

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
First Session—Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 29, 2003

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Supported Living Program

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I wish to present the following petition and these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Caldwell) consider changes to the departmental policy that pays family members a reduced amount of money for room and board when they care for their special-

needs dependants at home versus the amount paid to a non-parental care provider outside the family home.

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

This is presented on behalf of Ernie Penner, Gail Loewen, Abe Loewen, Val Harder and others.

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

Provincial Road 304

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I wish to present the following petition. The background of this petition is as follows:

Provincial Road 304 is the main connector road between Provincial Trunk Highway No. 11 and Provincial Trunk Highway No. 59 for residents in Pine Falls, Powerview, St. George, Great Falls, Manigotagan and Bissett who wish to travel in a southwesterly direction to Selkirk and to Winnipeg.

Provincial Road 304 from Provincial Trunk Highway No. 11 is in a southwesterly direction, is travelled by approximately 1000 vehicles daily and shortens the travel time to Winnipeg by at least 30 minutes.

The 14 kilometres of Provincial Road 304 to the south of Provincial Trunk Highway No. 11 is in very poor condition, has no shoulders and winds among granite outcroppings and through swamps, creating very dangerous and very treacherous conditions for the travelling public.

At least six people have died needlessly in the last eight years on the 14 kilometre stretch of Provincial Road 304 south of Powerview.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Smith) consider rebuilding and reconstructing the 14 kilometres of Provincial Road 304 to the south of Provincial Trunk Highway No. 11 at the earliest opportunity. I request this on behalf of Wendy Lavallee, Gary Schewe and Cynthia Zimmerman.

* (13:35)

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Holocaust Memorial Day

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I have a statement for the House, Mr. Speaker.

On May 1, 2000, members of the Legislature voted unanimously to pass Bill 19, An Act to Proclaim Holocaust Memorial Day. This year Yom Hashoah, which is the Hebrew name for the day, falls on April 29, or as it is known from the Hebrew calendar, 27 Nisan.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read today from the preamble to the bill passed in this Chamber and then ask for a moment of silence after the other leaders have spoken to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust.

WHEREAS the Holocaust refers to a specific event in history, namely the deliberate and planned state-sponsored persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and '45; and

WHEREAS six million Jewish men, women and children perished under this policy of hatred and genocide, one million of which were children; and

WHEREAS millions of others were victims of that policy because of their mental or physical disabilities, their race, religion or sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS the terrible destruction and pain of the Holocaust must never be forgotten; and

WHEREAS the systemic violence, genocide, persecution, racism and hatred continue to occur throughout the world; and

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly is committed to using legislation, education and example to protect Manitobans from violence, racism, hatred and to stopping those who foster or commit crimes of violence, racism and hatred; and

WHEREAS Yom Hashoah or the day of Holocaust as determined in each year of the Jewish lunar calendar is an opportune day to reflect on and educate about the enduring lessons of the Holocaust and to reaffirm a commitment to uphold human rights and the value of the diversity and multiculturalism of Manitoba society.

THEREFORE Her Majesty by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba enacts as follows: Holocaust Memorial Day Yom Hashoah.

Mr. Speaker, again I would ask after the other leaders speak that we would ask all members to join me in a moment of silence.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the First Minister and speak on behalf of our caucus in putting a few words on the record about Holocaust Awareness Week and the Holocaust Memorial Day Yom Hashoah.

This Legislature unanimously passed legislation that officially designated Holocaust Memorial Day. The fact that more than six million Jewish men, women and children were persecuted for their religious and racial origins is unthinkable. Yet, it nevertheless is a fact of our collective history.

The atrocities of World War II, and indeed all wars, must never be forgotten. It is painful to address these issues, but it must be done. It is the only way to work towards ending hate, discrimination and racism. The sad fact of the matter is that systematic genocide, violence,

racism, hatred and persecution continue to occur around the world in spite of our collective efforts to eradicate these horrible incidents.

We wholeheartedly support Holocaust Awareness Week and Holocaust Memorial Day. These events encourage not only remembrance but also education so the past will serve as a lesson for future generations. Perhaps through continued education our children will be able to achieve what other generations have not been able to do, to put an end to systematic violence, genocide, persecution, racism and hatred that continue to occur throughout the world.

We are pleased that Manitoba is one of the provinces that have enacted Holocaust Memorial Day legislation. As legislators, it is important we reaffirm our commitment to uphold human rights and to value the diversity and multiculturalism of Manitoba society.

Canada has a tremendous history of mutual acceptance and tolerance. Commemorating Yom Hashoah will reinforce the commitment of all Manitobans to fight intolerance and racism in their daily lives. As time passes, it becomes increasingly important to preserve the memory and reality of the Holocaust in order to combat few forms of hatred and xenophobia.

*(13:40)

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join the other leaders in remembering the Holocaust and in contributing my words to our joint efforts to decrease racism and to improve human rights in Manitoba and globally. It was a privilege and an honour this morning to be part of the Holocaust awareness program, "Unto Every Person There Is A Name" and to be able to read some 40 or more names into the record to remember these people who perished in the Holocaust.

It is important that we remember what has happened in the past so that we prevent it in the

future. I think all of us can look forward to the day when perhaps not so far in the future, we may even have a human rights museum at The Forks to remember and to help us move forward in ensuring tolerance and ensuring that we have a society that is prepared to speak up continually for human rights.

Mr. Speaker: Would members please rise for a moment of silence?

A moment of silence was observed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 13—The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 13, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la violence familiale et la protection, la prévention et l'indemnisation en matières de harcèlement criminel, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: This bill will allow persons who do not just cohabit but others such as victims of dating violence and other family members, for example, such as seniors, to apply to the court for protection and prevention orders and as well enables a greater access to the protection in that legislation by victims of domestic violence.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Salisbury Morse Place School 22 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. John Thompson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer).

Also in the public gallery we have from Linden Christian School 26 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).

Also in the public gallery from Churchill High we have 15 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Ed Lenzmann. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training (Ms. McGifford).

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

* (13:45)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Taxation Provincial Comparisons

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, heading into the Budget that was just brought down by the Doer government, groups such as the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the CFIB, the Winnipeg and Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, editorial boards were all pleading for this First Minister to provide meaningful tax relief to Manitobans. The Premier had the opportunity to do so and he failed.

In 1999, Mr. Speaker, before he was the Premier, a family of four earning \$40,000 paid \$485 less provincial income tax than the identical family in Saskatchewan. Yet in 2003, under the Doer government, that same family of four earning \$40,000 is paying \$332 more provincial income tax than that identical family living in Saskatchewan. That is a difference of \$817 to the family in Manitoba. Why is the Premier unable to compete even with Saskatchewan?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would know that the 2000 tax tables included all the legacy of the Conservative government in terms of their tax decisions. He would also probably want to reflect on the fact—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, they would probably want to reflect on the fact that in Saskatchewan the Devine government, a Conservative government I might add, eliminated both the property tax credits and the municipal tax-sharing agreements, which constitute in our Budget the municipal tax-sharing agreement is about 79 million. I am looking to our members on that issue and if I recall correctly somewhat over \$160 million on the property tax credit side.

Mr. Speaker, the property tax credit is \$400. The members opposite, when they take the \$400 plus even the example they used from their own tax tables of the past, we would be ahead with the \$400 property tax credit. The members opposite should also know that if they check the last Budget from the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), he said that in Manitoba we have to sustain tax decreases, when he was being criticized by the same group of individuals the member opposite is quoting today, we have to sustain our tax cuts because we in Manitoba not only have to balance our budgets but we also have a schedule, at that point, 75 million, to pay down the debt.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, the debt payment is about 96. In fact, it is exactly 96 million a year. If you look at Manitoba's debt rate of \$6.2 million, if you look at the *Free Press*, from last week's Budget, you will see that Saskatchewan's operating debt is well over 11 billion. Ours is about \$6 billion. Paying down debt, reducing taxes and investing in health and education, that is the way that most Manitoba families want us to bring in budgets. That is what we have done.

I would suggest that members opposite vote for this Budget, they vote for a 6% middle-income tax cut, Mr. Speaker. It is a larger tax cut than they ever brought in themselves when they had the chance to be in office.

* (13:50)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, in 1999, a family of four earning \$60,000 paid \$253 less provincial income tax than an identical family living in Saskatchewan. That is a difference of \$1,195 and that is something that this Premier should reflect upon. Is that what this Premier calls the *Manitoba Advantage*?

Mr. Doer: I know that members opposite cut the property tax credit, which had a particularly tough impact on Manitoba seniors who are on fixed income. They went from \$325 to \$250 and then they called it a spending decrease instead of a tax increase. We introduced a promise in the 1999 election campaign to increase the property tax credit to \$400. They do not have that in Saskatchewan. Four times three is \$1,200, again a higher amount than the member opposite cited.

Mr. Murray: This Premier has provided taxpayers almost no meaningful tax relief since he has come into office. One of the very first actions that they tried to do on the other side was they tried to take credit for an \$80-million tax break that was announced in the 1999 Budget. As well, this Premier denied Manitobans some \$30 million in tax relief that would have flowed as a result of the federal reduction.

The Premier loves to throw around big numbers in the House, but he does not mention the fact that his Government has taken in more provincial income tax than they have offered taxpayers. Why does this Premier insist on making hardworking middle-income Manitobans the highest taxed west of New Brunswick?

Mr. Doer: We have chosen to have a balanced approach between investing in health, investing in education, investing in the future economy, reducing taxes more than twice as much as members opposite, or flattening out the property tax pressure on people that they had increased over time. We will compare every school division with every member, with your increases between 1990 and 1999 and our ability to flatten that out. We are willing to go at every increase in property tax credit with members opposite. Mr. Speaker, \$220 million are our tax decreases and we did not even campaign on it; \$220 million versus \$120 million in their 11 years. We are way ahead of them and we continue to pay down debt. Manitoba's debt rate now is second only to Alberta, and we think that is a balanced way to proceed into the future.

First Nation Casinos Funding

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, both the requests for proposals and the

selection committee report on Native casinos are very clear that the proponent will be responsible for the financing and construction of the project and that equipment must be paid for by the proponent. I would ask the Premier: Has any taxpayer money or general purpose revenue been used to fund Native casinos?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, I am assuming that the member's question is in regard to the development of the Aseneskak Casino in The Pas. That casino is being fully paid for through its own proceeds and the payback of capital to the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the machines which are in that casino. The capital of the casino came from both First Nations who advanced capital as well as from bank financing, and those financings are being paid back through the operational proceeds of the casino.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a Cabinet document and Order-in-Council with the Clerk. This Order-in-Council indicates that upwards of \$5 million was advanced by the Government of Manitoba to pay for the Native-run casinos. The Order-in-Council is clear. It also states that up to \$29 million was budgeted. This Order-in-Council is signed by the Minister of Finance. Can you confirm that this \$5 million, upwards of \$5 million, was used for the construction of that Native casino?

* (13:55)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the simple explanation on that public document, which we made available after Cabinet rendered a decision on what it was, it is a line of credit to facilitate the development of that. A line of credit, as you know, is something that is repayable.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Clearly, this Government is financing the construction and the equipment of Native casinos. Why was that Order-in-Council that was passed in March of 2002 not released until March of 2003? That Order-in-Council was held for one year. What is the reason for that?

Mr. Sale: Well, Mr. Speaker, very interesting to have questions coming from this member when

it was their Government which did not put any of the capital expansion of the casinos in Winnipeg on the books, which hid that money from the people of Manitoba. It is incredible.

I would suggest that the member opposite simply read Item 2. The loans to the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation bear interest at the rates established by the Minister of Finance under The Financial Administration Act. In other words, they are fully funded by the operation of the casino and if they are drawn upon, if they are used, they will be fully paid, Mr. Speaker.

First Nation Casinos Funding

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, May 24, 2000, in this House, the Minister then responsible for Northern and Aboriginal Affairs stated emphatically to this House and the people of Manitoba: "No money will be used by the provincial Treasury in the establishment of these casinos."

Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to table those comments made.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we find out that this Government through an Order-in-Council has authorized the funding of \$5 million to an Aboriginal casino in northern Manitoba. The question today is: Who is telling the truth? Was it the Minister of Northern Affairs then or the new Minister responsible for Gaming? Who is telling Manitobans the truth?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, let me help the member with a bit of orientation around the Criminal Code of Canada. Under the Criminal Code of Canada, the operation of lotteries is under a provincial authority, and the ownership of the gaming equipment must be in the hands of that provincial authority, in this case, the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation purchased machines for the use of Aseneskak. Aseneskak is paying through its proceeds for those machines on a monthly basis. They are current in their payments. They are not behind in their payments. The purpose of

the loan to the Lotteries Corporation which normally makes those kinds of purchases is to give them that authority to do that, which they require under the Criminal Code of Canada.

If he would do his research, he would know that and I would say, again, Mr. Speaker, it would have been really nice if the \$158 million of debt which they incurred for the building of casinos in Winnipeg had been revealed to the public and put on the public debt where it belongs.

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Speaker, therefore, the minister is saying to Manitobans that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs lied to this House and lied to Manitobans back in 2000 when he said no funding was coming from the provincial government to support Aboriginal casinos.

I ask the minister again today: Will he confirm to Manitobans that \$5 million has been allocated to the Aboriginal casino in northern Manitoba and that a total of \$29 million has been allocated to help in the funding of the building and construction of these Aboriginal casinos in Manitoba? Will he just confirm that?

* (14:00)

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, again I would ask the member to read: To make loans to the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. That is to whom the loan was made. What did the minister actually say? The current Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) said: Were the funds from the provincial Treasury to be used to help fund the construction of the casinos? The answer is no. It was no then, it is no now.

They bought machines which are being paid for by the casino because the Criminal Code of Canada with which members opposite should be familiar requires that those machines be owned by the Lotteries Corporation.

Mr. Tweed: What the minister does not get is the fact that he is telling Manitobans one thing and doing another and then saying nobody understands. The report clearly suggests that the MLC will own the gaming equipment but it must be paid for by the proponent.

How does a statement like that coincide with the minister's statement that he said: "No money will be used by the provincial Treasury in the establishment of these casinos"?

Mr. Speaker, the Government is allocating \$29 million to the construction of Aboriginal casinos in Manitoba. When they are talking about health care suffering, when the minister cannot find \$11 million for an immunization program, they are building casinos in northern Manitoba.

Mr. Sale: First of all, I can assure the rather hysterical member that the fact he said no money would be used in the construction, that the machines would have to be owned by the Lotteries Corporation, is absolutely correct. I am glad he has finally got that correct.

I would like him also to understand that every VLT in the province, whether it is in a hotel or a bar or in an Aboriginal community, is owned by the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation, financed by the Lotteries Corporation. The Lotteries Corporation in turn has the ability to have authority to borrow from the Province, like any Crown authority. This is simply the same way we have done business with all corporations.

The member is using the word "lie" from his seat. I think it is inappropriate, given that the facts are clear. No money was used in the construction. The machines are owned by MLC. That was the body to whom the loan was granted, MLC, not the casino. They are current in their loans. They are paying back what they owe.

School Division Amalgamations Salary Harmonization Costs

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, amalgamations of school divisions have cost their local taxpayers millions and millions of dollars. According to the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, school division amalgamation was legislated without a plan and without consideration of the financial consequences of the merger. Today school divisions are facing millions of dollars of new costs which are being passed on to the local ratepayers.

Will the Minister of Education today commit to paying the costs of harmonizing wage settlements in all of the amalgamated school divisions, as he did in the case of the dispute in the Sunrise School Division?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Education and Youth): It is a pleasure for me to address the question from the member opposite. As a government, we put a number of dollars forward, \$3.6 million with regard to helping divisions with amalgamation. We realized that all the benefits from amalgamation would not happen overnight, but what is a really important point to make with regard to taxation, which the members opposite often like to throw jabs about around the Legislature, I just want to clarify a couple of points for the members opposite.

In Springfield alone, between 1990 and 1999, taxes increased by \$428. Under our Government, the taxes have decreased by \$58. If there is anything smelling a little bit fishy, and that the member opposite from Springfield often likes to make reference to, it is that those taxpayers in Springfield have to put up with a \$428 tax increase from the 1990s from the Tory government at that time.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I wish the minister would focus his attention on the question and answer the question that was asked.

Can the minister explain to this House and to Manitobans why he intervened by providing direct cash in a wage dispute between a school division and its unions and has not provided any direction with regard to harmonization of salaries in other school divisions that have experienced amalgamation?

Mr. Lemieux: I mentioned in my previous answer the benefits of amalgamation are going to happen. We realize that it takes a number of years for these benefits to take place. We understand that and I am sure the member opposite in Russell understands it does take some time.

When you want to talk about taxation and what happens with the results of taxation, and they like to compare what has happened before and now, and I would like to be clear about this.

So I would like to reference, for example, in the Russell area, taxes went up by \$234 from 1990 to 1999 during the previous government, and the taxes have decreased by \$190 under our Government.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister again how he can justify interfering in a collective bargaining process. This is a collective bargaining process between a union and a school board. How can this minister justify interfering in a collective bargaining process just prior to the potential election call when in fact he has been caught in an embarrassing situation in terms of the amalgamation and its costs, where other school divisions are now ringing the phones off the wall asking us whether the minister, in fact, will do the same for them as he did for Sunrise?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, what is embarrassing is when you take a look at the increase in—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker, the member from Springfield often likes to chirp around the Legislature. Let him go back and explain why the taxes increased \$428 from 1990 to 1998.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind all honourable members that decorum is very important in this House. We have guests in the gallery, we have the viewing public and time is scarce for Question Period. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to be fair to the member from Springfield. He was not part of the previous government but having said that, the facts do speak for themselves. If he wants to be fair about it, take a look at the record, and the record is clear. Also, the member from Lac du Bonnet should take a look at the increase in Agassiz, \$343 increase from 1990 to 1999. So both of those members opposite should take a look at the facts and they will see what happened to education with regard to under the Tories compared to us, and we win, hands down.

*(14:10)

Education Support Levy Elimination

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, the records show that this Government has broken its election promise from 1999 to eliminate the Education Support Levy in years three and four of its mandate. The Doer government's all-time low funding of the operating costs of public education is at 57.5 percent. This minister's piecemeal approach to the ESL has done nothing for the property owners of the school divisions of Manitoba. Does the minister not recognize that his off-loading has simply resulted in forcing cash-starved school divisions to turn to property owners to make up for his funding shortfall in this province?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Education and Youth): Mr. Speaker, taking a look at the overall spending with regard to our Government, there has been approximately a \$300-million increase with regard to spending in our Government. Under the Tory regime there was \$100-million cut in the 1990s.

The member opposite raises a couple of points with regard to education funding. The ESL on residential properties, we made a commitment we would certainly be looking at that area and we have addressed it. Mr. Speaker, \$27 million over the last couple of years is a great, great advantage for the taxpayer. You know, it is around \$61 on a \$100,000 home. Plus our Education Property Tax Credit that we give is a real benefit for taxpayers in Manitoba.

Overall spending with regard to education: when you take a look at the pensions that our Government pays for, we pay for capital costs as well as operational. It is around 73 percent of educational spending. We are very, very proud of our record. We have a lot more work to do. We do not have it perfect but we continue to work every day to address the 1990s that were put before us.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that he has not been working hard enough at that election promise. Why does this minister continue to defend this position when it is offloading on all the property owners of

Manitoba? He knows full well that their collective property tax bill in the province of Manitoba for all taxpayers has continued to increase this year.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, the numbers that I have before me, every division that we take a look at with regard to the members opposite, as the Premier mentioned before, any day we want to compare and have a debate with regard to taxation, in the 1990s and what the previous Tory government laid on the taxpayers, it is sinful what they did to the taxpayers of Manitoba. Not only did they tax them to death, they let the schools run down. We have mould, leaky roofs in schools, everywhere across the province, every corner of the province. They should be embarrassed by what they did to the public education system in the 1990s.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, this minister's song and dance has done nothing for the property owners of this province: 14% increase in Transcona, 13 percent this year in St. James, a 30% increase in Brandon since 2000. Why has he broken his Leader's election commitment to eliminate the Education Support Levy in Manitoba by now?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I recommend strongly that members opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the promise in the election campaign was to increase in our first Budget the property tax credit by an increase of \$75 which would be subtracted off the property tax bill. We promised it; we delivered it. In the second year, the promise was to increase it again to \$75 to go ultimately for the Tory number of \$250 to \$400. We promised it. We delivered it in our second Budget.

Our third Budget we promised, if finances allowed, we would phase down the ESL. We did that in Budget three and Budget four. We have gone from \$97 million on the property tax homeowner's side down \$27 million. We promised in year three and year four we would phase that down. We delivered it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If members wish to have a conversation, we have lots of room in the loge, lots of room in the hallway. Right now, the honourable Member for River Heights has the floor.

I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Wuskwatim Hydro Project Environmental Assessment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, members of this Legislature have noted the flip-flopping and dippy-doodling that the NDP government has done on the licensing process for Wuskwatim Dam.

I would ask the minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board to explain the Government's flip-flop on the question of a review by the Public Utilities Board of the Wuskwatim Dam.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the fact that we have an agreement between ourselves and the federal government for the first time ever to have a comprehensive Clean Environment Commission review to look at demand-side and the results of the demand-side saving, to look at the whole issue of the potential windmill megawatts that will be generated and, thirdly, to look at the Wuskwatim Dam and its impact both environmentally and financially here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we believe strongly that the federal and provincial governments should be involved in a comprehensive hearing. Secondly, we also believe strongly that we should just not look only at a dam, but we should look at all the sources of renewable energy. For the first time ever, I am proud that our ministers have come forward with that idea.

We also believe that the public must understand and know the law in terms of rates. The PUB is charged with the issue of rates. We wanted to make it perfectly clear that this would be referred to the PUB.

We have confidence, Mr. Speaker, in what we are doing. We have confidence by the procedures we are taking. For the first time ever in Manitoba, we will have a comprehensive federal-provincial review. We believe that is a very positive idea.

Mr. Gerrard: It is odd to have a comprehensive review and then backtrack and have a PUB.

Mr. Speaker, I table documents which are from the Public Registry which are letters written by an ADM in the Department of Conservation indicating very clearly that the Government was committed to a PUB review, very firmly, sometime ago, and this decision to reverse that has created problems.

I ask the Premier: Is the real reason for the flip-flop not a realization that the clear commitments in these documents to a PUB review might have led to legal challenges and additional delays to the Wuskwatim hearings if the PUB were excluded from the review?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, if you will look at Hansard from a year ago, I said that there would be a PUB review of Wuskwatim. I also said we were looking at the sequencing of environmental hearings and the requirement on rates dealing with the PUB. That was in May of 2002. You did not need to get a letter that came after that. It was right here in the House.

We think it is a positive way to proceed under the Clean Environment Commission. It is different than the past, getting a comprehensive federal-provincial licensing process that looks both at need and impact. At the same time, we think it is very, very positive. It is very consistent with the COSDI recommendations to the Government, and it is the first time we have been able to actually implement it in a comprehensive way with the federal jurisdiction.

We think this is good for the federal government. We think it is good for First Nations that are involved in this proposal. We think it is good for Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, if we are talking about clarifying how we are going to get something approved, at least we know what we want to do.

We believe that hydro should be used for the benefit of all the public, and we believe as a government in building hydro. We never called Limestone lemonstone like the Liberal Party. We know what we are going to have to do to build Manitoba, and, if an approval process needs some clarity in terms of the process, the approval process, we think the process we have established makes a lot of sense for Manitoba.

* (14:20)

Red River Floodway Expansion Environmental Review

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): This constantly switching horses in midstream is creating confusion. I asked the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Ashton) in my supplementary to tell the House the process and timing of the environmental review of the expansion of the Red River Floodway, or is this process going to be wrapped in a similar level of confusion as the assessment process for Wuskwatim Dam?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should understand that people actually keep track of what he is saying and his party is saying in one community to another. I recall 18 months ago the only party in Manitoba that did not support the floodway expansion option was the single Liberal member. His party is selling Liberal memberships to stop the expansion of the floodway and promising in the election in Selkirk to stop the expansion of the floodway in Selkirk.

In Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, they are calling on us to do it quicker. Remember when a year ago they were calling on us to build the floodway expansion quicker. He did not say get the environmental assessment. He has two different positions 30 miles apart. He should be accountable for his confusion.

Bridging Generations Program Update

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): Mr. Speaker, all of us on this side of the House, including our newest addition to this side of the House, are very concerned that we enact legislation and take an approach to encourage young

farmers and beginning farmers to stay on the land.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Can she tell the House what the Government has been doing to increase the number of young and beginning farmers in rural Manitoba?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question because it is a very important issue. When we came into office we recognized that there was an aging farm population and that there was great difficulty with the transfer of the land to the next generation. We brought in place a program called Bridging Generations, which the member opposite, who is my critic, thought that program was quite a joke.

Well, I can tell you that since the program began in April of 2002, we have approved 123 loans for a total of \$14.5 million and approximately 75 percent are farms transferring within the family. We recognize that there are young people that want to get into agriculture and we are working with them, but I want to also tell my colleague and members of the House that members opposite talk about people leaving Manitoba. I want to tell them that farmers are coming to Manitoba. Farmers from Alberta and Saskatchewan are buying land in Manitoba because there are some difficulties with moisture. They recognize the quality of our crops in this area and those people are coming to Manitoba.

Sunrise School Division Salary Harmonization Costs

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, it was reported in the *Winnipeg Free Press* yesterday that the Government gave Sunrise School Division \$85,000 to help settle the strikes of employees represented by two unions at the school division. My question to the Minister of Education is this: Given the fact that the Government has provided money to settle the strike of two unions at the division, will the minister provide more money to harmonize the contracts of the employees in the remaining 11 unions who will be negotiating later this year, or

will the minister simply let the cost of salary harmonization fall upon the backs of property taxpayers in the division?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Education and Youth): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised the member opposite can actually ask that question with a straight face and talk about the taxpayers in the same breath.

Mr. Speaker, when we take a look at the Lac du Bonnet area, the former Agassiz School Division, there is a \$343 tax increase in the 1990s laid on the heads of the taxpayers in that particular school division, and he actually has the nerve to ask the question with a straight face about taxpayers in the region.

Overall we have been very, very supportive of amalgamation. We know the benefits are going to accrue over a number of years and over a period of time. This Government has continually worked with the school divisions, the amalgamated divisions, to work through some of the challenges that they had. We will always be there with them. We are there with the parents. We are there with the children of the school division. We are happy to see the strike over, not like the member opposite, who would like to see that strike just continue day and day and day after day.

School Division Amalgamations Salary Harmonization Costs

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): The taxpayers, the property taxpayers in River East constituency and the River East-Transcona School Division have asked—[interjection] Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious question. The taxpayers, the property taxpayers in my constituency are asking for answers, not arrogance, from government.

We know that forced amalgamation of River East-Transcona School Division is going to cost the taxpayers \$2 million more, not less, as a result. The question that my property taxpayers are asking is: Are they going to be treated like second-class citizens by this Government or are they going to be given the same consideration as Sunrise School Division was given, and is money going to be provided by this Government

to ensure that my taxpayers are treated the same as others in this province?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Education and Youth): I do not often make comments about others' research teams, but, Mr. Speaker, had they done the research, and the member opposite from River East, had she been so caring in the 1990s, would have certainly taken a look at a \$301 increase to the taxes over the 1990s. Also, in Transcona there was a \$428 increase over the 1990s.

Our Government has taken a serious, serious look at taxation. We have looked at ESL. We have the property tax credit in place. We are certainly, I believe, in sync with the taxpayers of Manitoba with regard to taking a look at the way we approach taxation with regard to education and education funding. We have been able to keep up the programs. We have put more money into capital programs than they ever did and we continue to grow. We work every day. We are not perfect, but we continue to improve the education system every year.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Legacy of Honour Dinner

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday I had the very great pleasure of attending the Legacy of Honour dinner that was held by the Churchill Bulldogs Alumni of Churchill High School. That dinner was put together to honour the football program at the Churchill High School, which has been in existence since 1961 and whose motto is "Pride and Tradition."

It was an evening attended by over a hundred people from the community and alumni of the school celebrating the wonderful program and the wonderful experience that many of us enjoyed while playing Bulldogs football. It was an evening of regaling of old tales, certainly recounting the innumerable trouncings that we gave to St. Paul's or to Kelvin or to many other

schools in Winnipeg. Many chants of "Bulldogs rule" were heard throughout the evening.

It was a wonderful evening celebrating former players who have been nominated to Churchill's Hall of Fame as well as builders. I would like to indicate for the record that those inducted into the Hall of Fame were honoured builders: Bill Madder, who was the vice-principal from 1956-62 and principal from 1965-80; Art Bryant, the head coach from '61 to '62; John Puchniak, head coach from '65 to '70; and Brian Dobie, head coach from '75 to '95; as well as players Roman Kopchuk, Jamie Horne, Barry Heindl, Rick Hiebert, John Nelson, Alun Bowness, Pernell Johnston and Kevin Gauthier, all inducted into the Churchill Bulldogs Hall of Fame.

* (14:30)

I would indicate, Mr. Speaker, that program has won six provincial championships and been involved in four others, 10 championships in a span of 42 years. Quite a record for a school which is smaller in proportion than population, and I would just like to once again say Bulldogs rule.

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending John Taylor's play, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* last week and it was an exceptional performance. Over 125 students participated from six different schools. It was an amazing performance, great talent, great performance from all the characters, the narrators, et cetera. It was an amazing group and I must congratulate all those students involved in addition to the teachers and all the people who supported it.

Last night I also had the pleasure of attending the John Taylor family concert, Shine On Music. This family concert had students from Crestview intermediate choir, Crestview boys choir, Voyageur Elementary School, Phoenix Grades 4 and 5 choir, Ness Grades 6 and 7 vocal jazz, Ness Middle School Grade 7 jazzers and again John Taylor High School. It was amazing. The performances were excellent,

students were talented and showed amazing poise and confidence.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the school division for their excellent music program, for the music teachers, administration staff and volunteers who spent many hours working with the students to develop their skills and talents, the parents who have supported their children and nurtured their talents and all the students who have developed skills of co-operation, self-confidence and music.

I believe that this shows how this province has indeed a very, very bright future. They have done an excellent job. Again tonight there is another school production where Buchanan, Lakewood, Hedges and John Taylor are performing. I think what we have to do is work cooperatively with government, parents and schools to ensure that we have the programs to support those students, to build the confidence and skills that we need in the future. Congratulations to all the students. It was a very enjoyable evening where everyone had a great time. Thank you very much and keep up the excellent work.

Beausejour Area Sporting Events

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate and thank the committees of the 2003 Western Canada Summer Games, the 2004 Scott Tournament of Hearts and the 2006 Manitoba Winter Games for choosing Beausejour as the site for part of the 2003 Western Canada Summer Games, the 2006 Manitoba Winter Games and the entire site for the 2004 Scott Tournament of Hearts. I congratulate the volunteer committees within our community who made the presentation for each of these events in the town of Beausejour, the rural municipality of Brokenhead, Tyndall and Garson for supporting each of these events and bringing our recreational facilities and our excellent volunteer base to the attention of the entire province.

The new Sungro Centre in Beausejour is Manitoba's newest and one of Manitoba's finest ice facilities in the province, and this facility was built largely without the participation of

provincial government funding, which is clearly indicative of the resolve and the commitment of our community and our volunteers.

The Beausejour, Brokenhead, Tyndall and Garson area has a history of organizing and supporting major sporting events. The area recently hosted the 41st Annual Canadian Power Toboggan Championship races. For 41 years in a row our community has hosted this national event. I do not believe there is another community in Canada that can boast hosting a national sporting event 41 years in a row.

This is certainly a testament to our community and to the volunteers in our community who dedicate themselves to ensure that our community is a better place to live, to work and to raise our children. We have some of the finest volunteers in the province who dedicate themselves to the events that are organized in our community year after year. Volunteers provide an identity to every community and the identity provided to the communities of Beausejour, Brokenhead, Tyndall and Garson by our volunteers is one of caring, compassion and community spirit, and for that I thank them.

Care-a-Lot Nursery

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to visit the Care-a-Lot Nursery Centre at 829 Watt Street along with the Family Services and Housing Minister (Mr. Caldwell) and the Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh).

Mr. Speaker, before I say more, I must first commend the board and staff at the Care-a-Lot Nursery Centre for the high quality of care the children receive. Through the fundraising program, the board and staff have created a fine playground with all the new play structures. All the rooms at the centre were neat and tidy, with all the necessary supplies. It is a well-run centre.

Also, as the MLA for Rossmere, I appreciate the open line of communication that has developed between the Rossmere constituency office and the executive director of the Care-a-Lot Nursery Centre, Lorraine Maskiw. It is appreciated when the executive director brings forward concerns that day care centres face. I

commend the centre for all the good work they are doing for children.

During the visit to Care-a-Lot Nursery, the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Caldwell) announced:

Support for the Child Day Care Program will increase by \$6 million or 8.6 percent. In the past four budgets, the Manitoba government has increased funding for child care by over \$22 million or 41.5 percent to improve salaries, provide additional subsidies, increase the number of funded spaces and bring more children with disabilities into the system.

Funding for children and adults with disabilities will increase by an additional \$29 million or 10.2 percent.

All families with children under 18 receiving income assistance will receive the full National Child Benefit Supplement. The Manitoba Government has been restoring the National Child Benefit Supplement since 2000, and when fully implemented, it will result in \$13.7 million in additional support.

Support for the Applied Behaviour Analysis program will double to \$2 million, benefiting all pre-schoolers with autism currently on a waiting list.

We are committed to supporting the priorities of Manitobans and the values they place on strengthening families and building communities. We have made good progress but must continue to help people achieve their fullest potential.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is dedicated to the goals of early childhood development.

Manitoba Hydro

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make some comments about Manitoba Hydro and some of the issues that I see around hydro, but, more importantly, I would like to remind everybody in this House that Manitoba Hydro is a business like no other. It operates in a monopoly provider position while at the same time it is severely regulated and operates in a controlled environment.

Mr. Speaker, what we have seen in the last six months from this Government has been, while some would say confusing, I suggest perhaps deliberately confusing, when we see the Minister of Energy (Mr. Sale), who mused out loud about nation building because there was one line in the Ontario budget about the potential purchase of hydro-electric power and then mused again about a process which was entirely a step in the other direction from all indications the Government has put forward on how it would manage the process for this Crown corporation for any future potential significant investments, which we have now seen flipped back again, flip-flopped, if you will, now saying that the Public Utilities Board was intended all along to be responsible for any financial review of the impact of construction.

Mr. Speaker, what we have seen is the oldest game in the history of mankind, bait-and-switch. The shell game is another way of referring to it, where you have the people most affected guessing under which shell the process might pop up, and what we have seen is, oh, guess wrong, you are out.

So, Mr. Speaker, the future of this Crown is put in jeopardy, and I am sorry to see it happen.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before going to Orders of the Day, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us Councillor Jae Eadie, who is a councillor in the City of Winnipeg.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the Government, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the

Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), and the debate remains open.

Order. The honourable Member for Lakeside, on a point of order?

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): I wish to speak on the Budget debate, Sir.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker: First of all, I would like to draw the attention of all members that under our new rules it stipulates that the Speaker shall go back and forth. It is in our new rules. Also, to inform the honourable Member for Lakeside, you have already spoken on the Budget debate. That should take care of the matter.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I would like to thank you for the opportunity of speaking on the Budget, Mr. Speaker.

Let me begin here. I would like to thank the service of members. I do not know if I will have an opportunity later on to do this, so I will do it now. I would like to thank the members for their service in this Legislature, for serving Manitobans to the best of their ability.

Our colleagues on this side of the House: the Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli); the Member for Wolseley, our Deputy Premier and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister (Ms. Friesen); and the Member for Inkster, the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Barrett), all of whom will not be seeking re-election, and the recent departure of the Member for Riel (Ms. Asper). I believe that all of these individuals have served our Legislature to the best of their ability and have served Manitobans generally in the work that they did here.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge and thank the members for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner), and especially to my good friend, the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura). I believe that these four people have served our province to the best of their ability, both within government and outside of government in opposition. They should be proud of the record. All

members in this Legislature should be equally as proud of the efforts they have put in on behalf of our fellow citizens.

The reasons I got involved in government, Mr. Speaker, were manifold. Let me say that the real reason was to make a real difference for Aboriginal people in this province and the people that live in this province, that is, all the people of Manitoba. I believe we have done our best on this side to make a difference over the past four years. We are proud of our record. Some will be critical of that and I respect that.

However, I think we have increased private investment. We have restored some pride into the democratic process. We have restored some understanding for people generally about the political process in our province.

I want to say we have doubled the annual rate of job creation as well. The average is now 8000 new jobs per year. The number of jobs created last year was 9100. Our unemployment rates for all our people and, especially, for young people has been the lowest or second lowest in Canada. Many more young people are working today. Fewer Manitobans have needed income assistance since 1999.

I do agree that more has to be done. I believe that, for many of us, we will only be comfortable when these numbers include First Nation communities.

The 2003 Budget allows us to continue that work towards a better lifestyle for all Manitobans, generally. I want to talk a little bit this afternoon in my capacity as the Minister responsible for Culture, Heritage and Tourism and, to a degree, the Minister responsible for Sport as well. I am proud of the important role that my department has played so far in creating a climate for healthy individuals, people, families and communities. We support a broad range of cultural, arts, heritage, recreation, library and tourism services which we believe benefit Manitobans and their communities.

Last week, I was pleased to announce the first increase in a decade to the arts and cultural industries totalling \$1.5 million. As well, I was pleased to announce additional funding to rural

and northern public libraries. This budget investment adds an additional \$750,000 in the promotion and marketing of tourism in our province and takes advantage of some unique opportunities, and to help refine an Aboriginal tourism strategy. This Budget also provides support for skills training and implementation expenses required by an Aboriginal tourism strategy.

We have increased funding for our Community Places Program and given it more ability to create new jobs and economic activity in the construction industry while recognizing the role of recreational facilities in healthy and productive communities.

This Budget builds on an important element as well, the accomplishments of our Government over the past four years, and supports the important ongoing work of the department that I am responsible for. Since 1999-2000, Manitoba has invested nearly \$128 million in operating project and capital grants to the arts, cultural industries, public libraries and heritage communities, an average of about \$33 million a year. Among the provinces, Manitoba has the second-highest per capita arts funding in Canada, and also our department is very proud that we support the sustainable development of Manitoba's arts and cultural communities. Creativity, identity and well-being of Manitobans are directly related, and the arts also contribute to Manitoba's economic viability and global profile.

Art is a good thing in itself. Studies tell us that there is a demonstrated effectiveness on the economic value of the arts. We know that arts and culture contribute at least \$22 billion to the Canadian economy annually. Over 13 million Canadians each year attend live dance, theatre, opera and music performances, and we believe that this is positive. Many studies have shown that participation in the arts makes people happier, healthier, both physically and psychologically, and exposure to the arts enhances children's ability to learn and can help to develop the habit of critical thinking, an essential ingredient for true democracy.

Manitobans are rightly proud of the rich and diverse cultural life of this province, and we are

very proud to play a role, I believe an important role, in supporting all those working within it. Highlights of our funding program for the arts include the annual funding provided to the Manitoba Arts Council to enable provision of operating and project grants to performing, visual and literary arts organizations and individual artists. With the recently announced increase of \$500,000, Manitoba Arts Council funding is at about \$8.7 million annually.

In the past year, the Manitoba Arts Council awarded 314 grants to individual artists and supported 89 professional arts organizations. An example of their innovative work is the recent establishment and distribution of the first Arts Award of Distinction. The Manitoba Arts Council funding in this Budget also supports many other worthwhile yet less visible projects. For example, through their Community Connections Program, the Manitoba Arts Council have piloted three grant programs specifically designed to meet the particular needs of Aboriginal artists. They have awarded 37 student bursaries and supported arts training schools and arts service organizations.

My department is pleased to be working with the Manitoba Arts Council, the City of Winnipeg and the Government of Canada to restore stability to one of our flagship cultural institutions, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. Through our partnership, we have appointed an interim management committee to manage the affairs of the WSO and to bring forward recommendations to the funders which will ensure that the WSO continues to pay for future generations.

Manitoba is recognized as a leader in the Canadian and international arts community. To sustain that leadership, we believe in providing operating grants to a number of major cultural organizations, including the Manitoba Centennial Centre, the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Manitoba Museum and the Western Manitoba Centennial Auditorium. We believe the total of these grants averages about \$7.9 million annually, but we believe that this is truly a wise investment.

Cultural capital grants average approximately \$1 million annually. These funds have supported urgent capital repairs to the Winnipeg

Art Gallery, the Centennial Concert Hall, the Manitoba Museum and the multi-year renovation to the Western Manitoba Centennial Auditorium in Brandon.

* (14:50)

We have recently completed a five-year, \$2-million commitment to the Manitoba Theatre Centre to help refurbish and upgrade the 30-year-old facilities.

The Province provides annually over \$1.3 million to support a variety of cultural festivals throughout our province, including the Winnipeg and Brandon Folk Festivals, the Festival du Voyageur, the Winnipeg International Children's Festival, the Fringe, Jazz and New Music festivals and others.

Our commitment as a government of \$1 million over five years to Arts Stabilization Manitoba is reflected in this Budget as well, Mr. Speaker, and we are very proud of that. Funded by the three levels of government and the private sector, Arts Stabilization Manitoba provides technical and financial assistance to Manitoba arts organizations to enhance sustainable business planning and governance practices resulting in fiscal stability.

This Budget includes an annual grant of \$75,000 to the Manitoba Arts Network to support touring development and delivery in rural and northern Manitoba. Enhanced provincial support has leveraged federal funding of over \$150,000 towards this initiative.

This Budget also contains significant support for Manitoba's cultural industries: film and video, sound recording, publishing, visual arts, crafts and new media. In 2000-2001, the Government of Manitoba approved a five-year economic growth and development strategy to support cultural industries in our province. We believe this strategy incorporates a variety of delivery mechanisms, including recoupable investment programs, one-time grants, increased annual operating assistance, marketing and professional skills and technological upgrading. The initiative is designed to help companies promote production, improve marketing

capabilities, increase earned revenues and develop employment opportunities.

Over the past two decades, Manitoba's book-publishing industry has increased more than sevenfold in sales and now has nearly \$4 million in gross revenues. Our Government is pleased to support this flourishing industry. Our Budget contains and extends continued support to Manitoba's book publishing programs to foster growth and development in the industry. The department also supports an industry-wide initiatives program administered by the association on behalf of its member publishers.

The department invests over \$200,000 annually in the marketing of Manitoba books, professional skills upgrading, the purchase and/or the upgrading of publishing technologies and industry-wide initiatives such as Manitoba Book Week and prairie book week, Prairie Books.

Manitoba boasts a diverse range of successful book publishers including three Francophone publishers, two Aboriginal publishers, a publisher specializing in educational learning and resource materials, a publisher of children's literature, and many more. Manitoba publishers work to develop Manitoba writers, and many of these writers have gone on to be nominated for and/or to win such acknowledgments of excellence as the Governor General's Award, Stephen Leacock Award and the Chalmers Canadian Play Awards, among many others.

On behalf of the Province, the Manitoba Film and Sound Development Corporation delivers film, sound and new media funding support to Manitoba companies. With the announced increase in this year's Budget, Manitoba Film and Sound will now receive an annual grant of just under \$3.4 million.

In 2002-2003, the Manitoba Interactive Media Fund was established, administered by Manitoba Film and Sound. The three-year \$900,000 fund will provide assistance to Manitoba's new media companies for product development, professional development and marketing assistance.

Portfolio investment envelopes, the PI funds in the order of \$775,000 were initiated. PI funding is broken into support for three cultural sectors: \$300,000 to film; \$300,000 to sound; and \$175,000 to publishing. PI funding is based on three- to five-year business plans and is designed to support the growth and development of Manitoba companies. The PI program is designed to assist companies with professional development and skills upgrading, artist promotion and development, business growth opportunities and marketing capabilities.

The Manitoba Film and Video Production Tax Credit program has provided over \$12 million in tax credit to Manitoba production companies since 1998. In 2002-2003, a special review committee worked with the industry to revise the tax credit program guidelines to accelerate the capacity to process claims in a more efficient manner.

In addition to direct and indirect supports to the professional arts community and the cultural industries, the department also assists a number of community-based and amateur arts organizations throughout the province, including annual operating grants to 20 community arts councils throughout the province. Since 1999-2000 new councils have been established in Morden, Melita, Rossburn and St. George.

I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, to speak about the important role that my department plays in helping to create a climate for healthy people, families and communities. My department supports the local, regional and provincial support and recreation delivery systems and works in strong partnership with those delivery systems to create opportunities for Manitobans to be physically active, productively engaged in leisure activity of all kinds, and gainfully involved as volunteers in their communities.

The benefits of sport and recreation to the individual have long been recognized. I was pleased to agree, along with my counterparts across Canada, to the goal to increase physical activity in each province and territory by 10 percent by 2010. We have the delivery systems in place in Manitoba to achieve that goal and the positive contribution that this increase in physical activity can have on our health, justice and social service systems is significant.

In addition to increasing opportunities for Manitobans to be physically active, it is also important to consider many other interests that we share. Manitoba has 87 rural and northern libraries. The city of Winnipeg public library system reaches into every neighbourhood in this city. Today's libraries still include books, magazines and newspapers, but they also include film, sound, large print, Braille books, along with multilingual materials. A new and emerging role is that of community access centres for computer access. Any Manitoban with an interest in using a public computer can log on at their community library and access information through the Internet. Manitoba public libraries serve over 920 000 Manitobans each year with collections that hold over 4 million items in over 30 languages. In 2001, more than 8.5 million items were lent to Manitobans.

As I mentioned earlier, we have proposed a \$300,000 increase to rural and northern libraries. This will allow us to address the funding rate for the first time since 1994. We will be proposing an increase in the matching formula and increases to the collection, development and access grant for each library or bookmobile. We recognize the increased demands made by technology and infrastructure on rural libraries. As a result, the increased per capita grant will allow the libraries to meet the needs and demands of the public for public Internet access, skills development and community partnerships breaking down financial barriers through free access and information, both print and electronic. Public libraries are the community's access point to lifelong learning and are recognized as one of the most important public services as well, Mr. Speaker.

If I may, I would like to turn over to the area of Community Places, important to community, cultural and leisure activity of all kinds. It is the availability of safe public facilities to house the programs and services. Increased funding to the Community Places Program recognizes the role of recreational facilities in healthy and productive communities. This expansion of the Community Places Program is a priority not only for this Government, but also for the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and other community advocacy groups.

Increased funding to Community Places positions the program to meet a growing demand for assistance to Manitoba non-profit organizations as they develop and improve the province's recreational facility infrastructure. Projects funded through Community Places touch the lives of virtually every Manitoban through initiatives as diverse as beach and boating facilities, libraries, arts centres, senior activity centres, community stages, arenas, recreational trails and day care facilities.

* (15:00)

Community Places funds an average of 219 community projects per year throughout our province. Community Places funded projects leverage approximately \$6 in new spending for every \$1 of provincial money invested. In the coming year, Community Places funded projects will stimulate the Manitoba economy with construction industry spending of approximately \$20.1 million. In the coming year, Community Places funded projects will create approximately 6000 work weeks of employment for 1600 Manitobans.

Briefly, tourism, we feel, is also a very important part of Manitoba's economy because it contributes over \$1.3 billion annually in revenues, or about 3.5 percent of our gross domestic product. Tourism contributes more than \$3.5 million each day to Manitoba's economy. Recent statistics show that the efforts of Manitoba's tourism operators, councils, committees and government are working. Tourism revenues have increased by 28 percent from \$1 billion in 1999 to nearly \$1.3 billion in 2001. Over a half-billion dollars of these revenues are export dollars from out-of-province markets.

We are also aware of many of the other benefits a healthy tourism industry provides Manitobans. Tourism is often the focal point for community development and stimulates growth in arts, culture, heritage and recreational products.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the importance of the tourism industry in terms of jobs. Approximately one in ten employees in Manitoba works in a tourism-related job, particularly in the accommodation,

transportation, food and beverage areas. One in ten employees translates into more than 60 000 full- and part-time jobs across the province.

Events such as the September 11 incident in 2001, the war in Iraq and, most recently, health issues related to SARS have affected the tourism industry worldwide. While Manitoba has experienced growth and relative stability in tourist arrival, we are in a sensitive period. Currently, we are in discussions with provincial colleagues and the federal government, the federal Minister responsible for Tourism, the Honourable Allan Rock, about tourism strategies for the coming high-travel season.

Our research indicates that the neighbouring U.S., Saskatchewan, Ontario offer the greatest potential for growth in the short term. Americans are shifting their travel patterns to shorter haul vacations by car, creating new opportunities for Manitoba to tap into the upper midwest U.S. markets. The Canada-U.S. exchange rate is also in our favour. We believe that by promoting the purchasing power of the American dollar in Manitoba, we will attract new visitors to Canada. We also know that if Canadians will be travelling closer to home, there is money in this Budget for strong, focussed tourism marketing in partnership with the tourism industry to take advantage of these new opportunities.

As the minister responsible in this department, we are committed to the creation of a strong Aboriginal tourism sector. Our department is taking the lead in the development of a new strategy that will identify opportunities for Aboriginal people to gain business opportunities and employment in the tourism industry. The strategy will address a growing market demand for Aboriginal products. To ensure that this new strategy represents the interests of Aboriginal people, I have established a leaders' advisory group to provide direction and advice on how we can align our overall provincial tourism strategy with Aboriginal products and services.

Aboriginal culture is of great interest to tourists and our success will depend on how clear short- and long-term goals will be defined. We must take advantage of that great potential that is available to us in our province. As we move to expand and enhance a sector of the

industry, we must ensure these goals remain true to Aboriginal tradition, principles and spirituality. We also realize that, to be successful, we must collaborate with other levels of government and the private sector.

Collectively, we have built a strategy that is based on Aboriginal control, community-initiated development and cultural integrity. Our strategy will focus on three key areas: creating attractions that capitalize on existing, successful developments and natural attractions; hospitality industry training for management staff and community entrepreneurs; and strategic marketing. We will also expand our reach to collaborate with other jurisdictions. I am optimistic about recent discussions I have had with my colleagues in Nunavut about opportunities to develop tourism packages with Churchill as the gateway to other northern experiences and the traditional understanding of Aboriginal people about Churchill being the gateway to the Arctic.

We are very well aware of the exceptional assets associated with Aboriginal history, culture and tradition. We have a tourism product with universal appeal, and we need to promote it far and wide so we can share it with the world.

I strongly support the development of a national tourism strategy that fully includes Aboriginal peoples. I will be raising this issue at the Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Tourism meeting at the end of May that will be held in Vancouver, I believe.

This Budget also allows for expansion of our media and public relations program. This past year, my department's media program generated over \$2 million in editorial coverage and publications such as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Boston Globe*, *Home and Away* magazine, and we are very proud of that.

We believe that Manitoba needs to continue building on our successful use of technology to facilitate tourism development. Our Web site, travelmanitoba.com has become a major marketing tool, reflecting the new consumer preference for on-line travel information. Manitoba's Web site is successfully directing visitors to businesses in this region by providing

links to hundreds of tourism operator sites. With site traffic exceeding 125 000 hits per month, Travel Manitoba's Internet presence provides strong support to the tourism sector.

This Budget provides money for the continued enhancement of our Web site and allows us to build on the success of our on-line travel counselling service. We are proud of the fact that we are the first province in Canada to offer on-line travel consulting services to potential visitors. Since the launch of the program last June, live travel counsellors provided tourism information to over 1300 potential visitors.

I want to touch briefly, Mr. Speaker, on Adventure in Ecotourism. Two years ago, our Premier hosted a tourism forum, bringing together over 160 leaders from the tourism industry, labour and government providing advice on future directions. Priorities emanating from the forum included expansion on nature base and cultural and heritage tourism opportunities. This mirrors the World Tourism Organization's identification of adventure travel and ecotourism as one of the fastest growing market segments. We have consulted with stakeholders in the industry and now a comprehensive travel and equal tourism plan that supports the industry through product development, training and marketing initiatives, and this Budget commits over a half a million dollars to the adventure, travel and ecotourism sector. Last spring we launched a great new outdoor adventure guide and Web site that has received very positive response from the industry. We also hosted a very successful workshop with members of the Manitoba Lodge & Outfitters Association, and we have identified co-operative development initiatives to further this sector.

Our research has confirmed as well that Manitoba's wildlife resources will be of interest to markets seeking unique opportunities to view birds and animals. An important component of the ecotourism strategy will be the implementation of the Watchable Wildlife program.

This Budget provides a greater capacity for us to work with wildlife and outdoor-product tour operators to bring their products to the marketplace as well.

We plan to develop several wildlife viewing sites over the next three years, and we will initiate a targeting marketing effort to attract new visitors seeking these experiences.

Before I conclude, let me say that these are just some of the things that we are involved with. We will continue to work with the various stakeholders that the Government has been dealing with, but, overall, I see this Budget as an extremely positive and progressive one on all fronts, not only for my department, but it is a budget that I believe continues the work of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism that our Government has been involved with over the past four years.

In summary, I have to say that we have a lot to be proud of. That includes the 1999 Pan Am Games, 2002 North American Indigenous Games and the recently completed Ford World Curling Championships held earlier this month. We have much to look forward to that includes the Western Canada Summer Games that will be hosted by four Manitoba communities, they being Beausejour, Gimli, Stonewall and Selkirk. The host committee is ready for these games, and I am certain that Manitobans will be ready to welcome our guests that will be here in our province. I am also optimistic of the 2005 Juno Awards show and I am quite sure that the new True North Centre will be just the ideal location to host such an event. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:10)

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I am privileged and honoured today to stand and put a few comments on the record in regard to this year's provincial Budget. Prior to doing that, I would like to acknowledge the members that are leaving the Legislature. There are certainly lots of rumours in the wind, discussion of an election pending. I would be remiss if I did not just express my thanks and congratulations to those people. Having had the opportunity so far to have sat on both sides of this House, I understand the difficulties it takes to govern, and also, I think, I am starting to understand the challenges it takes to be in opposition. I do know that the Member for Inkster (Ms. Barrett), the Member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), the

Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), the Member for Riel (Ms. Asper), we may share different ways or different ideas as to how we want to accomplish things, but I do believe in the long term the mindset is that what we think we are doing is for the right reasons and for the people of Manitoba.

I also want to acknowledge good friends and colleagues that I have had the opportunity to serve with in government and, as I said, in opposition. The Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), a long-serving member, first elected in '86, I believe, and has served his constituents very well. I know that whenever I get a chance to travel to Gimli and into those communities, Mr. Helwer is a very well-respected gentleman.

I want to acknowledge the commitment and time and work and effort of the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner), who announced recently that he will not be seeking re-election. Just to acknowledge the different approach that the member brought to our caucus and, I think, to government. He had a very different view of a lot of things and his life history. The way he has conducted himself in his life will stand him well in whatever he chooses to do or wherever he chooses to go. He has taught me a lot of things about not only the business world but about being more compassionate and being more giving and more caring, and I want to thank him for that.

The Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), part of my class of '95, elected first together in '95, have grown to be good friends, and I acknowledge the great job that he has done, particularly on behalf of all Manitobans during the flood of '97. If it were not, I believe, for the Member for Morris at that particular time, who kept a calm, steady hand on the things that were going on around them—they were changing rapidly and he had to be able to analyze and make decisions on behalf of the people. I believe he did an exemplary job, and I wish him well in his retirement and the things that he chooses for his life in the future.

The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), who entertained us somewhat this afternoon, is always an entertaining person. I have long believed that MLAs, elected officials in general, should have limited times put on them as far as

how long they can serve. Having met the Member for Lakeside, having listened to him, I suggest it is incumbent upon all of us to keep some of that experience in our caucuses and some of that talent that we are so quick to push away sometimes.

I think the value of his experience and history has brought a new definition to our caucus. Mr. Enns had the opportunity, he spoke at an event of mine, and he went through the history of the Progressive Conservative Party. I would even suggest that he would be the type of person that any government in the province of Manitoba could utilize in a way of helping us attract new young people back into the political.

Ms. Nancy Allan, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I think he delivers a message of participation and action. I think it would be a benefit for all of us. I know that the young people that sat and listened to him speak for an hour told me it felt like 10 minutes. The fact that they were learning things as they were going, I think he is a hidden treasure. I think that we would be foolish as a province not to utilize that experience.

I wish the Member for Lakeside well in his farming and in his future. He always says that he was born and raised in a city, but became a farmer when he got elected and has had a farmer's interest in his heart ever since. I wish him well.

Finally, the last person I just want to acknowledge is the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer). I have had the opportunity of sharing a constituency beside him. We have shared constituencies with the boundary changes. Again, I think that the member can be someone that we can all hold up and aspire to be like. I think members on both sides will acknowledge that he is very straightforward, very sincere in what he says and what he does, and did a tremendous job representing the people of Minnedosa.

I wish him well and I look forward to the opportunity of spending some free time with him as both our lives progress.

Madam Acting Speaker, the Budget this year presented to the people of Manitoba—the

first thing I would like to just talk a little bit about, and I think all of us have experienced it at some level or other in our lives—many of us have families that have grown up and started their own families. I think that the budget process is important to us as individuals. Many in the Legislature have owned and operated businesses. Again, budgeting becomes a very integral part of doing that business just as it is in our day-to-day life with our households and with our families.

Finally, as a government, we are responsible for presenting a budget to the people of Manitoba outlining our expenses, outlining the way we want to spend money and also the way we plan on collecting the money. The two, although they cannot work independent of each other, are very much independent in the way they perform. When you are preparing a budget, and I will use the family or the small business as the perfect example, and I believe the provincial government has that responsibility, is we have to look at what the outcomes are going to be from the decisions that we make, be it to spend money or to collect revenue, make money.

How we choose to work that, we quite often differ because of our positions and our experiences. The bottom line is that the Budget is a spending document that tells people in the province of Manitoba how they are going to spend their money and who will benefit from it.

Well, in this Budget, we have seen the level of spending increase. We know that the government of the day has made a commitment to increase their spending allocation in the province of Manitoba. On the spending side, what I have to do, and I think it is incumbent and responsible of all Manitobans to do, is to ask: Where in the Budget, the increased spending and the previous spending, are Manitobans benefiting the most? I think when Manitobans stop and think about it and look at the process, they might have some serious questions.

I know for a fact that this Government has chosen to increase spending in health care. Although that is a hard thing to argue against in the sense that people want to know that health care is there for them and accessible, what I question, and I think what I am hearing from my constituents in the questions that they are asking,

is what is the direct benefit of the spending that is taking place. We know that it was a priority of this Government in the last election although I suspect they will not be beating the drum to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million, something that the current Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has basically said was a wrong promise. It was a promise that should not have been made and it was irresponsible to do so, but what have we done with the increases in those spendings in the last couple of years?

* (15:20)

In health care in particular, we have seen that the nurses got a very deserving raise. I suggest that that is going to be something that any government of the future is going to have to watch very closely because that is part of the competitive edge that we have with other provinces. We have to be in line; there is no question about it. If we want not to lose our good nurses and our good health care professionals, we have to be very cognizant.

One of the things I hear constantly from the people in my constituency is, yes, we agree with the fact that nurses deserve to be paid more and to be competitive with the other provinces, but along with that question comes, when you give someone or some organization or some group of people an increase of 20 percent plus over three years, what are the people of the province of Manitoba getting in return for that? What benefit is there for the expense that is being put out?

I question whether we got enough out of the deal in the sense that we still know that the nursing ratio full time to part time is out of whack with the rest of Canada. We know that the Canadian averages would suggest that 55 percent, 60 percent of all nurses working in other parts of Canada are working in a full-time position. In Manitoba, we know that not to be true. We know the fact is that only 35 percent or even a little less than 35 percent of the nurses employed today in our health care system are working full time. So I am confused and a little bit concerned that, in the negotiation side of it, that was not something that was put on the table.

I think it is important that government recognize the needs of the people that work in the system and compensate them fairly, equally

and competitively, but in the same breath, we need to get something back that helps our system work better and, in the same breath, benefits everyone. It is easy, and I know it is quite often the case, there is an issue, you throw money at it, the problem goes away temporarily but then reasserts itself in another area, and I think this Government is facing that right now.

They have spent the money. They have committed it in the Budget. They have spent the money, but we have not got the tradeoffs that we needed to enhance the system. So, therefore, I think that the benefit and the expense were not reasoned out by this Government, and perhaps, in their haste to make a deal, to cut a deal, to avoid the public perception of this Government negotiating hard and wanting something in return, was perhaps missed. I think that is unfortunate.

We know that our doctor recruitment program that was started by the former government continues to recruit doctors from other parts of Canada and also other parts of the world. We have to pay them on a competitive scale, and if we do not, they are not going to stay. I think that is very, very obvious in what we are seeing.

But I also have a concern that this Government has agreed to the formula set out by the College of Physicians, where an immigrant coming to our country, to our province is placed in such a restrictive measure that many of them now will not come to Canada, and many will not consider Canada simply because of the restrictions that were put on them when other provinces that we are competing with, that we are competing financially with, that we are competing for the same resources with, are doing it. I just think that, again, the money has been spent, but the benefit to the people in the province of Manitoba has not necessarily been realized, and I have a concern about that.

In the Budget that was presented to us this past week, Madam Acting Speaker, I cannot remember if I heard it, and I am sure somebody will correct me if I am wrong, but I think that the health system in Manitoba, I did not hear much discussion or debate about the mental health

concerns that we have in Manitoba. I think it is a growing concern, and I think that collectively we all have to start working to develop a program that is better for the people in those situations.

In this job, and I am sure many of the MLAs will agree, we get to experience that first-hand. It does not necessarily just have to be in our family, but it happens to people that we know, and it happens to people that we do not know, but they count on us to help them get through the system.

I can relate a personal experience of trying to help a young person through the system and I said to myself, people suffering from this illness or the distress that they go through, sometimes they are not capable or able to find their way through the system and there is nobody out there to help them. That is not because there are not people out there who want to help them; it is just that they are so busy and so consumed with what they are doing that you are in the system or you are out of the system and how you get in and out of the system is so difficult for people who actually need the help. I think that any government in Manitoba, and I think it is incumbent on us all, that we have to work to strengthen The Mental Health Act and improve it and make it more accessible, make it more understanding for people who are in desperate need of using the system.

Other issues in health care, and, I mean, I just cannot participate in a Budget debate without talking about the failed hallway medicine promise. I guess what I sense more than anything, and maybe to the strength of the Government they played on it, I think people desperately wanted to believe that it could be done. I do not think there is anybody out there in reality who really believes it can be done, simply because it is a nation wide issue. It is an issue across all jurisdictions, all political boundaries, but the people were desperate for an answer, and I think that this Government promised them something that was totally irresponsible, and, now, like all governments or like all parties, when you make a commitment to that level, by not being able to achieve it, you can talk a million different directions and you can say a million different things about, well, that is not really what we meant to say or what we really

meant to say was this, but the fact of the matter is that you said it, you said it clearly, you enunciated it at every opportunity.

I think that is unfortunate because when you are doing a budget or a Throne Speech or even an election campaign, you are selling hope. When people at the end of the day see that hope diminished just simply because the government of the day can stand up and say, well, things change, I think that is disappointing and I think that reflects poorly on all MLAs who have been elected into this Legislature in the past and into the future.

The second last area in health care that I do want to talk about in the Budget, and it was just in the papers again in this last week, is the frozen food fiasco. It is obvious that everyone of us here eats frozen food probably on a daily basis, if not weekly, and the complaints that were driven before the election in '99 have all dissipated simply because they were not real to start with. The organizers of that campaign have stepped back and said, well, we will still give them frozen food; we just will not complain about it anymore publicly, and therefore it becomes a non-public issue.

The last thing I would like to say in regard to health in this year's Budget, and I can say quite confidently that I hear it at 100 percent of all the facilities that I attend, health care facilities, is we need more people on the floor. We do not need managers. We do not need bureaucrats. We do not need health care professionals who sit at a desk. We need on-the-floor help for the people who are providing the care today. That does not necessarily have to be the most highly trained professional. It is another set of helping hands that the people working in those situations are asking for.

*(15:30)

I think in a budget, that is where a government has the opportunity to prioritize and place spending allocations in areas of need. Having had the opportunity to work in a small business, to own and operate a small business, our decision was always made easier when it came to, you know, do we need more money or do we need another person out there to work in

the system. I think the bottom line at the end of everyday is if you need the people, you need the people, and I encourage this Government to look at that and try and enhance that situation.

In the Budget, they talked about education. I think even members opposite are coming to the conclusion that amalgamation has probably been the worst thing that they ever could have done. They did it in the name of students and education. They did it in the name of tax-savings dollars. They did it in the name of taking that savings that they thought was going to be there and putting it back into the education system. That is an admirable thing. It really is, but had any of the members opposite taken time to actually read the Norrie report which they said they did but they did not—they used it when it suited their purpose—Norrie said there were no savings to be incurred by this. At one time he was talking \$4 million. At the end of the day, he said: It will not create savings.

I think this Government has failed those communities by forcing it upon them. You have divided communities against communities, and that is not what a government is supposed to do. I know it happens from time to time, and I know that it can happen from time to time, but it is beyond me why anybody, any government, any individual would want to go out and create that problem for themselves when there was no pent-up demand for it. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Doer) in a public event stated that it was not the Manitoba way and that we would not do it, and it was the very first thing he did as government. That is what hurts people and that is what hurts us as politicians, because people now and then and probably forever start to question our sincerity when we say something and do exactly the opposite. I think this Government, the members recognize that. In fact, I would challenge anybody across the floor to campaign on that. I mean, if you feel strong about amalgamation, you should campaign on it.

Madam Acting Speaker, a couple of other issues that I do want to touch on in the Budget, the Province of Manitoba has put out a nice pamphlet and it talks about advantage Manitoba. I do not know if everybody is aware of this, but early in the year, the Province of Manitoba gave a company in Manitoba \$15 million to secure its

place in this community and to secure employment.

I ask you what has \$15 million bought us. It has bought us 200 layoffs and more in the making. Is that good economic policy? Is that good investment of the taxpayers' dollars? I mean, what have we gained? We have gained nothing. We have money that has gone out of the till, money which this Government in '99 said that that is where the savings would come from in their health care system, but they have chosen to spend it. It is a very simple question. Is that the economic policy of this Government?

They talk about out-migration and in-migration. It is very simple. If you have a hundred people coming into your place of work today buying something and 90 coming in and taking something out, you have only got 10 customers. You do not have the 900 that you say you do. That is exactly how StatsCan shows the job creation in this province. You brag that you have created 8000 or 9000 jobs, but you neglect to tell the public that 9000 people have left the province. Where do those jobs go? They go somewhere else.

It is absolutely ridiculous to believe that those jobs are on top of everything else that has happened in this province. They are a detraction and they should be explained to the people in that very way.

In Justice, they talk about the money that they spent in Justice. You know what? You have spent a lot of money. You have increased the spending by astronomical amounts, but what have we got? We have got a community that is afraid. We have got seniors that are being beaten in their homes. We have young children being abused by criminals, and all we get from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) is another news release announcing another program.

One of the punishments, perhaps you might want to think about, is tying all the Government's news releases that the Minister of Justice has put out and let these bloody criminals walk around carrying it tied to their hands for a while. That would be punishment, instead of the slap on the wrist that these people get. They get a slap on the wrist and then they are back out in

the public. The public is being jeopardized daily by people that will not stand up and just call a spade a spade and tell these people that criminals are criminals and they should be punished as criminals.

The very fact that this Government has been so soft on criminals is going to reflect in our whole culture and our communities and in our residence and in our homes. You know what? There was a time when we used to say, well, that only happens in the city of Winnipeg. I can tell you, the encouragement this Government has given to criminals and criminal activity, it is moving out. People out there are not going to stand by. My neighbours will not stand by and let this happen unless a government takes control and issues a directive to the people.

You know what? I hear from the police officers and they are absolutely right: We catch them and before they get out of processing, the police, I mean, before the police get done the paperwork, these guys are back on the street. I just cannot believe that a government does not find that offensive and is not standing up and saying something, not only saying it, but doing it. If we have to, let us make it more simple for people to understand. If you commit a crime in this province, you pay a price. There are no deals to be cut. There are no sit-downs between the Crown and the prosecutor and a deal cut to allow these people to go back out on our streets.

Until this minister and until this Government stands up and gets that backbone, that is going to continue to happen. Manitobans are going to continue to live in fear.

There were so many issues in the Budget. I find it interesting when we talk about Hydro. The people of Manitoba, when this Government tried to take \$30 million, and I will use the word take. Most people tell me they tried to steal it, take it out of Autopac. The people resented that. The ratepayers that pay into Autopac resented that and this Government, I think, smelled the wind or at least felt it and said, you know, that is probably right. You know what? Maybe we will go back to Hydro with such a number that people will not understand. They do not, but they are starting to. They are starting to realize that the \$288 million that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) said Hydro could afford

to write the cheque for, we find out later they cannot. They have to borrow it and add another \$200-plus million of interest onto that fee.

People are starting to understand that. People are starting to see in the Hydro statements that their rates are going to go up and that Hydro is asking that they go up and that this Government is artificially manipulating those rates until after the election call.

It is so simple for the Premier to stand up in this Legislature and in public meetings, and the backbenchers shouted it today, Manitoba Hydro is a Manitoba company and we should use that money to help Manitobans. Well, he is probably right, but a budget is to sell to us how responsible you are going to be as government and how accountable you are going to be as government. It does not say, oh, yeah, and by the way, if we do not make it through this Budget, managing our affairs the way we are supposed to, we will go and milk the Hydro cow until the cow falls over.

* (15:40)

You know what? You guys are not new to this. This has happened in businesses and this has happened in governments before, where they start raiding the cash cows, and all of a sudden the cash cow runs dry and people are wondering what do we do now. Usually when that happens, people wake up and start to say, you know, maybe they were not doing the right things; maybe we should have been stronger at the time and voiced our opinion. But I believe that in this election that is coming, people will understand the Hydro issue, and they will respond directly to the Government's position on that.

The last issue I want to talk about, Madam Acting Speaker, you know, they speak about their glowing tax cuts, 6 percent. Dollars to anybody it amounts to dollars. You can count on one hand the amount of dollars an earner under \$30,000 is going to receive. Less than \$5 a year, that is what it means to them.

But just to let you know how other provinces compare to Manitoba and these numbers are less. The province of B.C. pays less by 29% taxes and—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Allan): Order. I regret to inform the member that your time is up.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Madam Acting Speaker, it is a pleasure and a privilege to be able to speak on the Budget.

The Budget is probably the most important thing done in the Legislature. The Budget outlines the policies and the direction of the Government. The Budget points out the priorities of the Government. The public judges the Government largely by its budget. Financial matters are most important to the public because budgets affect the daily lives of people. The private sector and the public sector are both affected by the financial policy outlined in the Budget.

Madam Acting Speaker, this is the fourth Budget I am speaking to since I got elected in 1999. This is a fair and responsible Budget. In the 1999 election, we promised to live within the balanced-budget legislation, and four years in a row our budgets have balanced. We have delivered four straight balanced budgets.

Moody's Investor Service has improved Manitoba's credit rating equal to Ontario and B.C. which is just behind Alberta. It is the second best credit rating in Canada. Madam Acting Speaker, I think we have done rather well.

The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) recently pointed out that the balanced budgets were a reason for our Government being popular and he said it right in this Legislature. I do agree with him, but I must say that our strategy in education, health, urban renewal have also added to the strong support for the Doer government. The human focus on youth, families, working people and the good relationship we have developed with business and labour have also added to the strong support for the Government.

Madam Acting Speaker, my speech to the Budget is very different than the Member for Turtle Mountain's (Mr. Tweed). I see all the positive things in the Budget; therefore, we will disagree on the Budget. The present Government is following what Tommy Douglas did in Saskatchewan for 20 years, Tommy balanced every budget. Romanow and Blakeney followed the

same pattern. Schreyer balanced, if I am right now, seven out of eight budgets. The Doer government has balanced four budgets, and this just proves that we have kept our promise of balanced budgets.

Madam Acting Speaker, I would like to talk about taxation policies, which, of course, are part of the Budget. Taxation policies have brought about affordable government. Affordable government requires fair and responsible taxation policies, ensuring that our debt and pension liabilities are met. We are making the necessary investment in health, education and infrastructure. These investments form the basis of sustained economic growth, but they must be managed with a solid and transparent financial framework.

The Manitoba government is committed to a balanced approach to finances and economy. Not only have our four budgets since 1999 met the requirements of balanced budget legislation, but we have strengthened that legislation to require repayment of public pension liabilities and to prevent the sell-off of public assets.

Since 1999 we not only have balanced four straight budgets, but we have devoted \$384 million to paying down the debt in pension liability. We had \$2.7 billion of debt in pensions for civil servants, and this was growing each year, and we are beginning to pay that down. Because we are paying down the debt and we have balanced budgets, Moody's Investor Service has improved our credit rating. Next to Alberta, who have all that oil, all that wealth, I think our economy is in good shape.

We have also reduced debt servicing costs by over \$100 million per annum. We have reduced personal income tax by 14 percent, saving Manitobans \$220 million annually. We have increased the property tax credit from \$250 to \$400, saving Manitobans \$53 million annually. We have cut taxes. We have cut personal income tax. We have cut property tax.

Also, we have begun the phase-out of the Education Support Levy, saving \$27.1 million annually by 2003. We have reduced small business taxes from 8 percent to 5 percent, while increasing the threshold to \$400,000 by 2005.

We have implemented the first reduction to the general corporate tax rate in more than half a century from 17 percent to 15 percent by 2005.

We have implemented a balanced and sustainable fiscal plan without health care premiums, without stepping back from promised tax relief, without selling off public assets, and without incurring budgetary deficits. Our overall spending has been very, very responsible.

I would like to say a few words about our immigration policies. Our immigration policies have played an important role in Manitoba's economic growth. It has contributed to our province's diverse multicultural landscape, broadened our opportunities for economic growth. For the last four years, we have reached a high of 4600 new immigrants in 2002. This strong performance is a result of concerned effort to expand Manitoba's unique Provincial Nominee Program.

Immigration levels have also increased because of community and government sponsorship to sponsor refugees. Therefore the Provincial Nominee Program has been very successful right here in Manitoba, and it is certainly appreciated by the business community. This Government has its financial house in order and the public knows that and supports the direction of the Government. When I go door to door, people are quite comfortable with the Doer government in respect to its economic strategy.

There are other economic indicators that support the strategy of our Government. There is an increase in private and public investments, especially in venture funds. The Manitoba economy has grown 3.1 percent in 2002, and the projected growth is to go to 3.2 percent in 2003 and 2004. The unemployment rate is the lowest in Canada. Madam Acting Speaker, Manitobans are working. Our economy is working.

Housing has had a banner year in sales. In fact, housing starts have increased 22.1 percent this last year, and the future looks very good. Retail sales increased by 6.9 percent in 2002, which is higher than the national average. The ethanol industry is ready to take off. Businesses in the rural community are ready to participate in this project.

*(15:50)

We have had several new businesses start up and expand in Manitoba that require large capital investment. This again proves that people have confidence, the business community has confidence in our economy. I will just give you some examples. Brett-Young Seeds has just completed an expansion which will cost \$20.7 million. J.R. Simplot is investing over \$150 million in the first phase of the new potato processing plant near Portage la Prairie. Motor Coach is investing \$40 million in its Winnipeg employees assembly plant and production development. We have Monarch Industries completing a \$13-million relocation expansion of its Winnipeg facilities. These are just some of the investments that are taking place.

Of course, the Manitoba and federal governments have recently announced they will jointly provide \$160 million towards the expansion of the Red River Floodway. Many other businesses are expanding, investing. This is a good sign for our economy and it is a good sign for the work the Doer government is doing

On CJOB this morning, on the talk show, it was reported that there were good indications that the land is strong, Manitoba is doing very well, so all indications are, people are saying it is very, very good. You might hear something from the Opposition here now and then that preach gloom and doom, but it is good out there.

I would just like to talk about urban renewal. This is another strong point that we are all proud about. We are proud about what is happening in the inner city. There are some very good signs out there. The building cranes and earthmoving equipment are back and people are optimistic about the future of Winnipeg. If I may ad lib here, I have heard people from the Conservative Party say that they missed out on urban renewal. They should have done some of this work.

Housing has appreciated, I heard last fall, 24 percent in the inner city. Now I have been reading in some places, the North End and West End, it is up to 60% appreciation in homes. This is a good indicator that our urban strategy to revitalize the downtown is working. It will take years to complete this renewal, but we have a very good beginning.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Some work that is fostering this urban renewal, let me give you some examples. The expansion of the Red River Floodway, which has not started, but once this \$160-million project goes, it will do a lot to generate jobs and employment. The True North Centre is being built. That is a nice addition to our city. *[interjection]*

The True North has public money, but also private money. I remember in 1995 the Opposition tried to, or attempted to, or it seemed like they were going to build an arena, and, I think, one day or two days after the election in '95, the deal was off. But, excuse me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the True North Centre is being built. We have the downtown waterfront renewal, a nice addition. The Red River community college on Princess Street is another fine addition. It will bring young people downtown. The new Hydro building has not been built, but it looks like it is coming downtown.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we are doing is bringing people downtown. When people come, there is life downtown. When people come they buy, they spend and so forth, and it makes the economy grow.

We have the Millennium Library project, another fine example of it. The Health Sciences Centre is a \$100-million project. It will be a nice addition to our inner city.

The Neighbourhoods Alive! program is rebuilding homes. It is providing vocation. It is providing job training. It is a very nice renewal tool for the lower income people. It is doing very well. In fact, many rural towns would like to be part of this project. It is a very popular project. People from all political stripes are praising this project. It is a very innovative project. It is working very well. I was just in Brandon at the Winter Fair. I saw some of the good work they are doing. The people of Brandon thought it was great, but it should be possibly started in other towns in rural Manitoba as well.

We have a new hotel at Main Street and St. Mary's. There is a new Co-op building at Portage

and Donald Street. It sells outdoor equipment. Staples has moved into Portage Place. There is a Crocus building on Main Street.

There are many landmarks that tell us Winnipeg downtown is on the move. The result of this activity is that it brings people downtown. It brings economic activity downtown. This restores the heart of the city. People are moving downtown, not just to work, but to live. Many years of neglect have caused our inner city, the heart of Winnipeg, to die, and when you hear of programs like Neighbourhoods Alive!, we are bringing life back to the centre of Winnipeg.

I would like to turn to the topic of education. I feel very comfortable because most of my working years have been spent in the classroom as a teacher. In other words, I have been in the front lines of education. I am still in contact with many teachers and former students who are in the front lines. I do get reports from time to time about the status of education. Generally, the front-line people are happy with our Government's performance.

If you want to know how a government is doing, you talk to the people involved. You talk to the working people. You talk to the people in the front lines. That, to me, is one of the best reports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not at war with educators, as the Tories were. They went through several ministers in Education in their last term of office, because they had really no educational vision. They had no educational vision.

In the 1999 election, we said we would give hope to young people, and we have. We have done a lot in education. I am very proud of this Government's work, accomplishments, achievements in education. For instance, college and university education has increased by over 20 percent since 1999. Our youth are back in universities. They are back in college. They are in college and university to improve their skills so that they can make a contribution to our economy. We believe in a skilled work force. That is a great contribution to a good economy. University and college tuition fees have been maintained 10 percent below the 1999 level,

which is about \$500 below the Canadian average. That was an election promise which we have kept.

We have given a hundred million dollars in new funds for infrastructure renewal and expansion of the medical college and university. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder what the Tories gave in their 11 years in office to the universities for infrastructure. Just a thought in my mind. We have given 60 million bursaries, scholarships and study grants. Funding for kindergarten to Grade 12 schools has increased at a rate matching or exceeding the economic growth.

* (16:00)

Today in Question Period, they were talking about our Government not funding the schools properly, indirectly, but I think we have done a fabulous job in that aspect. We have passed new legislation for adult learning centres to ensure financial accountability and program quality. We have 43 adult learning centres across the province. In Rossmere, the McLeod Adult Learning Centre is very popular. There are many students going to it. The school is full. It gets tremendous support from the public. We have spent about \$14 million on adult education. The McLeod Adult Learning Centre in Rossmere gets a grant of about \$420,000. I think we have really supported adult education. I appreciate that.

We also have a heavy investment in early childhood development, which would add up to about \$50 million in the last four budgets. I think that is tremendous. That is an increase of \$50 million beyond what they were getting.

What happened to education in the Tory years? Usually a 2% cut each year, an election year a slight increase. Our record is impressive when compared to the Tory record. Our vision is that education is an investment in youth. It is an investment in our economy. It is an investment in our country and in our future. Tories tend to look at education as an expenditure. These are two very opposite visions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will turn to the topic of health for a few minutes. First of all, we have a very different vision here than the Opposition. Our vision had its fruits in the Tommy Douglas

philosophy or model of public and universal health care, which began over 50 years ago. The Opposition vision is more towards private, for-profit health care and follows the American version that Connie Curran brought to Manitoba. We all know about how popular that was with the people of Manitoba. Of course, we will disagree because we have different visions on health care, but I am proud of the vision that our Government has.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, we are moving ahead in health care. Close to home, or, I should say, close to Rossmere is the Concordia Hospital, which is getting a hip and knee replacement centre which will do about 750 operations a year. This will be a centre of excellence for Winnipeg or for Manitoba. We have a state-of-the-art oncology unit at Concordia, which is very much appreciated.

The River East access centre located on Henderson Highway near the IGA store is another important investment in the community. If you go to northeast Winnipeg, you will see signs that health care is moving ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke with staff and board members at the Concordia Hospital, and they appreciate the direction health care is going in this province. It is not perfect, but things are coming together. They are very, very positive. For instance, hallway medicine hardly exists at Concordia Hospital. I hear the Opposition talk about that. I see very few people in the hallways. I often go through that hospital and I check to see how many are in the hallway, at the most two or three. Usually the hallways are clear in Concordia.

I can remember before the 1990 election when I ended up in the hallway all day. I think half of North Kildonan was there with me. I could not canvass, but I could canvass right in there. In fact, a board member of the Concordia Hospital walked by me who knows me very well. When he saw me on that gurney, suddenly, he did not notice me.

There was a real mess throughout Manitoba in health care. I realize we have accomplished

much, but we have more to do. Let me give you some examples of how we are moving ahead in health care. The Health Sciences Centre received \$100 million to rebuild and renew the entire complex, the largest project in the history of Manitoba. The Brandon hospital is spending \$58 million, I should say investing \$58 million in expansion and renewal. Those are just two examples.

I will give you a few more examples: 500 additional training spaces for technicians, therapists, health care aides, nurses and doctors. We have almost three times as many nurses graduating this year as in '99, and 90 percent of them are staying to work in Manitoba. We will have 15 new medical school places. The number of doctors in Manitoba has grown every year since the NDP took office, a reversal of the flight of doctors in the 1990s. Over 50 health care facilities expanded and modernized.

We have the Telehealth system which allows doctors and patients in Northern and rural Manitoba to link with clinical specialists in Winnipeg through live video and audio feed. We have more MRIs, more CT scanners, 80 new ambulances. The St. Boniface and Health Sciences centres have left the Tory frozen food fiasco. I think we have an honourable record in health care.

Mr. Speaker, to conclude, I think we have done a solid job in health care. We have done a solid job in education. Our financial strategy on the economy is on the right track. Urban renewal has made great improvements in our city. Our hydro policies have done very well. We are elected by the people, we are of the people and we are working for the people. Our focus has been on people. We have had that human focus in our Budget and the way we carried out our policies. I know that when I go door to door.

Mr. Speaker, I close with that and I thank you.

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): I would like to take this opportunity to wish my colleagues who are retiring, the members from Morris (Mr. Pitura), Gimli (Mr. Helwer), Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) and Lakeside (Mr. Enns), a long, happy retirement filled with

happiness and good health. It is also with regret that I must add the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner), who is unable to seek re-election due to illness.

I would also like to wish the members opposite who are not seeking re-election, the members from Inkster (Ms. Barrett), Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) and Riel (Ms. Asper), the best in whatever their future endeavours may bring.

I was very disappointed in the NDP Budget. In speaking to my constituents in Seine River, the No. 1 concern is high taxes, primarily property taxes. Property taxes continue to escalate contrary to what the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the members of the NDP party say. Manitoba business taxes are among the highest in the country and Winnipeg, where most Manitobans live, has the second highest property taxes to be found anywhere in Canada.

One of the reasons for the increase this year in particular and the additional burden that my taxpayers are having to assume is because the school division, because of forced amalgamation, residents have had to incur a 7.2% increase in property taxes, directly attributable to the forced amalgamation. The same amalgamation that both the Minister of Education, the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) and the Premier said would save taxpayers \$10 million. Well, let me read some comments that the Louis Riel School Board made at a budget meeting and then reiterated at a meeting with the MLAs just recently. Let me remind you that the Louis Riel School Division now has the constituencies of St. Boniface, part of Radisson, Southdale, Riel, St. Vital, Seine River within the boundaries of this school division. I am reading directly from the Louis Riel budget document that they distributed at their meeting.

* (16:10)

The Province has committed to providing one-time funding of \$50 per pupil to all divisions being amalgamated. This will be paid out over a three-year period and translates into approximately \$250,000 per year for Louis Riel School Division. This amount of funding is not sufficient to address the cost of amalgamation.

For 2002-03, in order to provide sufficient revenues to address the first years of costs of amalgamation, the St. Boniface and St. Vital school divisions each raised revenues from property taxation beyond what would have been raised were the divisions not being amalgamated. This is the Louis Riel School Board's words, not mine.

It is important to note that 40 percent of the cost of amalgamation included in the 2002-2003 Budget were reflected in 2002 property taxes and 60 percent will be a part of the 2003 property tax mill rate. For 2003-2004, as a result of further analysis and study of amalgamation, additional harmonization costs have been identified and incorporated into the Budget. There are still some program areas which have not been harmonized and which need to be studied further. It is anticipated that additional costs will be identified for the 2004-2005 budget year.

Over 82 percent of expenditures are related to salaries and benefits. Collective agreements with the majority of the employee groups are open to being negotiated. When school divisions amalgamated, the employee contracts of each division must be renegotiated. Staffing and materials for programs, services and technologies must be consolidated and harmonized. In the 2002-2003 Budget, \$2.1 million was included to address amalgamation expenditures. I repeat, 2.1 million in additional costs that the board has determined which costs would need to be budgeted for 2003 and 2004. Some of these costs are ongoing from 2002 and 2003 and will continue to be incurred in the future. In the Budget 2003 and 2004, the board has included amalgamation costs required to harmonize staff allocations, salaries, school supply budgets, transportation services, facilities, as well as information technology hardware and software. Some of the costs are ongoing from year to year, and some amalgamation costs will be incurred on a one-time basis.

The total of the costs for 2003-2004 as follows: ongoing—ongoing means every year this will have to be included in their Budget—\$2,321,932; one time, \$77,000. The Province will be providing a grant in each of the first three years of amalgamation, 2002 to 2003 to 2004 and 2005. The amount of this grant is

approximately \$250,000. Not near enough. The figure I quoted for the total cost is \$2 million. It does not even come close. The board went even further, and they are going to follow the minister's edict of reducing administrative costs. The minister gave them an approximate amount as a guideline. The Louis Riel School Board will actually double the amount of savings to be effected through administrative costs. The reductions will be implemented primarily through attrition at senior administrative level. The cost of amalgamation, however, will far exceed these savings. So I repeat, where is the \$10-million savings that both the Premier and the minister are on record as having reiterated and repeated several times? Every division that I have spoken to that was forced to amalgamate has incurred increased costs, and the increased costs, contrary to what the NDP portray, are not one-time costs, they are ongoing costs.

What really surprises me, I guess, is how silent the four NDP MLAs for the area have been on this topic. Are they too not concerned? Because I know their constituents are certainly concerned. As I indicated earlier, property taxes is still the No. 1 issue in my constituency.

I also want to put some comments on the record which express the views of some of our business leaders on the overall Budget. Jim Carr, the CEO of the Business Council of Manitoba, and I quote: "We wanted to hear more commitment to tax reduction and the value of tax competitiveness. Most of all, we are still not hearing from the Government the importance of wealth creation, because if there is no wealth creation and climate to generate new wealth then you cannot distribute it in order to maintain a level of public services that will satisfy the electorate."

Graham Starmer, president of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, indicated: "Very little imagination" in the Budget. The tax relief and the incentives are just not there.

Robert Kreis, chairman of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce: It is very unfortunate. Manitoba's business case for investment just got weaker today. It is a very good day for our competitor provinces and our competitor businesses outside of the province. We are still

losing people to other provinces and suffering net migrations. We need to have a competitive tax structure in Manitoba that does not penalize success but, rather, rewards it, a structure that does not dissuade high-income earners from moving to the province to establish businesses or work in high-income fields.

This Budget did nothing to put more disposable income into the pockets of consumers. I was speaking to one of my constituents the other day who is a single-income earner, a husband and a father, and he explained the lack of disposable income very well when he said: For the first time in my adult life, there was not enough funds in the bank to pay the credit card, and he only used this credit card exclusively to go and visit his ailing parents in British Columbia. He has a mother in excess of 88 and a father nearing 90, and they are both in failing health. He had not seen them personally since 1999, and he took his wife and family by car, and they motored most of the way without even stopping to save expenses. Knowing this individual, he is not an individual that is a spend-thrift by any stretch of the imagination, and he said that for the first time in his life, he did not have enough money just because of day-to-day expenses.

* (16:20)

With a spending-to-tax ratio of 11 to 1, this Budget does nothing to make Manitoba competitive, or to give our young people a reason to stay here and build their futures. Manitoba is now the highest-tax province west of New Brunswick. This Premier confirmed he believes there is no correlation between tax cuts and job creation. His tax cut amounts to a \$14 saving for Manitobans. They cannot even afford a tank of gas to get out of Manitoba on that. If you look at this graph, a two-earner family of four earning \$60,000 a year will pay \$3,409 in income tax in 2002. In 2003, they will pay \$3,395.

In 1999, the average Manitoba family paid \$250 less in income tax than the average Saskatchewan family. Today, the average Manitoba family pays \$942 more in income tax than the same family in Saskatchewan. Under Premier Doer, Manitoba is now the highest taxed province west of New Brunswick.

Last year, an average of 12 people a day left Manitoba for other provinces. To put that into proper perspective, it is like three families leaving your community every day because they felt they could make a better life for themselves and their families elsewhere. We have to stop this trend and make Manitoba more attractive and more competitive. We have to provide opportunities for our young people to stay in our province to work and raise a family.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to now put a few words on the record about my critic portfolio and how this Budget impacts or does not impact on tourism and the cultural industries.

I will congratulate the Government for continuing to support Manitoba's growing film and sound industries, as there are many opportunities to be cultivated in this area. Laudable too is the increase in funding for rural libraries, which play such an important role in disseminating information in our rural communities.

I notice now the Government has increased funding for tourism marketing, an area largely ignored since this administration took office. I chastise the Government for its decision to concentrate on gaming advertising at the expense of tourism advertising. This was a short-sighted move, and it did a disservice to the tourism industry stakeholders, whose attractions the Government did not see to advertise until it was beneficial for their own cause. Indeed, I find it extremely interesting that only on the eve of a provincial election did the Government suddenly rediscover the merits of promoting Manitoba's tourism industry.

In recent weeks, the Doer government has launched a massive radio and television advertising campaign singing the praises of our province. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but most Manitobans would view this campaign as a phony, feel-good ploy designed to pump up the Government. It is extremely disappointing that the tourism industry is trumpeted only when it is in the interests of enhancing the profile of this Government.

The tourism industry is extremely competitive. It is essential that we market the

considerable attractions to which our province is home. Whether they are historic, cultural, natural or recreational, we must market that to potential visitors both from within and beyond our borders. An investment in tourism is an investment in the growth of the provincial economy and it is an area governments sometimes take for granted.

I await with interest to see what the Government is planning with respect to the establishment of a stand-alone agency to promote tourism. I only hope that industry stakeholders, appropriate government agencies and interested Manitobans will be offered input into the creation of this agency and its mandate. I continue to argue the importance of taking a multi-ministry approach to the development of this province's tourism industry.

In particular, I would like to request that the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Robinson) have a word with his colleague the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Ashton) about his wrong-headed decision to turn provincial park staff into glorified parking ticket agents. The Government's decision to ticket thousands of unsuspecting park goers who are unable to purchase park passes because parks were not properly staffed is simply despicable. It is being done simply because this Government cannot control its spending habits and it has decided to pick the pockets of unsuspecting park visitors. This creates a very negative perception of our provincial parks. Visitors who have been ticketed will undoubtedly think twice about returning to these parks and most certainly share their unpleasant experience with other potential park visitors.

What kind of a message does this send in terms of Manitoba's tourism industry? Not a very positive image, I would suggest.

As I said earlier, this Budget does absolutely nothing to move Manitoba forward. In fact, it does just the opposite of that. As a result, Manitoba will continue to fall further behind and our young people will continue to leave for jobs and opportunities elsewhere.

I want to now go back to my earlier comments regarding the forced amalgamation of

school divisions. I am glad the Minister of Education (Mr. Lemieux) will be able to hear these comments. Louis Riel School Division is very concerned about forced amalgamation. They say that in no way can they cover, with the \$250,000, the total cost of their amalgamation and harmonizing the costs. The ongoing costs are \$2,321,932 and they say the only option available to them is to pass it back on to the taxpayers. As I indicated earlier this year, in that division, they experienced and they tried desperately, they went back two and three times to reduce their budgets. They had to pass on a 7.2 percent.

Traditionally, St. Vital School Division has experienced, before the school divisions were amalgamated, they do not have the same commercial tax base that others do. Ours is, in St. Vital, primarily residential. We experienced a 4%, a 5% and, I think, even once an approximate 6.1% increase. On the other side, though, the St. Boniface portion of the new amalgamated school division had never exceeded a 4.2% tax increase; this is what I am led to believe. So this year the 7.2 percent was excessive.

* (16:30)

As I indicated, the ongoing costs are their primary concern. They have followed the minister's education edict that states there had to be administrative saving. In fact, they are doubling that expectation and they still say the costs of amalgamation, however, will far exceed these savings.

I believe they also wrote to the minister. When I last spoke to the school trustees, they had not received a response. The school division had written and wanted to know how much or whether the minister was going to give them additional funding beyond 2003-2004 to help cover the costs they are experiencing due to amalgamation. They feel also a lot of the costs; they have not identified all of the costs of amalgamation at this point. They are further studying a lot of the harmonization costs.

I believe my time is almost over, so I will end there by saying that because of the increase in property taxes for my constituents, there is no way I could support this Budget.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to put a few comments on the record in regard to the budget speech. As others have before me, I would like to say a few words about some of the members who are leaving this Legislature and will not be here to run in the next election and the next Assembly.

I would like to begin by giving our heartfelt best wishes and prayers to the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner). I understand that he is not feeling well. We may be on opposite sides of the House, but we are all brothers and sisters inside this Chamber. We sincerely hope that he will do well in the days to come.

I would like to acknowledge, also, people on this side of the House. The Member for Wolseley, who was Deputy Premier and Inter-governmental Affairs Minister (Ms. Friesen), has done a wonderful job, in my honest opinion. It is a very challenging job, I might say, dealing with over how many municipalities? A hundred-and-seventy-plus municipalities. It was quite a challenge, I know. I deal with upwards of 20 local governments myself.

I have six municipal governments, eight First Nations communities, half a dozen or so northern affairs communities, not to mention three school divisions, and so on. So I know how complicated it can be to juggle so many balls at once. She has done a fine job in that respect. We will certainly be challenged to fill her position when she is gone.

The same can be said for the honourable Member for Inkster (Ms. Barrett), who has done a stellar job, I think, especially in view of the rabid opposition we have experienced from members on the opposition benches in regard to some of the changes, most necessary changes I might add, to the labour legislation in this province. She has done a wonderful job. She has held up very well under a sustained and sometimes vicious attack, I might add, from the Labour critic, the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler). She did keep her cool, and we have better labour legislation in this province today as a result.

I will also miss the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), a very distinguished gentleman, and also

the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), and especially the Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) whom I have established a pretty good relationship and friendship with, I might add. He is a member of a constituency that borders mine, and we have a lot of similar interests. We are interested in roads. We have discussed them together as well as our water management in terms of the conservation districts and all that. I have found him to be a real gentleman and a very friendly person all around. I sincerely will miss his presence in the House as well.

The Member for Riel (Ms. Asper) has moved on, and I wish her the best in her new position overseas. I am sure she will perform most adequately and represent our province and our country well.

I will sincerely miss the Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), who is a very instrumental member of our caucus. I know that. I chair a couple of caucus committees and I can always count on her to attend meetings. I value her input highly. She is a very intelligent lady. Her commentary is always well thought out, and she does not hesitate to make her opinions known within here and within our caucus as well. There is always a broad spectrum within this House, and I think within caucuses as well you will find there is a spectrum, and she certainly makes her opinions known to us. We will miss her.

Last, but not least, I would like to pay credit to the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) who, after a distinguished career of some 37 years or so in this Chamber, is moving gracefully on into retirement. He is very dear to me, and I mean that most sincerely. When I entered into politics—it was shortly after the death of my father. He passed away in 1998. I almost look upon the Member for Lakeside as a father figure in this Legislature. I might add that for a long time I was estranged from my uncle for reasons that I will not go into here, and I also sort of thought of the Member for Lakeside in an uncle sense as well.

He is very dear to me, Uncle Harry is, and I have always enjoyed debating the issues with him. I listen to him most carefully when he discusses conservation issues or agriculture

issues. At one time, I even went and consulted with the former premier of Manitoba and Governor General on a very critical issue to our province, the development of the hydro industry, and did get a somewhat different perspective, I must say. So the Member for Lakeside has certainly stimulated my thought when it comes to speaking about issues past and present.

I must admit that one day I was somewhat taken aback when the Member for Lakeside referred to me as a Neanderthal, which took me somewhat aback at the moment, especially given the fact that I had been in his riding the previous week and had spoken most highly of him, which I did point out to him, and, gentleman that he is, he did immediately rise and apologize for that. I commended him for that. I was tempted to say at the time that sometimes it takes an old dinosaur to recognize a Neanderthal man, but I did not say that at that point in time, and I am not saying it now, certainly not.

* (16:40)

So I wish the member well in his retirement. I am going to send him one of my legislative calendars from now on just to stay in touch with him. In case he ever needs help with his, say, home care, for example, if the members of the Opposition get back in and privatize it like they were attempting to do in times past, he might need a little bit of advocacy in that respect. So I will make sure to put him on my mailing list in that respect, which is a good segue, I think, into some of the topics that I would like to discuss today in the Budget. I think I would like to speak in terms of our performance over, I am not just speaking about this Budget on the table today, but about our performance over the past three years. The most important thing and our No. 1 commitment was to the health care industry. I think we have made giant leaps forward in this regard.

We started with a system that had been basically run into the ground, and, I think I might add, almost deliberately run into the ground, because, let us face it, we knew what their object was and still is, I might add. They have made that quite clear to me over the last three years, arguing about some of these private clinics they would like to come into our

province. I think essentially that is what the bottom line is. Their objective was to run the public system into the ground and make it so unpalatable to the people of Manitoba, that, at the end of the day, when they put privatization on the table, people out of desperation would have accepted that.

That is the only logical conclusion that I can come to. How else could you explain laying off nurses, reducing the training programs at the university level, not putting money into infrastructure, et cetera? The only logical conclusion is that they were, in a sense, deliberately sabotaging the public system in hopes of moving on their privatization agenda. That is understandable. Look at the amount of money that is facilitated through the Department of Health. It is, I believe, almost \$3 billion, if not more than \$3 billion that goes into this system. Certainly, that size of a cash cow must have had their privatization behind-the-scenes supporters almost drooling in anticipation.

As long as this Government is in place, I think they will have to keep their desires in check. That is something that is most important. I think when you look at our record, how we have built on infrastructure more than anything else—if you look to pages 4 and 5 in the Budget book, for instance, you can see that the number of CAT scans has been increasing dramatically, the number of MRIs has been going up, ultrasounds, et cetera, et cetera.

Everything is growing; we are moving forward now. We are building hospitals. There is a brand-new hospital under way in Brandon. Also, I am proud to say that the Interlake has not been neglected, that a brand-new hospital is currently under construction in my buddy riding of Gimli again. So the needs of the people in the Interlake are not being neglected.

This is a government of builders. We are not hoarding the money. We are not pulling back and moving forward on a tax cut agenda for the wealthy in this province. We are more focussed on average working day citizens. We are concerned about the poor in this province. That is our prime objective, although we have made steps forward on the tax cut agenda as well, which was not part of the five commitments that

we had made in 1999, but given sound fiscal management, good guidance by our Premier (Mr. Doer), we have been able to go above and beyond what we had committed to in the election campaign in 1999.

In the field of education, this is most evident, I find. On the capital side, I might add, just for the record, we are all aware of it here, but it is something that the constituents cannot hear often enough is that, in terms of capital infrastructure developments, this is paid for 100 percent by the provincial government.

The Interlake constituency that I represent has done quite well in this regard as well. It started shortly after my election in 1999. The two schools in Fisher Branch were both renovated, had their roofs repaired, new exteriors put on. Over \$1 million in renovations began in my former home town. The Riverton Collegiate, I think, had close to a half-million-dollar upgrade to their heating system, which is not something that is visible, but certainly something that is appreciated by the people who have to live, study and work in that building. The early years school in Arborg as well received a new exterior.

Let us not forget once again the constituency of Gimli. Not only did they receive a new hospital, but a new early years school. Sigurbjorg Stefansson Early School also was just completed. I just attended the opening ceremonies there a couple of months ago. So Gimli is doing quite well, despite the fact that it is a constituency that has a Conservative member, which is a sound indicator that this Government is not playing favourites, that we are being fair in the way we deliver.

An Honourable Member: Now, now.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, the Member for Lakeside had a little comment there, but I would remind him that there was a major capital upgrade in Balmoral as well, was there not, dealing with the water and the sewer. I believe they were under a boil water advisory and a lot of money went into that community so that people no longer have to go through the onerous process of boiling their water. So Lakeside has not been avoided either. While we are on the topic of Lakeside, I recall the Minister of Education and Youth travelling out to the

community of Lundar not too, too long ago to announce a major capital upgrade to the school there as well. Lundar, I am sure, appreciates that. A new school in Winkler as well, another staunch Conservative riding, so I think we are doing fairly well.

I see the Member for Portage (Mr. Faurschou) quietly nodding in the background there as well. I guess the Simplot investment and the new Food Development Centre are things that are going over rather well in his community—[interjection] Well, he is adding to my list here, and I do not know about that just yet, but I think those two major upgrades are going to go a long way in his community. It is a town, much like most rural communities, dependent on agriculture, and that certainly will revolutionize the agriculture industry in his region and greatly improve the quality of lives for the people that he serves.

I was on the topic of capital works in terms of education, and I would just like to finish on a very positive note. The Minister of Education and Youth recently came out to my constituency, and the community of Inwood will be receiving a new school as well. I thank him for that. The current facility is on the verge of being condemned, and they certainly warrant it, given their increase. They have almost doubled the number of students over the last four years through delivery of a very sound teaching program. They have made their school such an attractive environment that in excess of 10 percent of their student body is school-of-choice children coming from other areas. They have done very well, and their efforts and good record have been acknowledged by this Government as well.

* (16:50)

On the operating side, we go into a state of apoplexy a lot of times, especially on the opposition benches, about how we are not funding enough, which just boggles my mind because our record on funding the operation side makes theirs pale in comparison. There are no ifs, ands, or buts.

In addition to that, we have done a number of other things: the property tax credit, for instance, something that they had cut, which

could be called a tax increase, I guess, for their people. We have made a commitment to reconstitute that. We went from \$250 to \$325 upwards to \$400, which is a sizeable lump on everybody's tax bill, I am sure, and something that must be acknowledged. We have also reduced the portioning, which is very important, and I think we should just look at the history a little bit here.

I know that the previous government removed the Education Support Levy off farmland, I believe, and I would credit them with doing that. That certainly helped the agriculture producers, but what did they do? When they removed the ESL, they increased the portioning, so it is give with one hand and take back with another. Well, that is not our style. We manage our resources soundly, and we are able to deliver on things like the property tax increase up front. We have reduced the portioning, and we are very proud of that record.

In addition, we are also reducing the Education Support Levy. We had a 10% reduction in the previous Budget, I believe it was, or the Budget before that, and another 20% increase in this current Budget. So we have committed to taking the tax off property from our perspective. The school boards, of course, are a different entity, a different level of government altogether. I would call on them, the school boards, to also start working with us as opposed to against us and try and take the high road and start looking at their budgets as well because if the Province can increase tax credits, can lower portioning, can reduce the ESL, then that creates a window for them, and I think they should follow through on that.

Our funding increases I have mentioned. You look on page 3 on the Budget document, it was under \$750 million I believe in 19—well, I should correct myself—a little over \$750 million when we took office. That is now upwards of \$850—some million—record increases. We have done a number of other things. The amalgamation, which really sticks in the craw of some of the members opposite, but at the end of the day it is going to be a positive process. We had too many school divisions. We had school divisions that had only one school in them. If that was not a sure sign that it was time to

reassess and retrench, I do not know what was. It was a difficult process. There will be some growing pains no doubt, but at the end of the day we will have a sounder, more streamlined, more efficient system. At the end of the day we will benefit. I might add, you put a 4% cap on administrative costs which will reflect positively as well.

I would like to leave the topic of education and talk about something that is near and dear to me, which is water control. Again I have to project back to September of 1999 when I first became a member and entered this Chamber. I was under the naive assumption that a lot of stuff was in place already, that you would think that, in this day and age, we would have a smooth-running system that would be well organized. The exact opposite was the case. It was a disaster, to say the least. A disaster. They had cut the funding to roughly a third of it. The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) and the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) both acknowledged in this Chamber that the previous Premier, Mr. Filmon, had gutted the system and had basically left rural Manitoba out to dry, and they are the party that claims to represent the farmers in this community. How can they justify that after making cuts like that? It was so bad that a producer had challenged the provincial position in court, and a judge had ruled that the Province had acted so irresponsibly that he took away our jurisdiction over municipal drainage. One of the first acts that this Government took when we came back into office was to reconstitute The Water Rights Act and set us back on the right course here.

I might add, in this last Budget, once again, there was a 10% increase in funding for drainage, something that I have lobbied for very hard in my caucus and my lobbying has paid off. Thankfully, we have had increases in consecutive budgets, I think, in terms of drainage.

I want to speak about the Conservation Districts Program for a moment, if I may, Mr. Speaker, a program, I might add, which was begun by the former NDP Premier Mr. Schreyer back in 1972, and over the 20—some years leading up to our coming to government in '99. I believe nine conservations had been set up over

roughly a 27-year period. In our 3.5 years in office we have almost doubled the number of conservation districts. We are up to 16 now, and we are not stopping yet. We have set a target for ourselves to bring new CDs on every year. I have been lobbying very hard not only at the provincial government level, but with all the municipal councillors and reeves that I have to deal with, to try and get an Interlake conservation district up and running. I can see some light at the end of the tunnel. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, we will have this program in the Interlake where it is long overdue. We are a big region of this province. We have a lot of low land, a lot of swamp, ridge and swale country, and we are in need of sound water management as much, if not more so, as any other region of this province. I can just think of the scenario in my home municipality, the R.M. of Fisher, with the Peguis First Nation downstream of this municipality. With the municipal drainage that has gone in place over the last 20, 30, 40 years, it has put them in a very difficult situation. It is time for us to take a serious look at this particular watershed, which is what we are doing now, and try and get some sound planning in place which may alleviate some of the suffering that these people in Peguis have to experience.

A lot of other things. The Office of Drinking Water, for instance, is now in place. We have reconstituted the 70% subsidy for people who want to test their water, something cancelled by the members opposite, supposedly the spokesmen for rural Manitoba, but in their zeal to cut taxes and so forth they felt that reducing that subsidy for testing your water—something that is so basic for human survival, to have clean water—how heartless can you be to have cancelled something like that. It just boggles the mind. It is not a whole lot of money, but it is very important to people in rural Manitoba, especially the poor people. Maybe it does not seem like much to people at the upper-income scale but for those people who are living on \$10,000 or \$15,000 a year, that means a lot to them, as do things like the rural stress line. Our farmers have a lot to endure, the weather. You never know what is going to happen. Either it is feast or famine, drought or flood. They are under stress at the best of times. You have farmers fighting with tuberculosis in the Riding

Mountain area. All these people in dire straits and often by themselves out on their little farms, all by themselves, and what did the Tory government do? They cancelled a critical information line like that. Little things like that, but they add up to a lot to the people in rural Manitoba.

On the topic of agriculture, since I have segued into it somewhat, just over the last couple of years in office, this Government has put over \$220 million into disaster assistance. I might add that one of the critical things that we did, directly as a result of the flooding in southwestern Manitoba, which is virtually 100 percent in the Conservative fold, where they experienced drastic flooding, our Government took action. Not only did we come across with disaster assistance, but now we have included coverage through the crop insurance program for excess moisture. I know the Member for Lakeside has mentioned this, that they were on the verge of doing it, that they were going to deliver on this, but history will show that it was this Government, not the previous Conservative government, that carried through on this, which farmers in this province will appreciate forever in the days to come.

We have focussed our efforts on maintaining the family farm. Again, the members opposite—we knew what their objective was, their friends in the corporate world, as the sale of MTS, and I will not go into that today. I have thrashed that out in previous speeches, how it was essentially a mafia takeover of the telephone company, but I do not want to speak about that. I want to speak about what we are doing to try and keep the family farm in the hands of the people, as opposed to farmers having to sell their land and go to work in some plant, or in a hog barn, or in a slaughter plant for minimum wage. We would prefer that they stay on the land. There is the Bridging Generations Initiative that is in place now—over \$15 million spent, 130-plus families addressed.

* (17:00)

Mr. Speaker, we have made progress on the ethanol initiative. We have had the Livestock Stewardship Initiative. We have expanded crop insurance and so on and so forth, the Prairie

Grain Roads Program. I could go on and on and on, and I am kind of regretting switching to 30 minutes as opposed to the 40 minutes, but so be it. I am going to have to wrap up. My little light is beeping here. Just in closing, I thank you for the opportunity to have a few words, and, finally, once again I wish a successful and enjoyable retirement to all the members who will be leaving this Legislature.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of the wonderful constituency of Carman, I am pleased once again to rise today to put some comments on the record about the 2003-2004 Budget.

First, I would like to take a couple of minutes to recognize nine members of this Legislature who are not seeking re-election, and for a breach of the rules, Sir, and I believe it has been done by several speakers before me. Their names are, and I believe the record will show them all: Mr. Harry Enns, Harold Gilleshammer, Frank Pitura, Ed Helwer, Jim Penner, Jean Friesen, Becky Barrett, Marianne Cerilli and Linda Asper.

Collectivement ces neuf personnes, ces neuf personnes dévouées, ont consacré plus que cent années de service à la représentation de leurs électeurs à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de cette Chambre. Cela constitue un dossier de service public extrêmement impressionnant, et notre province est plus riche grâce à toutes les contributions faites par ces députés. Je leur offre mes meilleurs souhaits dans leurs explorations de la vie en dehors de l'arène politique.

Translation

Collectively these nine dedicated individuals have put in more than a hundred years of service representing their constituents inside and outside this House. That is an extremely impressive record of public service and our province is richer for all these members' contributions. I wish them all the best as they explore life outside of the political arena.

English

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the residents of the Carman

constituency. Your ongoing support makes my job as an MLA go so much more smoothly, and I look forward to your continued input.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their love and unconditional support of my political pursuits. It is appreciated far more than they realize.

Mr. Speaker, the Doer government has just brought down its fourth Budget. Unfortunately, in their case, practice does not make perfect. The first thing Manitobans must ask themselves is: Why should they believe anything in this Budget? After all, look at its author. This Budget was written by a Premier who promised to end hallway medicine but failed, a Premier who was forcing hardworking health care professionals to fudge hallway medicine numbers, and a Premier who has tried to hide a \$133-million deficit.

Manitobans cannot trust the Premier on his hallway medicine numbers. They cannot trust him to balance the Budget, and he has given them no reason to trust his budget numbers. After all, this is a Premier with an insatiable spending habit.

Les budgets devraient avoir pour objectif de présenter une vision, d'établir une direction pour le développement futur, d'offrir de l'espoir à tous nos jeunes et d'être à l'écoute des priorités des Manitobains. Pourtant aucun des quatre budgets du gouvernement Doer n'a réalisé de tels objectifs.

Translation

The goal of budgets should be to lay out a vision, set a course for future development, offer hope for all our young people, and listen to the priorities of Manitobans. Yet none of the four budgets of the Doer government has delivered in these key areas.

English

The latest Budget simply reinforces what the previous three budgets demonstrated, that this Government has no vision and that it is pursuing the wrong priorities. The Finance Minister rattled off a few things that the Doer government supposedly delivered on. Yet he completed

avoided talking about how they failed to deliver on three of their top election promises. They failed to deliver a balanced budget; they failed to deliver an end to hallway medicine; and they failed to make our community safer. With a spending-to-tax ratio of 11-1, this Budget does nothing to make Manitoba more competitive or to give our young people a reason to stay here and establish themselves.

Le Manitoba est maintenant la province où les taxes sont les plus élevées à l'ouest de la province du Nouveau-Brunswick. Oui, vous m'avez bien entendu. D'une côte à l'autre, nous sommes taxés le plus. Le premier ministre et son conseil des ministres devraient avoir honte que le Manitoba continue à traîner si loin derrière les autres provinces sur le plan de la compétitivité.

Translation

Manitoba is the now the highest taxed province west of New Brunswick. Yes, you heard me correctly. From coast to coast we are taxed the most. The Premier and his Cabinet should be ashamed that Manitoba continues to fall so far behind the other provinces in terms of tax competitiveness.

English

This Budget confirms that the Premier (Mr. Doer) believes the musings of his Industry Minister (Ms. Mihychuk), who likes to argue that there is no correlation between tax cuts and job creation. The tax cuts contained in this Budget amount to a measly \$14 savings for everyday Manitobans. They cannot even afford a tank of gas to get out of Manitoba on that, but this Government offers nothing to make them want to stay.

The Budget proves that the Premier's spending habit is still out of control. He spent the last three and a half years raising Manitoba taxes, increasing user fees, robbing Manitoba Hydro blind, and raiding the rainy day fund to pay for it. Since his Government took office, the amount of money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund has fallen from \$285 million to \$145 million at the end of 2003. The rainy day fund raid does not stop there, though. The Doer government is projected to draw an additional

\$39 million from the fund next year. Despite a written commitment by the Doer government to replenish the rainy day fund of the \$150-million temporary, or transitional, withdrawal in 2001-02, it has never been replaced.

When the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) was asked in Question Period last week why this money was never returned the minister replied that things change. What kind of logic is that, Mr. Speaker, that things change? I bet Manitobans wish they could tell their bankers that things change when they can no longer make their monthly mortgage payments, but things do not work this way in the real world.

Then there is the Doer government's favourite financial institution, the bank of Manitoba Hydro. Not satisfied with pillaging the rainy day fund when it is not raining, the Doer posse has repeatedly set their sights on this valuable Crown corporation. Manitoba Hydro has been forced to hand over millions of dollars to the Government to help it balance its books, and, in turn, Hydro has been forced to borrow millions of dollars to make up for the money that the Doer government siphoned from its coffers. This is simply unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans will be forced to pay for the Doer government's visit to the bank of Hydro when the corporation is ultimately forced to increase its rates. The Doer government may be laughing about their draw from the bank of Hydro, but Manitobans will not be laughing when they have to draw more money from their own bank accounts to pay for higher Hydro bills. This Government has raised the bar of financial mismanagement to a new level with their raids on Manitoba Hydro. Instead of finding ways to get spending under control, the Premier and his Hydro Minister have pillaged the Crown without any regard for its long-term fiscal health. This is entirely irresponsible and it is everyday Manitobans who will end up paying for the Doer government's folly.

* (17:10)

This Budget fails miserably on a number of accounts. Most troubling is the fact that it has nothing to move our province forward or to address critical issues, such as the fact that Manitoba has the worst job-creation record in

the country. This Budget should have been about finally reining in years of overspending, providing meaningful tax relief and focussing on the real priorities of Manitobans. Instead, it seems to focus on the interests of the very few at the expense of the many. As a result, Manitoba will continue to fall further behind, and our young people will continue to leave for jobs and opportunities elsewhere.

I would just like to focus in on a couple of key areas from the Budget and how they will impact residents in the Carman constituency. Take the Doer government's handling of agriculture. Once again they have failed miserably, demonstrating just how grossly out of touch they are when it comes to the needs of our agricultural sector. They should have set aside funds in this Budget to pay Manitoba's share of the transition funding under the Agricultural Policy Framework, but they did not. The governments of Alberta, Ontario and Québec have flowed their share of the transition funding, recognizing how important this money is to the economic well-being of their farmers. The Doer government continues to argue that the transition funding is trade injury money, even though federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief has clearly said that the transition money is to help farmers deal with all the different types of hurt. By refusing to flow the transition funding under the APF, the Doer government has chosen to balance its Province's books off the backs of our farmers, and, frankly, that is despicable. An investment in agriculture is an investment in the overall health of the provincial economy. But this Government refuses to recognize that.

Further evidence of how out of touch the Doer government is with our agricultural sector can be found in a document, *Building Strong Communities—A Vision for Rural Manitoba*. Under the section entitled *Supporting Farm Families*, the Government points out that it has reinstated the farm and rural stress line. Reinstating the farm and rural stress line is hardly an accomplishment that I would be bragging about. If the Doer government were truly interested in helping farmers, they would be concentrating on policies designed to tackle farmers' stresses head-on, rather than offering them counselling after the fact.

The same could be said about their bovine TB support team. It is time for this Government to work harder and to find meaningful solutions to this very serious threat to our multimillion dollar livestock industry. Then there is the matter of transportation. A sound highway system is critical to the health of the rural economy. I agree with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) when he said in his budget speech that in a province as large and geographically diverse as Manitoba, transportation is crucial to economic development and quality of life in each region. The minister is absolutely correct. That is why it frustrates me that the minister, knowing how important transportation is to our economy, has once again ignored the crumbling infrastructure of southern rural Manitoba.

In 1999, the highways construction and maintenance budget was \$159 million and, yet, administrative costs were \$66 million. In 2002, the budget was \$136 million, but the administrative costs were \$76 million. That means a \$10-million increase in overhead to run a shrinking program. Less money is going into building and maintaining our roads and more is going into administration and overhead. That is a sure recipe for infrastructure disaster.

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities president, Stuart Briese, said of the Budget, and I quote: "We are disappointed there is no more additional funding in highways. They are crumbling."

That is simply unacceptable to Manitobans, and I know you would be hard pressed to find many residents of the Carman constituency who are satisfied with the state of this province's deteriorating road system.

I would also like to throw in a comment about the Department of Conservation and the way our provincial parks are being run. My constituency is home to the Stephenfield Provincial Park, and I know that it is extremely popular. It recently came to our attention that conservation officers have been turned into glorified parking police and ordered to go on a ticketing spree designed to put money in the pockets of a government that cannot control its spending.

The number of parking tickets issued in provincial parks over the last year skyrocketed to 1000 in '90 compared to a mere 10 issued during the 1998-99 fiscal year. The fines collected jumped from \$444 in '98-99 to more than \$32,000 following the NDP parking ticket cash grab spree. I would like the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Ashton) to tell Manitobans where his Government gets off treating unsuspecting park visitors as cash cows. How galling it must be for park visitors to drive up to a park, find no one working at the gate, and yet find no instruction about where to buy a parking pass in the absence of the park staff.

These unsuspecting visitors then have to make a choice. They can turn around and go home disappointed because they cannot buy a park pass at the park gate or they can take a chance, park without the appropriate park pass and spend some quality time with their families enjoying our beautiful parks. Too bad that when they go back to their cars and find that the park staff, who were not working the gates to sell them a parking pass, have come around to ticket them for not having a parking pass.

It is wrong on so many different levels to have conservation staff working as parking ticket enforcers. I know it has to be tremendously demoralizing for these well-trained staff who could be put to far better use dealing with visitors and managing our parks and natural resources. I cannot even begin to imagine how irritating it must be for a park visitor to get a parking ticket when there were not staff manning the park gates or signs directing them to where to buy a pass in the staff's absence.

I would suggest to the Conservation Minister that this policy sends an extremely negative message to park visitors about how we manage our parks. All this aggravation is taking place only to put a few more dollars in the pockets of a government who cannot or will not control its unbridled spending habit. The Budget should not be balanced off the backs of our park goers.

Our Carman residents, like other Manitobans, are also concerned about public safety issues. The continuing increase in gang activity and schoolyard bullying is also unacceptable to Manitobans. We all deserve to feel safe in our

communities. It is a sad day to note that fewer Manitobans can honestly say that they feel safe in their own province. Our police officers are being assaulted and they are being killed. Senior citizens are being violated in their homes and on the streets. Pedophiles are getting off with a slap on the wrist. High speed chases are occurring more often, and gang-related crime is more prominent in our communities than ever.

A recent headline on the front page of *The Winnipeg Sun* stated: Gang warfare feared. Story after story have appeared in the media province-wide about the revolving door of our justice system under the Doer administration. The president of the Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys has referred to the Doer government as being soft on crime. That kind of statement reinforces what too many Manitobans fear, that the Doer government is unable to deal with crime and criminals.

* (17:20)

There is a mention of the Seniors' Home Security program but no details. This was first promised by the NDP in September 1999, and despite several violent home invasions involving seniors, we are left wondering when will they be able to access this particular program. There is lots of talk about all the programs the NDP have brought in but precious little mention of getting tough on criminals and holding them accountable for their actions, virtually no mention of protecting victims.

What kind of message is the NDP's inaction on crime sending to our youth? I will tell you. It is sending our youth the message that if you commit a crime, you probably will not have to do the time. It is completely unacceptable. I also believe that it is absolutely appalling that some of our children are afraid to go to school because of bullies. This Government is not doing enough to address this situation.

Learning is supposed to be a safe and enjoyable experience. We always tell our children that their years in school will be their best years and that they should not be in a rush to grow up. How can school be an enjoyable experience if you are constantly watching your back because you might be wearing the wrong

clothes, listening to the wrong music, walked on the wrong part of the schoolyard, or have the wrong friends? This is the reality of today's schoolyard. The Doer government needs to do more to make our students feel safe in their classrooms.

Good quality education and retention of youth are important to the future success of our province. Aging infrastructure, professor shortages and lack of funding is making it difficult for our institutions of higher learning to continue providing competitive education. Most disturbing is the fact that we are training our young people to leave. Our best and our brightest are leaving in droves, going to jurisdictions where their taxes are lower and there is a greater range of job opportunities. No premier should be proud of this type of an export program.

L'importance de retenir des gens de métier compétents n'est nulle part ailleurs plus apparente que dans notre système de soins de santé.

Translation

The importance of retaining skilled professionals is nowhere more apparent than in our health care system.

English

Supposedly, more nurses than ever are graduating from our universities. I am absolutely delighted to hear that, but can somebody tell me how many of these nurses will be staying in Manitoba, how many have signed full-time nursing contracts with our hospitals, and I am sure many of my constituents would like to know how many of those nurses will be coming to rural Manitoba. We have a health care crisis on our hands, and this minister is doing little to resolve it.

The Doer government has spent nearly \$1 billion more on health care since 1999, yet many Manitobans would be hard pressed to point to marked improvements in access to and the delivery of health care services. Manitobans are on waiting lists to see specialists, to get tests and to have surgery. Waiting for long periods of time for health care that is supposed to be universally

accessible has a negative impact on a person's quality of life. These long waits for health care services show that the Premier does not have his health care priorities straight.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close by saying that I am extremely disappointed in this Budget. It fails to provide meaningful tax relief for Manitobans. It fails to provide a vision for agriculture and rural development in this province.

Il ne fait rien pour encourager nos jeunes à rester au Manitoba.

Translation

It does nothing to encourage our youth to stay in Manitoba.

English

It fails to adequately address the shortcomings in both our justice and our health care system. It is a budget that raids the profits of Crown corporations to pay for this Government's voracious spending habits. This is a budget that fails to address the priorities of Manitobans. For that, the Doer government should be ashamed.

Mr. Speaker, just before closing, because of the new rules that we have implemented that guide us through the House, if we were fortunate enough to carry on the way we are, I understand that we would be out of here by the middle of June. By doing so, that gives us the opportunity, many of us, to spend time with our families. We get the opportunity, after being here for many years, to get to know one another and the names of our children.

But the individuals that I am about to list and put on the public record are the children of people who work for us in the Clerk's office, and who do an admirable job. I am hoping that they have that opportunity, that glorious opportunity, this summer.

The names of these fine young people are: Marissa Thompson, Nicholas Thompson, Jessica Malynyk, Stephanie Grenier, Shanelle Grenier,

Riley Korol, Emma Yarish, Adam Yarish, Julia Haskett, Cassidy Haskett.

To these young people I would like to wish them a great wonderful summer.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this wonderful opportunity.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education and Youth.

An Honourable Member: 5:30.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5:30 p.m? *[Agreed]*

I had already recognized the honourable Minister of Education and Youth (Mr. Lemieux); so when this matter is before the House, the honourable Minister of Education and Youth will have 30 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

April 29, 2003

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