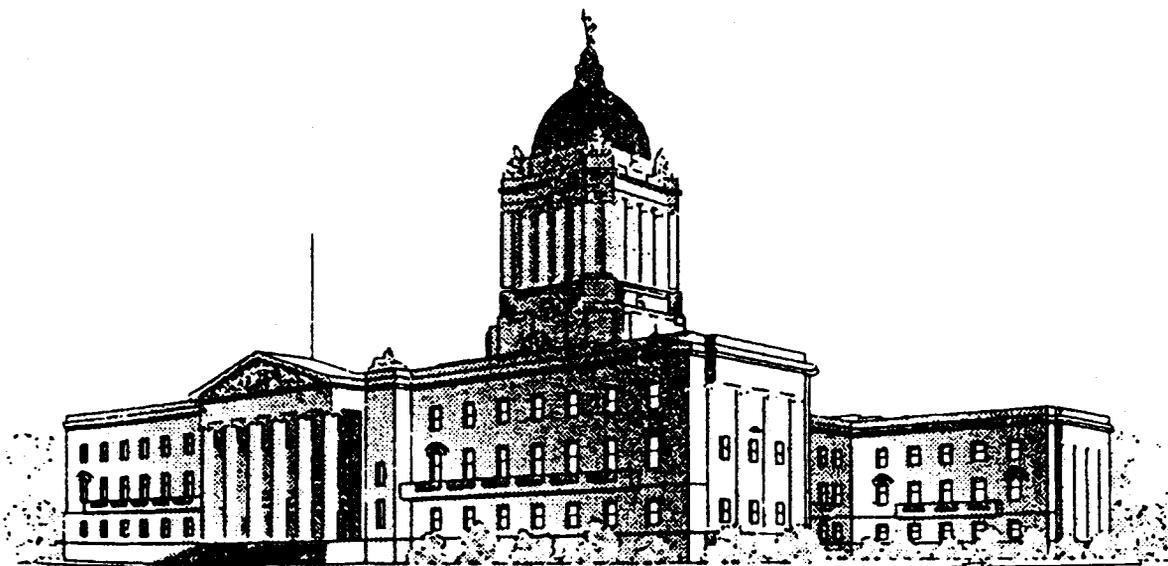
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 23, 2001

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On a matter of House Business, Mr. Speaker, I would request that you canvass the House to see if there is an agreement that on days when the Agriculture committee is travelling to hear public representations that there be no quorum calls in the House and that there also be no votes. At this point, the committee is scheduled to be outside of the city of Winnipeg on Monday, April 23, today, and as well on Monday, April 30.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader, on the same House business?

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On the same House business, Mr. Speaker, I heard the honourable minister saying no votes. That would be votes deferred to the next day—[*interjection*] The votes would be deferred.

Mr. Speaker: It is requested that we canvass the House to see if there is agreement that on days when the Agriculture committee is travelling to hear public presentations there be no quorum calls in the House, and that there be also no votes, but deferred votes. At this point, the committee is scheduled to be outside of the city of Winnipeg on Monday, April 23, and Monday, April 30. Agreed? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I would also ask that you canvass the House to see if there is also an agreement for no quorum calls and no votes or a deferral of votes to the following sitting for Thursday, April 26, which is the day that Rural Forum starts in Brandon.

Mr. Speaker: It has also been requested to canvass the House to see if there is also agreement for no quorum calls and no votes for

Thursday, April 26, which is the day that the Rural Forum starts in Brandon.

Mr. Laurendeau: That would be deferred votes, Mr. Speaker. [*interjection*] No, he did not say deferred.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, I will read it again. We are canvassing the House to see if there is also agreement for no quorum calls and no votes, but deferred votes, for Thursday, April 26, which is the day that the Rural Forum starts in Brandon. Agreed? [*Agreed*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Leonard Loboda, Richard Kovacs, P. Stevens, and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro consider alternative routes for the additional 230 kV and 500 kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

* (13:35)

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), I have reviewed the petition and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Will the Clerk please read.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the Province of Manitoba, humbly sheweth:

THAT the R.M. of East St. Paul has the highest concentration of high voltage power lines in a residential area in Manitoba; and

THAT the R.M. of East St. Paul is the only jurisdiction in Manitoba that has both a 500kV and a 230kV line directly behind residences; and

THAT numerous studies have linked cancer, in particular childhood leukemia, to the proximity of power lines.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro consider alternative routes for the additional 230kV and 500kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flood Conditions

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Acting Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report to the House flood conditions and forecast update for April 23, 2001. Levels of the Red River continue to rise slowly with increases of less than one third of a foot since yesterday. The crest is expected in Emerson today and at the floodway inlet on Friday. Further rises will be only about half a foot from Morris to the floodway inlet. Rises from Emerson to St. Jean will be even less. Minor dike closures may still be required at Morris and St. Adolphe, where PTH 75 at Morris will remain open. The flow in the Red River Floodway was 22 800 cubic feet per second this morning of a total of 64 300 cubic feet per second flow coming from St. Adolphe. The river level in downtown Winnipeg has been steady at 17.5 feet for the past four days, and it is not expected to rise higher.

The crest on the upper Assiniboine River is presently near Miniota and is expected at Griswold, Oak Lake Reserve, April 25 or 26 and at Brandon between April 27 and 28. Significant flooding of valley lands is under way from St. Lazare to Brandon. Predicted crests from Virden to Brandon are now similar to or slightly above the crests which were observed in 1996. Streams in the Riding Mountain and Duck Mountain

areas have been stable recently due to cool weather. However, significant rises could develop on streams flowing off the Riding, Duck and Porcupine Mountains later this week. As predicted, warm temperatures should melt a lot of the remaining snow in the high ground. Crests on streams in the Dauphin and Swan River areas should be lower than those of 1995. Extensive flooding of low-lying areas is expected, but villages such as Minnedosa should escape all flooding.

Roseau River levels are steady or falling and no further difficulties are anticipated unless heavy rain develops. The Souris River is presently cresting at levels significantly lower than 1999. Low-lying areas are flooded from the international boundary to Hartney. Flooding from Melita to Hartney should end within a few weeks, but flooding at Coulter will last through much of May.

On the Pembina River, flooding of valley lands from Rock Lake through to La Rivière continues; however, the crest has passed through Manitoba with stages well below those of 1996 to 1997.

Levels of the Whitemud River are stable in the Westbourne area. Flooding continues in the northern portion of the watershed near Glenella and through the Big Grass Marsh. High levels are expected near the outlet of the marsh east of Gladstone for the next two weeks. Levels of the Fisher River continue to fall and no further difficulties are expected.

*(13:40)

Overland flooding continues in many areas near Lake Manitoba. The Alonsa and Ashern areas continue to have difficulty. Water is being pumped and temporary drainage is being installed to alleviate any flooding which may occur. Water levels should subside in the next few days. The weather forecast for southern Manitoba indicates warming for the rest of this week with very little precipitation. That is the update for today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): I thank the honourable minister for his statement. I know that along with him and indeed all Manitobans,

we have a sigh of relief that the forecast looks promising and that the flooding would appear to be minimized in terms of the major areas of concern along the Red and even the Assiniboine, but, Mr. Speaker, allow me to point out that hundreds of culverts and small bridges, roads have been cut, driveways, crossings.

Mr. Speaker, I come to work along the provincial road 518 and four of my neighbours have their driveways cut off to let water through. I am assuming, and I am hoping, that the Government will address these issues as had been raised by my colleague the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) and others about the response to the municipalities throughout Manitoba that do not make the headlines in terms of the flooding but who have been inconvenienced significantly as a result of the high water this spring.

Not to let this occasion go by but to remind us all that some prudent forethought and visionary work done by previous governments that built the Red River Floodway, the last dam that I commissioned on the Assiniboine on Whitemouth that is saving us from substantial damage at this time. I challenge and I charge this Government, and I will support this Government if they choose, as they have indicated, to address these issues. Let us not be too complacent about having slipped by yet another serious flooding situation this year.

National Organ and Tissue Donor Week

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Today marks the beginning of National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. I would like to call on all honourable members to give their considered support to this critical awareness effort. It is a challenging topic. On one hand, we have to acknowledge the tragedy of the loss of life. On the other hand, we know that in that tragedy there is hope of life for others.

There are 175 Manitobans currently awaiting transplants. They are waiting for something that will save their lives or will significantly improve their quality of life. This week

we encourage all Manitobans to ensure their families know and support their wishes to have their organs and tissues provided for transplant efforts to save lives if they should lose theirs. It is critical that families know and understand the wishes of their relatives so that difficult decisions can be made immediately.

Mr. Speaker, in October I appointed a Manitoba Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplant Committee. This committee is actively working to provide recommendations that will increase the organ and tissue donation rate within the province. I am awaiting report from the committee later in May.

I would also like to note that the federal government is dealing with this issue on a national basis. The recent creation of the National Council on Organ Tissue Donation and Transplantation is a welcome move. This council will provide Canada-wide efforts to increase awareness, develop standards, provide leadership, co-ordination and funding.

Between 1995 and 1997, Manitoba had the second-highest donor rate compared to other provinces. This is something to acknowledge and take some pride in, Mr. Speaker. The numbers may change significantly year over year. What we want to ensure is that Manitobans give some serious thought to organ and tissue donation and discuss it carefully with their families. I encourage all honourable members in this House to give this issue some thought themselves and to undertake to discuss their views with their own families.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that out of tragedy can come hope and the gift of life. Thousands of lives across Canada have been touched by the thoughtful consideration of many Canadians. I hope that this week will encourage all of us to give that same thoughtful support to this important issue. Thank you.

* (13:45)

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I would like to thank the minister for that statement today. Certainly it is very important that we recognize National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. It is a particular interest of

mine, having been a nurse and worked in an area where we have had to ask parents or family members to make this consideration while a patient is passing on, has been certainly an experience that is not always that easy to do. To address this issue up front is certainly one that I would be very supportive of seeing happen.

We do know that there are a number of patients awaiting organ donations in this country and in this province. It is something that would take some educational effort to make happen, but one I believe that is possible and would certainly alleviate a lot of issues for families and for patients who have to live with the need of an organ being donated to them. Certainly, if we in the House can encourage all Manitobans to look at and discuss this with their families, at a time when we are healthy, to look at signing our driver's licences, it is a very big decision. The first time, I know, that I went to fill out my driver's licence it was something that I thought would be easier to do, and it took some time to sit and think about it. Yet once one works through that in their head it really is quite an impacting feeling that you have to know that you have moved that step ahead. You have been willing to address the issue with yourself and your family, and you are willing to make that happen if the need should ever be.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that one of the private members' resolutions coming up in this session is one that I will be putting forward on this particular issue. It is a particular interest of mine, and I certainly would like to commend the people in Manitoba who are involved in this. So thank you very much for the opportunity to put a few words on the record.

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 from Linden Christian School 24 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Mark Glor. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen).

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery

where we have His Excellency Wendelin Ettmayer, Ambassador for Austria to Canada.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

South Eastman Regional Health Authority Funding

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): After adding half a billion dollars more to the Health budget since taking office, this Government has provided no improvements to health care services to Manitobans. Today there are triple the number of patients in hospital hallways compared to this time last year. Waiting lists have grown longer. The shortages of nurses, doctors and specialists are larger than ever. They have put more money into the system, but because they have failed to manage responsibly, because they failed to provide a plan and a vision, regional health authorities are struggling and our health care system is deteriorating, Mr. Speaker, leaving Manitobans and patients the victims of a health care system that simply is not meeting their needs.

We have received a copy of a very disturbing letter from the South Eastman Regional Health Authority, which I would like to table for the House. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Health confirm, as outlined in the letter from Mr. Paul Campbell, chair of the South Eastman RHA, that there was not sufficient money provided to the regional health authorities to meet the commitment for nurses, technicians and other health care providers that the Government negotiated in the collective agreement?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is so inaccurate in so many of his statements that I am not sure where to start. For example, today, in Winnipeg hallways, there are four people in the hallways who will be gone by the end of the day. When the member was the communications director for the Conservative Party, on today's date there were nine in the hallway, double.

With respect to the South Eastman region, yes, I did receive a letter from the chairman of the board, and there are discussions that are taking place with respect to the Southeast region. I might point out that the budget increase to that region this year, budget over budget, is almost 10 percent. I note that for the year that the member opposite was the communications director for the Conservative Party, the budget increase to that very same region was 2.2 percent.

* (13:50)

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the 2000-2001 provincial Budget, the Doer government said and guaranteed, and I will just quote from this document: For the first time in a decade, health authorities have their budgets based on a stable funding formula. Regional health authorities must exercise greater fiscal responsibility, avoid deficits, and reduce administration costs now that proper funding levels are in place.

Yet this letter from the South Eastman Health Authority, in the letter they state that due to insufficient funding last year they had to take \$2.7 million out of this year's funding to cover the deficit carryover for the 2000-2001 year. In addition, the letter states, and I would like to read from the letter. *[interjection]* This is a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker. The letter states, and I quote: "What is particularly troubling is that Manitoba Health has broken its commitment to fund the Collective Agreement increases. South Eastman board only ratified the Collective Agreement after receiving assurance from the government that sufficient funds would be provided to cover the increased costs of the agreement."

I would ask the minister, on behalf of all the regional health authorities, how does he expect RHAs to pay their nurses, their technicians, their health providers, when his Government is not providing them enough money to honour the existing collective agreements as was promised?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, last year at this time the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) was running around saying: You are not funding the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority enough. They are \$10 million in deficit. She was wrong then, she is wrong now, and they are wrong again today. They are wrong again today.

How does the member opposite characterize the largest increase in the history of the RHA, the largest increase in the history of that RHA, \$3.4 million in a base budget—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, let me repeat for the member from Lac du Bonnet, when he was the member responsible and provided a 2% increase to that region, how the members opposite indicated that the \$3.4-million increase, which is a 10% increase, the largest in their history, in light of members opposite's statements just very recently of spend, spend, spend. They cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the letter notes that government underfunding could lead to potential cost-cutting measures, including the delay in the purchase of a CAT scan, delays in the opening of two personal care homes, the cancellation of the chemotherapy program, the discontinuation of the regional surgical program and the closure of the extended treatment unit in the Bethesda Hospital at Steinbach.

The letter also raised concerns about the possibility of hospital closures in order for the RHA to avoid running a deficit. Will the minister say they have no intention of closing rural hospitals? The Doer government's mismanagement of the health care system is leading in exactly that direction. What does the minister have to say to our nurses, our technicians, our health care providers, who may be laid off because RHAs say they have not had sufficient funds this year to honour the collective agreement?

Mr. Chomiak: First off, members on this side of the House are not going to do what members opposite did. We are not going to fire 1000 nurses.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health likes to take advantage of political

opportunities like this to always take advantage and indicate that the Tories fired 1000 nurses. During the period of health care reform in the 1990s—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind all honourable members that a point of order is a very serious matter, and I ask all honourable members for their fullest co-operation. The honourable Member for Charleswood, on a point of order.

* (13:55)

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On that point of order, it certainly is important that the record reflect accuracy in statements that are made in this House. Certainly, during the period of time of health care reform in the '90s, there were nurses that were moved about in the system. The reason they were moved about in the system is because the collective agreement did not allow a transfer from one job into another. In fact, nurses had to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, without a mobility agreement, nurses did have to be laid off in order to be rehired into a new job. It is no different than the NDP right now firing 350 VON nurses in a period of serious nursing shortage. It is no different. If they want to go down that path, then we can too.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind all honourable members, when up on a point of order, a point of order is a breach of the rules or procedures of the House or unparliamentary language.

The honourable Minister of Health, on the same point of order.

Mr. Chomiak: On the same point of order, I suggest that the member does not have a point of—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Just to remind all honourable members, I have to deal with one point of order at a time. The honourable Minister of Health, on the same point of order. *[interjection]* I have not ruled on it.

I caution all members, when rising on a point of order, a point of order should be a breach of the rules or unparliamentary language. I just reminded all honourable members. I have not ruled on the point of order.

The honourable Minister of Health, on the same point of order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the member opposite does not have a point of order. I suggest the member opposite is trying to deflect attention from the fact that 1000 nurses were fired during the Tory years and deflect attention from the fact that in 1997—

Mr. Speaker: Order. A point of order is for breach of the rules, not to be used for debate. The honourable Minister of Health, on the point of order pertaining to the breaking of the rules or unparliamentary language.

Mr. Chomiak: I suggest that it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over facts. I only have two more words to say, Mr. Speaker: Connie Curran.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), it is not a point of order; it is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I am very confused by the Leader of the Opposition. A week ago in this Chamber his own Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner) said: "Residents of my region are not asking this Government to spend more money." April 18, 2001, Budget Speech. The Member for Steinbach criticized this Government for spending money on health care. They cannot have it both ways. They cannot fire nurses. They cannot then destroy the health care system and then blame this Government for trying to pick up the pieces of their own mismanagement.

Regional Health Authorities Recruitment/Retention Funding

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Today it has been confirmed to us what we have been hearing from around the province, that the Doer government is not providing sufficient money to honour the collective agreement for nurses and other health care professionals. Despite the Premier and the Minister of Health talking about the need to recruit and retain nurses, the letter from Mr. Paul Campbell indicates that, and I quote: No funds have been provided to recruit and retain nurses and other scarce health care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health how he expects the RHAs to carry about the important recruitment and retention functions that he said they will do when he is not providing them the resources he promised to provide to them.

* (14:00)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): The chairman of the South Eastman board wrote and outlined a series of options and a series of difficulties that they perceived in terms of funding, given their demands for budgetary requirements in their budget if we were to maximize their total budgetary requirements. I might add, Mr. Speaker, that this region received a 10% increase budget over budget, the greatest increase in the history of that region in this year's Budget. Members opposite, including the Member for Charleswood, criticized this Government for overspending in health care. They cannot have it both ways.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. The question is for the Minister of Health. I want to ask him how he expects the RHA to carry out their important recruitment and retention functions that he said he will do when he is not even funding the commitment to fund within the collective agreement. That is the question. It has nothing to do with extra spending. Why is he not meeting the requirements of the collective agreement?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, we have been meeting with the RHAs for a period of time.

Last year the same member stood up and criticized this Government for not funding Winnipeg enough. Last year she stood up and wanted Charleswood to be declared an underserved area for health care. Now she is standing up after we have given the southeast the largest increase in its history. I have indicated to the chair that we would be meeting with them to deal with these issues, and they will have sufficient funds to deal with the collective agreement. After receiving the largest increase in their history, just last week this member said all the Doer government was doing was spend, spend, spend. She cannot have it both ways. It is inconceivable to me that there is any credibility attached to that statement since, when they were in government in '97-98, they funded that same region at 2.2 percent.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health how he can justify to the regional health authorities the spending of \$7.3 million of health care money, taxpayers' money, to purchase the Pan Am Clinic building and equipment when he is not even providing sufficient funds to meet the collective agreement or recruit needed health care professionals throughout this province.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the establishment of the purchase of the Pan Am Clinic is designed to provide increased services, something that was not done during the Tory years in office. If the member wants to find out about those things, perhaps she could ask her leader. If, for example, one was to purchase, say, a gas station, and you were paying up to \$7 million to rent that gas station over two years, would it not make more sense to spend \$7 million and reinvest the money back into that gas station rather than paying the money in rent as we have to the private clinics the past two years?

Regional Health Authorities Funding

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, in his letter to the minister, Mr. Campbell references the cancellation of the chemotherapy program for his region. He references the cancellation of the regional surgical programs and he references the delay of the new personal care home opening, all of this while the

Minister of Health could find \$7.3 million to buy the Pan Am Clinic.

I ask the Minister of Health: What programs and services will be cut by other regional health authorities as they now desperately try to find the money to honour the collective agreements and meet the health care needs of their residents?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): As I indicated, the letter was a letter from the chair of the board outlining various options that the region was considering given that they have only a 10% increase in their budget, contrary to what the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner) said: "Residents of my region are not asking this Government to spend more money."

We put the Budget out ahead of time. We are having discussions with the regions about the ramification. Last year they said: You are cutting Winnipeg. They were wrong. This year they say we are cutting rural Manitoba. They are wrong again.

Mr. Tweed: I want to ask the minister, given that he has not provided sufficient funding to meet the contractual agreements and given that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has said that he will not fund RHA deficits: Can the Minister of Health tell the RHAs and the people of Manitoba how he expects them to continue the delivery of a high-level health care?

Mr. Chomiak: Most of the rural regions have received the greatest single increases in their budget since the inception of regionalization. I suggest that members opposite, whose record in this regard is somewhat shabby, if one realistically compares the increases when the member opposite was the legislative assistant, or the Member for Charleswood (Ms. Driedger), the increases are in excess of any other year. The programs going in are in excess of any other year and, like they were wrong last year with respect to Winnipeg, they are wrong again with respect to rural Manitoba.

Mr. Tweed: Are the Health Minister and the Doer government telling RHAs to reduce staff, reduce services, cancel procedures, close hospitals in rural Manitoba while they spend \$7.3 million to nationalize the Pan Am Clinic?

Mr. Chomiak: What we have done is, first, we told the regions they cannot follow the Tory plan of closing hospitals in rural Manitoba. We said that is not on despite the fact it was under way. We also said despite the 1000—

Point of Order

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): I sympathize so much with the Minister of Health, having been in that chair, and know the great budget demands on his particular department, but I cannot sit here silent anymore. I think accuracy is very important in this debate. The Minister of Health has talked about some plan to close rural hospitals. I can tell him as a Minister of Health that we did not close hospitals. We made them relevant. We changed function. I may also say—

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind all honourable members once again, a point of order should be raised when there is a breach of the rules or for unparliamentary language.

The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a point of order.

Mr. Praznik: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I ask this for your guidance, but the minister continues also to get up in the House today to make the point. He stated many times that this particular RHA who has written to him had a 10% budget increase. In their own letter they say they only had a 2% increase.

I want to ask the minister: Is he telling the House that the chair is a liar? This is unbelievable. It is not a dispute over the facts. Is this letter wrong?

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

* (14:10)

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I suggest that the member is wrong and should know better than to try to dispute the facts that they have not done very effectively in the House by virtue of trying to raise a point of order to make their point. It is very clear a \$3.4 million increase on a \$34 million base budget is 10 percent.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: I just want to add the comments. The member who represents that region, and I quote again, said last week in this House: "Residents of my region are not asking this Government to spend more money." April 18 Budget speech, Mr. Speaker, and I think he probably knew what the increase was to his region, the largest increase from any government to that particular region. Regions are never happy with the money they get. They certainly were not happy under the previous government's regime, but we have tried to balance all of the interests of programs, needs of the regions. We have given considerable additional resources to rural areas. Last year they were wrong on the urban. This year I think they are wrong again on the rural.

South Eastman Regional Health Authority Funding

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, as an MLA for the southeast region of our province with an increasing population and growing needs, the Doer government's failure to provide sufficient funding to honour collective agreements and meet our health care needs is causing great distress. *[interjection]* The minister is taking me out of context on last week's speech. I am talking about managing money, not increasing money.

I would ask the minister which of the options available to the RHA he would choose: (1) closing Ste. Anne Hospital; (2) closing Vita and St. Pierre hospitals; (3) cancelling the chemotherapy program; (4) delaying the opening of personal care homes; or (5) discontinuing the regional surgical program? Which of those options, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, (1) the letter indicates that we are not going to allow "by writing," and it says in here and that is why members are disingenuous. We are not going to allow closures or deficits. (2) We have the largest physician recruitment

training program in the history of the province. (3) For the first time in a decade training doctors to go to rural Manitoba. (4) We have doubled the number of nurses that are trained in this province. We have not closed nursing hospitals, as was done under the members. We are expanding nurse training. (5) That region got the largest increase in its history as a regional health authority; and (6) The member said in this House last week: "Residents of my region are not asking this Government to spend more money."

Mr. Jim Penner: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the answer, almost.

I would ask the minister, given that these are all hard choices, what he would recommend: closing Ste. Anne Hospital, closing Vita and St. Pierre hospitals, cancelling the chemotherapy program, delaying the opening of a personal care home or two, or discontinuing the regional surgical program. What are we going to do, Mr. Minister? These are the options that we have been given.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, further in the Budget speech the Member for Steinbach said, and I quote: We have not seen health care spending increases like this ever before.

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

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne's* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

I would ask if the honourable minister could just answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Health, on the same point of order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the context of the question, the member said he was misquoted, and I was just continuing his quote. I was trying to clarify the member's own statement.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, the honourable minister was on his feet for seven seconds and said very few words, so I could not tell if he was using those words to form his answer or if he was going into provoking debate. So the honourable Official Opposition House Leader does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question of the member who did not want us to spend any more, is he asking us as a government to spend—*[interjection]* Is the member asking us as a government to—*[interjection]* Is he asking us to spend the 2.2 that he did under his government or the 9.8 that we are spending this year under our Government? You ought to clarify that.

Mr. Jim Penner: I did not get an answer there, Mr. Speaker, so I am going to try and get an answer on my supplementary question from the Minister of Culture (Mr. Lemieux), who is a fellow MLA for the southeastern region and a member of the Treasury Board.

Could the minister tell the people of the southeast why he approved the \$7.3 million in funding for the building and equipment at the Pan Am Clinic while short-changing his own constituents in southeastern Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): The question was clearly directed at the Minister of Culture, and I ask if he is representing his constituents or hiding behind the Minister of Health?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I know that members opposite know full well that the questions have to be put to the minister who is responsible for the area of policy decisions. Indeed, *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(6):

"The Minister to whom the question is directed is responsible to the House for his or her present Ministry . . . "

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised, the honourable member does not have a point of order. When questions are raised, it is up to the Government which minister responds to the question.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, members on this side were quite surprised when we heard the comments of the Member for Steinbach when he said: "Residents of my region are not asking this Government to spend more money."

What we did is we gave to that region the largest increase it has had since it has been an RHA. We are working with that region to deal with some of its needs and requirements, and we have said that for some time, because they told us that they were grossly underfunded under the previous government. We said we would try to recognize that, we would work on that, and we would build on that for that reason. That is why they only got 2.2 percent when members opposite were there. That is why we gave them additional funding. That is why we are working with them to improve the situation.

* (14:20)

Regional Health Authorities Funding

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): The Minister of Health would want us to believe that there is only a small problem in the South Eastman area of Manitoba, but the reality is that this same problem prevails throughout the province. We have heard from regional health authority after regional health authority regarding this minister's handling of finances regarding the health region. As a matter of fact, in the *Brandon Sun* just a few days ago: Big cash crunch hits RHA.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Health what he has to say to the Brandon Westman Region, who depend on the Brandon General Hospital for many of their services, when the regional health authority from Brandon

has indicated that they will not have enough money to meet labour costs this year, given the Budget that was announced by this minister?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I will indicate, as I indicated to the Brandon region, this year they got a 9.2% increase over last year. The previous year was 9.2. That is an 18.4% increase over two years, which runs contrary to the member's colleague the critic for Health, who said all they chose to do was spend, spend, spend. They cannot have it both ways. The public knows they underfunded and starved those areas. Now they are trying to turn it around. The public knows that.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health, given the fact that it is not our message here, this is the message that is being given by the RHAs throughout the province, whether it is Marquette, Brandon, Eastman and other regional health authorities saying that they will not have enough money to meet labour costs within their RHAs.

I want to ask the minister what his answers are to these RHAs and how he expects them to meet the contractual obligations that they have, given that they do not have enough money in the Budget that he just announced?

Mr. Chomiak: Two things, Mr. Speaker. One of the reasons that these issues are out is we promised to get the RHAs their budgets ahead of time. For the past three or four years, the budgets have come to the RHAs eight, nine and ten months behind, which is why all of these things cause more difficulties and why there are deficit problems and difficulties.

Mr. Speaker, we had to balance this budget off under the resources provided by the Province to try to improve health care. Marquette got a 6% increase. South Eastman got a 9.8% increase. Brandon got a 9.2% increase. I think under anyone's calculation, that was a fair representation of the resources of this province. It is ironic that members opposite stand up in this House day after day after day and say we are overspending in health, and today they are saying we are not spending enough in health. We

endeavoured to balance the Budget. They were wrong last year in Winnipeg when they said Winnipeg would be in difficulty. They are wrong this year.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Health, whether he will admit to Manitobans that it was a wrongheaded approach to spend \$7.3 million on the Pan Am Clinic's building and equipment and leave RHAs in Manitoba with a shortfall in meeting their obligations for labour costs within the RHAs?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, members opposite have opposed the relaunch of our nurses' program. Members opposite, I presume, oppose our doctor's program. Members opposite oppose the fact that we have doubled the number of nurses training in Manitoba.

Members opposite have opposed every progressive measure on the preventative side, the health clinics, et cetera, that we have imposed. I think most Manitobans would recognize that a 9.2% increase to Brandon this year is reasonable under Budget circumstances. I think that members, Manitobans, recognize that we are trying to do something, that we are trying to prevent the two-tier Tory health care system that we were left with, and that is why we are doing the Pan Am experience, so money will go to the public sector for reinvestment, not into private pockets.

Regional Health Authorities Funding

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I watch the current Minister of Health and I understand very much—maybe only he and I in this House understand what is going on here right now. The Minister of Health is under attack from a health care system that consumes great amounts of money, but I want to ask the minister if he would just be honest with Manitobans and with those health authorities.

I ask him: Given that the letter from Mr. Campbell, from South Eastman Regional Health Authority, very clearly indicates that, yes, they received the \$3.4 million; \$2.7 million was consumed because of a deficit of structural funding requirements that is there, why in that letter he clearly indicates that there is not enough

money to meet the \$850,000 required to meet collective agreements? Would the minister, I plead with him, just be honest that this is a fact and we can have a real debate about the issues instead of rhetoric.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite very cleverly tries to play around with the numbers and forgo the fact that the letter says our increase in funding is \$3.4 million. Our increase in funding is \$3.4 million. If there is a structural deficit, they told us it was because of underfunding from the previous members' term of office, that we are trying to make up by giving them the largest increase they have ever had as an RHA.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister if he would just acknowledge the reality for that regional health authority, that given the increase that has been provided they will not have enough money to meet the contractual obligations under their collective agreements and their options will be only to reduce services, close facilities or lay off staff. Will he just be honest that that in fact is what is happening instead of hiding it in rhetoric?

Mr. Chomiak: That particular region is getting a 10% increase of \$3.4 million in addition to the money it got last year. Last year that particular region got an increase of 6.1 percent, which is a greater increase than when members opposite were in office. That, in the assessment of the Department of Health—and we are working with the region—will be sufficient to cover all of the needs and requirements. We are still negotiating with them at that region.

At this time last year that member and the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) accused us of having a \$10-million deficit and ran around with a letter, a letter like this in Winnipeg. They were wrong then and they are wrong today.

Mr. Praznik: I would like to table a copy of the letter from the minister to Mr. Paul Campbell, board chair of the southeast region. I believe the minister referred to this as his funding letter. I would just like to ask the minister a very simple question, since he will not acknowledge the facts.

I would ask him: Is the reason regional health authorities are so upset this year because

the minister's letter has clearly said this is it, there is no more money and that they should take the necessary, and I quote: organizational and operational changes to work within their funding level? In other words, layoffs and closures. Is that why they are so upset?

Mr. Chomiak: For the first part, Mr. Speaker, for the first time the regions actually have the funding ahead of time. I know that is novel for budgeting purposes for members opposite, that we have provided the information in advance. At this time last year, the Member for Lac du Bonnet ran around with a letter from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority saying there is a deficit, there is a deficit. How could they fund it? I said wait till the end of the year and we will see what happens, and they were wrong.

Members opposite want it both ways. We want to be prudent. We have given a 10% increase to this particular health authority, the largest increase in its history. It is only indicative of the inability of the members opposite to actually understand this process. The fact is the information went out ahead of time, not eight months into the year as it was under their years. We expect them to live within their budget. Most Manitobans expect all of us to live within our budgets.

Brandon Regional Health Centre Capital Program

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I would like to ask the Minister of Health a question about an update on a long deferred capital project in southwest Manitoba. I would like to know what the status of the project is at the Brandon Regional Health Centre.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): The redevelopment of the Brandon regional hospital as a regional critical care project and a related project is going ahead under this Government. It was promised and promised for over a decade. It is going ahead. We have put money in the Budget so that the citizens of that area and that region will have access to an expanded and improved facility and MRI-related technical equipment, something that has never happened

in that region. We are very proud to have an opportunity of working with that region to provide that service.

* (14:30)

Regional Health Authorities Funding

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): The citizens of Westman probably want to ask the minister whether he included any money for operating costs in his Budget for his announcement today. The minister talks about presenting numbers. He clearly wants to have it two ways. When he does a comparison to minimize our spending in the Budget, he compares it to last year's actual. When he talks about an increase where he wants to show an increase in spending, he compares it to last year's Budget.

My question to the minister is: If you look at the numbers and you compare this year's increase over last year's actual cost, do you not agree with Mr. Campbell that your actual funding is not 10 percent but, in fact, less than 2 percent?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I will explain it to the member opposite. If he were to look at the funding that was not provided to the House in the past when members were in government, but the funding went from the time when the members were opposite from \$29 million to \$30 million, \$29 million to \$30 million actual, and this year we have increased the funding from budget to budget, it is \$3.4 million, the largest increase in the history of that particular region.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health should have a meeting with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and do their numbers the same way, because it clearly shows that the funding has increased less than 2 percent in real terms.

I ask the minister: Why has he underspent? Why has he short-changed the people of southeastern Manitoba and not even provided them with enough funds to meet their contractual obligations?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the member should speak to his colleague the Member for Steinbach

(Mr. Jim Penner) who said: "Residents in my region are not asking this Government to spend more money." That region received the largest increase in the history of that particular region.

Members opposite who cut hospital budgets, closed 1400 acute care beds in this province, fired a thousand nurses, ought to recognize that we are rebuilding a health care system that was left in very bad shape by members opposite.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, well, the minister is right. There is nobody in this province that wants to see them spend more than the \$850-million increase you have already seen.

My question to the minister is: How much of the \$116 million transferred to the RHAs went to the WRHA?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the WRHA received an increase in its budget, from budget to budget, of 6.7 percent, which is less than most of the rural health authorities received.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ACCESS Program

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to draw the House's attention to the ACCESS Program, which recently gained national recognition. The Access Program has existed in our province for 25 years and in that time has had a significant impact on the lives of many young Aboriginal people. For many Aboriginal people in Manitoba, it continues to be a struggle to obtain a post-secondary education.

The ACCESS Program, which is operated at post-secondary institutions around the province, provides support to Aboriginal students who wish to attend university. Some of the students who are supported by this unique program may not have completed high school, but the program offers them a chance to get the education they need to build a better future.

After its many years of service to the community, the ACCESS Program is gaining recognition of the Conference Board of Canada.

ACCESS is being recognized for its work in providing educational opportunities for young Aboriginal people. ACCESS is one of only two organizations receiving the Conference Board of Canada's national award for fostering Aboriginal learning and achievement. Our Government was very proud to have proposed increasing support for ACCESS in Budget 2001 for the second consecutive year after more than a decade of program cuts and frozen funding.

The education of all Manitoba's young people remains a top priority of this Government, as does our commitment to strengthen opportunities for Aboriginal people throughout our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:40)

Organ and Tissue Donations

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): On January 29, I had the opportunity to meet an individual who was undertaking a remarkable journey to raise awareness for a very important cause. George Marcello, a co-founder of the Step by Step Organ Transplant Association, came to the Steinbach constituency as part of his Canada 500 Day Walk in an effort to save lives by increasing the rate of organ and tissue donations in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, each year in Canada approximately 400 organ donations are made by Canadians who have passed away but who made known their wishes to give life to others. Through these Canadians, the lives of hundreds of others are given new hope. That new hope also brings encouragement and benefit to friends, family and loved ones.

Mr. Marcello has a very special connection to this cause, having himself been the recipient of a donated liver. His vitality and desire to take on this challenge is a testament to the life that can be given through organ and tissue donation, and yet Canada has one of the lowest rates of organ donations among developed countries.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage all Manitobans to consider making the decision to fill out their consent cards on the back of their driver's licence. It is also important that individuals discuss this decision with their

family members, as they may be asked to confirm this decision in a time of grief. Organ donation is one of the greatest legacies we can leave. I would like to commend Mr. George Marcello for taking the legacy he has received and working to ensure others have the same opportunity to benefit.

Volunteer Week

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): This week of April 22 to 28 has been proclaimed as Volunteer Week in Manitoba. Manitobans take great pride in their commitment to volunteerism and public service, and Manitoba is well known for its spirit of volunteerism and community.

In Manitoba, volunteers of all ages make invaluable year-round contributions to this province. I had the privilege of attending Winnipeg Community Clubs Past Presidents Awards Dinner last week where Mr. Jerry Jones [*phonetic*] of Assiniboia West and Mr. Mike Audenbright [*phonetic*] of Heritage Park community centres were honoured for their outstanding contributions as volunteer community club presidents. Many, many other community club presidents were also honoured at this dinner.

In my own constituency many people, in a variety of ways, volunteer. Recently three other people were honoured during the annual general meeting of the Salvation Army where Irene George was honoured for her contributions as president of the auxiliary, Major Lou Ashwell for his dedicated service as a volunteer to the Golden West Centennial Lodge, and Tiffany Holland [*phonetic*] for her hard work as a volunteer from Silver Heights Collegiate.

Community clubs, school teams, Pan Am Games, world curling, baseball competitions and many others could not have been possible without the countless volunteer hours that were donated by Manitobans. We should all take a moment this week to thank those in our neighbourhood and communities who give of their energy and time to make our province a better place to live and for everyone to have a better Manitoba. Thank you very much.

Tara Graham and Duana Meseyton

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to stand in the House today to recognize two outstanding young women from my home constituency of Portage la Prairie. Ms. Tara Graham, an Arthur Meighen High School graduate, who currently is attending Michigan Tech University on a tennis scholarship, has just recently broken two all-time U.S. college records for total matches won by singles and double play. Graham's record of 88 doubles wins crushes the old record of 69 wins, and her 66 singles wins beats out the previous record of 63. In addition to her exceptional athletic success, Tara has maintained an honours grade point average in her pre-med studies.

Similarly, Duana Meseyton, recent graduate of Portage Collegiate Institute, has demonstrated her outstanding athletic ability by pitching four consecutive shutout games in U.S. college play for the Delta State University women's softball team. Her performance has earned Meseyton a spot as starting pitcher, a rare accomplishment for a freshman player. Coupled with her exceptional athletic performance, Duana has been able to maintain an impressive grade point average at her university, making Portage la Prairie doubly proud of her accomplishments.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to send my sincere congratulations to these two young women for their success, both academically and athletically. I would like to also thank them for being such exemplary ambassadors for the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

Recycling

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of Earth Day, which occurred yesterday, April 22nd, it is with great pleasure that I rise to bring attention to our Government's support of a key environmental initiative, the City of Winnipeg's recycling program.

As part of our commitment to protecting the environment, our Government will provide \$685,000 to assist the expansion of Winnipeg's recycling program to apartments and condominiums. By targeting funding enhancements to waste minimization we are helping the city to

respond to one of its most pressing service concerns. In the end all will benefit from a cleaner, healthier Winnipeg. This is for years to come.

Manitoba is one of the highest per capita waste generators in Canada. Winnipeg's plan is aimed at reducing this volume through more recycling and a comprehensive public education program. We are extremely happy to support this program, which will allow all Winnipeg citizens to have access to this critically important service.

This is just another example of how a great partnership and joint commitment from both the city and our Government can effectively address mutual concerns. We are proud to support and will continue to support worthwhile initiatives like this one in order to have a cleaner, more sustainable province.

This new funding, in addition to many other initiatives announced in Budget 2001, helps us to live up to our responsibility to manage our natural resources while being caring stewards of the environment. Our Government believes that a green Manitoba is part of our Manitoba Advantage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET DEBATE (Seventh Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: On adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. Vital, who has 32 minutes remaining.

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to continue with my comments. On Friday afternoon when I was speaking I was talking about the incredible success that we have had with college enrollment. I just wanted to quote the vice-president, Ken Webb, from his press release. He said: I think these numbers represent another clear indication that market-responsive applied education is the reality of today.

Through our marketing efforts and with the support of the Government's College Expansion Initiative, our message has been received. Red River College has become a premier educational institution in Manitoba, because we dedicate ourselves to supporting the learner and providing programs that prepare graduates for the realities of our present and future marketplace.

I would just like to inform this House that this extraordinary increase in post-secondary enrolment is occurring at the same time as Manitoba has the lowest unemployment rate in the country. This is unprecedented. We will continue to work on our college expansion initiatives and provide hope for young people.

Another situation that we inherited when we became Government and we got into office, another neglected area, was the capital deficit that we inherited. One of our challenges was how to put more money into infrastructure. There were years and years of neglect in regard to funding our public education facilities. When I first got elected I toured the University of Manitoba with the Minister of Education and we saw first-hand the deplorable conditions, particularly in the engineering department, where there was water leaking through the roof. In Winnipeg School Division No. 1 alone, the capital deficit that they have could eat up our whole budget for one year.

Our Government will continue to invest in infrastructure in our universities and colleges and rebuild our infrastructure in our public school system. We are making a substantial commitment since being elected, in infrastructure investment: \$60 million to the University of Manitoba; \$14 million to the University of Winnipeg; \$5 million to the University of Brandon; \$1 million to the St. Boniface College; and \$31.5 million to the Red River expansion.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we are taking this province in a different direction than the rest of the country by investing in our post-secondary institutions at historic levels, and we are proud of it.

I would also just like to comment on the \$40 million that we will be investing in the Red

River Floodway to increase its capacity. Actually it will be doubling the floodway's capacity. This is very good news for the residents of Kingston Crescent in St. Vital, who fought the flood in 1997. Although Manitoba and Ottawa are currently working to improve the floodway inlet, further large-scale upgrading is needed to prepare for floods larger than the 1950 and 1997 flood. I know that that is welcome news for the constituents of mine in St. Vital.

I would like to have an opportunity to speak today about health care. I would like to talk about the Tory record on health care and then talk a little bit about what we have done in health care since we became elected.

The Tory record, they cancelled the nursing program at Red River College, the Misericordia Hospitals, and the St. Boniface Hospital. They decreased the number of seats for doctors at the University of Manitoba. They deleted 1000 nursing positions. They limited LPNs in hospitals and tried to eliminate them altogether. They said they were going to save \$200 million in SmartHealth. SmartHealth was a disaster. It ended up costing us \$40 million. They closed 1400 acute care beds, which is comparable to five hospitals the size of St. Boniface, and they paid Connie Curran \$4 million for that advice on how to restructure our health care system.

* (14:50)

Our NDP record, moving ahead on health care. Funding for health care has increased to \$2.6 billion, with new initiatives to deal with hallway medicine. Over the past 18 months, the number of patients in hallways has been decreased by 80 percent; \$22 million has been promised to replace and upgrade aging diagnostic equipment, with a further \$18 million next year. This funding will provide new MRIs, CT scanners, ultrasound machines, and other vital medical equipment, and ongoing support for expanded nurse training and recruitment programs. We will build on enrolments that have already increased 60 percent. We will be implementing new incentives to keep doctors in Manitoba after they graduate.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Manitoba will work with other provinces, the public and health care professionals to contain spiralling drug costs, one of the greatest strains on the health care system today. We will also be purchasing 80 new vehicles for emergency medical services, added throughout the province over the next 18 months, and continue development of a co-ordinated transport system. We will also be working on new initiatives for better care and co-ordination of emergency rooms.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale) for the initiatives that he has implemented in his department that are very positively received by some of my constituents in St. Vital. During the 1999 election, our Government promised to invest in Manitoba families and children. We have acted on that promise. In addition to making the largest investments in public education in a decade, we have also paid particular attention to families with young children. Again and again research has shown us that early childhood experiences in safe, healthy and nurturing environments result in better outcomes throughout life.

This year's Budget again reflects sound investments in early childhood that will help to prepare children for school and for life. This in turn means our children will be well prepared to contribute to a better future for all Manitobans. In the 2001-2002 Budget, we announced increased funding for Healthy Child Manitoba by \$5.6 million for a total of approximately \$18 million.

Just a month ago we announced parent-child centre funding for 22 community-based programs that reach all parts of Manitoba. Soon we will be announcing the Healthy Baby program. This includes the prenatal benefit that the minister has announced: increased funding for child care by 7.7 percent. This is the second year in a row our Government has firmly committed to stabilizing the child care system to provide high quality, affordable care for Manitoba children. The combined total investment from last year and this year is approximately \$13 million. This includes support for wages, additional spaces and greater support for children with special needs. Ending the national

child benefit clawback for families with children under six is keeping with our commitment to phase in this program. This year's Budget will fully restore the benefit for families with children under six, and it is a \$5 million investment in families with young children.

In addition, our Government has again increased the property tax credit at the same time as providing stable funding for education to stop the skyrocketing of property taxes that we saw throughout the '90s. We continue to increase tax reductions for low- and middle-income families through the family tax reduction and through measures to provide tax relief at the middle-income bracket. We are proud to say that we have been able to demonstrate our priority on families and children all within the framework of a balanced budget. These are real initiatives that will make a difference for people in St. Vital.

Our future prosperity depends on the skills and education we provide to our citizens. Education and training are vital to the well-being of Manitobans and their families and are the foundation of our economic plan for Manitoba. Health care remains the number one priority of Manitobans and our Government. Moving ahead on health care is more than about money. We will continue to introduce innovative measures to preserve and improve our universal, public, non-profit system. We will continue to work hard on behalf of Manitobans to build a strong economy and healthy communities, and we pledge to fulfill the promises that we made during the election campaign in September 1999.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is always a privilege and an opportunity to take part in the general debate of the Budget as it is on the Throne Speech. It is those few, rare occasions that we have in the Chamber to speak in a very broad and a general way about the effectiveness of the Government, or in this case the effectiveness of a particular government's financial management that they forecast in the document that we refer to as the Budget. I am fortunate that I have such a great company of solid MLAs to support the attack on this current Budget that I am going to defer right now to my colleague the Member for Portage la Prairie to carry out that attack.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie):

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank you very much to my colleague from Lakeside constituency for the opportunity to address the amendment that we are debating at present by the honourable Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray).

I have to speak from the heart as a member for Portage la Prairie in regard to this particular Budget. Before I get into the Budget specifically I do want to once again take this opportunity to welcome back all members to the House for the spring session of the Legislature and also congratulate the pages for their diligence in taking on the challenges of this Chamber and especially a note to Danielle Doan at Arthur Meighen High School from Portage la Prairie who is taking on the responsibility of page in this session of the Manitoba

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to begin by addressing the budget allocated to the Department of Agriculture. It is with great delight that I see that additional monies has been allocated to the Food Technology development centre in Portage la Prairie. However, I am dismayed when evaluating the entire budget for research and development, because the additional monies that have been dedicated to the Food Technology Centre has been at the loss of Other Operating in the research and development area in Portage la Prairie. The Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre, as well as the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, will both see fewer dollars this year under this Budget.

I look to the faces of those persons who are in support of the Government and ask them, when in this crisis that we are currently trying to address in agriculture, why would they be in support of a Budget that takes money away from research and development, in fact, the future of agriculture in our province. I cannot understand why anyone on the Government side of the House could support this action, because research and development provides for our future. It does not matter whether it is in agriculture or health care or transportation, research and development provides for our future. It provides a vision for that future in those particular areas.

* (15:00)

Agriculture in my community is a very vital component to the economy, and without research and development, agriculture will not flourish. I implore the members of the Government side of the House to re-evaluate their allocation of dollars and look to restoring the funding in the research and development areas so that the future of agriculture, not only in Portage la Prairie but the entire province of Manitoba, be prioritized so that it can, in fact, provide for a very prosperous future which I know can take place if in fact research and development is supported adequately.

I must also look to the Budget in the highways department, now known as the Transportation Department, where the allocation of dollars in the lines that provide for the bridges within our municipalities, this Budget, even though the Government has provided for over \$800 million of additional expenditures, has seen fit not even to recognize the inflationary factors in the bridge construction for municipal roads in our province. They remain with \$400,000 allocated to that particular category, and we all are aware, by the minister's statements brought to the House here, of the severe damages incurred to bridges, culverts in rural municipalities.

Now I understand that certain other areas of government can perhaps allocate funding, but these are structures that need to be renewed and upgraded continuously and not even to recognize the inflationary restrictions that are brought to bear on this particular expenditure is very, very disheartening and shows a significant lack of vision.

As well in the Transportation budget, there is a line designated as Grant in Aid. It is a line that is provided for the cities, towns and villages of this province, assistance to upgrade and continue to maintain their infrastructure within their communities. This particular line, again, does not even reflect inflationary consideration and remains the same as it has been. Now this particular support is a very good program insofar as that it recognizes support for the municipalities of the cities, towns and villages and their allocation of dollars for road work and matches that particular allocation. So therefore these

municipal officials, duly elected officials, have the responsibility for prioritizing the particular projects and bringing to the Department of Transportation well-thought-out projects looking for support. This particular program each and every year is oversubscribed. In addition to the inflationary component, this line remains the same, and it is with great dismay to see that this particular vision of our province by this Government is so dearly lacking.

In regard to education in our community of Portage la Prairie, this Budget provides only for a 0.64 increase over last year's funding. Now we are all aware of inflation in this province, in and around 3 percent. Now how can anyone in their rightful mindset understand how someone can continue with the programming and support for our young people, our future of this province, by not even recognizing the inflationary component within a year-over-year budgeting. *[interjection]* The honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) is saying that there is an overall Budget increase. However, within the Department of Education, they have seen fit to restrict Portage la Prairie to a year-over-year increase in funding of 0.64 percent.

An Honourable Member: It could not be because it is Tory land. What do you think? Could it be?

Mr. Faurchou: I have no idea as to the reasons why. However, Government members seem to not understand the fundamentals of program proviso insofar as not even recognizing inflation.

The same holds true in that field of health care. This past weekend, the Portage la Prairie general hospital had to close its ICU, Intensive Care Unit, which provides backup to the emergency services offered from that facility.

This facility provides medical services to more than 50 000 people in the central region of Manitoba. With this particular closure, because of staff shortages and underfunding, had to close. That is a deplorable state of affairs in this current day, where universality and availability of medical services, as the Member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) just extolled as being supported by this particular Government, when the Portage District General Hospital cannot even provide

emergency services, and this particular unit within the hospital remains closed at this hour. I have no explanation as to why this Government is not looking at this as a serious situation and addressing it.

Overall, I have to ask the questions of teachers, health care services personnel, those persons employed in transportation, those persons involved in research and development within the support of the agricultural industry in this province, as to whether or not their particular employs have been enhanced by this Government's Budget, an allocation of over \$800 million more monies? I challenge the members on the Government side of the House to come to Portage la Prairie, to go to the schools, go to the hospital and care home facilities. I challenge them to go to the farms. I challenge them to drive down the streets of Portage la Prairie and the rural municipality roads and see whether or not this particular Budget enhances those particular areas.

An Honourable Member: It does not.

Mr. Faurchou: Indeed, it does not. I would like to hear from any members opposite as to whether or not they would accept that challenge to come to Portage la Prairie and talk to the teachers in the classroom, to the nurses on the wards, to the grader operators, to the contractors, and ask them the questions as to how the additional \$800 million that is so abundantly extolled by all members in this Budget Debate as being fair and providing for a future in this province. I have to ask the questions and yet I hear no responses, and I hear no acceptance of my challenge to come to Portage la Prairie.

When one provides for a budget, they provide for the vision for the future of our province. This particular Budget, I am afraid, does not speak to the future of this province. This dismays me greatly. As an elected official, I came to this House hoping to provide for discussion and planning for a bright future of this province, and to this point I am extremely disappointed that persons can sit and not look to that future and plan for it.

In the case of Portage la Prairie, I want to express the disappointment on behalf of

numerous service groups that have tried to provide support for individuals looking for recreation and sporting activities. Portage la Prairie dedicated itself to the Pan American Games and provided for the athletes village, which was home to over 1100 athletes in 1999. It was hoped that some of the monies that were left over from that particular event here in our province, a very successful event I might say—they have not been allocated outside the city of Winnipeg, not recognizing any of the contributions of volunteers and of local governments in Brandon or Minnedosa, in Portage la Prairie, Roseisle, in other venues within this province that contributed to the success of the Pan American Games. It was not Winnipeg only that hosted those games. Yet looking at the allocation of those specific dollars of the monies left over from those games, it would appear so. Outside of Winnipeg, residents of Portage la Prairie are very, very disappointed.

* (15:10)

In addition to those particular dollars allocated in the Minister responsible for Sport's (Mr. Lemieux) portfolio, we see in this Budget a reduction, yes, a reduction in dollars allocated for sport and recreation in this province. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. When one is looking for a healthy lifestyle, recreation and sport play an immense role. Looking at this blueprint for the future, it does not speak to a bright future.

Within the allocation of sport, there now is entering into discussions of reclassification. I have asked to speak to the Minister of Sport and to date have not been able to get an appointment with the Minister responsible for Sport in this province. I hope that he will indicate to his staff that he would be acceptant of a meeting on this particular topic, and I look forward to having that opportunity, because the reallocation within the minister's responsibility for funds on sport and recreation have been reclassified, causing significant duress to many, many sporting activities within this province and do not speak to a very bright future for persons looking to participate in sport and recreation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, this particular Budget is supposed to lay out the blueprint, the

planning document for the future of our province, and again, in this particular area, it does not. It falls grossly below the expectations of persons that supported this Government, and it will speak volumes to their particular ability for re-election, because many persons look to the schools, the health care facilities, the recreation and sporting opportunities and the roads infrastructure that one makes use of in order to take in those particular services, are all in an abysmal state of affairs. This particular Budget does not speak to that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when one looks to the future, one has to do some planning, and northern Manitoba should be an integral part of that planning. Many communities within the north of Manitoba look for economic opportunities. I do see in the Budget that more money is allocated for winter roads within this province, but everyone realizes that winter roads are only to sustain what is there; it is not to build for the future—*[interjection]* The Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) says: He is looking to spend more money. That is not the case. I have never spoken to spend more money than the \$850 million-plus that has already been allocated. I am saying that those dollars should be spent wisely. I would like to ask the Government to consider looking to the future in research and development of cargo airships for the northern services, which the Province is providing, as a very cost-effective alternative to the winter road network in this province.

If there was investigation of the cargo airships that are now in development stages right now to provide for our northern communities, not only in Manitoba but to the territories that are north of our province, as a very viable way of transporting the goods and services at a very, very cost-effective manner. In fact, they are looking at freight rates just a little bit more than ocean travel, less than rail rate on a year-round basis, yet this Government has failed to even investigate this technology and again fails to look at alternatives for the future that would provide for more economic development on a year-round basis for less money than we are expending at the present time on services on a winter road, very restricted time frame. I ask the Government to consider at least investigating this new technology and ability to service our

northern communities and the territories that are north of us.

Northern development should be a key to prosperity of the future of our province, and I cannot see in this Budget where this particular mandate is being addressed. The northern parts of our province are very much wanting for a new future and new ideas as to how to make that future a bright and prosperous one.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will leave with the last topic which is very near and dear to my heart, as a school trustee and very much interested in the long-term future of our province through the young people which we are providing education for.

We have to encourage young people to look to Manitoba for their careers. Without an address for encouragement to take their skills and experiences that they have garnered in educational institutions within our province, we will only be educating those individuals for other jurisdictions' benefits.

In the particular address of this situation, it was proposed that through the income tax and tax credit system which we have in this province, we provided for tax credits that would offset the cost of education to students within this province if they were to take their skills garnered in our educational institutions in the province and apply those skills at employees within our province. And that particular point would in fact encourage those individuals to take those skills and provide for a very bright future for our province. I have heard nothing from that side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that talks to encouraging our young people to take their skills and put them to good use here in our province. No, in fact all that we are looking to do is provide for the education and yet those individuals are free to take those skills and apply them in other jurisdictions, which they will because this particular province does not encourage them to stay.

* (15:20)

When one is a single-income earner in this province, we are one of the highest taxed jurisdictions. The Government goes to great lengths

to show families of four persons in their statistics of their Budget documents but does not look to the individual taxpayer and where he or she fits within the comparison of other opportunities within our nation. It is very poorly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a family in this particular situation. We have young children that are approaching university age; in fact, one is in university at the present time. It is very disappointing to see that they are not looking to garner their lifetime careers here in Portage la Prairie or even the province for that matter. Very, very disappointing. I spoke of two young people in my member's address this afternoon. Both those young people are not looking to returning to Manitoba to apply their skills, and this young lady who is graduating this year from pre-med studies in Michigan is not looking to Manitoba to apply those skills. I have to ask the question why. I look to members opposite and challenge them. I will provide this young lady's name and address so that they can contact her and ask very specific questions as to why she is not considering coming back to Manitoba. They may garner some information that perhaps they can apply, because obviously they have not been speaking to the young people in this particular Budget document.

If they took up that challenge, as I have challenged them earlier, I think that they would be enlightened and that this particular Budget document would be significantly changed. I also would like to now, seeing the minister for higher education opportunities here in our province is in the Chamber, ask of her the allocation of dollars to persons looking for higher education as to whether or not it is equally balanced between the city of Winnipeg and the rest of the province.

Point of Order

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I think the member is probably being very reasonable in his remarks, but I think he knows that the presence or absence of a member from the Chamber is not to be remarked on. I would ask you to bring him to account.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes. We have certain rules in the Chamber about references to absence of members of the House.

Mr. Faurschou: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank the Minister of Family Services for pointing that out, and I am regretful for making that observation here in the House today.

* * *

Mr. Faurschou: I would like to ask the question as to whether or not the budget for higher education within this province of Manitoba is in fact balanced between the city of Winnipeg and the rural area of the province and as to whether or not it affords equal opportunity to garner a higher education in this province. I would like to in fact ask the minister at some time to bring a statement to the House to show the fairness and equality of expenditure within her department as to whether it recognizes those individuals in rural Manitoba and within the city of Winnipeg on an equal basis, because our young people, regardless of where they reside, should in fact be provided with equal access to higher education in the province on an equal basis. I refer to the relocation costs that are attributed to those persons who have to, on many occasions, travel to the city of Winnipeg, city of Brandon, and take up second residences at a very significant cost to continue their higher education.

I ask that the minister look to the programs that were undertaken by the previous government in respect to the Campus Manitoba concept, which employs the three universities within the province here and their distance educational programming and provides it at numerous locations throughout the province—I believe there are now 15 locations within the province that this technology has been installed and that the programming is being delivered—and ask her to look to that programming as a very, very beneficial undertaking and to support it insofar as expanding it and allowing those individuals around the province to take on the challenges of university education close to their home residences, where they do not have to incur the high cost of residency, and also ask her in regard to the deployment of funds, in regard to Red River, Keewatin College, Assiniboine College, to look to those particular institutions as well and support their programming which is offered off campus at locales throughout the province as a significant return on invested dollar and look to that particular programming as

once again enhancing the opportunities of the young people in rural Manitoba to garner that higher education that provides them with the skills that they may then place into practice in their own areas where they reside.

These programs in fact have shown significant increase in attendance. With support that is desperately needed from her department, I think that those particular dollars are very, very well spent. I believe that they will in fact be recognized if one was to evaluate the performances and the benefits that have been extracted from these particular resources. I look to the minister as well in regard to the program for registered nursing that they put into place for Red River College, that that particular opportunity be provided for at areas that are now serviced by Red River Community College at their satellite campuses, because the shortage that I alluded to earlier about the closure of the ICU unit at the Portage District General Hospital emanated from the shortage of skilled registered nurses, which hopefully this program will address, and that if this program were to be available in rural areas, regional sites, they would be able to garner individuals who are already in the medical field of employ and allow them the opportunity to upgrade their skills, so they can take on the new challenges which are so desperately needed by Manitobans here in this province.

I am not in this House to offer criticism in regard to what one is undertaking without the offer as well to improve, to change, to enhance. I am glad for the opportunity, because if ever I stand in this House and criticize I hope also to provide for dialogue that will satisfy that criticism. Once again, I thank you very much for the opportunity to rise in this House and debate the Budget and the amendment, which the honourable Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) has presented to this House. Thank you ever so much.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I am very pleased today to put a few comments on the record regarding the Budget and the amendment to the Budget.

Mr. Speaker, I did want to at the beginning comment about some comments made by a member of this House at a meeting this past weekend. I wanted to quote the member, because the member said: Look at us today. We are strong. We have proven we can compete with anyone.

He pointed to a large growth in the Manitoba manufacturing and aerospace industries, the province's low unemployment rate, rising wages for full-time workers and the overall growth of the Manitoba economy.

Now who said this? Who made these comments on Saturday night? Was it the Premier (Mr. Doer)? Was it the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger)? No. It was the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray). I find it very confusing to sit here in the House every day listening to the Member for Kirkfield Park tell us how bad the Manitoba economy is, all the doom and gloom that comes from the Opposition Leader's mouth during Question Period, and then he goes to a luncheon on the weekend and he tells a totally different story. There he gives a very positive view of the Manitoba economy.

* (15:30)

One other comment that he said, and this bears repeating, he said that the Doer government's reluctance to fund the Kenaston Boulevard railway underpass project was a barrier to free trade in the province. Hello? I cannot believe that. Just to show you how these people are grasping at straws and how little they have accomplished in their debate on the Budget, when they have to go and use the Kenaston underpass as a justification for free trade in the province, clearly they are running out of issues.

He said: It is a corridor to the U.S. market, this underpass, Murray said, adding one or two train delays might not make a big difference, but ultimately it slows things down. So I am wondering what this is all about. I have come to the conclusion that the Opposition actually liked this Budget. The Opposition has found in the first couple of days that they were getting nowhere on the Budget. In fact they gave up on the Budget debate. Three or four days ago they reverted to asking questions about power lines,

an issue by the way that has been going on for some time and will continue to go on, but in these seven days of the Budget debate, are they asking any real questions of the Budget? Are they getting anywhere? The answer is, no, absolutely not. Then the next day they went off and chased the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) around for a couple of days on, once again, issues that will be here next week but no real questions on the Budget. So clearly they are, I believe, happy with this Budget. They are finding very little that they can actually complain about, and when you dissect the Budget, you see that is in fact correct.

Normally what would a Conservative ask for in a budget? Well, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) could probably assure me that they would want to see a balanced budget. That is normally what they want. Well, this Budget is balanced. In fact, it is so balanced that it is a surplus budget. A good Conservative would want to see payment of a debt. Well, what did we see here in this Budget? We saw \$96 million on the payment of debt. Check off another one for good fiscal management. A Conservative government would want to see a recognition of the pension liability, something that they did not do for the last 12 years, and previous Conservative governments of Sterling Lyon did nothing. It took this particular Government to recognize the pension liabilities and to come to grips with the need for us to pay down those liabilities over a number of years.

Now, the next area of the Budget had to do with spending. We know that these people do not like to spend. There is one cardinal reason that Conservatives have for being here, and that is they do not like to spend money. They like to hoard the money, hold it back, pay down the debt, pay as you go. That is Conservative philosophy. So I am really shocked and amazed when we have Conservative after Conservative standing up in the House and wanting to spend more money. We have the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) constantly advocating for a \$37-million underpass. At the same time, he is asking questions about reduced taxes. He is asking to pay down the debt, but yet he wants this underpass. We have the Minister of Agriculture not being happy with the monies that have been put aside for the agricultural crisis,

and he wants to spend more on agriculture. On the other hand, he wants taxes reduced. So he wants spending increased and taxes reduced. I mean, that just cannot happen.

The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) is just trying to get me back to our old friend Abe Kovnats who sat with us many years ago now, in the '80s. He would sit in the back here on the Opposition, and he would always tell us that in opposition you can have it both ways. To a certain extent, he is correct. They can get away with it. They go out to their constituents, and they demand roads to be built here and roads to be built there and unlimited monies to be put into health care and the farm crisis. I am sure, if we went around behind them with an adding machine and added up all the promises each one of them make individually, it would be absolutely shocking how much money they would want to spend. So they ought to be careful about where they promise.

The Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux) has said we have a calculator, and we will be following them around too. The Member for Lakeside knows this because we did this to the Liberal Leader in past years when she had gone from one seat in 1986 to 20 in 1988 and appeared to be poised for leadership, poised for the big chair. We pointed out jointly, the Conservative government at the time and we as a third party, we took great pains to point that out to the public, that the Liberals were not balancing budgets when they were promising to spend unbelievable amounts of money and reduce taxes. They were trying to be everything to everybody.

Perhaps, on the one hand, the Member for Lakeside and Mr. Kovnats may be right that in opposition you can get away with a little bit of fudging; but I can tell you that it does not always work. I suggest to the member that he look back to times when both parties in this Legislature have voted together on a budget. In 1973, the Conservative government of the day supported the Schreyer budget just before the election. When the Conservatives were in government the last 12 years we supported them in one of the minority government budgets and we supported them in 1999, and we still throttled them in the election.

So I am just telling the member that you can come across, you can vote your conscience on this one, guys and women, you can vote with us on the Budget. The election is not for a couple more years and we will not hold it against them, because we did it and it did not hurt our electability at the end of the day. So vote your conscience this time. Come across and do the right thing, because in many ways this Budget could almost be an election Budget. It does everything. It is even an improvement on last year's Budget, which was pretty good.

The question is can we repeat it next year. That is going to be the problem. But this particular Budget has a lot going for it and is really worthy of support, and is not worthy of the scurrilous attacks that some members opposite have been making on it, very selective attacks, because never do they take a balanced approach.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would just like to remind the honourable member that I have taken the word "scurrilous" under advisement, and I would ask the honourable member not to use that word until I have made a ruling.

Mr. Maloway: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to use the word "exciting" to describe this Budget and I want to tell you that we have a very exciting story to tell. I think our members are going to be doing that over the rest of the Budget Debate, and certainly in public offerings, public speeches that we make over the next little while. So I am trying to determine why the Opposition are so negative, why they are so negative, when the economy is in such great shape. Why are they so glum? The Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), as I indicated is not happy with the \$40 million for the farmers. The Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), he wants his \$37-million, \$40-million Kenaston underpass. The Leader thinks it is important for free trade.

The question is what would they cut in terms of spending? Our Leader asked that. Where would you cut to build this underpass? Where would you cut to give more aid to farmers? We have yet to get the answers from them. They have no ideas as to where. They will talk about efficiency in government and stuff like this, but when we were in opposition I will tell you that

when we did come up with our alternative budgets, which these people do not do, our Leader made sure that we always squared the circle.

* (15:40)

I remember he used to say you want to spend so much over here, if you are going to spend \$10 million over here on this bridge or that highway, then make sure we take another \$10 million out somewhere else. He was covering all of the angles, and this was even when we were in a minority situation with 12 seats and not a lot of bright hopes for the future at that point, I can tell you. *[interjection]* That is right. He was still thinking in those terms.

So I cannot believe that the Conservatives would not be employing the same sort of approach, that they would want their members to not be running off in all directions and that they would want them to co-operate and come forward with an alternative budget, so that the public, so the press, so that we could see what they would do in government.

Now they say they want tax cuts. The question is which ones? Which taxes would you like to cut? I remember in 1986 and 1988 the previous Conservative Leader was demanding an end to the payroll tax. That was at that time around \$200 million, and he got a number of people in Manitoba to vote for him on that basis. The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) remembers that.

He told people that they were going to eliminate the payroll tax. Well, you know, 12 years have gone by, and the payroll tax was not eliminated. As a matter of fact, it was carefully forgotten about. In 1988, he promised it again. He did not do anything about it. In 1990, he did not promise it anymore because he knew that he could not do anything about it. In 1995, 1999, he did not promise to do anything with the payroll tax.

Now, after all these elections, guess what is coming back on the table? All of a sudden, they want to know why do we not eliminate the payroll tax, when they forgot to promise that in

1999, they forgot to promise it in '95. They did not promise it in '90. They promised it in '88 and '86, and they abruptly hid from the promise after they got elected.

Well, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) was here in 1986. He knows that, while they lost the election that time, they did promise to eliminate the payroll tax. In 1988, when they won, they promised to eliminate the payroll tax. They quit promising it in 1990, '95, '99, because they knew they had no intention. They could not do without the \$200 million in revenue.

Now the Member for Russell asked what they did. Well, I will tell you what you did. You got the province from knee deep to waist deep into lotteries so you could drive up the lottery revenue to the \$200 million so you could get the province hooked on lottery revenue, which no government is going to disentangle us from. So that was the approach of the previous government.

Now the corporation tax, I mean that is the killer. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) sits in pain when he is asked that question. It is the most uncomfortable question he has to deal with because for the last 30 or 40 years no government has made changes in the corporation tax. This time around the current NDP government has in fact reduced the corporation tax. Now I am sure that, if you did a canvass of our caucus, you would find that perhaps this would not be a universally supported move, but nevertheless we are prepared to support this one as necessary because of other provinces' moves in this area.

The member should also know that, if you are going to cut any corporation taxes, this is the one to cut because what it is, is on corporate profits. If the economy is in bad shape or dropping, then there will be reduced corporation profits and there will be reduced taxes anyway. So reducing this one is in some ways a symbolic cut, but it certainly gets the Conservatives pretty riled up, I can tell you that. They do not like this one at all. So you know, for all these reasons, this Budget is becoming increasingly difficult for the members here to be voting against it. As a matter of fact, the reduction in the general rate of corporate tax went from 17 percent to 15

percent in four equal, annual steps. The first cut in this rate since the Second World War, and most of us were not even born in those days.

So all through the years of the last Liberal government, and who can remember the last Liberal government? All through the years of Liberal government and then through the Conservative years of the '60s, then the Schreyer years, then their brief Sterling Lyon interlude, then the Pawley years, and then the Filmon years, nobody saw fit to reduce the corporate income tax. It took the second budget of an NDP government in Manitoba to reduce this tax. I think that bears repeating over and over again. I am sure that we will be repeating it over and over again and I would expect the Opposition—they should be supporting it—should be out saying nice things about this Government, should be saying how this Government has saved businesses a certain amount of corporate income tax.

You know, I have further good news for the members on the corporate income tax. The small business tax rate has dropped to 5 percent, and not only that, they have raised the threshold. There is just more good things here. They raised the threshold from, I believe it was, \$200,000 to \$300,000. Now that takes in a whole lot of business here, I can tell you, in Manitoba. The NDP government did that. So come on over guys, come over girls, and let us support this Budget. I mean, there are just so many good things here.

Now when they talked to us about tax reductions, you notice they never say how much they would reduce them by. They do not calculate the reduction. They do not see how much of a loss it would be. We never hear about how much they would cut. They just say they want to get rid of the payroll tax. They want to get rid of corporation tax. They want to get rid of all taxes. Well, let me tell you exactly, what are we going to do? Are we going to simply give up on the roads? The way you people want to operate, you would not have any taxes at all. You would have no schools. You would have no hospitals. You would have no roads. I mean, you would not even need a Legislature. You would not need an opposition, that is for sure.

The Member for Kirkfield—no, not Kirkfield but the—*[interjection]* Yes, he talks about that underpass a lot. I should be able to remember the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), but I have got it down. Once again, how we are supposed to reduce taxes, build this overpass, you know, this kind of economics used to be called voodoo economics, but we are going to have to call this Loewenomics now. *[interjection]* The Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) calls it "studoo." I think that one actually may win the little contest that we are going to have to have later here.

* (15:50)

So, in any event, I think that these people are just wishing that this Budget debate would end. As a matter of fact, they only have another day, they only have a day to listen to the corporate tax cuts. So we have paid down the debt. We are giving a budget surplus. We are setting up the pensions as liabilities. We are increasing spending. We are cutting taxes. How much more could one government do in one year? If we did all that, we would not have anything to do for the next year.

So, Mr. Speaker, my conclusion, and not the conclusion to the speech, is that their sour dispositions reflect the recognition, the collective recognition over there that they have another eight long years in opposition, and that is something they do not like. They are slowly realizing that governments in Manitoba do not normally get four-year terms. Only Sterling Lyon got four years. Sterling Lyon probably should have managed to get eight years out of it. The way this Government is operating at this point, there is no question that it will be re-elected for another four years.

So I think there is a number of members out there in the Opposition looking at this and getting very depressed.

An Honourable Member: Contemplating their retirement.

Mr. Maloway: Yes, contemplating their retirement, getting very depressed. I just want to encourage them to seek as much counselling as possible to get them through the rough roads

ahead, but eight years in opposition is a long time. On the other hand, I will say that, having gone through even longer periods, the time does go fast. If you occupy yourself and make reasonable speeches and do not go and try to spend more than we can possibly afford, then you will have a good time in opposition for the next eight years.

I want you to know that there are only three years left to election day, and I hear you are dropping in the polls. I am told now it is 30 percent and dropping, so that is not the way things should be going. You people are supposed to be running yourselves like a corporation. Right? You are supposed to be selling a product and you are supposed to be driving those numbers up, driving those share values up, and I do not see that happening. Those values are going down.

As a matter of fact, last year in the Budget, you had two discredited leaders in this House, the former premier, the former Finance Minister. These two carried the can for that government the last 10 years and in the Budget debate last year they put on a credible show. They really had a little bit of fire. They had just been whupped at the polls, and they were carrying the legacy of the 12 years in government, but yet they had that extra kick to carry them through the Budget.

Now a year later, they have got the new group here, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) and his cohort there, the new leader, and two days into the Budget they folded their tent and walked away. They want to talk about power lines. They want to talk about justice issues. They do not want to talk about the Budget anymore.

Now they are chasing issues of health funding in southeastern Manitoba where we have increased health funding by nearly 10 percent, and they got to the Adler show, their farm team down at CJOB. Right? Shooting the balls out for them to get them in shape, and then they come in here in the afternoon and that is their warm-up act in the morning.

They have not a lot to go on, but I am concerned that the Member for Fort Whyte is

going to start scaring business out of Manitoba. At least if he is not scaring business out of Manitoba, he is certainly going to scare them from coming into Manitoba.

So I would suggest that a number of the smarter group over there think about this, get together and maybe convince the Member for Fort Whyte that he is not doing Manitoba any service by running down the economy, by running down the Government. All he is doing is he is terrorizing. He is scaring businesses who might come here for a lot of good reasons like the lowest hydro rates in North American, like the lowest auto insurance rates, like the lowest housing prices. There are all sorts of reasons why companies might leave California, might leave Alberta to come here. What is this guy doing? He is scaring them away. He is fearmongering. He is terrorizing these businessmen who should be coming here because of the reduced tax rates that we are just giving them. So he is making it more difficult for us. We are reducing the corporate income tax, and he is fearmongering. Now next year we will have to reduce the corporate income tax even more. Why? Because of him. He should not be doing that.

So I would suggest that perhaps the Conservative opposition might look at the all-party approach. When you look back to the last 12 years when we were in opposition, we were very reasonable with the Government. The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) knows this. When it came to constitutional issues like Meech Lake, when it came to the Charlottetown Accord, we sat with the Opposition and came up with a common front. *[interjection]* That is right, but in any event we did it.

I think right now we have moved further in this approach, Mr. Speaker. We now have an Agriculture Committee, and it is working. It is not here today listening to our speeches. It is out doing its work around the province. It has government members. It has opposition members. The idea is to listen to the people and to put pressure on the federal government for more money. Now that is a co-operative approach. The Opposition is showing some good sense here in getting together in a co-operative

approach just like we did on Meech Lake and Charlottetown, and we had all-party approach in the Constitution.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that the brain trust over there in the Opposition ought to consider a possibility that we could have an all-party committee on business and the economy, that we could get together and we could go out and entice business to Manitoba from Alberta and from other provinces without having these people running the province down, where they would be doing something positive for the province.

An Honourable Member: We are, we are. We are raising—

Mr. Maloway: No, you are scaring away business is what you are doing. I wish you would stop doing that. I think you would support your business buddies out there and more importantly support the province by having an all-party approach on the economy.

So you see this idea is not getting very far with these guys right now. They represent themselves as the brain trust over there. Can you imagine when the real brain trust shows up what sort of trouble we are going to be in? Nevertheless I think the offer is there. You cannot run around the province. It does not do the province any good. It does not ultimately do you any good to be saying bad things about the province. *[interjection]* I always took a balanced approach in opposition, right? I said—*[interjection]*

The former Health Minister and Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) says I said the bad things loudly and the good things quietly. No, that is not entirely true. I have always been fairly fair, realizing that governments have problems. You can never satisfy everybody in government. I have always taken the view that you do not make headway by poking each other in incremental steps. At the end of the day, there is a cycle to politics, right? Governments are in for four or eight years and then they go out, and people make the decisions to vote, roughly, I think they say, based on four hours of looking at the issues every four years. All this running around and skulduggery that the Opposition does

between elections keeps them busy, keeps them occupied.

* (16:00)

The former Liberal leader talked about her caucus as being an adult day care, right? Basically, that was it. She is now in the Senate, the biggest day care in the country, geriatric day care. She referred to her members as adult day care. Basically the members are in that situation where they have time on their hands. They have another eight years to go. Basically their leader will be giving them make-work projects to stay out of trouble and pass their time. So they are not risking a lot by doing something positive for the province like voting for this Budget, like getting involved in another all-party committee—they are involved in agriculture right now with us—getting involved in another all-party committee on the economy, helping out, helping business come to Manitoba. That in fact will put them in better stead a lot quicker with the public than if they simply go out and be totally negative and try to basically say things that are not necessarily true.

The Filmon government when it was in government talked about the Manitoba Advantage. If you look at the Budget books you see that maybe another province may be a little lower in a certain type of tax than us, but we do a comparison, and they did. I do not know how many years we have been doing this Manitoba Advantage but certainly all the years they were in government they did. They do a tally to show the total package of living in the province of Manitoba. They show that car insurance rates are second-lowest in North America. They show that housing prices are lower. They show that hydro is the lowest priced in North America. When you put that advantage together, if we may be slightly higher on one tax or another, the total package puts Manitoba in a very, very favourable light.

When we formed the Government we did not reinvent the wheel. We simply went and followed what they were doing. We simply used the Manitoba Advantage in our arguments that Manitoba is not a bad place to invest, and here they are ignoring the Manitoba Advantage. They want to talk about some obscure little tax rate.

Of all the basket of taxes that provinces have, they want to pick one obscure little tax. They do not take into account that Alberta has medicare premiums. They do not take that into account. They talk about no sales tax in Alberta. Well, that is a positive thing, but you cannot just take in isolation one tax here and one tax there. No, you cannot.

You have to be fair. The public are going to see through that argument that you can just selectively take a tax here and compare it. You have to look at the complete basket of taxes, and you know that the basket of taxes has not changed that much since you were in government. You used the same arguments as us just two years ago. I think the Opposition is suffering from irresponsible opposition syndrome. We have a doctor in the House here. I should ask him to identify that syndrome, but it has certainly spread very quickly in the opposition benches. I wish there would be a cure for this negative opposition syndrome.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

An Honourable Member: Nattering nabobs of negativism.

Mr. Maloway: Nattering nabobs of negativism, yes.

Even Silicon Valley is having its problems now, and companies in Silicon Valley, if you look at what we can do in the area of broadband and what is being done in other jurisdictions, it is conceivable that over time with or without Hydro's involvement, but probably it would be better with Hydro's involvement, if we can develop dark fibre builds in some of the towns of Manitoba like Thompson and maybe Brandon and Gimli and other such areas, we can secure sufficient band width, which will help to drive up business activity in this province, will help to attract business from other provinces, and I cannot think of anything better.

You know, the major car companies test their vehicles in Thompson, all three companies. In fact, the snowmobile manufacturers all take their snowmobiles up there. They take their cars up there and they test their vehicles in

Thompson. There is every reason to believe that given the proper band width that companies in Silicon Valley, given the need for power, the low price that we have for power, that we could encourage some of these companies to move to Manitoba. That is the type of salesmanship, salespersonship, that the Opposition should be involved in.

I am going to deal with health care in a little while, but I just think that there are a lot of business opportunities from not only Silicon Valley, that there is every reason to try to encourage companies like Dell Computer, who are the largest practically in the world, to build a distribution site around the airport here and drive the airport into year-round and nighttime use.

There was talk of flights to China recently. So if you could get a distribution centre like that, and I use Dell just as an example, but there are IBM and Compaq, and it does not have to be computers. It could be another business, but if it is a business that requires power and needs band width, then we should be chasing these businesses. We should be trying to get them into Manitoba.

Cutting the corporation tax is a step in the right direction for that. We expected I think a little better, more favourable treatment by the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) when that was announced. We expected the Member for Fort Whyte to be a little more responsible and to admit that that was a very good idea. He is a new member, but he will get used to it. Over time he will realize that it is sometimes good to give a government credit for things and then go ahead and do your attacking. Where we have exposure, by all means attack us. We have spots, and you can find them if you have not already, but certainly give us credit for some of the things that we are trying to do and do not be negative on some of these things.

I would like to talk about health care just very briefly and then education. I can tell you that, in the area of health care, anybody who has been a previous Health Minister knows this, that at the end of the day, I remember Larry Desjardins telling me 25 years ago that we could dump unlimited amounts of money into health care and we will never, never ultimately solve

the problem. I think that governments like Ontario, governments like Alberta with Alberta wellnet and even the Manitoba government now and the Saskatchewan government recognize that we have to fast-track the technology side of health care, that we can get more use from the doctors' time and the nurses' time by using a technological solution. Well, we have.

I only have a couple of minutes left and I have like another 40 minutes on top of this, but I did want to talk about education. Did you know that the Education Department piloted a math course last year for the first time. It was very successful, actually 16 out of 18 people graduated. The marks were normally 65 percent for these students; they ended up with 75 percent. They are now announcing 16 new on-line courses to start this fall. This is some of the good news that we are coming out with in this Budget.

The main reason for my speech today was about the common business identifier which I am going to have to save for another speech, but this was going to be my main thrust today, to talk about the importance of the common business identifier. You will know that last year we passed the e-commerce legislation. I know the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner) was kind of new at it and I do not think he noticed all of the ramifications of it.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand my 40 minutes are up and I will have to have another speech soon.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): I must say I very much enjoyed listening to the remarks of my long-time colleague, the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), who spoke about the Budget and many of the things happening in our province. I want to tell him that I today rise to speak about this Budget and I intend to do what he suggested we do, and that is to recognize, I think, some of the realities of the situation, not just be negative for negative's sake, and to talk about some of those blemishes, weak spots, and things that are real criticisms of this particular Budget. So I hope he enjoys my remarks as I speak here today.

First of all, my overall comments about this Budget, I do not want to be on the record as one of those people who, as I have said, are just going to oppose for the sake of opposing.

Having spent nine years in Cabinet, I was not a Treasury Board Minister, but certainly I had responsibility for the largest spending department of government, that being the Department of Health. As I said earlier in Question Period, there are probably only two of us in this Chamber who really fully understand what this health budget is about and this debate is about, myself and the current Minister of Health. I am looking forward to talking about that a little bit, but he and I, I think, have probably the best understanding of that budget in health care expenditure.

I am not here today to say this is a budget that is absolutely terrible, that everything about it is horrendous, because the reality of it is that for so much of the expenditure of the provincial government, we are required to do it. There is not often a lot of latitude and room. I will say that in the 11 years that my party was in power there were many areas within government that one could argue did not receive the kind of dollars that people in those areas would have liked to have. In fact, in some of them, I would even say in the area of drainage, for example, areas like drainage did not receive the money that was required even to maintain the system, or the Department of Highways, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am very understanding of the realities that Cabinets face when setting their budgets and the spending allotments that they have.

One part of the debate that I have not heard anyone opposite mention, and it kinds of saddens me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because in the interest of having the realistic kind of debate that the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) has suggested, I believe that has to be put on the table. When my party came to power in 1988 and the Member for Elmwood was a member of the outgoing administration—he was re-elected in the 1988 general election when his party was fairly soundly defeated in this province—one of the realities that his outgoing government faced, we faced as an incoming government and every provincial government across the land faced of every political stripe was that 20 or so years of deficit financing had caught up to us all, that the financial imperative of those governments, the

early days of the Filmon government, was that we could not sustain the borrowing, the deficit financing, the debt load that all provincial governments had come to accomplish after 20 years of really overspending.

Now, when we came to power in '88 we had to deal with that, plus we entered into a period of recession. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did not have the revenue growth, in fact we did not have the thriving economy, as North America, indeed the world, was plunged into a pretty significant recession.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, yes, I will walk the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) through that period, but during that time I can remember, and this was hard, the Minister of Finance, in budget preparations in that 1990, '91, '92 time frame, drawing a line in the sand and saying in those years we could not borrow more than \$400 million and we would have to live within that. Yes, they were significant deficits. We did not want to make them, but we did not have the revenue growth. We had growing demand on services because of the recession.

We tried to be extremely innovative in managing our budget. That is one of the reasons we brought in the reduced workweek, a program which most of our employees accepted, I think very bravely, and we made it work for them. We did the kind of things—I am proud of that because that is part of my record as a former Civil Service Minister. We did the innovative—*[interjection]* The Member for Elmwood says well done. I think people have acknowledged we tried to treat people fairly in managing within a deficit level that we thought was still wrong.

You cannot necessarily, I think, in the made-in-Manitoba solution, wean the public off that kind of deficit financing overnight. This is not Alberta, and it may not be maybe a bit closer to Ontario, but we started earlier and we were able to manage I think with a little more time than some other provinces did. So we did not have the drastic kind of reductions that other provincial governments were forced to do a few years later because we started earlier.

Now, for people who saw reductions in their government funding, they may have appeared

very drastic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but in the overall picture they were much more managed, much more fair. We moved towards a balanced budget. By 1995, with the growth in the economy, I would like to argue that many of things we did made Manitoba more competitive, brought us into a time and a place where we could be more attractive in a growing economy, that Manitobans were gaining a much greater sense of self-confidence.

The Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) may remember those days back around 1988 in the free trade debate, where several of his colleagues, the former Member for St. Johns I remember travelled the province with an anti free trade committee, because woe is me, we Manitobans could not be competitive, free trade would destroy us. Well, that was the attitude that was prevalent in the government of the day, the Pawley government, and in a large part of our province.

In those early years of the Filmon government I think one of our great achievements was we changed attitude. Now I hear the Member for Elmwood talking about the Manitoba Advantage and those things. Well, in 1988 members of the New Democratic Party were not selling the Manitoba Advantage. They were selling woe is me, we cannot compete. We will get snowballed in a competitive world.

So I am pleased that one of the achievements of the Filmon government was to see the New Democratic Party start to believe in the competitiveness of Manitoba. I am glad that has happened. That is part of the general better feeling about our province. By 1995, we were able because our economy turned around and we were bringing in more revenue and we had managed well to balance our budget, we were then able to start to build up some ability to put more money into certain services, to reduce some taxes until of course 1999, we lost that election. There are a lot of reasons why a party loses an election. Usually it is because you have been in power for over 10 years, and the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) nods, and that is true. Someday his colleagues will again outwear their welcome with Manitobans and we will be glad to provide a solid opportunity to them, but that is the regular cycle.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we saw during that period and what angers me is when I hear members of the New Democratic government, particularly some of the new members who went through this House, who get up and say well, you have underfunded drainage for all those years. Shame on you. You underfunded day care. You underfunded education. You underfunded these things. They totally ignore the context.

The context of the year 2001 is hugely different from 1991. Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of those areas did not receive the money they wanted. In some cases they did not even get the money they needed to do the job they would have liked to do, the job that in many cases we would have liked to have done, but that was the context. So many of those funding decisions must be judged in the context of their time. The context of today is one of the last few years of probably our best economic performances at the height of the cycle with a Treasury that has more money coming into it than in many years.

So is it easier for a government to make spending decisions than it was 10 years ago? Absolutely. We have balanced our budget. We are retiring debt and we have had a pretty solid economy. We are looking though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at potentially a recession, a slowdown that is happening. That caution should be there to a government as to what do they work into the base of their funding decisions, because where they increase their base and they work those dollars into their base they will be much harder to deal with if the revenue flow turns down.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the literally thousands of funding decisions that are in a provincial budget, probably the vast majority are very similar to what has happened in the past, during the course of the Filmon years. Others are different. We will argue in the Estimates that some choices could be made here differently, et cetera.

I must say it is with great amusement that I hear the Premier (Mr. Doer) get up and say a million dollars more for drainage is somehow going to be a huge significant issue. I have one drain in my riding, Catfish Creek, that is probably about \$3 million just to put in proper

working order. That is one drain out of maybe a hundred provincial drains in my riding, so the million dollars is just like spitting in the wind, quite frankly, to the needs that are there.

* (16:20)

I hear the Government talk about highways. Well, the highways capital budget is down again and if members opposite will notice, I have not been critical of the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton). He had the same problem as I had in that highways always loses when they come up against health care, education and social services because we can put that off another year. So, I say to members opposite, and I extend my hand to them in a co-operative measure. I extend my hand to them and I say it is time that we take a solid position for dedicated fuel taxes. Give or take a few million dollars, I suspect now that they have added an extra \$10 to the licensing fee. They got a little tax increase there. They are probably close. Maybe they collect a little more now than they spend on highways. We were always spending about what we collected. But the real culprit is our national government that takes \$150 million-plus—this year it is probably \$170 million, \$180 million-plus—out of fuel taxes in our province and put not one penny back into our transportation infrastructure.

I put this challenge out to the Minister of Highways that in the spirit of agriculture we should have a non-partisan, all-party fight to take that crusade to Ottawa for dedicated fuel tax for transportation, shared, I would argue, with the municipalities who also have to bear a part of that cost and certainly recognizing that there are national issues in which a federal government would want to have some direction over the use of those dollars. That should be worked out. But the reason the dedicated tax, it is very simple, discipline. It means that treasury boards have to spend that money on transportation and infrastructure and not have it easily diverted to other parts of government because we have not had the discipline in treasury boards to ensure that funding of infrastructure.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a very co-operative approach, I put that out to members opposite. Those are things that should be

pursued. But where I do take issue with this Government, where I do take issue with this administration and its Budget, is a direction with respect to spending that I find troubling. I know there are many organizations, there are many aspects of public service, that feel that the '90s really short-changed them, that they did not get those dollars. In the latter 90s, we started to put some money into priority areas, but there is one reality. Not all areas that were publicly funded prior to the 1990s can be funded again. Part of the exercise we went through in the 1990s was changing somewhat the way that government does business. Part of it was changing the priorities that we recognized, unlike the '70s and '80s, that government cannot be all things to all people and meet every single need that is out there.

So part of our reductions over the '90s—some of those, of course, we expected, when we had more money we could put those priorities back into place, but there was a recognition that others may never come back to the public treasury, that it just was not as high a priority for the overall good compared to an ever-increasing health care budget or an ever-increasing demand in education.

So my concern with parts of the Budget for the member opposite is the demand on them politically because the promises that they made while in opposition to groups—and oppositions do that—that would help them get on that side of the House, that if they are now pumping money back into several of those areas that quite frankly do not meet the priority test, they are giving up the hard work that was done in the 1990s, and it will come home to haunt them if we get into a recession.

Those are questions we will get into the Estimates on some of the specifics, but that is one of my first criticisms, because we start to see it happening now. We see groups and organizations who were not funded for the last number of years now back on the funding lists. I am not opposed to them because they are bad groups or anything, but what they are trying to accomplish, how does that weigh against the need for health care, education, infrastructure? In many cases, it does not pass that priority test, but it is a political payoff. The Government is going

to have to really watch, and we will be very diligent on this side to be looking for those areas that we think the public would not be in agreement with, given the other demands on the Treasury.

The other criticism I have is, in the last year, this administration took in literally several hundreds of millions more of revenue than they budgeted for, and the Premier (Mr. Doer) who says to the regional health authorities you will get your budget at the beginning of the year, and you will live with that budget, you will live within it, and we will not pick up deficits. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I tell you, I lived through Health, and that is a tough order, but he has imposed it on it. The Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has written to each RHA, and we tabled a copy of that letter today. It is very clear. There is your budget, you will live with it, we will not be responsible for any deficits.

I ask: Why then did this Government not live by its own advice in the last year? How many hundreds of millions of dollars were added to their expenditure levels in the last 12 months since the last budget beyond what was budgeted for simply because they had the extra money? In almost all departments we have seen in this Budget, and I think we will have confirmed to us when the final numbers are in at the end of the fiscal year, virtually the majority of the government departments ran over their budgets. Why one set of very strong directions to regional health authorities, yet not the same kind of direction to each minister running their department? Why the difference? Why the double standard?

What is troubling about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is if they had an extra \$200 million or \$300 million of revenue that was unexpected during the year, was that revenue put to the best use? Perhaps those dollars could have funded some tax relief, much needed tax relief, some additional tax relief. Yes, health care needed more money. I am the last one to stand here and say that they had to live within that budget because, goodness knows, in my two years as Health Minister, I added significant amounts of dollars in year as we tried to balance and reassess funding levels in regional health authorities, as the minister today referenced. We

dealt with it in year because it was an ongoing process. But surely some of that increase that they have had in revenue over the year, that increase over what they had budgeted could have been made available for tax relief, could have retired debt, could have been used for some of the bigger items rather than finding its way into in-year funding for extra groups or organizations or adding to departments' budgets beyond what their budget had called for.

The great concern that we have on this side of the House is that this will become a growing trend, if not the operating method of the Doer government. You get some more money and you just filter it into the departments, a little more here, a little more there, until one day you have added significantly to the base, your revenues are coming down in a recession, and then my prediction is not that the Government will say: We are going to go back to those groups, particularly if it is a year before an election, and say: No, we have got to have some of it back. We have got to cut this out a little bit here. We have got to balance. No, my guess is this Premier (Mr. Doer) will then come to the Legislature and say, oh, we do not have enough for health care, we are going to amend the balanced budget law, we are going to take away the discipline to balance the budget. Where will we be? We will be right back where we were in 1988. We will be right back.

An Honourable Member: But the difference is we will be one of the few provinces in that position again. The others are staying on track.

* (16:30)

Mr. Praznik: Well, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) has summed it up well from his seat. He said the difference will be we will not be leading the pack in good management, but we will be the one out of step with the other provinces.

What is insidious about this Budget is not maybe what appears on the surface. It is a pretty kind of normal budget, but what is really there is what is underneath: several hundred millions of dollars of increased revenue siphoned back into the departments; no major use of that kind of increased revenue to do some of the big things

that need being done, like debt retirement or tax relief.

Building into the basis of department funding that may not be sustainable, that is what is fundamentally wrong here because it sets a course. It takes away the discipline. It becomes hard to reverse, and in it, I would say, are sown the seeds of defeat for this Government. It may take some years, it may take some time, but in the course we see the seed is planted, because the discipline is not there to manage within your Budget. As long as the extra dollars flow, we are okay, but when they do not flow anymore, that is when the real day of decision comes.

I make this prediction, I make it very clearly: I may not be here to see it come about. I may. My guess is when that day comes this Premier (Mr. Doer), his answer will be to remove the balanced budget legislation, and 10, 15, whatever years of hard progress by this province will be wiped out. He will not blame himself. He will not blame an ineffective Treasury Board. Even the Vice-Chair, the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin)—boy, are we to be proud—he shows up at half the meetings—

An Honourable Member: Twenty-five percent.

Mr. Praznik: —or 25 percent of the meetings. Right? I ask each of those Treasury Board ministers: Where is the discipline that you have imposed on your department?

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, I sat with my colleagues through Treasury Board, some of the toughest meetings around because we had the discipline. Is it fun? Absolutely not. Do you make people unhappy? You bet, but at the end of the day it is the big picture that is important. That is what this Budget says. We are just slipping a few extra dollars into spending here, a few more here. We cannot live within our allotment within one year. We cannot live within it. We have to spend it.

I am going to make a couple of exceptions, and I want to talk about Health for a little bit, because that is one, but it is all the dollars that get slipped in here and there in each minister's

department to become part of their base, and all of it over what was budgeted last year. Where is the discipline? Where is the management? Where is the plan? That is what is missing. That is what is missing from what many on the other side have argued is a fairly innocuous budget, a pretty normal budget, something not out of line with what the Filmon government would have done in like circumstances.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this, that the Filmon government would have used that extra revenue that was unexpected to give some much needed tax relief. Yes, we likely would have put some more into health care. Yes, there was a demand for university infrastructure. The Government tried to sneak it past the public with the backdoor tax, six months of planning gone undone in six days, and that is what good opposition is about. Yes, that infrastructure money was needed, but that is a good example, if you do have the surplus, of being able to catch up on a few of those areas. The problem is all those extra dollars worked into the base in areas that the public would probably say are not a priority compared to the myriad of other demands, whether it be health care, highway infrastructure or tax relief. That is what is wrong here. That is where my criticism is of this Budget is that lack of discipline in managing the province's affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a few minutes. I look to you. How much time do I have remaining? Fifteen minutes. I want to speak a little bit about health care today because what we witnessed in this Chamber was something very interesting. I have come to the conclusion that the life of a Health Minister is around two years, and that is maybe because I went through that. We all go through this same cycle. The day you get appointed you are the absolute gift to health care, because everybody who has been told no by the previous minister now sees a chance to make their case and get what they want. So you are the hero; you are absolutely brilliant. That lasts usually for a year or so. Then the reality slips in, that health care is consuming taxpayers' dollars faster than the taxpayer can generate them. That is universal. So now we have to say no. Now we have to actually get down to managing. All the people who wanted us to do things and all the promises we

may have made we cannot fulfill; it starts to turn on us.

Mr. Chomiak, the current Minister of Health, I think he has reached that point with today where he is moving into that latter stage. I know, because I was in it once too. The issue of the day was hallway medicine.

When the minister gets up and says, yes, there was underfunding for the need in South Eastman, he is absolutely right, because the old system of funding health care over the last 30 years, used by the New Democrats as well as the Tories before we started reforming, had no consistency. We created regional health authorities to get a governance model that we could start to compile and get those consistencies. In the two years I was Health Minister, the latter year being the first year of funding for the regional health authorities, and the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) was my legislative assistant, and we worked on this, we made adjustments throughout the year because we knew we had to bring things up to a standard. We knew there were things that had to be met. We worked with RHAs to deal with those, and there were a lot of things that happened in the year, and we needed that flexibility because we were in a process of transition.

They are still in transition today. What we have seen is a Premier (Mr. Doer) who has come down with this hard budget issue that he does not practise himself in government and he has done it in a manner in which we know there is defeat for those RHAs and their budget process already worked into it.

Mr. Campbell's letter today did not hail the minister for a 10% increase. Yes, budget over budget, they are up \$3.4 million, but what the minister totally avoided is the fact that during the course of last year they had to spend \$2.7 million extra money over budget, for what? Not for Caribbean cruises like the friends of the Premier involved with Sagkeeng. They did not spend it on those things. They did not spend it on trailer rentals that were not owned. No. You know what they spent it on? They spent it on health care services for the people of that region. They spent it on paying the salaries of nurses and health care workers. It was not wasted. In

any big organization, there are always a few ways here or there you can save a few dollars, and you should look for them, but \$2.7 million was not frittered away.

By the way, I raise that issue with respect to the Premier's hirings of his political staff because the Premier found nothing wrong in hiring a staff who got paid, we learn now, \$2 million for consulting fees and renting trailers they did not own. The Premier, in this House, could find nothing wrong with that. He hired the person. Yet he turns to South Eastman and he says that \$2.7 million you spent on health care on behalf of your citizens, that is not important.

It is important, and that expenditure was needed. So the real increase for South Eastman is some \$700,000. They have \$300,000 of built-in cost increases. It leaves them \$400,000 to meet the collective agreements with their nurses, with their technicians, with their allied staff, with their maintenance people. They need \$850 million just to live up to the contract agreements that the former government and this Government negotiated and signed. Yet in their Budget is less than half that amount.

*(16:40)

Am I saying today that I have all the answers? Not at all. What I am saying is the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) should be honest. Why did he not just get up and say we know that there is not enough money for them to meet their contractual obligations. They are going to have to manage better. They are going to have to tighten their belt here, and, yes, they may not be able to deliver all the services people need, but it is priorities. Did we hear that? We heard: We gave them 10 percent. I ask the members of this House: If they gave them a real 10 percent, why was there not a letter saying thank you?

It was not there because the reality of it is that they got less than 2 percent.

I am not saying you can shovel money at health care. I know that. But let us at least be honest. What I saw with the Minister of Health today was a minister who is in his latter stages. He cannot face the truth. It was hard for me as

Health Minister too. What is that truth? Health care is so big, consuming so much money, that there are no miracle workers in health care.

We need a debate on health care with Manitobans and Canadians that is realistic, not red herrings about spending 7.3, buying Pan Am Clinics and privatization. Those are all issues that this Government has thrown up to somehow get the debate around privatization.

The real debate is how we can meet the core level of services for Manitobans with ever-increasing demand, with new technology, with a growing population. Does that mean that government can do everything in health care? No. But why does the minister not just say that? Why does he not get up in this House today and say—they were \$2.7 million over budget last year because they needed the money.

I can only give them X. They are going to have to find ways of living within that, and I will work with them. Did I hear that from this minister? Even in my worse days, I always said that I would work with them to try to find solutions. I never abandoned regional health authorities like the current Minister of Health is doing.

When I say abandoning, that is what he is doing. He sent them a letter. I have a copy of the letter from Mr. Campbell. It is very, very clear. In the last part he said that you will have to make the necessary organizational and operational changes necessary to work within the funding level provided. Any anticipated shortfalls or year-end deficits will remain your responsibility.

If there ever was a letter that said here is what you get, live with it, do not knock on my door, because I really do not care, this was it.

Now, I know the Minister of Health. I bet you this pained him to sign it. But why does he not just get up today and admit that RHAs are going to have to deal with those issues? Why does he not admit it? You know why he does not admit it? Because that party across the way tried to fool Manitobans. They tried to tell Manitobans that fixing health care was simple—\$15 million, problem gone; six months, it is gone.

Well, you know, you had to be totally unrealistic to think you could do it. I would say they deceived Manitobans. That is not to say that there are any magic answers, but let us have a realistic debate. Let us have that debate. Let us not see what we saw today, a Minister of Health who was trying to tell us all was well and wonderful when it is not. Let us get to the real issues.

We saw it earlier, we saw it last week with the Minister of Justice, the same kind of trend starting again, right? The Minister of Justice spends a year and a half issuing press releases. I am going to fix this, I am going to fix this, I am going to do this, it is the leading edge in Canada, a victims' rights bill, I am with everyone, says the Minister of Justice, Mr. Mackintosh. At the end of the day, you know, he should stick to some bit of his knitting and do it well. He is trying to be all things to everyone, the super Justice Minister, but the work is not getting done. His own staff is in the paper saying: We do not even know how we are going to live up to his commitments for August.

Again it is part of a trend. It is part of a trend with this Government. Let us tell people what they want to hear. Let us make ourselves look like we are really activists doing all kinds of things. Let us put some money into certain groups that supported us in the election, make them feel happy, and we deliver very little.

The reality caught up to the Minister of Justice last week. Where is the victims' rights bill? Ah, um, I am still working on it; I do not have it out. Does that help a single victim out there? No—a thousand more cars a year being stolen, 500 more gang members. Are these simple problems to solve? Not at all. But be honest. Have the real debate. Do not come to this House with press release after press release and platitude after platitude and say all is well, because it is not.

If members opposite want the co-operation of this side of the House to tackle real problems, then be realistic when you come to this Assembly. The display of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) was unbelievable, the Minister of Health, unbelievable today, saying as much as Mr. Campbell is a liar. Well, I will tell you, Mr.

Campbell knows his budget better than the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) does. Does that mean the Minister of Health has all the money to give Mr. Campbell? Not at all, but at least admit the fact. You know what, Mr. Speaker? Over the next few days, over the next few weeks, regional health authority after regional health authority will be coming forward, and they will have the same stories to tell. You know what will happen? Eventually that minister is going to get dragged into the public forum, and he will have to tell the truth, that there is not enough money in those budgets to do everything he said there is.

You know what? Today he could have just been honest. Me, of all people, I empathize, I sympathize. I have been there. But, Mr. Speaker, be honest. Minister of Justice, be honest. You cannot solve every problem, and you cannot solve it with a press release, and the biggest one of all is the Premier (Mr. Doer) because the Premier sets the tone. What we have seen with this Budget and with his performance is the Premier of this province will exaggerate. He will make things sound like they are wonderful. You know the reality, it is not there. Do you know this Premier, he gets up and he says I am building CT scanners. I am putting one in The Pas. I am putting one in Dauphin, or one in Steinbach and one in Selkirk. There is not a penny of operating money. You see the letters from Steinbach, not a penny of operating money. So you know what the answer is? Well, they will not be there till next year; we will put it in next year's budget. It does not take a year to get a CT scanner. It does not. But you know what? We will have the press release. We will get up and we will say, oh, we put eight CT scanners. There is a whole bunch of them, the ones I approved and funded when I was Minister of Health, put the money in the Budget. It is the exaggeration. It is not being realistic.

Mr. Speaker, it is those seeds that will grow into the defeat of this administration. It is those seeds that will undermine them with the public. All they have to do is be honest and have an honest debate, and the public will give them far more credit for being honest about issues than they ever will for being deceived, whether it is a small deception or a large one. Sown in the seeds of this Budget are the kinds of expenditure

levels and the little here and there that demonstrate a government that does not have the discipline to do the job it says it would like to do.

So we will be voting against this Budget, not because it contains all kinds of terrible things, but we will be voting against it because we know that this Budget demonstrates the lack of discipline that this province, in fact every province, needs if they are going to financially be competitive and responsible in the days ahead. So members opposite, particularly the back bench should be starting to ask their Treasury Board about some of their decisions. They should not just accept everything that is said to them as a matter of fact. It is time that they show a little innovation. Their defeat is sown with the Budget.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be able to speak in favour of the Budget presented to us on April 10. To me the Budget addresses the inequities, the shortcomings and the shortsightedness of decisions made by the previous government. It is a Budget that is good for everyone, children, young people, working men and women, seniors, not so seniors, retired and semi-retired and everyone else.

* (16:50)

Listening to previous speakers, I thought everything had been said about the pros and the cons and there is nothing left for me to say, but listening to my colleagues on the opposite side telling us why and how they cannot support this Budget, it is hard to ignore and not come to the defence of this Budget. The remarks of members opposite, that the Budget lacks vision and has no plan, what do members opposite really want in a budget? They want us to go their way? Well, their way did not work—the cuts, the layoffs, the closing of hospital beds, the sale of MTS. It put more Manitobans on the scale of misery to miserable.

In fairness to this Budget, I thought it contains a lot of vision, doable plans for

Manitobans to look forward to. This Budget addresses the continuing needs and priorities of Manitobans. We all should feel fortunate we have a government that cares, that knows what is good for Manitobans, a Finance Minister who has a vision, a plan for the present and the future. We should thank him for his generosity, his boldness and courageous work to prepare us today and deal with tomorrow's challenges.

He took into account everything that is good for Manitobans, both on immediate and long-term needs. In his remarks when he presented the Budget, he said our hard work today builds a better tomorrow for Manitoba families. We have many accomplishments, employment at a record high level, dramatic cuts in hallway medicine, and other improvements to health care, significant tax reductions, promotion of our immense Hydro resources and creating new opportunities in the North, significant investments in our schools, colleges, universities, children and youth for all our future.

The honourable Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos) in his previous remarks in the Chamber once defined a budget as the political allocation of resources. True enough. This Budget allocates resources to basic human issues, important for all of us, health care, education, taxes, and so on. It touches a broad spectrum of Manitobans from all walks. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, everyone stands to gain.

Mr. Speaker, health care remains No. 1 in the minds of Manitobans. In this Budget funding for health care increases to \$2.6 billion with a new initiative to deal with hallway medicine. Over the past 18 months there is a significant decrease in the number of patients in hallways by 80 percent. There is now new funding for \$22 million to replace and upgrade aging diagnostic equipment with a further \$18 million next year.

Shortage of nurses continues to be a concern. To address the shortage in the long term is an ongoing support for expanded nurse training and recruitment programs. The effects are starting to show. Enrolments have already increased 60 percent. Spaces are also added to medical schools to accommodate students who pursue medical training and who will set up

practice in rural or northern areas and also putting in place new initiatives to keep them and other doctors in Manitoba after they graduate.

Funding for the acquisition of 80 new vehicles for emergency medical services and ambulance will be deployed throughout the province to the tune of \$5 million, the first increase since 1992. For the second year in a row, stable funding to regional health authorities is delivered early in the year to allow them to plan their budgets accordingly. This approach has helped the province's largest regional health authority, that is, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, to deliver high-quality health care within its budgeted resources. Mr. Speaker, sustainable funding to regional health authorities will mean enhanced investment in long-term care, community-based primary care and mental health. Are these not good?

In Manitoba our Government puts people's health at priority. It is a necessity that we cannot go without. It has to be managed carefully and responsibly. We must not lose sight of the fact that healthy people are happy people and happy people are productive people.

In education our Government has once again set itself to new heights. With the investment made today in education, there is even more hope for young people in Manitoba for decent, accessible, affordable post-secondary education. For the second year, our Government has maintained the 10% tuition reduction for students. This means university undergraduate students will save about \$300 and college students will save about \$150, with variations according to the faculty or course. In the previous government, the tuition fee went up substantially for 10 years. Now it is down 10 percent.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The Budget increases funding for the Manitoba Bursary Program established a year ago. It now stands at \$6.3 million. The new bursary will assist about 2600 students with awards averaging about \$3,300. With the provincial and Canada Millennium scholarship bursaries combined, it will assist over 5000

students. Manitoba's previous bursary program had been cancelled in 1992 and '93. Not only that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is also an increase in tax credits for students. A typical full-time university student will receive an additional \$234 in Manitoba tax credits, a 34% increase.

Manitoba's average university fees will continue to be the third lowest in Canada, while college fees are the second lowest in Canada. Tuition reduction, new tax credit, and the new Manitoba bursary together makes post-secondary education more accessible and more affordable than ever before.

Over \$100 million in new capital investment is also committed to universities and colleges in the past year and to the present unprecedented level of capital investments. New construction is on every campus, a downtown campus for Red River College, a new engineering facility at the U of M, investment in Manitoba's economy and the future of our young people. We are starting to see the results already. University and college enrolment are up 13 percent this year alone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Government is continuing also to pass off tax cuts we can afford. We are building on tax cuts announced last year, and the Budget 2001 reduces personal income taxes by \$21 million this year, rising to \$54 million annually by 2003. This means, on average, by the year 2003 Manitoba will enjoy about a 10.5% decrease in their provincial income taxes based on reductions introduced in the first two budgets.

New tax reduction has also been announced by increasing the non-refundable tax credit by 2.5 percent over that of year 2000 benefiting all taxpayers, reducing the middle-bracket tax rate to 15.4 percent in 2002 and 14.9 percent for 2003, a reduction from 16.2 in 2001, reducing the top bracket rate, which is 17.4 for 2001, removing another 4000 people, lower income Manitobans from the tax role.

Tax credits for all property owners and renters is increasing by another \$75. Tax credit increases from the last two budgets means an average 6% reduction in property taxes in Winnipeg and 9.4 percent in the rest of Manitoba. Not only that, last year small business

tax rates fell to 7 percent. At the beginning of 2001, it fell to 6 percent and on January 1, 2002, it will fall farther to 5 percent, a 37.5% reduction since 1999.

Last year, the first time a debt retirement payment totalling \$96 million was achieved with no draw from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. This Budget projects a surplus of \$26 million from the last fiscal year, which will add to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Last year, we made a \$21-million payment toward pension liabilities, the first payment in 40 years. Budget 2001 is balanced, with a positive balance of \$10 million.

* (17:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on Tuesday last week, I listened with interest to the emergency debate on the agricultural resolution brought forward by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). During the debate, it brought to light the magnitude of the crisis faced by our farmers, our province, our farming community and rural communities. Given the urgency, speedy passage of the resolution has shown that both sides in the Chamber can work together.

Before the debate, or weeks ago, I received a letter from a farming family in Inglis, Manitoba. That is north of Russell. The letter described life on the farm, how it is getting tougher. Income from the farm has become so low, to a point that selling and leaving the farm to raise a family in the city is beginning to be an option. This family wants to stay on the farm. To this family, farming is a way of life. With more farmers facing the same situation, the cry for help is getting louder.

Consider this: Farming is one of the prime engines of our economy. It is the mover of some of our industry. If there were no farmers, how would Winnipeg look, how would the province look? There will be no farmers to cultivate and plant the crops. There will be no crops to harvest. There will be no grains to sell or feed hogs or animals. There will be no hogs to process. There will be no jobs, and ultimately there will be no people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also come from a farming family. I am also an agriculturist by training. As such, I have an understanding of

what our farming families and communities are going through. We must not allow the deterioration of our farming communities.

I want to express my gratitude and thanks to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) for recognizing the crisis and working hard to put in place support programs so that our farmers can ride out the crisis during these difficult times.

Manitoba farm families will receive over \$75 million in provincial support for safety nets and income support while, at the same time, we continue to seek greater federal assistance. There will be new funding for enhanced Diversification Loan Guarantee Program. It will allow farmers to access the \$200 million in private financing. Supports for agriculture have increased by 6.4 percent over the last year's Budget. Manitoba's safety net spending has doubled since the NDP has come into office: \$121 million will be paid to producers in the 2000 and 2001 farm safety net packages. In 1998-99, \$58 million was spent on farm family safety net for Manitoba producers. These expenditures are being committed despite limited financial capacity compared to the vast resources of the federal government.

Farmers today have access to half a dozen other programs that are in place, like CMAP, GRIP, AIDA, MACC, and so on. It also puts farmers PST exempt on farm machinery and repairs, gasoline and diesel fuels, seed, fertilizers, pesticides and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the strength of the country revolves around the degree of how healthy its citizens and the quality of education of its population. The increasing support for health and education will once more prepare our young people for the challenges of the new economy. After all, we look at our young people as our hope for tomorrow to carry on and to lead us to greater heights. So we have to arm them with knowledge through quality education to make proper decisions, to assume leadership roles just like we are today, prepare them to get into a workforce that can take on the new world order, constant economic changes, globalization and global trade.

This Budget has delivered tax cuts we can afford. Now who can say no one wants to live here or do business here because of taxes?

I have chosen to speak only on a few areas that are of utmost concern to me and my constituents. This is not to say that the others are less important. Other initiatives are important like Aboriginal and northern initiatives, urban revitalization, immigration and skilled labour recruitment, ecotourism initiatives. These initiatives promote innovative approaches to emerging and outstanding issues. I recommend that you read the Budget book.

We judge government on what they are committed to do. The credibility is put to test in the delivery of its commitments. This Government has made good on its commitments. I hope the members opposite will begin to see the light and see it our way. We leave this province with pride and prosperity for everyone. We will make this province proud and great again.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I am pleased to stand and put a few comments on the record in regard to this year's Budget presented by the Government of Manitoba, but I do want to comment briefly, if I may, just in a follow-up process of last year's Budget. I think it is admirable that the members opposite will stand up and support this year's Budget and announce that they are going to support it and all the great things that they are proposing to do for Manitobans. What I find ironic is the fact that this same group of people stood up last year and voted for a government Budget that as we see the third quarter results coming in are now \$250 million over budget.

When you start to make a business plan and present a budget, no matter who you are and what you are doing, the people that you are presenting it to want you to be accountable.

An Honourable Member: Credible.

Mr. Tweed: And credible, as my honourable friend says. When you sit down as a family at the start of the year, you project your income based on earnings of the family and then you project your priorities based on where you would like to spend the money. Many families have had

to say no to certain things and had to say, well, maybe we can buy it over two years or over three years, but in the end they have to be accountable to that budget.

Businesses, when they go to a bank to get a loan or when they negotiate financing, prepare a budget. They take this budget to the banks or to the lending institutions and they present it. I know from personal experience one of the major concerns that all lending institutions have is: Can you support what you are saying in the documents, the budgets that you are presenting to us, and is it believable? Based on those priorities they make a decision as to whether that business or that individual is going to get financing to support his plan and move forward in the economy in the province of Manitoba.

Unfortunately this Government has lost all sight of that. They presented a Budget to the people of the province of Manitoba last year and woke up one day and said, oh, is this not wonderful. We have new income. We have a larger transfer of funds from the federal government, we have increased revenue from sales tax. Instead of going out and talking to the people, who are the financiers of the Budget, they chose to spend the money, without any discussion, without any indication to the public in their Budget presentation last year that this is what they would do, \$250 million more spent.

* (17:10)

I would suggest that every member on the other side, particularly the ministers of the departments, are guilty of misleading the public. They told the public last year that they could operate their departments within their budgets that they presented and which we debated in this House and went through the Estimates period to decide the priorities of the Government. We questioned the Government: Where are they spending their money; is it appropriate that they would spend it there; and are they comfortable that they can survive or manage within those dollars? Every time they were asked, they commented, oh, yes, we are quite confident. This is a generous budget. This is a budget for all Manitobans. All Manitobans will stand up and applaud this Budget, because it presents reasonable sources of funding. It supports the

departments that are in the most need in the province of Manitoba, and then what did they do? They turned around, and they spent a quarter of a billion dollars more than they projected that they would.

I would ask the honourable members across the floor, the ministers of each department and the backbenchers: Could you do that in your family budget? Could you do that in your business budget? Could you do it in any other circumstance except where it is a government that is taking tax dollars from the people of Manitoba and, after presenting a budget as to how they would spend those tax dollars, see an increase in revenue and decide that they would just spend it. Without public debate, without concern of where the public's priorities are, where the taxpayers, priorities are, they choose to take the money and go out and spend it.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that part of this debate is almost farcical in the sense that I do not see how anybody in this House, in this Chamber at all, could support this Budget or vote for it, because we know that the number that they have presented in the past has been a moving target. It has been deceptive. It has been ill conceived in the sense that what they tell people they are going to do, they do not. Then they go out and spend more money and do not tell people. Then they expect everybody to come back in and hear another presentation on another budget from this Government. Do we know those numbers to be real? I suspect we do not.

In fact, I am sure they will not be real because, based on our previous experience—and the Government constantly laments that we are the new NDP, we are the new free thinkers of the world today, and yet what we are seeing is this Government is falling into the same pattern, the same process that they fell into 12 years ago. They found extra ways of taxing people, extra ways of creating higher revenues and higher resources, and the Budget to them did not mean anything. The Budget was merely something put out in front of people to appease them, and they just said: Trust us. Do not worry. We can manage our departments, and we can manage them within these dollar amounts. Then they go out and spend, spend, spend, spend more than they budgeted for and then ask the public: Well,

where would you like us to cut? Where would you like us to save money?

The public believed them last year when they said that they could present a budget and come in on budget, and they were deceived. The public have been misled by this Government to the tune of a quarter of a billion dollars. They have proven to the public that they cannot manage it. I would suggest that this Budget today, we are really debating kind of a moot point because I do not think and I do not believe this Government is going to come in on this Budget either.

I do not see any reason why they feel they should have to, and I think that they are looking at the tax revenues and the increase in transfer payments coming across the board, and they are going to continue to spend. It has been a history of this Government. It has been a history of these ministers to spend, never sit down and prioritize and make decisions based on what is needed and what could be afforded but just to solve the problem by spending the money.

We have seen the ministers of this Government avoid public consultation or discussion. The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) was chastised for over a year for calling meetings, cancelling them, avoiding meetings, never showing up for meetings. We have the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that is being invited out to a certain part of the province to discuss some issues; he runs and hides behind a committee that he appointed and says, oh, no, it is not my issue; it is this issue, and I do not want to speak to you.

We have the Health Minister. I have regional health authorities in the province of Manitoba that have never met with the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). He has been the minister now for pretty near two years, and I would say that is shameful, but that is the way this Government operates. If I go out and meet with them, I have to be accountable to them, so I will avoid that. I will send my SA out or I will send my political staff out, of which this Government seems to have no trouble increasing their spending on. It is to put the spin on it. It is to put the optics on it that everything is okay. Do not worry. Do not worry. Do not ask too many

questions. By the way, you know that if we do have a problem, we will just throw a little more money at it. Even though you will not be happy about it, that is how we will show the public and the spin that we will put on it that we are doing the right thing.

I am going to deal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a few of the issues that I see as issues of concern in this Government's Budget. Again, I almost do this cautiously, because I do not believe this Government can live within the Budget that they are presenting today. I suspect that this time next year we are going to be sitting down and we are going to be discussing the increased spending that the Government has gone over budget. Eventually, as we all know or should know, in our families, in our businesses, in our lives, if we continue to spend more money than we bring in, we end up having to find other ways, other resources of creating revenue.

This Government has certainly been creative so far in trying to find those opportunities. I would only put one on the record at this point in time, the fact that they tried to steal the money from MPI to finance university projects because they thought, well, you know, we have made a commitment to the universities and, gee, you know, we have a pile of money sitting in MPI, and the ratepayers will not mind, and, I mean, it is just a little bit of money, and how can they argue against the fact that it is going towards the universities?

Well, I think this Government found out very quickly that the people did object to it. When you start reaching into the people's pockets to serve up your needs that you cannot forecast or cannot see in your budgets or cannot plan ahead to, then they see this Government as basically poor managers, not only of the economy, probably of their own departments. Perhaps we should check into their households and into their pasts to see how well they managed their own affairs. They seem to spend money that they do not have, and when they do have it they spend more of it.

So it is certainly, I think, an issue that is going to be out there. The people are going to question the credibility of this Government being responsible enough to collect taxes, to pay

for what they have expressed in their Budget, and to use the other money, in some cases, I would suggest, to reduce debt, to reduce taxes, to pay down costs that are facing us today.

There is money to do both. I think this Government has chose only to do one, and that is to spend the money. I think that over a short period of time that may be sustainable, but I think the message that is being sent to the people is the fact that no matter how well we are doing we intend to spend the money. We do not intend to look at other ways of helping the taxpayer, the financier of this Government, in ways that would be beneficial to the entire economy.

The members have spoken on the other side about their input into agriculture and how they have helped agriculture. Coming from one of the areas in the province that has been devastated in the last couple of years, not only by low oilseed and grain prices but also devastated by climate, I find it very strange that the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province can put in a budget that he is proposing \$40 million to be spent on a floodway system, providing that the federal government ante in their share. Yet when it came to helping agricultural producers in this province, he ran and hid.

The only time he did not run and hide is when he could see a photo opportunity in rural Manitoba with a select group of people that he personally and his staff personally invited. He would go out and make a quick presentation, get the picture for the paper, and then get out of town before anybody that was truly affected by this devastation could have a chance to present to him and talk to him.

* (17:20)

I use the same example with the all-party task force that we are embarking on right now. I supported the idea, and I still believe it is a good idea, but when the option of going out into the southwest corner, to Melita particularly, was presented to the Government, they ran and hid. They said: oh no, we cannot go out there. It would not be good. It would not be a good photo op if we went out there and really saw what was impacting these people and the fact that the Government would be challenged for the

nothing that they did for these people in their time of most need. I think that, for the Premier (Mr. Doer) to stand up and boast and be so, you know, oh, our money is on the table, we are going to build this floodway and all we need is the feds to get involved, well, the same principle could have applied and should have applied to the agricultural community.

If you want to show leadership, you take leadership on all issues, and if you are not prepared to do that, then you should step aside and let somebody else do it, because they are certainly not a leading example of how things should and could be done in this province to help people when they are in the most need.

I think the agricultural community has been tremendously let down by this Government, and I think that they are going to be disappointed even with what is in this Budget as far as the money that was spent in last year's Budget after they spent the entire session trying to build up as many losses against the Budget so that they could prove that the previous government managed it in a deficit, and even then they could not do it, spending all that money, they could not do it.

The issue of health, again, is certainly an issue that is on everyone's minds in the province of Manitoba. Again the message that we are receiving in rural Manitoba, particularly, is that there is not only a two-tiered health system in this province created by this Government, but there is a two-tiered feeling of loss in this Government.

We have seen the Department of Rural Development rolled into Intergovernmental Affairs and basically disappearing. We have people coming up and asking us questions as to who do they talk to in this Government in regard to rural issues and it is just not being dealt with. It is being ignored. They are just feeling that this Government is abandoning them. We are seeing it in their spending priorities. We are seeing it in their spending needs. We are seeing it in their uncontrolled spending, because all the spending that this Government is doing above and beyond is creating that divide. I think this Government is going to be a long time before they will heal that

type of wound that they have created in rural Manitoba.

The health care situation, I mean, we heard questions today about the lack of funding, the lack of prioritization of this Government in helping regional health authorities. We know that every regional health authority in Manitoba—I will qualify that, almost everyone. I am saying everyone. If it is not, then I will say almost everyone is operating at a deficit at the end of this year, and what is this Government doing? They are saying to them, well, this is the money we are going to give you, and we are demanding that you operate and live within these guidelines. Yet this is the same government that spent a quarter of a billion dollars more than their own Budget last year, the Budget that they all stood so proudly and supported and chastised us for opposing and said, oh, it is great for Manitoba. This is the best thing since sliced bread for all Manitobans. But, by the way, I did not notice on the bottom of the Finance Minister's, I did not see it on the footnote on the bottom of his financial document: P.S. We are going to spend a quarter of a billion dollars more than we budgeted for, but do not worry. It is not a big deal. We will get over it. These are the things we choose to spend the money on, so let us just let it go, and let us make people happy and never dealing with the issues of where the money should or could be spent or how much benefit it could derive to other parts of the province.

We talk about the Government's promise in the last election to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. What a joke. I cannot believe that anybody even over there believed it. If they did, obviously they were as misled as the people in the province of Manitoba. You have now spent hundreds of millions of dollars more and you still have not solved the problem. In fact, all you have done is changed the method of measuring hallway medicine so that you can show that you have reduced it, not eliminated, but reduced it and only reduced it at times. It is not consistent. It is not something where we can put a scale up and watch the scale descending as the problems are being solved. What is happening is it is going up and down just as it always has. I know some of the government members almost smirk at that suggestion that, you know, wow, some say we are at 80 percent,

some say we are at 60 percent, but, boy, you guys fooled everybody. You really did and you should be congratulated because you fooled them, but it is going to catch up to you because people are not believing what you are saying now.

I will give you an example. I have a gentleman who came into Winnipeg to visit his doctor. He is sitting in the doctor's office with the doctor. Now, this is a Winnipeg specialist, and the specialist says to him, you know, you are sick, like, man, you are really sick. You should be in the hospital today, and the guy said, well, you know, I am in with my wife. I will make a few phone calls. I will get things set up and I will go in today. The doctor said, no, I cannot admit you today. I am just telling you that you should be in the hospital today. You are really sick and I am not sure what the outcomes are going to be, but I cannot get you into the hospital yet because, well, the Government said I am not allowed to admit anybody into the hospital because it might create a statistic that would say we have got higher numbers in our hallways. What did he do? The doctor advised this guy; he said, I want you to go home to your community, check yourself into a hospital, tell them that you need to go to Winnipeg in an ambulance on an emergency call. Then I can get you into the hospital.

Boy, that is a great service and that is a great way of telling people don't worry. Everybody is treated fairly, everybody is treated equitably across the system, but if you happen to be from rural Manitoba and you do not come in an ambulance and you are not damn near dying, then we will not admit you. That is what they are telling people.

This Government stands up and can brag about the great system that we have, the great single-tier system that they are proposing. They are buying up private corporations that are offering probably the same or better services and are able to look after people in a quicker, more orderly fashion, and they are supporting that. That is only one example.

I have another example of the same situation, another community. The guy was in the doctor's office, was told he had to be in the

hospital, had to go home, had to check into the hospital, had to go into an ambulance, had to be brought in by ambulance. At what cost to the system, I ask you, what cost to the system when the guy was there in the doctor's office in the city of Winnipeg, where everybody says that is the only place you should go in this province to get treatment and get care and being told by the doctor, gee, you know, the Government will not let me check you in because they do not want their hallway stats to go up. You guys sit across there on the other side, on the government side, and you wonder why people like myself who are representing rural people are talking about highway medicine? That is exactly what it is.

It was cited earlier in the session, last session by the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire). A guy injured his thumb in Melita, Manitoba, and they had to drive him past Brandon, which members so proudly stand up, the greatest care and the greatest service. They did not have a doctor on call. He had to drive by Brandon to come to Winnipeg.

This Government stands up and boasts about their health care plan and their future and what they are offering to the people, and they are saying: Do not hurry. I mean, six months, \$15 million, we can solve this problem.

Well, I say you have not solved it, but what you have done is you have created an expectation from people that you cannot deliver on, you cannot and you will not deliver on, because if anybody had any common sense, they would know that it is not that simple. But you have made it simple to the people and unfortunately they bought into it and you convinced them. Now you are finding out that you cannot live up to those expectations.

* (17:30)

I suspect that it hurts when the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has to stand up and try and defend what they are trying to do. I forget the phrase, but the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) used it the other day. The Minister of Health has used it. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has used it. Well, we have to change the culture. We did not really say we were going to eliminate hallway medicine. We were going to change the

culture of almost waiting in the hallways. You are not quite dead yet. We need you to sit on a bed. Whatever it is, it is no longer called hallway medicine. I guess, when you take out the hallways and turn them into corridors, you have effectively, in your own minds anyway, dealt with the issue and dealt with the problem.

It is a growing problem. It is not something that is happening less; it is happening more. Instead of asking questions about how do we improve the service and how do we make it better, you continue to compound the problem by ignoring it and just throwing money at an issue. This is one of the many issues that this Government has felt that they can avoid or defer strictly by putting more money into it.

You have no real plan to address the health care needs in the province of Manitoba. We are seeing it. I can tell you, I am not just speaking from people in Turtle Mountain. I am speaking from people all over rural Manitoba. This Government has failed them in what they promised in their election and what they said and what they are doing.

They talk about the training of new nurses. I commend the Government for doing that, but what you have missed and what everybody seems to be missing is: Are we training these young professionals to work in Manitoba? I would say we are not. I would say we are training young people in today's market, and I question whether it is just in health care. I think it is in education. I think it is in every professional area. I think a lot of governments, not only this one, but governments in Canada have missed that idea, the fact that our young professionals today may come back to our province, and we hope that they do, but with their ability and their jobs, they are very, very, very transportable, and they want to see the world. They want to go out and experience living in different worlds and different cultures.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We are continuing to train more people, and I would suggest that we are training them for jobs outside of Manitoba. Unfortunately, that is the reality that we live in today, and how do we resolve that? I think we continue to train them,

but we have to give them reasons to stay in the province of Manitoba. By spending the quarter of a billion dollars more than they needed to last year, by, again I suggest this year, I do not believe this Budget will come in balanced. I believe that you will overspend. It is your nature to do that.

We had choices to make. When you look at what reductions you can make in spending or in not spending new revenue, it is not so much about cutting, it is about the choices that the Government makes in spending the new revenue that they have. I think, at one time, there was a figure of so many millions of dollars would reduce the interest paid on the debt and where can that money be used or where can it be spent. It can be spent in tax reductions or some new program spending, but there has to be a balance.

In my opening comments, I talked about spending a quarter of a billion dollars more than you told the people of Manitoba you were going to last year. I talked about a family, of how they make a budget and how they choose to spend it. I talked about a business. They make a budget. They try and live within the budget. In fact, in most cases, they have to because of the fiscal financial restraints that are put upon by lenders. What we have to do is make decisions. I take that same family, and we have used numbers about the highest taxed people in Canada. We know that those numbers are correct. It is not something that we made up. It is something that this Government put in their books.

We know that, if you make a certain amount of money in Manitoba, you are the highest taxed people in Canada, whereas in western Canada, west of Québec, I think there are only two provinces that are higher in that particular tax bracket. But if you took that family and you gave them a million dollars, just gave them a million dollars, they won a lottery. In fact, you can take any lottery winner in the last probably 10 years, and if you read their comments in the paper, what are they going to do with the new-found money. The first thing they say they are going to do is pay off their mortgage, pay down their debt, reduce their costs.

What has this Government chosen to do? Somebody gave them a windfall of money, and

they chose to go out and spend it all. For every dollar in tax relief that they have offered the hardworking people of Manitoba, they have spent six, and that is not sustainable. This Government has failed to realize that.

Again I revert back to this Budget. I mean I do not even know how we can vote on it because it is a moving number. It is a floating target with this Government. They have proven in their first Budget that they cannot live within their means, who is to expect or suggest that they will want to do that in their second Budget? I would say that they will not.

We talk about education, and I touched on that. I talk about I think it is good that our young people have opportunities, and have opportunities to learn, when they are transportable and their professions are so transportable and demand is all over the world. My family had the opportunity to travel to New Zealand last year. While they were there, the states of Texas, Colorado, and there was one other one, and, Mr. Speaker, I forget the name right now, were there recruiting nurses out of New Zealand into the United States. So we know that it is not just a Manitoba issue; we know that it is not just Canadian. It is a worldwide issue. So what do we have to do to continue or maintain our level of professionals and increase it as the demand is there? We have to offer them an opportunity to come and live in our province and work in our province, but also to earn a good living, to make the money that they are entitled to and to make the money that they deserve and to make the money that they could anywhere else in Canada and be competitive. This Budget moves us further and further away from being on equal footing.

We often talk about comparing ourselves, and growing up in a business climate we were always aware of how our competition was doing. We always wanted to do better than our competition, and we always wanted to offer a better product, a better service, a better customer-care package than our competition because that is how we succeeded, how we moved forward, and how we created jobs.

This Government is going absolutely the opposite way. They are giving a signal to the

people of Manitoba that we do not care if we are competitive with the rest of the country, we do not care if we are competitive with the rest of the world. What we will continue to do is pump money into education and training without anything at the other end that would suggest to those young people that after you have this low-cost education, which is good, that we want you to stay in the province of Manitoba. What we are saying is get your education, find a job, and when you do, we will tax you till you want to leave here.

Alberta is positioning itself right now, I believe, to be the retirement capital of the future in Canada because when you look at what people have saved and invested in time and hard work over the last years to prepare for their retirement, where are they going to locate? They are going to look, and they are capable of it because they are at an age where they can, they are going to look at the tax regime in the country where it takes the least amount of taxes away from them.

We look at the paper, I think it was the paper today, *The Globe and Mail*, or it may be yesterday, they talked about the best tax regimes in the world. They looked at their populations, and the amount that they are growing. All those areas, the Cayman Islands, the Bahamas, and several more, the numbers that they are growing by is basically retired foreigners that are taking their money there because they can get it out with the least amount of tax.

* (17:40)

This province has completely ignored that thought, and unfortunately what used to be a Manitoba advantage I believe is going to become a Manitoba disadvantage. It is not just coming from me or from members on this side of the House, but it is coming from all across Manitoba. It is coming from business people. It is coming from people who have spent their lives investing and living in Manitoba and trying to create opportunity in Manitoba. I will tell you, when they start feeling that hurt and that resentment to a government that when they had choices to make chose to spend more and tax more, I think they lose connection with the Government and it becomes easier for them to

lose connection with the province and the loyalty that they have.

There is an article in the *Selkirk Journal* dated April 16. The headline sums it all, I think, up for a lot of people and a lot of people who understand, and it just says: Lame budget makes Saskatchewan the new Joneses, the reference that you are always trying to keep up with the Jones. The writer of the article, I think, makes probably the best point of all, and it has been made to every jurisdiction in Canada. This guy probably feels like he is in an island by himself when he is asking this question or he is making this statement. He says the choice that provinces traditionally face is to either increase the tax rate or increase the tax base. Manitoba has, unfortunately, chose the first option, projecting that competitive rates might be here in four years. That may be too late. I think he is absolutely right, Mr. Speaker.

Here is a young graduate from Saskatoon attending the University of Manitoba and trying to make a decision where he is going to spend maybe a great part of his life. He is looking at those options and he is seeing a government that has basically abandoned him, has said: Regardless of what I tell you I am going to do in my budget document, regardless of whether my colleagues on government stand up and vote and support this document, when we come back in a year and tell you that we have overspent, hah, people will accept that. They will understand that. You know what, if they do not understand it and they start to question it, the only thing we will throw back at them is, well, where would you cut?

It is not about where you would cut. It is about where this Government chooses to spend. They have choices. When you have a windfall and when you have the huge revenues that they have coming in right now, they have a choice. They have chosen to spend the taxpayers' money of Manitoba.

I think back to the election in '99 and then shortly after when we first came into this House. The Premier (Mr. Doer) stood on his haunches and chanted, you know, we have looked in every room in this building, and do you think we could find anywhere near that billion dollars that you

guys talked about in your campaign? Well, according to their own documents they found \$800 million of it in two years. So I would suggest that again this Government has chosen to not tell the people of Manitoba the truth, and they have chosen to spend the hard-earned money that Manitobans contribute through taxes in the ways that they choose to.

Again, by being \$250 million over in their first Budget, what more can we expect, or I guess what less can we expect of this Government in their next Budget. It creates a lot of doubts in people's minds as to the commitment that this Government has and the willingness to take and make the hard decisions. The bottom line for this Government is: I will make it go away by throwing a few million dollars at it.

We have a Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) who is now I think becoming the minister of news releases in the province. He has probably killed a couple of dozen trees presenting news releases, but he has not taken the time to prioritize what he wants for Manitobans and invest the dollars in those priorities. He has broad-based it and painted a brush across Manitoba, and, with the amount of announcements that he has made, the financing will not sustain it. I suspect as time goes by these things will catch up to all members on the opposite side.

I spoke, Mr. Speaker, on a few things, and the Government, they always chant back: Where are you prepared to cut? Well, I am not prepared to talk about where I would cut, but I will tell you where I would spend. Of the \$750 million in new revenue that this Government has had in the last two years, if you reduce corporate income tax by 1 percent, it saves \$26 million, you have still got \$724 million to choose how you want to spend it. You could remove the education support levy, \$98 million; you would still have \$652 million to spend. You could reduce personal income tax by 1 percent. It costs you \$130 million; you would still have \$620 million to spend. You could reduce the sales tax for every paying Manitoban in this province by 1 percent, and it would only cost you \$144 million. It would affect every taxpayer in this province. So those are areas where you could

have made some decisions and chose to make decisions, but you chose not to. You chose to spend it. You chose not to give Manitobans some of their hard-earned money back and the opportunity for them to spend it how they see fit.

So I would say to you, the debate we are having today is all about whether we can trust the Government to bring forward a budget. They have proven in one year that they cannot. They are overspending by a quarter of a billion. I question how much more next year are we going to be talking about? Will it be a half a billion? Will it be three-quarters of a billion dollars that they chose to spend rather than be responsible with the Budget that they are presenting today that they ask all Manitobans to support when they cannot support it themselves because they know it is not the accurate number?

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a matter of House business, I would just like to table the Estimates order.

* * *

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I am pleased to rise to add my comments to the Manitoba Budget speech that was presented by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) last week, but first I would like to start by welcoming back members of the Chamber to the continuation of this particular session. To the table officers and yourself, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with you throughout this session. Also to the pages, who have a new experience in front of them and who will be with us throughout this session, we hope that they have an enjoyable time and learn more about our democratic process inside the province of Manitoba and that they will gain some valuable experiences out of their time with us here in this Chamber.

I would like to start by thanking our Minister of Finance for his Budget that he delivered on behalf of our Government. I am very proud of his efforts in regard to that particular Budget. I do know and I join with my colleague the Member for Elmwood (Mr.

Maloway) when he referenced the fact that last year we thought the Budget was an election budget, and we thought, boy, it is going to be pretty hard to top that act, but I can tell you that we are quite pleased and quite proud of the Budget that our Minister of Finance and our Government has been able to deliver this year. In fact, again, I would say that this is an election budget. I know I echo the comments of my colleague from Elmwood that it is going to be a hard act to follow again next year. I know that we are going to have to work very hard, as we have done over the course of our last 18 months in government.

I would also like to thank the members of the Treasury Board for their significant effort and contribution toward the development of this Budget. I know our caucus colleagues have had the opportunity to add comment throughout the process. I know our Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has travelled throughout the province of Manitoba seeking the opinion of Manitobans with regard to the Budget at the end of last year and into the early parts of this year, but at the end of that process the minister has come back and worked with Treasury Board colleagues and with Cabinet to develop the Budget that we are debating here today. So I would like to thank the members of Treasury Board for the many, no doubt, hundreds of hours that they have had to put into the deliberations in the working toward this Budget for their efforts.

Of course, we have had some announcements that have come about as a result of the Budget document that was released and that there were some issues obviously that were of interest to myself in representing the community of Transcona. I would like to thank the residents of Transcona for their continued support and encouragement that I have had over what is nearly 11 years now. Of course, I have been very pleased to work with them and represent the fine community of Transcona to this Manitoba Legislature.

Now, this Budget, as our Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has indicated, is a balanced budget and is balanced in every sense of the word. I very much like that particular phrase, because I believe that that is what this Budget accomplishes. We have asked that we

have, as my community has said to me and I have relayed to the minister and I know my colleagues have heard from their constituents as well, that they want balanced priorities when the Minister of Finance is preparing to deliver the Budget and in preparing the Budget itself. I think that is what our Minister of Finance has accomplished here.

* (17:50)

We saw, and I can remember back into the 1990s, when the former government had put together its particular budget they had a shell game where they used the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to balance their Budget, so-called, if we can use that term, from one year to the next. They would put money from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund into the operating fund of the province, into the books, and then at the end of that particular fiscal year transfer that money out, hopefully with nobody ever being the wiser. Of course, after a while we caught on to that process, the shell game that they were using to transfer the fiscal stabilization funds.

I can say that in this particular Budget, we have been very straight up with the people of Manitoba and have told them that, yes, we have used money from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and, yes, we have used some of the funds from Manitoba Hydro, but the intended purpose of the hydro export profits that we make in this province is for the benefit of all of the people of Manitoba. That is what our Government is telling the people by investing in the services that the people hold near and dear to their hearts.

Now, I know in Manitoba that education is very, very crucial. We have said quite clearly that education is key. A sound economic education plan is the foundation of a sound economic plan, to quote from the minister's comments. I believe that is quite true. We cannot have an economic strategy in this province without first having a sound education plan for our young people, first to encourage them to complete their education, but then to encourage them to stay and work within the province of Manitoba and to achieve the necessary standard of living that I am sure that we all want for our family members.

Our Government has invested in the last two years, as our Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has said so many times, \$47 million into health care, into education in our province, the largest increase in a decade into public education in our province. I am quite proud that our Minister of Education and our Government has chosen to make that investment into our young people and into the public education system.

My own community of Transcona has achieved an extra million dollars as a result of that investment in our people. I can tell members opposite that I stood up many times in this House as the representative for the community of Transcona when I had to indicate to the Government that you were penalizing the community of Transcona by over 10 percent in the cuts that you made to public education over the course of the last decade, which negatively affected my community of Transcona. I am quite proud that over the course of the last two years our Government has made an increased investment of nearly a million dollars into public education for Transcona. We are proud of that achievement of our Government.

We have made tuition freezes that we had committed during the course of the last election campaign. I know members opposite are perhaps still distressed. They maybe remember this little piece of paper that was distributed to Manitobans, the five commitments that we made. We are working towards keeping those five commitments. We have made significant progress to this point, and we will continue to make progress on that particular issue.

Are we perfect? No, Mr. Speaker, we are not perfect in some of these areas, and we are still continuing to work towards the resolution and to keeping these commitments that we made to Manitobans.

The members opposite reference health care. We have made significant progress. We have made investments into the structures and the facilities. I know the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has just announced last week that we are making an adjustment or an investment into the community of Transcona for a new Transcona Community Health Access Centre. We are proud to be able to announce that to the

people of Transcona and proud that our Minister of Health and our Government has recognized the merit of that particular investment for the community of Transcona. Since the previous government knew that there was a medical need and sat on that proposal for the better part of a decade and did nothing when the health authorities said that we needed to make those particular changes, you decided to penalize the people of Transcona. Our Government has chosen to ensure that those services are provided, and we have committed to building a new structure for the community. I look forward to further announcements to the services that will be contained within that structure and the announcement with respect to the tendering of that particular contract.

With respect to hallway medicine, as the members opposite like to talk about in health care, I can tell the members opposite we are not perfect. We have a way to go in that particular regard, but we have reduced the people that are waiting for health services in our hallways by nearly 80 percent in this province. I know we are not perfect. We have some ways to go. There are days where we have problems and people are in the hallways of our hospitals, but we have made significant progress, and we will be making more progress in that regard as we bring on stream the services that the people of Manitoba want from their health care system.

Yes, we have some work to do, but I can tell you that in 18 months we have made significant progress considering the 10 years that you as a government tore down health care in this province by allowing our doctors, by forcing our doctors to leave the province, by cutting the training programs for our doctors, by firing a thousand nurses, by hiring Connie Curran to undercut the health care system in this province. Now, in 18 months, we have made significant progress to turn around the health care Titanic, to turn around that ship and to make sure that we restore it to its rightful course and that we provide the health care services that the people of Manitoba want.

We have made a significant investment into renewing the hope for our young people as we committed to during the election campaign. We have frozen tuition fees at our colleges and

universities. We have invested \$12 million over the last two years into the bursary programs for our students so that they may achieve and go towards a higher level of learning. In addition to freezing the tuition and adding to the bursary program, we have made \$101 million in capital investments into the post-secondary education infrastructure, something that members of the government opposite allowed to crumble and get run down and move into a deplorable state, where the roofs of the engineering building at the University of Manitoba were leaking and the Government chose to ignore the problem instead of making the necessary investment into that infrastructure and others in the province to make sure that our young people were trained in a safe facility. So I am proud that we have made the investment into education.

Mr. Speaker, we reduced the tuition fees by 10 percent last year. We increased the grants to the universities and colleges, and we have committed to continuing that freeze for this particular year. I have already said we have made the investment, \$31 million, into the Red River College Campus downtown area of Winnipeg, and I know that will help to rejuvenate the centre of Winnipeg, \$15 million to the University of Manitoba, \$14 million to the University of Winnipeg, \$5 million to the University of Brandon and \$1 million to the Collège Universitaire de St. Boniface, of which we are very proud and will help our young people immensely. So we are renewing hope for our young people in this province as we had committed to do in our election campaign, and we will continue to work in that regard for the benefit of our young people.

Now, with respect to the health care, we have made a \$2.6-billion investment this year, 38 percent of our Budget. We had 15 medical spaces that we have expanded to train doctors in this province. We have expanded the nurse training program in this province to bring nurses back into our training program. I listened to the member opposite when he talked about nurses in Texas. I just had a conversation just this past weekend with an individual who had gone down during your government's time, down to Texas to work as a nurse. She is coming back because she has got problems down there with the crime rate down in Texas, so she is coming back to the

province of Manitoba. So it is not all gravy down there as members always make it out to be.

We have bought more CT scanners, and MRI and dialysis machines that we are making an investment into the province of Manitoba. We have expanded the number of emergency vehicles in this province, and we are buying 80 more emergency vehicles. We are trying to contain the spiralling drug costs which I know the members opposite when they supported the Mulroney government and their move to have 20-year patent protection for drugs continues to undermine the Pharmacare program in this province

and every other province of Canada. So we have made also an investment into the Healthy Child Manitoba through Family Services, where we have invested \$5.5 million into the Healthy Child Manitoba program. We have added a further 7.7 percent into child care.*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) will have 28 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 23, 2001

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