

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
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CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
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DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
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MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
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NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
VACANT	Kirkfield Park	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 11, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 18—The Organic Agricultural Products Act

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I move, seconded by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill 18, The Organic Agricultural Products Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, currently new federal regulations for organic food productions are providing assurance to national and international buyers that Canadian-produced organic foods are certified organic and are thereby assisting Canadian producers in their marketing efforts. By creating provincial standards for organic food production in Manitoba that mirror federal standards, the Manitoba Organic Agricultural Products Act will provide the same assurance to Manitoba consumers and will assist Manitoba producers in their marketing efforts.

Provisions of the act have been created in consultation with several of Manitoba's major production and marketing groups, including Keystone Agricultural Producers, the Canadian Wheat Board, the Organic Food Council of Manitoba and the Organic Producers Association of Manitoba.

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

PETITIONS

Crocus Investment Fund

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

The provincial auditor's report, the Manitoba Securities Commission investigation, the RCMP

investigation and the involvement of our courts, collectively, will not answer the questions that must be answered in regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by M. Ambalina, J. Bacani, L. Bacani and many, many others.

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

**Removal of Agriculture Positions
from Minnedosa**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

Removal of these positions will severely impact the local economy.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider stopping the removal of these positions from our community and to consider utilizing current technology in order to maintain these positions in their existing location.

This petition is signed by Marjorie McNabb, Bea Andrews, Donna Shorrock and many, many others.

Headingley Foods

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act (Mr. Smith), to consider allowing the owners of Headingley Foods to sell alcohol at their store, thereby supporting small business and the prosperity of rural communities in Manitoba.

This is signed by J. Johner, Janet Fritsch, Linda Klimack and many others, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

World Women's Hockey Championship

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Sport): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

It gives me great pleasure, as the Minister responsible for Sport, to rise before the House today to celebrate the successful completion of the 2007 World Women's Hockey Championship held in Manitoba.

These championship games, held in Winnipeg and Selkirk from April 3 to 10, brought athletes, coaches and spectators to Manitoba from the visiting countries of China, the United States, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Kazakhstan, Finland and Russia, along with a crowd of just over 15,000 people, which included the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his family, as well as the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), and many members of this Assembly. I also had the pleasure of being in attendance at the gold medal game last night. It was with great pride that we watched our hometown hero, Jennifer Botterill, score the first goal that led to a 5-1 victory for Team Canada over the U.S.

I would like to congratulate the Canadian women's hockey team for their brilliant, awe-inspiring performance. A special congratulations to the Manitoba Team Canada members, including Jennifer Botterill, Sami Jo Small and Delaney Collins, who was named an all-star defencewoman for the tournament. All of Manitoba and Canada are proud of the women's team winning the gold in this exciting championship event.

Manitobans should also be proud as our reputation continues to grow. Once again, we have proven our ability to host world-class sporting events, which have included the Grey Cup, Pan-Am Games, North American Indigenous Games, the World Curling Championships and many others, with great energy and success.

To Polly Craik and the host committee and volunteers, congratulations and thank you for once again showing Canada and the world that Manitoba is the place to host their event. Manitoba now has set the bar very high by smashing the record for ticket sales for this event with well over 120,000 sold.

To all the fans who repeatedly packed the MTS Centre to cheer on Team Canada and other worthy teams with such great enthusiasm, thank-you for making this the most successful World Women's Hockey Championship ever.

This event has greatly benefited not only the communities of Selkirk and Winnipeg who hosted the games, but indeed all of Manitoba. Destination Winnipeg preliminary estimates indicate the games

will generate in excess of \$7 million in economic activity for the province.

This event could not have experienced the high level of success without the hundreds of volunteers, including the event organizers, that dedicated limitless amounts of time. Manitoba has the greatest volunteers that always step up, no matter to what event. Without their efforts, events like the Women's World Hockey would not happen.

I hope all the competitors, officials, and spectators have had a memorable event and have enjoyed Manitoba's spirited energy and hospitality.

* (13:40)

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I thank the minister for his statement. It's my pleasure to rise today and pay tribute to the great sporting achievement that Manitobans witnessed once again, first-hand, last night at the MTS Centre.

I was pleased to be joined there last night by the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire). The Premier (Mr. Doer), was there with Ms. Devine as well as the Minister responsible for Sport, the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), and others. All of us who were there know what a great event it was, and once again it was great to see Canada claim the world championship in a dominating and convincing 5-1 win over the defending champion American team.

I was among the 15,003 people who attended last night. It was an experience that I'll never forget when Winnipeg's own Jennifer Botterill scored in that second period to break open a closely contested game. The roof nearly came off the place with deafening cheers from our great Manitoba home town fans.

From that point on, the Canadians displayed their superior skill, led by their captain and tournament MVP, Hayley Wickenheiser, as well as all-star teammates Kim St-Pierre and our very own Delaney Collins from the great community of Pilot Mound. They were also supported by Sami Jo Small and many, many other talented Canadian athletes.

The Americans, for their part, put up a valiant effort but were simply unable to keep up with this talented Canadian squad. The standing ovation the Canadian women received from the fans at the end of the game was a great send-off from Canada's best

hockey fans to the world's best women's hockey team.

Of course, this event would never have happened without the great commitment of the Winnipeg fans who purchased over 120,000 tickets to smash the previous record for ticket sales by more than 30,000. The Winnipeg volunteers, Manitoba volunteers, made this a world class event in every aspect and worked diligently to ensure that the tournament went smoothly. Of course, the hard work and leadership of tournament chairwoman, Polly Craik, who had the vision of success for this tournament and that she delivered beyond anyone's imagination.

So Canadians should be proud of this team in fulfilling its quest to once again reclaim hockey supremacy, and Manitobans should be proud to know that they have proved to all of the world that they are the best hosts and hockey fans that the IIHF could ever ask for. Thank you.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I add my voice to those of others in this Chamber to congratulate our Canadian women's hockey team, the three members from Manitoba: Sami Jo Small, Delaney Collins and Jennifer Botterill. It was certainly exciting to see Jennifer Botterill's goal last night and to see the excellent play of Delaney Collins through this series.

I would say that it has been an exciting time and a very good time to be a Manitoban, to be able to be here and watch the event and to be there when there are so many volunteers and so many people who put in so much time to make this such a wonderful success. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Riverside School 18 grades 7, 8 and 9 students under the direction of Mr. Cliff Friesen. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Budget 2007 Policy Intentions

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Last week, after the budget was presented, I was asked for immediate reaction, Mr. Speaker, and I said to the media at the time that we are always as interested in what's not in the budget as what is actually displayed in budgets that come from this Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and this NDP government. We've had the opportunity now to do some further analysis of the detail, both what's in the budget and the many, many caveats that the minister was referring to yesterday, all of those things that weren't in the budget.

Last week I referred in debate to the fact that it looked in a lot of ways like an Uncle Willy's Buffet budget but, on further analysis, it may very well be the batteries-not-included budget because of the number of things that are not stated. It's like waking up on Christmas and opening that present which looks great and then you go on, it's batteries not included, some assembly required, and by the time you put it all together the picture isn't quite so pretty.

So the NDP has tried to advertise that they've reduced taxes by \$539 million since 1999. And now the rest of the story: The government tells one side of the story, but what they've left out is the fact that they have increased fees, rates and taxes paid by Manitobans on everything from getting married to paying their hydro bill by a total over that time period of \$450 million. Mr. Speaker, \$450 million in increases on hardworking Manitobans. It's the revolving-door budget. The money goes in one side and out the other to go along with the revolving door of justice policy.

I want to ask the Premier: Why don't they just be up-front with Manitobans and disclose to them the true nature of what they're doing with their budgetary policies?

* (13:50)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Dealing with tax reductions, there is an amazing contrast here between the promises we've made and delivered on and the promises the Conservatives made and didn't deliver on, Mr. Speaker.

Members opposite promised to go to 80 percent education funding. We ended up with two taxes on homeowners, and we ended up at the end of 11 years with a 68 percent increase in property taxes because the government went down to 50 percent funding. We've rebuilt that to two-thirds funding, and this budget again builds more support for homeowners and personal property owners.

Members opposite promised to eliminate the payroll tax in four years. You talk about fine print; they just didn't tell us which four years—2011, 2021, 2031. Every promise we've made on tax reductions, we have met.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Every promise we have made on tax reductions, we have met or exceeded. Let me give you an example of exceeding our promise, something that would be absolutely foreign to members opposite.

We promised to reduce the education tax on farmland by 20 percent. Members opposite in government increased the portioning for farmland, but still swaggered around the coffee shops bragging about their record. We are now at a 60 percent reduction of education taxes on farmland, and this budget goes to 80 percent.

Tax Increases

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier likes to walk around the province passing blame for everything that is going on. He's been Premier for almost eight years. If he wants to figure out where to place the blame for problems in Manitoba, he should take a look in the mirror.

If you were in the MTS Centre last night, take a look at the smooch cam if you want to figure out who to blame for what's going on. He likes to go back to the 1990s. He doesn't want to take responsibility for what's happened under his own watch. It's a batteries-not-included budget, Mr. Speaker. They tell you, on one hand, they're going to do this. On the other hand, they take money out of the pockets of Manitobans on everything from park fees if you want to visit a park, if you want a security licence, a marriage licence. And look at this, even hearing aid dealer fees have been imposed by this government. They're all done in the secrecy of the Cabinet room with Orders-in-Council that don't need

to be brought before the Legislature. New regulations slide out from under the Cabinet room door without any fanfare or any announcement.

So I want to ask the Premier this: They've advertised income tax reductions of \$360 million. How can they say taxes have gone down when they've increased fees and taxes by \$450 million over the same time period?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Again, we're not dealing with, quote, blame. We're just dealing with accountability. The corporate tax, when we came into office, when the member opposite was chief of staff and bragged in his Web site about not only selling the telephone system, but he also bragged about being the architect for the tax policy of the Filmon government. What was it? It was the highest corporate tax in Canada at 17 percent. What is this budget? Fourteen percent; going down to 13 percent. He bragged about being the architect of having the highest small business tax in Canada. Those are the facts.

We started at—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Under the member's regime, it started off with 8 percent small business tax. We are now at 3 percent small business tax. We're going to 2 percent next year. We're going to 1 percent, the lowest in Canada. Mr. Speaker, I know it's not low enough for members opposite.

I would point out that the member opposite will know the biggest increase in user fees in Manitoba was the Tories increasing and putting on a user fee to transport rural and northern residents across the province. We eliminated it.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, their economic policies are so successful that companies are climbing over themselves to come to Manitoba. We have Mitsubishi, we have Maple Leaf Distillers, we've got—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Only a classroom of grade 1 kids could not take the point that's being made. The point is that we've got Mitsubishi, we've got Maple Leaf Distillers, and the Premier likes to talk about ancient history. Let's talk about General Electric. Let's talk about all those

other companies they were going to bring to Manitoba and their party drove out of Manitoba. The only thing that's going on in this province today is government-driven, centrally driven tax-and-spend, big government projects. It's not sustainable. It's not right and there's no foundation for economic growth being built by this party. Just ask all of those serious private-sector people who've taken a look at Manitoba and taken a pass as a result of this government's failed economic policies.

Mr. Speaker, just like they did on Crocus where they failed to disclose the relevant facts, why don't they tell Manitobans the truth? Why don't they admit to Manitobans that they've put their fees up on everything from hearing aid dealer fees, to park fees, to marriage licences, to the cattle checkoff, to Manitoba Hydro, to water rentals, to income tax and their failure to bracket income tax to the rate of inflation? Why don't they just come clean and tell the whole story because Manitobans are already on to them? Why not just regain a little bit of credibility? Come clean and tell Manitobans why they're increasing taxes and why they're not being straight-up about what they're doing with the budget.

Mr. Doer: The financial community has more than grade 1 education. I know the member opposite is a bit pompous as usual today, but the financial community and every one of the banking institutions have identified the debt-to-GDP ratio going down and the taxes in Manitoba going steadily down in every budget. Mr. Speaker, they're a lot smarter than, I daresay, the member opposite in terms of analyzing budgets.

I would also point out that General Electric had co-offsets which eventually became Standard Aero for the building of the Limestone dam. So the member opposite, in his ancient history, is again wrong. Of course, Mr. Speaker, members opposite voted against hydro-electric. They always voted against hydro-electric. They wanted to mothball hydro-electric in the '80s and now they want to sell hydro-electric into the future.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that when the member opposite is talking about economics, why anybody would report what he says is just foreign to me. In the Speech from the Throne debate, he mentioned that Ontario had not mentioned Manitoba once in terms of hydro-electric sales. It was eight times they mentioned it. He still hasn't apologized for that economic error, and he's on with

Mitsubishi again yesterday making mistake after mistake.

The user fees in the budget went down 5.1 percent because we eliminated the user fee for ambulance transportation for rural residents. It's down 5.1 percent and they better be able to calculate it.

Provincial Budget 2007 Federal Transfer Payments

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, increases in federal transfer payments are an indication that Manitoba is falling further and further behind other provinces. Budget 2007 anticipates an increase in federal transfer payments of \$402 million over budget 2006. Under this NDP government, Manitoba is firmly entrenching itself as a have-not province.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why does he refuse to take steps to make Manitoba a have province?

*(14:00)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I'm thrilled to get a question on the budget finally from the members opposite.

One of the great things that the members opposite like to misinform the public about is who's getting the benefit of transfer payments. The vast majority of transfer payments are going to Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. Manitoba's transfer payments are the lowest of those four provinces. As a matter of fact, here in Manitoba, our economy has been growing faster than the Canadian average, both last year and this year. When it comes to tax reductions, you have to take a look at the small-business tax rate. It is going down 88 percent. It was the second highest in the country under members opposite. It will be the lowest in the country and is the lowest in the country under this government.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, Ontario receives no equalization payments. Alberta receives nothing. British Columbia receives \$60 per capita and Saskatchewan only receives \$228 per capita. Manitoba receives a whopping \$1,547 per capita from the federal government in equalization payments. This is a clear sign that this economy depends on handouts from the federal government. Relative to other provinces, we're falling further and further behind.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why is he ensuring that Manitoba stays a have-not province?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the percentage of revenues that the former government received under the equalization program was about 19 percent to 19.5 percent. It's exactly the same today. It was actually slightly higher. The transfer payments on equalization are exactly equivalent today as to what they were in '99 when we took over government.

The big change in transfer payments has been the restoration of the cuts for health care, the restoration of the cuts for post-secondary and, as yet, no restoration of cuts for social services. The majority of those restored cuts are going to the provinces with the greatest population. Manitoba's economy is growing faster than the Canadian average. It's not dragging us through the '90s, when people's personal disposable income went down. Personal disposable income in Manitoba is growing, and wages are growing in Manitoba.

Mr. Hawranik: Federal transfers now make up 36.6 percent of all our revenues, up from 34.7 percent in 2006. In fact, 42 percent of all new revenues available to the Province come from federal transfer payments since 1999. Our dependence on the federal government is growing, and the NDP has failed to keep up with other provinces. As a result, we continue to beg the federal government for more money to provide services.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why doesn't he spend more time growing our economy rather than begging for more money from Ottawa?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what's happening. The only people who are missing the growth are the members opposite. Manitoba is growing faster than the Canadian average. Our manufacturing is leading the country, our exports are leading the country and our retail sales are among the healthiest in the country. Our commercial real estate is among the best in the country and our residential real estate sales are among the best in the country. The only members opposite who aren't growing, who are actually diminishing in their capacity to understand what's going on in Manitoba, are the members opposite. Everybody else is doing well.

Grace General Hospital Closure of Emergency Room

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the MLA for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) recently sent out a letter accusing many West End

Winnipeggers of fearmongering about the closure of the Grace ER due to doctor shortages. Darn right, there's over a hundred thousand of us in the West End of Winnipeg afraid that this hospital will close its ER because this Minister of Health has not told any of us how she will keep that ER open after June 30.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health today to tell all of us in the West End how she plans to keep the Grace ER open after June 30, and safely open, when there are only three doctors who are going to be working there after the end of June.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to tell the member opposite and tell all Manitobans, as we've done before, that our commitment to keeping the ER at Grace Hospital, indeed the ERs in all of the city of Winnipeg, open, is very real. We know the most recent discussions about closing ERs in Winnipeg were under the Tory regime when they closed Misericordia and were crafting plans to close Seven Oaks. So let's all be frank about who's keeping the ERs open safely and who was making plans to close the ERs. That's very clear.

The doctors, the nurses, all health care professionals, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the good folks at the Grace Hospital are working diligently to ensure that patient care is safe and that the ER stays open.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is not alleviating any fear because she is not telling us how she plans to keep that ER open after the end of June.

Community residents have set up a Web site called "Saving Grace" and one of the postings from that, from somebody named Darryl, said: "Three weeks ago I went to the Grace at 2:00 p.m. suffering from a kidney stone attack. I was given 2 - 292s shortly after my arrival to help with the pain. I was next seen at 10:00 p.m., 8 hours' waiting. There was a fellow waiting to have a leg injury looked at. He arrived at 10, . . ." ". . .12 hours he waited . . . all due to only one doctor on staff."

I would like to ask the minister again: Deal with the fear of a hundred thousand of us in the West End and tell us how does she plan to keep the Grace ER open after June 30 when there will only be three doctors left working in that ER.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, of course, work is ongoing to ensure that the staff is fully engaged in

helping people in the Grace neighbourhood and, indeed, across Winnipeg. That's why we have ensured that we've increased our incentive program for ER docs. That's why we're looking towards the long term, something I might suggest the members opposite ought to consider in ensuring that we invest in the education of our doctors.

We're ensuring that we make sure there are doctors and nurses available. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we're working on a protocol where we have more doctors in Manitoba, not 200 fewer like members opposite; where we have 1,589 more nurses, not 1,573 less. We're working every day to ensure that doctors are incented to work. People in the neighbourhood should feel very confident that the ER is staying.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, again the minister is not providing an answer to over a hundred thousand of us who are living in fear out there that this ER could be closed. Another posting on the "Saving Grace" Web site from somebody named Carolyn: "I have attended the Grace Emergency on many occasions. My treatment was excellent, however, the waiting time is brutal. People vomiting in the waiting room, in extreme pain, needing to lie down. Nothing is done for these poor individuals. Please get more doctors and keep our hospital open."

I'll ask the minister again: What is her plan to keep the Grace ER open after the end of June when we are only going to have three doctors there, when we are supposed to have nine to safely provide care? What is her plan to deal with that?

Ms. Oswald: I'm happy to tell the member opposite once again that, of course, we have a plan. We have a plan of \$1.7 million for the Faculty of Medicine to double their seats. We have a plan to increase the funds for hard-to-fill shifts and encourage doctors to work more ER shifts.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I find it curious strange to have a member of the opposition stand up and actually utter the phrase, "more doctors and more nurses," when under their reign of terror we lost over 1,500 nurses, we lost a whole bunch of doctors and, in a moment of wisdom on their part, they cut the spaces to medical school. We're working every day to build that. The people in the neighbourhood of the Grace Hospital should feel confident and not be concerned about the fearmongering of members opposite.

Transportation Infrastructure Bridge Closures

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): The closure of the bridge crossing Souris River on Provincial Highway 2 is forcing motorists and truck transport drivers to find alternative routes. This has a telling impact on the local economy in the community.

To quote Warren Ellis, a local ag producer and business owner within the area: With the planting season upon us, farmers and agribusinesses will incur considerably higher costs due to 1.5 mile stretch of highway that should have been upgraded years ago.

Could the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation provide details on his efforts to provide a viable alternative to Highway 2.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I thank the member for the question. A lot of the infrastructure in the province of Manitoba we know certainly needs a lot of work. In fact, when members opposite made statements recently: You know, we told the government in 1999 that all the bridges and the roads are falling apart. Why did they say that? They knew it. They're the ones who let the roads and the bridges fall apart, Mr. Speaker. If we're going to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lemieux: The reason I refer to this, Mr. Speaker, some Manitobans need to be reminded of it, but most Manitobans realize that under the 1990s nothing happened; a 4.4 percent increase from about \$169 million to around \$177 million over that decade. Our budget is \$400 million a year.

* (14:10)

Mrs. Rowat: This is about personal safety, so we expect a more intelligent answer from the minister.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP's funding announcements to improve our highways have arrived too late to catch up with the rate of decay, and we are continuing to see safety jeopardized and traffic load disrupted. Transport trucks are diverted onto the crossing near Wawanesa Provincial Road 344. This bridge was designed to support 14 tons. The trucks using it are now 40 tons. Maintenance crews have reported pieces falling off the bridge as a result of this traffic.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister doing to ensure the safety of Manitobans by keeping these vehicles from using this route?

Mr. Lemieux: The engineers in our department have certainly done their inspections. They've spotted some work that needs to be done on the road on Highway 2 on the bridge, and because of safety, we had to close that particular bridge. We're going to be doing work on that bridge.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we've done, I've just talked recently, as a matter of fact, this morning with the mayor of Wawanesa and asked him what, if any, advice or suggestions he would give. He said he was very pleased with the work being done by the Brandon office and Transportation Department. I asked him if there was anything else we can do, we'd be pleased to work in co-operation with him. In fact, I informed him that a short section of road on No. 3 highway which was restricted, we have lifted that restriction in order to enable traffic to run smoothly east-west without having to take a detour to No. 1 highway.

Mrs. Rowat: The residents of Wawanesa are greatly concerned about their safety, and I too understand that the mayor has some solutions and some options available that he has presented to the minister. So I think that by having large vehicles moving through the town using a bridge that was not designated to support them is a safety issue. So, Mr. Speaker, we ask this minister to work expediently and deal with this.

Despite current efforts to post flagpersons to divert heavy traffic away from the bridge near Provincial Road 344, they are not continuously present at the site. So one of the options that has been presented by the municipal council has been to ask the minister to commit scheduling flagpersons at this bridge for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until the bridge on Highway 2 has been repaired.

Is this a viable option and will he respond, please?

Mr. Lemieux: Again we rely on our engineers and the professionals to determine the degree of safety that's necessary on a lot of our roads and bridges in the province, Mr. Speaker. I take my lead from them, not the member opposite, where any comments we hear about transportation and infrastructure—they never raised a question and never posed a question with regard to northern Manitoba or anywhere else. This government represents and has representatives

in every corner of the province. We ensure that projects are taking place in every corner of the province dealing with all Manitobans, and we believe that's the way to proceed with projects with regard to infrastructure—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Cattle Levy Refund Deadline

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, cattle ranchers in Manitoba are livid about the negative option refund of the NDP cattle levy. What does this mean? They don't get a refund unless they ask for it. Many ranchers were completely unaware of the application deadline because this Minister of Agriculture chose to keep it quiet. There was no advertisement of it.

In light of the fact that the minister has completely mismanaged and bungled the entire program, will she revise the deadline to allow producers to apply for a refund of this levy?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Well, Mr. Speaker, it's really interesting. On one hand, they don't want us to advertise, and now they're saying: You should be advertising. Very strange, from the man himself. But I can tell you, the levy was developed with the producers, and the producers were made aware. Producers who are looking for a refund have been applying for a refund and have been receiving a refund.

Mr. Speaker, producers in Manitoba also want to see slaughter capacity enhanced in this province. That levy will help with that. It's unfortunate the member opposite continues to say things like we don't need more slaughter capacity, and he's worried because the slaughter plants in Alberta aren't fully occupied. Shame on you.

Mr. Eichler: The only one making money is your buddy, Billy, at \$360 a day. That's the one making money off of this.

Mr. Speaker, posting dates on the Cattle Council Web site is hardly due diligence. If support of the levy was so widespread, there should've been no need to conceal the refund deadline. The minister claims that only because 25 percent of the ranchers chose a negative option refund. It proves they were in favour of being taxed through the back door.

Can the minister explain why she did not advertise the refund deadline when she scrapped this backdoor confiscation of our farmers' money?

Ms. Wowchuk: The member opposite must be having a memory lapse. The member opposite knows full well that producers negotiated with the government in order to get a refundable levy. Not all producers wanted a refundable levy. Most producers recognized it's important that they be part of the solution to increase slaughter capacity in this province. Just because the member opposite is so against producers having an involvement, he should not be saying the things he is about them.

Mr. Speaker, producers have the option and they negotiated that option in order to have a refund on their levy. Most producers choose to keep their money in because they recognize that we need increased slaughter capacity in this province and they want to be part of the solution.

Cattle Enhancement Council Administrative Costs

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): The Cattle Enhancement Council has kept over \$450,000 of the \$625,000 confiscated from Manitoba ranchers. Coincidentally, this is the same amount spent on council operations.

Mr. Speaker, only the NDP could achieve 100 percent administration costs. It's got to be a new record. There is no plan in place for an increase in slaughter capacity in this province. There are only more taxes.

Does the minister and her new council—what do they have to show for their accomplishments for this \$450,000 spent on administration? Zero to show for it.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, again the member is wrong. The member is wrong again. He does not want to see slaughter capacity increased in this province, because he thinks he comes from Alberta and is defending the Alberta packers, instead of our producers in this province.

The council is working. The council is taking applications and one application was approved. That fell through, but there are others who recognize the importance of increasing slaughter capacity in this province and continue to apply for funds from the council. The council is reviewing them, so again he's wrong.

Cattle Enhancement Council Administrative Costs

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, earlier today I was listening to CJOB and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) was calling on the federal government to bring forward a new federal disaster program. I would suggest that in this province our greatest disaster is the Minister of Agriculture.

If you look at her track record with regard to the BSE situation: Five years after BSE and we still don't have a single slaughter facility in this province. The money they collected from the farmers has all gone to administration. Now that, in this province, is a first, but it speaks volumes to the record of this minister.

I want to ask this minister whether or not she will scrap that ill-conceived program, return the money to farmers and then begin on a new path to ensure that this province has slaughter capacity within.

* (14:20)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to just say the Minister of Agriculture, I believe, is doing an incredibly great job on behalf of Manitobans. I thought the Member for Russell was going to stand up and thank the Minister of Agriculture for taking leadership on dealing with the Shellmouth Dam issue and all of the cattle producers and other producers who reside in and around that area. After decades of neglect, the Minister of Agriculture has taken a stand, dealt with the Shellmouth Dam area and the areas adjacent as a unique area. It is a provincial asset for flood protection, the Shellmouth Dam. This Minister of Agriculture has finally taken leadership here in Manitoba and I thought the members opposite would applaud the minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Slaughter Capacity

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, only an NDP Premier would stand up and praise his minister for using up the entire funds from a checkoff levy for administration and for her friend, Bill Uruski.

We have a situation in this province where we should be embarrassed nationally because this is a province where we raise a tremendous number of quality cattle, and yet, this is a province where we

don't have a single slaughter facility because this minister has not been able to put a program together that will work for this province. Instead, Mr. Speaker, she has put in a levy where 100 percent of it has gone to administration.

I want to ask the minister why she continues down this path and why she isn't doing something that's productive, something that is positive and something that will show that this province can indeed facilitate slaughter facility in this province.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite talk as though they want to increase slaughter capacity in this province, but I'll read to you what was said about the member from the Lakeside. He said that he's unsure if there is room for a cattle processing plant in Manitoba with Canadian facilities operating at only 60 or 70 percent.

So, Mr. Speaker, they talk as though they want to increase slaughter capacity, but the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) once said that slaughter capacity wasn't full and the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) said he would probably take his money out. We have to remember that it was the producers who came to us and said they wanted to be part of the solution. They didn't want government to be building slaughter facilities. We've worked with them to ensure that the levy is refundable which is what they wanted.

Funding for Projects

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Five years, a checkoff levy where all of the money collected has gone to administration, and what does this minister have to show for it? Nothing. Instead she blames a former administration. She's the Minister of Agriculture. She has to take responsibility along with the person that sits beside her, the Premier, and it is time in this province, that farmers had a better response than they've been getting from this minister. It is time to put a program together where we can actually see some results, where money will go to a project rather than into the pockets of those people whom she has appointed to the board.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Indeed, Mr. Speaker, money will go to projects. There are people who are looking at the program. There are people who are making application. One particular project that was offered, funding was not successful.

But I will tell you that there are people who are interested. The members opposite pay a discredit to our processors in this province because there is slaughter capacity in this province right now. They stepped up to the plate during the BSE crisis and there are others who are looking to see it.

Now the member says I am going back too far, but it was only on March 23 of 2007 that the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) said he isn't sure if there is room for slaughter capacity in this province because Canadian facilities are only operating at 60 percent. What do they want? Do they want slaughter capacity in Manitoba or do they want to look after their friends in Alberta?

Crime Reduction Strategies Government Initiatives

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans know full well that Winnipeg is, in fact, the car theft capital of Canada. Since this government has taken office, tens of thousands of vehicles have been stolen. Individuals who steal cars typically commit other crimes also. These are the types of crimes that are having a great impact on real people in our streets and in our homes. This budget has done nothing to address that very real issue.

My question is to the government. Why would the government not invest in expanding the bait car program? Why not invest in electronic ankle bracelets? Why is the government not proactive at dealing with this very important issue?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that we've recently been able to assist the City of Winnipeg in doubling the auto theft unit on the streets of Winnipeg.

I am very pleased that this government has put in place a program like Spotlight that puts intense monitoring and intense identification on individuals who have been released as a result of things like the youth justice offenders' act brought in by the Liberals and provides specific monitoring of these individuals and was something the members opposite voted against.

I am proud to be of a government to put in programming that will help individuals, Mr. Speaker, not be part of a group of opposition members who are going to vote against the budget that puts in money for safer communities, puts in money for victims—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: I think it's time that we start walking the talk. This government has constantly tried to give the impression that they're tough on crime, they're tough on street crime. That is not true. Manitobans know full well that we are still the auto theft capital of the country, that the street crime is still there.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister of Justice can tell us how many individuals 10 years ago would have been charged for things like theft in shoplifting and so forth and brought before our courts or the justice system compared to today. If you stop reporting crimes it doesn't necessarily mean the crime rate has gone down. This government has not done its job in fighting crime in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: I will take the word of one Loren Schinkel, president of the Winnipeg Police Association, who said and I quote: Certainly from the perspective of the association the provincial government has been very supportive of public safety, whether it's a street crime unit where they funded an additional 45 members and they stepped up repeatedly through the years here. That's positive from the perspective of front-line policing, and there's an additional nine members in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I will take the word of the police association and our police officers versus the Member for Inkster, versus the member who stood up in this House and made some, shall I say, less than noteworthy phrases in this House, anytime. I'll go with the police rather than the Member for Inkster.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, a reality check. You know, the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Gerrard) had his car stolen in the back of the Legislature. I've had my car stolen in the last couple of years. Cars are being stolen in the city of Winnipeg. Open your eyes, to the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister of Justice has had his car stolen. Reality check: cars are being stolen. I don't care what the Attorney General has to say in terms of: Well, we're doing this, we're doing that, we're doing this. The bottom line is with a car—*[interjection]* No, if you're going to steal a car, Manitoba is the place to steal a car. There is no consequence. We need programs. We need to expand the bait-car program. We need to bring in the

electronic monitoring of ankle bracelets. There are things that the government can do that will make the difference.

My question to the minister is: Why are you not doing the things that will really make a difference for those crimes? Don't pull out the quotes: Well, this government—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Let's talk about the facts. Year to year, auto theft this quarter has gone down 20 percent from last year. You know, Mr. Speaker, the problem—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order?

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

I want to prevent the Minister of Justice from misleading, because it is inappropriate to mislead when he says that we've gone down 20 percent. Even with the 20 percent, we're still the car capital of Canada.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order should be raised to point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure from our practice, not to anticipate activity that hasn't even occurred.

On the point of order raised, the honourable member clearly does not have a point of order. It's clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable minister, to conclude your comments.

*(14:30)

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I went to Ottawa on the federal Criminal Code of the federal Government of Canada and asked the federal minister if he would change the act to make auto theft a direct crime, he said yes. I said: Would it toughen up the act so people can't get out on bail? He said yes.

I was representing the people of Manitoba who want more consequences, not a Liberal backbencher who said, and I quote, they don't want any more

police on the street. That is the problem with the Liberal approach.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House, but before I do, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce Mark Wartman as the Minister of Agriculture and Food from Saskatchewan, and Brian Rusnack from Saskatchewan.

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

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

Following the prayer on April 4, 2007, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) raised an alleged matter of privilege regarding statements made by the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer) regarding the Crocus Investment Fund, statements that the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition asserted were intentionally misleading. At the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition moved "THAT the Premier be directed to apologize to the Legislative Assembly and the people of Manitoba for bringing false information before this House and undermining the integrity and respect of the Legislature." The honourable First Minister, the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), and the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) also offered contributions to the Chair. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

I thank all honourable members for their advice to the Chair.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity, and second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached, in order to warrant putting the matter to the House.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition asserted that he was raising the issue at the earliest opportunity, and I accept the word of the honourable member.

Regarding the second issue, of whether a prima facie case of privilege has been established, it has

been ruled on numerous times in this House that a member raising the matter of privilege must provide specific proof of intent to mislead the House on the part of the member in question. I should note for the House that providing information that may show that the facts are at variance is not the same as providing proof of intent to mislead. As ruled by Speaker Dacquay, without a member admitting in the House that he or she had the stated goal of misleading the House when putting remarks on the record, it is impossible to prove that a member had deliberately intended to mislead the House.

Also, in the words of the federal Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in its 50th report, "intent is always a difficult element to establish in the absence of an admission or a confession." Although the Leader of the Official Opposition tabled several documents, none of them contained an admission from the honourable First Minister that there was an intention to mislead the House.

The procedural authorities also offer commentary on the issue of misleading the House. Joseph Maingot states on page 241 of the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* that allegations that a member has misled the House are in fact matters of order and not matters of privilege. He also states on page 223 of the same edition that disputes between two members about questions of facts said in debate do not constitute a valid question of privilege because it is a matter of debate.

In addition, when Manitoba Speakers have been asked to rule on whether matters of privilege involving the alleged misstatements by members or the provision of misinformation or inaccurate facts by ministers, Speakers Phillips, Rocan and Dacquay have ruled that such situations appeared to be disputes over facts, which according to *Beauchesne* Citation 31(1) does not fulfill the criteria of a prima facie case of privilege.

Turning to the issue of the request from the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) that the Speaker make a determination whether information claimed to be false was put on the record in good faith or whether it was put there intentionally, this is not within the role and the purview of the Speaker.

As I advised the House on April 29, 2004, and in rulings delivered on May 5, 2005, June 13, 2005, December 6, 2005, April 18, 2006, and April 27, 2006, it is not the role of the Speaker to decide on

questions of facts. As House of Commons Speaker Milliken advised on February 19, 2004, it is not the role of the Speaker to adjudicate on matters of fact, as this is something that the House itself can form an opinion on during debate. I think this point is worth repeating, as members may have some confusion regarding this concept, given that it has been raised six times since I gave my initial ruling on April 29, 2004.

Also, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition asserted that the statements of the honourable First Minister were obstructing members in the performance of their duties by obstructing their ability to question and criticize the government. However, given that members have been able to ask questions in Question Period, raise grievances, make members' statements and participate in debate and in committee meetings, it is difficult to agree with the suggestion that members were obstructed from performing their parliamentary duties.

I would therefore rule, with the greatest of respect, that the matter raised is not in order as a prima facie case of privilege.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): With respect, Mr. Speaker, I challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in support of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

* (14:40)

Formal Vote

Mr. Goertzen: A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

* (15:00)

Order. The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Division

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

Yeas

Aglugub, Allan, Ashton, Bjornson, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Nays

Cullen, Cummings, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Penner, Reimer, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 31, Nays 20.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Celebrating Music in Manitoba Schools Month

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I was pleased to receive notice that April is Celebrating Music in Manitoba Schools Month. Undoubtedly, members on both sides of this House support and recognize the benefits of music and performing arts education in our school system. Despite this, it has come to my attention that not all schools will be able to fully celebrate music in Manitoba schools as a result of extremely inadequate facilities.

At Elton Collegiate in Forrest, Manitoba, the band parent association has been quite active fundraising and encouraging their students and the band teacher in delivering quality music education for both the local and the regional band program that includes students from Douglas, Rapid City and Forrest. The band and drama programs were housed until recently in two used and antiquated huts that have been condemned by the school division because of structural problems.

The Rolling River School Division has presented reasoned, detailed requests for new funding for a more suitable space. The school has also been told that they should use the multipurpose room as both a band and drama room. This is unacceptable and a non-practical solution as the multipurpose room already serves in a number of other capacities

including lunch room and classrooms for various subjects. Thus, this unworkable solution will only serve to put further strain on resources for other important programs.

It should be noted that, given the number of students, the Elton Collegiate band and performing arts program and the collegiate itself does qualify for funding to build a more suitable space. It is also important to note that this issue not only affects Elton Collegiate, but also the surrounding catchment area which includes three elementary schools.

It is truly a shame that this government can claim to support music in Manitoba schools, while failing to support a well-established band and performing arts program in rural Manitoba. It is important that students across this province, whether they reside in rural or urban centres, be given the opportunity to develop their talents to the fullest. All students should be able to celebrate music within their schools. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Budget 2007

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize the many benefits that this most recent budget, *The Building Budget*, will bring to the city of Flin Flon.

Budget 2007 provides tax savings for the people of Flin Flon by increasing the educational property tax credit by \$125 this year, bringing it to a total of \$535, providing relief to both renters and property owners. This will save Manitobans \$40 million annually. Personal income taxes have been reduced, resulting in a savings of \$119 million province-wide. Middle income taxes are slated to be cut by 19 percent over four years.

The small-business tax will be reduced to 2 percent in 2008 and 1 percent in 2009, ensuring that it stays among the lowest in Canada. This will help foster the growth of Manitoba's many successful small businesses.

Infrastructure has been made a priority with an increase of 50 percent to highway funding, bringing the annual investment close to \$400 million as outlined in the five-year \$2-billion provincial plan, part of the 10-year \$4-billion plan. I know that highways are a priority for northerners, and I am pleased to see that this has been recognized by the provincial government. As well, we'll go forward aggressively to clean up abandoned and orphaned mine sites.

Budget 2007 sees a restoration of the 50-50 funding partnership with \$12.6 million in capital funding, with support of the federal Public Transit Capital Trust, to strengthen affordable and accessible transit systems in Flin Flon, Thompson, Brandon and Winnipeg.

As well, the very successful Neighbourhoods Alive! program has been expanded to include Flin Flon. The program provides community organizations with funding to help rebuild and enhance neighbourhoods by listening to the people who live there. Former programs have included improvements to housing, funding for employment training, recreational projects, and community safety initiatives. And, of course, we will continue to support the Lighthouse initiative for young people and core funding for the Friendship Centre.

When this government came to office in 1999, we introduced a multitude of positive initiatives for northern Manitoba, including massive expansion of hydro development. We will continue to build northern Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Royal Manitoba Winter Fair

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today to congratulate the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba and the City of Brandon on the 100th anniversary celebration of the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair which took place at the Keystone Centre complex in Brandon from March 26 to 31. This centennial is significant, not only due to the fair's longevity, but also because the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair is one of only three fairs in the world with a royal designation. The City, the provincial Exhibition Board, its directors and staff, led by General Manager Karen Oliver, fair co-chairs Terry Klassen and Dale McKay, and numerous other volunteers that gave their time to help organize this celebration, must all be commended on making this year's fair another huge success. The Royal Fair recorded the highest attendance in its history with over 118,700 visitors.

I'd also like to thank, personally, Terry Payne, the president of the Provincial Exhibition, for his efforts as well as for hosting my fellow members and myself on MLA day on March 28.

There was also a special designation on Monday, as a special tribute was made to the Canadian Forces in designating Monday as the Canadian Forces Day. Congratulations must also be extended to all those individuals, organizations, and donors that both

participated in and funded the fair's many events and activities once again. The Royal Fair highlights featured the nightly show-jumping equestrian events, the Budweiser Clydesdale Eight-Horse Hitch sponsored by the *Brandon Sun*, the Thru the Farm Gate educational displays, commodity and community displays, the Royal Seed Show and the family-entertaining SuperDogs.

In the show-jumping competition, congratulations go to Mr. Michael Grinyer, who won the MTS Cup while riding his horse Alcatraz, 18-year-old Ms. Jenna Thompson, who won the Royal Century Cup on Timebreaker, Ms. Karen Cudmore on winning the RBC Cup on Ocelot as well as the Koch Fertilizer Canada Ltd.-sponsored Gamblers Choice on Ulano, as well as Mr. Albert Kley, who won the grand prize of the Grand Prix on Saturday night at the ATCO-KUBOTA Cup on his horse Daiquiri.

Therefore, I'd like to close by once more congratulating the organizers of the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair for continuing to make the fair a resounding success. The success provides an invaluable opportunity for Manitoba's youth to learn about agriculture and for the exhibitors to showcase their livestock and talents. This great tourist attraction also provides a valuable boost to Brandon's local economy.

Hats off to everyone involved on a tremendous 2007 Centennial Royal Manitoba Winter Fair.

* (15:10)

Vaisakhi Festival, Sikh New Year

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to speak about an important day in the Sikh calendar. It is called Vaisakhi, a festival that marks the beginning of harvest in northern India. It also celebrates the creation of the Khalsa, the Sikh nation in 1699 and the Sikh New Year.

Traditionally, Vaisakhi is a harvest festival observed on the 13th of April according to the solar calendar. It is celebrated in north India, particularly in Punjab and Haryana when the rabi crop is ready for harvesting.

Vaisakhi also commemorates the founding of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. In 1699, Sikhs from all over the Punjab gathered together in the city of Anandpur to celebrate Vaisakhi. The guru initiated five Sikhs of different social standing into the Khalsa

or the "Order of the Pure," thereby eliminating social divisions. The guru then received initiation from these five members, erasing all distinctions between the guru and the Sikhs. He also gave them "The Five Ks," items of the faith that all baptized Khalsa Sikhs wear.

Mr. Speaker, Vaisakhi is a time of celebration. It marks the beginning of the harvest and the founding of the Khalsa. It is an important event of the Sikh community here in Manitoba. The Sikh community is one of Manitoba's vibrant pioneering communities. It contributes significantly to social, economic and cultural development and to the well-being of our province.

I ask that all members of this Assembly join me in wishing them an excellent Vaisakhi festival. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Child Care in Manitoba

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the need for a substantive and well-financed long-term plan for child care and child-care spaces in Manitoba. Over the last several months many who are involved in child care in our province, many parents and many children, were put in a situation where there was a great deal of uncertainty with respect to child care because of the failure of the provincial NDP government to commit to a clear long-term plan and the failure of the federal Conservative government to fulfil the previously signed agreement between federal and provincial governments. Now, after both federal and provincial budgets, we see that the support for child care in Manitoba is less than what's needed for our children.

It was very clear after the provincial budget that those who are concerned about child care in Manitoba are very dissatisfied with the NDP budget. This morning at the Social Planning Council, Susan Prentice restated the major concerns that many others have expressed about the NDP approach to child care in our province.

When elected after the upcoming provincial election, Manitoba Liberals are firmly committed to delivering a strong five-year program and the needed resources for child care in Manitoba.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Fourth 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. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and the debate remains open.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I rise to speak on the amendment to the Minister of Finance's motion. It would be good if I had time to rebut all of these clauses from (a) to (p) but I don't really have time, although it would be fairly easy because I think all of them are inaccurate or misleading in one way or another. However, what I'm going to do instead is to talk about all the good news in this budget and thereby rebut the amendment to the Minister of Finance's motion in any case.

For the eighth straight year, budget 2007 is balanced. Budget 2007 projects a Fiscal Stabilization Fund balance that is \$200 million more than the 1999-2000 budget and a summary surplus of \$175 million for 2007-2008.

A short summary would include seven items, seven things that this budget means for you and your family. Budget 2007 commits to a new multiyear plan to increase provincial funding to 80 percent of total public schools education expenditures.

Budget 2007 reduces by \$125 the education tax paid on residential property with an immediate increase of the education property tax credit to \$525.

Budget 2007 aims to attract and retain our young people with 60 percent rebate on tuition fees.

Budget 2007 reduces the middle-income tax rate to 12.75 percent from 13 percent, a 2 percent reduction, and lays out a plan to save middle-income earners 10 percent overall. The budget also increases the threshold in this bracket to \$66,000 starting January 2008 and increases income tax credits, removing 6,000 low income earners from the tax rolls.

Budget 2007 commits to 30 additional police officers and invests in more doctors and nurses.

Budget 2007 reduces the small-business tax rate to 2 percent on January 1, 2008, and to 1 percent on January 1, 2009, making Manitoba's small-business rate the lowest in Canada. The budget further reduces the general corporation income tax rate to 13 percent on July 1, 2008 and 12 percent on July 1, 2009.

Budget 2007 protects Manitoba's water and provides record investments in roads and highways, including new funding for Winnipeg roads and bike routes.

Now, to offer more specific information about these and other items, I'm proud of the fact that this is a very green budget and that we're doing a lot of good things for the environment, and also for the economy. For example, green initiatives in budget 2007 include supporting the provision of loans of up to \$20,000 by Manitoba Hydro to encourage the installation of geothermal pumps and offering a reduced interest rate of 4.9 percent for the first five years of borrowing; introducing a new 10 percent green energy manufacturing tax credit to encourage manufacturing of machinery and equipment used to produce renewable energy; providing more than \$10 million for water protection initiatives; improving water management and flood protection, and supporting the implementation of the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board report; providing a \$2,000 rebate to support Manitobans who buy hybrid electric vehicles; supporting First Nations efforts to secure a UNESCO world heritage designation for the east side of Lake Winnipeg; and supporting the development of resource management boards to create plans to take into account the social, cultural and economic aspects of the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Manitoba and Canada have developed a \$53.8-million partnership with the federal ecoTrust Fund for priority actions under Manitoba's climate change plan.

The clean and renewable energy offered by hydro-electric production will continue to drive economic activity in the province. Manitoba Hydro recently signed a 100-megawatt export contract with Wisconsin Public Service Corporation.

A call for proposals has been issued to develop 300 megawatts of wind power, building on the success of the St. Leon project, which is one of the biggest wind farms in Canada. I would recommend that if members haven't been to St. Leon, they should

go to see St. Leon and see a wind farm that the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) is very proud of. In fact, I think he was at the official opening ceremony.

An Honourable Member: Check out the salamanders while you're there.

Mr. Martindale: And the salamanders. I believe it's the salamander capital of Canada. Now it's the wind farm capital of Manitoba.

Construction of the Wuskwatim Dam is underway in partnership with Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, employing 200 people, two-thirds of whom are of Aboriginal descent.

"Since 1999, 150,000 Manitobans have taken part in Power Smart programs, saving close to 300 megawatts of power, which is equivalent to building a virtual dam that would generate more power than Wuskwatim."

In addition to the green initiatives in this budget, there are tax savings for all Manitobans. So just to expand on them briefly: We are providing \$297 million in new tax cuts including \$119 million in personal income tax reductions, \$49 million in education property tax relief, and \$93 million in business tax cuts. As I have mentioned already, we are increasing the Education Property Tax Credit by \$125 to \$525 this year, saving Manitobans an additional \$40 million annually.

Reducing personal income taxes by \$119 million, with tax cuts for all Manitobans, plus a plan to cut middle income tax rates by 10 percent over four years. Lowering the first income tax rate to 10.5 percent over four years and raising the income threshold to \$35,000 starting January 2009. Increasing the basic personal amount by \$200 and increasing the spousal amount and eligible dependent amount by 24 percent to match the basic personal amount, providing extra relief for single-income households and removing 6,000 low-income earners from the tax rolls.

*(15:20)

We are matching the federal pension income-splitting tax changes, saving pensioners an estimated \$11 million per year. We have once again a balanced budget and we are paying down debt.

Budget 2007 is the eighth balanced budget and the first summary budget in Manitoba's history that fully reflects generally accepted accounting principles, GAAP. This is the first government in 50 years to balance eight straight budgets. It projects a

summary surplus of \$175 million while paying down debt and pension liabilities.

It makes a payment of \$110 million to reduce debt and pay for pension liabilities bringing the total payment over eight years to \$814 million, the largest multiyear debt repayment ever in Manitoba. It projects a balance of \$477 million in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund at the end of 2006-07, drawing only the federal funds allocated for health wait-time reductions, an amount of \$37 million in 2007-2008.

We are creating opportunities and healthy families in budget 2007. We are committing to a \$104-million multiyear plan for safe, secure and affordable housing, with support from the federal Housing Trust, to focus on housing needs for Aboriginals, seniors, the inner city and northern Manitoba.

We are implementing a children's fitness tax credit to provide up to \$132 in federal-provincial tax savings to help with the cost of registering children in physical activity programs. We are launching Rewarding Work, which was actually just launched yesterday, a four-year plan to help people achieve employment and higher incomes.

I was at the launch yesterday of Rewarding Work and this is actually a very good idea. It's breaking down the welfare wall so that people can move from social assistance or Employment and Income Assistance to work, because in the past one of the problems was that when they got a job sometimes their income was actually lower, especially if they had children, and they lost their welfare benefits. But we want people to make more money working than on Employment and Income Assistance. That's what launching Rewarding Work is going to do. If you want to look at it, there are very detailed briefing notes about implementing Rewarding Work and it will be very interesting to watch as people take advantage of this.

There was actually a picture in the *Free Press* today of one of my former neighbours on St. John's Avenue and I met her. She's now a receptionist at Opportunities for Employment. She took their training and now she's working for Opportunities for Employment and she's very grateful for this opportunity. It was good to see her picture and short interview in today's *Free Press*. We look forward to hearing many, many more success stories here.

I think it kind of illustrates the difference between our government and the previous

government who cut welfare rates and who only had draconian things to do in the area of social services; for example, cutting \$10 million in the child-care budget. We have not only increased the child-care budget but we backfilled for the federal government when they pulled out of child care, when they abrogated the arrangements and negotiations of the previous federal government.

An Honourable Member: Then they clawed it back.

Mr. Martindale: Well, they probably clawed back other things.

Well, let me talk about Canada's so-called new government, this Housing Trust fund that I mentioned. My understanding is that what they've done is they put the money budgeted for social housing into a trust fund, and when that trust fund money is gone, there's no more funding into the future for social housing. This harkens back to 1993 when the federal government cut funding for social housing and the provincial government in Manitoba, the Filmon Conservative government immediately did the same thing, eliminated all funding for social housing. So there was almost no new construction of social housing in Winnipeg and Manitoba from 1993 to the year 2000. Then, fortunately, the federal government came back to the table in the city of Winnipeg and so we had a five-year agreement with \$70 million.

It's good that the federal government continued to be a partner, but I've two concerns. One is about the lack of federal funding into the future, especially since Manitoba will increasingly be responsible for all social housing except, I understand, co-ops, and, if there was a change in government, I have no doubt that the members opposite would also eliminate funding for social housing, as their federal cousins have done. It would be good to hear one of the opposition members address this in their comments and put on the record that they wouldn't do this. There's a challenge for the Government House Leader since he's listening attentively.

Now, back to creating opportunities and healthy families, we have increased by \$25 the employment supports for single people, childless couples, and people with disabilities. This is only the second increase, but it's a good thing. We have actually increased the basic benefit, unlike the 1990s where there was nothing but cuts from this government and clawbacks, since my colleague, my seatmate from Dauphin had mentioned clawbacks, and it was

namely—the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers). It was the child tax benefit that was clawed back from people on employment and income assistance, and we reversed that. We allow people to keep all of that money for children because we believe it's better to go directly to families and directly to children.

We are providing a new Manitoba child benefit for low-income working families with children. *[interjection]*

One of the members opposite wants me to talk about fees, so I would like to talk about one of the examples that was used by the Official Opposition Leader (Mr. McFadyen) in Question Period today, and that is marriage licences. I'd like to point out this is a voluntary fee—

An Honourable Member: He knows a little bit about this.

Mr. Martindale: Yes, I do know a little about this because I get to sign the marriage registration forms. Actually, I don't any more because I gave up my licence to officiate marriages because I don't have time. But it's optional. You don't have to have a marriage licence. If you are regular in attendance at worship, you can have banns read by the minister or priest on Sunday morning for three successive Sundays, either in your church or both churches, and then you don't need a marriage licence and you save yourself a hundred bucks.

Most people probably don't know this, and most people don't take advantage of it because, in fact, I've been ordained for almost 27 years, and I've never been able to use this provision. But it's there. All people have to do is go to church regularly and no marriage licence, no hundred dollar fee. It's optional. So I just wanted to put that on the record.

An Honourable Member: As opposed to the inter-facility transfer which you put in, which isn't optional.

Mr. Martindale: As the Member for Dauphin-Roblin points out, as opposed to the inter-facility transfer where people had to pay, what was it, \$50?

An Honourable Member: Oh, no, no.

Mr. Martindale: It was more than that.

An Honourable Member: Lots more.

Mr. Martindale: Lots more.

An Honourable Member: Eighteen hundred dollars in some cases.

Mr. Martindale: Eighteen hundred dollars in some cases and our government eliminated that fee.

I think that's very much appreciated, especially in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: That's not optional.

Mr. Martindale: And it wasn't optional.

We are introducing a new Manitoba benefit to complement the recently announced federal working income tax benefit which supports low-income families making the transition to work. Once again, this is one of the things that we're doing to make it more beneficial for people to work than to be on employment income assistance.

We are providing more than \$48 million in new resources for child protection services. We are expanding the Healthy Baby program. We are enhancing positive parenting programs and supporting parent-child coalitions. We are providing more than \$7.5 million for provincial programming related to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. We are investing more than \$14 million in early learning and child care to backfill the withdrawal of federal funds. And this was what I had mentioned earlier, that Canada's so-called new government is not honouring the commitment of the previous government, and so we could have actually cut it by \$14 million, but instead, we're backfilling it because we believe in child care. This is a substantial amount of money.

We are providing \$2 million annually to increase the income supplement for those age 55 and older for low-income seniors.

Under infrastructure investments, building and connecting Manitoba, we are increasing the investment in highways by 50 percent bringing the annual investment close to \$400 million as outlined in the five-year, \$2 billion provincial plan.

Budget 2007 continues to invest in health care, providing better care sooner. We're installing a new, leading-edge, non-invasive cancer knife, the first in Canada, to treat cancers in all parts of the body. We are investing more into reduced wait times for quality-of-life procedures such as hip and knee surgeries and diagnostic tests.

We are funding a new, state-of-the-art cardiac centre at St. Boniface General Hospital. We are continuing to train more health care professionals by

expanding to 100 the Faculty of Medicine class, adding 25 spaces for the licensing program for international medical graduates, adding 15 new technologists' training seats, and supporting 3,000 nurses in training. We are providing \$3 million in new funding for physician specialist training and training for key medical positions, including emergency room doctors, oncologists, and pediatricians.

*(15:30)

We are supporting a new Manitoba firefighters burn unit at the Health Sciences Centre, which was recently opened. We are building a new access centre in northwest Winnipeg, and I believe it will be called Access Inkster and it will house the NorWest health clinic. We're looking forward to that construction and ribbon-cutting and official opening some time in the future, especially because it will probably be in Burrows constituency depending on which side of Keewatin Avenue it's built on. If it was on the west side, it would be in Inkster, but if it's on the east side, it will be in Burrows. Of course, I'm hoping it will be on the east side.

Under education, budget 2007 is investing in the future. We are providing a \$30.3-million increase for public schools, the largest increase in almost 20 years. We are committed to a new plan to increase provincial funding to 80 percent of total public schools education expenditures. We are implementing the 60 percent tax rebate on tuition fees for all post-secondary graduates who live and work in Manitoba. We are maintaining the 10 percent tuition reduction for the eighth year in a row. We are enriching support to universities and colleges by providing an average funding increase of 7 percent.

Under building dynamic communities, we are fighting crime with 30 additional police officers and providing additional support for police in schools and after-school programming for kids, namely the Lighthouses program. There is one of those in Burrows and we hope that soon there's another one. We are doubling support to \$800,000 for the Manitoba Integrated Organized Crime Task Force to tackle gang activity and drug trafficking. We are expanding the Lighthouses program to 50 sites around the province. We are expanding the Turnabout program for children under 12 who come into conflict with the law. We are providing more support to help shut down drug, sniff and prostitute houses. This is under the Public Safety Investigation Unit who enforce The Safer Communities and

Neighbourhoods Act which has been used over 200 times in Manitoba.

We are supporting renewal in the city of Winnipeg by providing funding for 14 additional police officers, including five for the stolen auto unit to deal with repeat offenders. We are providing funding for three additional Winnipeg police officers for the School Resource Officer Program at Gordon Bell, Hugh John Macdonald, Kelvin, Grant Park and Churchill schools and surrounding areas.

In conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a budget that I am proud to support. I will be voting for it. I congratulate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and his cabinet colleagues for a progressive, balanced budget, with an optimal balance, I would say, between tax cuts for corporations, individuals and small business and more investment and more spending in social programming and in housing and in health care and in education and many other things that will not only benefit my constituents in Burrows, but all Manitobans.

I look forward to running on this budget in the election, whenever it's called, because it's a good news budget. It's an election budget—[interjection] I have no idea when the election will be called, nor does anyone on this side except the Premier (Mr. Doer) and he's not telling us. But we will be ready because we believe we've provided good government for the last eight years. We've provided good budgets. We've provided balanced budgets. We've paid down the debt. We've increased the amount of money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. This budget invests in Manitoba and Manitoba communities, and we will all be happy to run on this budget.

The only remaining question is: How are the opposition parties going to vote? Are they going to vote for this good news budget or are they going to vote against the good news budget? I guess we'll have to—[interjection] Oh, I see, the member opposite mentions the amendment. I guess judging from the amendment, they will be voting against it, and woe is them.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to this eighth budget of a tired, ineffective, campaign-blinded NDP government.

This is a budget presented by a Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) who is so tainted by his involvement in the Crocus fiasco that he has lost all

credibility, one of many consequences of which is that today's budget can only be regarded as yet another attempt at NDP fiscal evasion, a budget that's not credible, as the minister and government which produced it no longer have credibility.

The Finance Minister has stood in this House and given high praise to the Crocus Investment Fund at a time when he knew full well that the Crocus Investment Fund was anything but doing well and was in serious trouble, in big trouble. This Finance Minister has said in this House that a liquidity problem never happened when the Auditor General and principals with Crocus themselves have acknowledged that the Crocus Investment Fund had liquidity problems. The Finance Minister said in this House that the Crocus Investment Fund was at arm's length from the NDP Cabinet. Today we know that it was not.

The Finance Minister said that he lacked the necessary monitoring capacity to oversee the Crocus Investment Fund. That the Cabinet document of November 27, 2000, shows clearly in black and white that his department was engaged in plenty of monitoring activity and knew full well what was going on, namely, that the Crocus Investment Fund was in trouble and heading for failure. The Finance Minister also said he was not aware of valuation problems when it's clear from the November 27, 2000 Cabinet document that there were valuation problems with the fund's shares being worth less than they were being valued at.

But, with yesterday's confirmation that the trail of Crocus guilt leads straight to a higher authority in the Premier's Office, it's no surprise that the Premier's decided to stick by his minister and why the Premier refuses to call a public inquiry into this scandal. Clearly, it should have been done long ago. Clearly, it should be done now. Given what we now know about the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and his Cabinet colleagues, how can we in this House possibly believe anything that's presented in this budget? How can Manitobans believe any of the promises after what we have heard said in this House and we now know is not?

This budget is as false as the government's posterous claim that there's no hallway medicine in Manitoba or that water trumps everything. The Minister of Finance was in the papers this last week, claiming his goal, if you can call it a goal, was to make the province of Manitoba one of the top three cheapest places to live in in Canada. That's it, the

NDP grand vision for Manitoba. Forget "Spirited Energy"; we're downgraded to "livin' cheap." Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of us in this Chamber today would like Manitoba to aspire to something a bit more than that. We would like Manitoba to once again be very successful.

Instead of making Manitoba a cheap NDP backwater, we should make Manitoba a dynamic, progressive, 21st-century province where there's opportunity for our youth to work and live and grow as citizens, a forward-thinking place with good, high-paying jobs, a great quality of life, a healthy environment, timely health care and first-class education. Here's an idea that today's NDP has long since abandoned in their power-hungry drive to clone the Filmon Tories. How about making Manitoba where social justice is a priority? A province that provides affordable housing, health care services that don't leave Manitobans waiting, and health care workers frustrated. No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, apparently the real NDP dream has come to life: to make us the cheapest place in Canada. "Livin' cheap," the 2007 NDP budget proves yet again how divorced from real reality this government is. Time for the NDP to ship out because it's clearly too late for them to shape up.

We have recently seen two budgets unveiled, one federal, one provincial. Both have sadly neglected First Nations people. Shame on the NDP for not adequately and realistically addressing First Nations issues in this budget. Shame on the NDP for not sticking up for First Nations peoples in Manitoba when the Harper government left them out in the cold. Harper's government has ripped up the landmark Kelowna Accord and heaped disrespect on the First Nations of Canada by not addressing the major issues facing First Nations in their latest budget. Instead of standing up for First Nations in Manitoba, instead of standing up for the Kelowna Accord, instead of addressing First Nations' needs adequately in their own budget, the NDP has chosen to ignore the huge challenges which are facing First Nations' communities.

* (15:40)

The budget also fails to adequately address the child-care needs of Manitobans. Where is the needed five-year plan with multiyear commitments to make sure we really have the strong child-care system in Manitoba that we need? What they did was a temporary patch-up job. The real needed approach to child care was not there.

Let's turn now to one of the bigger NDP bait-and-switches, the Premier's (Mr. Doer) promise to end hallway medicine. Somehow, along the way in breaking that promise, this Premier's government has managed to spend more and more in health care but get worse and worse results. Instead of focussing on improving our system, the NDP budget only continues the NDP, PC bureaucratic approach to health care.

Eight years to come to a conclusion that RHAs might not be working right. You know, it's a curious question of why this government on the verge of an election would call a review of the RHAs. Clearly, this government knows that there's a big problem in their health care system that they are running. Clearly, this government doesn't have a solution, and so what they're doing is calling a review to try and create the illusion that they're doing something when the reality is that they don't know where they're going.

There's absolutely nothing here in this budget to address the real problems facing us in health care, the way we run the system itself. Manitoba needs a health care system centred on patients and their family physicians, not one centred on the bureaucracy. Instead of bringing forward this vision and a plan, the NDP government continues to lurch from crisis to crisis in health care, crises like the recent one at the Grace Hospital emergency. It's not alone. There are continuing problems at other hospitals.

For example, when I was visiting the St. Boniface emergency department recently, I heard a lot of concerns, but this government doesn't have a real solution. All it has is patch-up remedies which work temporarily, if at all. There is not a clear guarantee that the Grace Hospital emergency room is going to stay open. We have promises about doing things in the medical school, but that may take some time, and the real problem is that the NDP government has failed to put in place the basic approach, the basic structures, the basic environment which is a quality environment, which is what is needed, so the physicians will want to work here because it's a great place to be. That's what the problem is, that they are looking and constantly working on temporary patches, rather than addressing the real framework and system problems that are there and are creating such problems.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We can look at not only the dysfunctionality which has occurred with respect to the roles of family physicians who are too often being bypassed, family physicians who are having patients who've been in hospital come to them without information as to what happened in the hospital. So they have to repeat tests, so they have to waste time going over history which they should have had, had the system been working properly instead of the way it is at the moment. Indeed, one family physician told me that a patient of his was in hospital, and he was never told about it, and the first thing he learned about it was when the patient had died, and the obituary was in the newspaper. That's a terrible way for the system to operate, because time and time again this government has left out family physicians who really should be at the centre of care, not on the periphery of a system as it's operating at the moment.

Instead of bringing us forward with this vision and a plan, instead of putting a solid scientific underpinning for the health care system, this government has failed to invest in the areas of research, for example in the Manitoba Health Research Council. The scientific underpinnings of the health care system, the ongoing research are critical to ensuring a high quality and high performance perspective, are critical to ensuring that the system is operating in a cost-effective way and are critical ensuring that we are training and bringing forward the high quality personnel we will need to run a really good health care system in this province.

Let me refer the members of this House to a document produced last year. This sort of information has been available for some time. But once again, a thorough document, a thorough analysis was done and a document produced entitled *The Manitoba Health Research Strategy: Provincial Consensus 2006-2011*. This consensus for what is needed for now and for the future came from the work of many, many fine people who got together to look at the role of health research and the Manitoba Health Research Council. The document says clearly Manitoba's position in health research is at risk; research is important for bringing the community together and for moving forward toward a shared vision. The document talks about identifying, developing, recruiting and retaining the best researchers and providing the sustained support to facilitate their growth. The document talks about facilitating networks, linkages and communication throughout the Manitoba health research and health care enterprises and beyond. It talks about moving

evidence into practice, taking the results of the research generated here based on the Manitoba experience and improving health care here in our province.

Yet the government in this budget has totally rejected this vision because it's provided the same number of dollars for the Manitoba Health Research Council in this budget as was provided in 1989. When allowing for inflation, the Manitoba Health Research Council, Manitoba's foremost health research agency, is now getting just a small fraction of what it received in 1989. The numbers in 1989 as a proportion of the health care budget were not enough then. We are now in a situation where we are far, far behind. Investing in research helps lead the way to a better future. The failure of the present NDP government to adequately invest in health research through the Manitoba Health Research Council is resulting in the whole system sliding into a worse and worse state. The current path of this government in this area is absurd and shows how little this government actually understands in terms of the operation, in scientific underpinnings of the health care system and the need for research for renewal and for improvement.

Mr. Speaker, the health of Lake Winnipeg is also at stake. This budget does appallingly little to save one of Canada's great lakes. Summer after summer has gone by under this government with worsening algal problems in Lake Winnipeg. Last year, it was in certain parts of the lake like a pea soup, difficult, probably unsafe to swim in, certainly pretty ugly looking compared to what Lake Winnipeg should look like. This algal bloom, the algal bloom problem in Lake Winnipeg and on a number of other Manitoba lakes today is the worst it's ever been.

* (15:50)

Indeed, this NDP government will go down in history as presiding over the greatest deterioration of Lake Winnipeg in our province's history. Compare that record of failure with the practical real-world proposals the Liberals have brought forward but that the NDP refuses to act upon, banning phosphorus from dishwasher detergents, banning winter manure spreading by municipalities, an environment levy on the amount of phosphorus in cosmetic fertilizers and many, many other items and actions which can and should be done to improve Lake Winnipeg and to lay a much better scientific foundation for improving the situation in Lake Winnipeg.

It is sad, it is very sad that after eight years we don't even have the basic scientific knowledge to know what the proportion of phosphorus is in Lake Winnipeg that comes from the hog industry. We've had claims that it's 1 percent. We've had other claims that it's 7.5 percent, and the reality is we don't have the scientific information on which to base a good number because this government never has taken the time to make sure that scientific data was actually collected. How can you make good decisions when you don't actually collect the science? That's very sad.

Greenhouse gases: Sadly, this budget gives us no assurance that the government will actually address the issue of greenhouse gas emissions. For all the lip service this government has given to greenhouse gases, here are the real facts. Greenhouse gas emissions have gone up under this government's watch to 11 percent above 1990 levels. Indeed, greenhouse gases spiked by 20 percent between 2004 and 2005.

The budget speech we heard by this Finance Minister rambled on about youth, about keeping youth in Manitoba. Sadly, the minister lacks credibility. Here's why. Manitoba is the only western province to have suffered a net interprovincial migration loss in the most recent figures. Manitoba continues to suffer a net loss of people to Saskatchewan. Manitoba now ties Newfoundland for having the highest percentage of interprovincial outflow among Canadian provinces.

Literacy: One of the cornerstones to improve literacy is real support for libraries around the province. The budget doesn't do it. I've met with people since the introduction of the budget who are completely frustrated at the NDP's lack of understanding of the importance of libraries, of operating funds for libraries and the role of libraries in improving literacy.

Finally, we did see a slight increase in post-secondary funding. The funding the budget announced would offset the losses from the tuition fees. How politically expedient for a government going into an election, too little too late. Engineering and other students have gone through, already, the desperate act of voluntarily hiking their own tuition fees. Students can see through the facade of this budget. They see the crumbling buildings that they're studying in. They see the difficulty attracting and retaining top-notch scholars and educators. Where is

the funding to fix the capital deficits of the brain drain on our post-secondary education institutions?

The Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP spin machine continue with their tired old approach of shovelling money out the back of a truck, hoping it falls somewhere useful and praying no one notices that most of it is just blowing away in the wind.

We heard recently from the MLA for Burrows with a convoluted story about how a particular fee could be optional. The story was so convoluted that it turned out at the end of his story that it almost never, if ever, occurs. So that's an NDP option, one that's too impractical to ever implement.

The MLA for Burrows was talking about their plan to address poverty, but I was at the Social Planning Council this morning, and leading Winnipeggers were there to say how inadequate the NDP approach is.

Finally, after many years, this NDP government gave a little bit of money for FASD, but the reality is that if they'd started paying attention to FASD, as we suggested many, many years ago, they could have saved a lot of dollars. In fact, our estimate is, based on good numbers, that in the last eight years that the NDP have governed, their lack of action has cost this province \$1.7 billion. Mr. Speaker, \$1.7 billion in costs that could have been prevented had they acted expeditiously and quickly on preventing FASD and in treating and helping those who have FASD or helping the family members. Again, as with Lake Winnipeg, we actually lack the solid, scientific base to make the kind of progress that we should be making in the area of FASD.

We don't know for sure what the incidence of FASD is in Manitoba. We don't know with any real certainty how many children are born each year with FASD in our province. It makes it very difficult to make progress if you don't have the basic knowledge on which to move forward. It is sad that this government has failed so badly to make sure that that basic information is there, that basic knowledge is there, that basic science is there. That is part of what could have been funded through a properly organized Manitoba Health Research Council, for example, and properly resourced.

But, you know, that is the sad story of eight years of NDP government, much of which they've been missing in action, lost in terms of the progress that could have been made, and certainly, what we've seen is a budget, we've got to say this, that is

spending \$3 billion more than when they first came to office. That's 50 percent more. Have we seen a 50 percent improvement in health care? No. Have we seen a 50 percent improvement in Lake Winnipeg? No.

I therefore move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster,

THAT the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words:

And further regrets that this budget also ignores the present and future needs of Manitobans by:

(q) failing to acknowledge that the province needs to stand shoulder to shoulder with Manitoba's First Nations and Métis communities in responding to the major needs in the areas of housing, nutrition, wellness, and other areas, both by direct provincial action and by effectively calling the federal government to account for its shortcomings;

(r) failing to take adequate measures to protect children in the care of Manitoba Child and Family Services and to provide adequate transition to children in care so that they're not at high risk after leaving care;

(s) failing to provide an effective strategy to deal with child poverty;

(t) failing to provide Manitobans with the legal rights to timely quality health care;

(u) failing to present an adequate approach to reduce phosphorous levels and algal blooms in Lake Winnipeg;

(v) failing to provide an adequate five-year plan and the needed resources to address child-care needs of Manitobans;

(w) failing to provide adequate funding for the primary organization which provides provincial operating funding for health research, the Manitoba Health Research Council;

* (16:00)

(x) failing to provide a vision for rural communities and farm families outside of the city of Winnipeg;

(y) failing to provide adequate support for libraries in Manitoba when libraries are one of the major building blocks needed to improve literacy in our province;

(z) failing to provide adequate support to municipalities and small farming operations to end the practice of winter spreading of animal manure and human bio-solids;

(aa) failing to make rapid transit a priority in the city of Winnipeg;

(bb) failing to instil an environmental levy on cosmetic fertilizers containing phosphorus that continue to aggravate the algal problems on Lake Winnipeg.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: We will now debate the subamendment that was just introduced.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak in support of this *Building Budget 2007* which deserves support from all members of this Chamber if they believe in Manitoba and the future of our children and our new generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, this is getting close to four years of my being elected by the people of Radisson, and I must say how much I have enjoyed representing my constituents in this Legislature and my participation in debates, on the Legislative Review Committee, on standing committees and the many other duties of an active MLA. I enjoy these activities as I see myself being part of the building process of our society and communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to once again re-establish my basic philosophical belief of making a better world. We have the courage and the will to do that, and I'm pleased to do it with a dynamic team of social democrats to achieve our goals sitting on this side of the House.

People ask me what makes it to be on this side of the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. It is very, very simple. It is the difference is our ideologies. It is the big question of what kind of society we want to build, what kind of country we want Canada to be and what kind of province of Manitoba we want. Do we want the province to have human values, futuristic plans and a vision to build a sustainable social system for our future generations?

Mr. Speaker, this budget is an example of how to build. I take pride in saying this is the eighth straight balanced budget in the history of Manitoba presented by our Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), and it needs applause, it needs support from all people. This has been projecting a Fiscal Stabilization Fund

that is \$200 million more than in the '99 and 2000 budget. Not only that, it also has a summary surplus of \$175 million for 2007-2008.

Mr. Speaker, I won't reproduce the numbers by repeating them in my speech which is available to all members in this Chamber. I would rather speak on the vision of our party in developing and building Manitoba for our youth and new generations, looking further ahead than just the next few years. This is where the distinction is between us and the other side of the House.

Let me elaborate on these specific values, Mr. Speaker, and maybe after listening, some of these members may like to join us. We and millions of social democrats in the world see this world with a far-reaching lens looking more into the future and building economies and strength for social justice and equitable societies versus Conservatives' ideals of building capitalism, a different ideology which is totally based on a narrow vision and a focussed target to control society by controlling economic power.

Mr. Speaker, today may not be the proper time to debate the ideologies of Conservatives and our party, but it is obvious that the NDP's fundamental approach to build our society and provide equal opportunities and social justice to all versus the Conservative agenda to be on the road dismantling public enterprises and control ownership of economy and wealth to hold power and control. Their fundamental tool is to keep the corporate power growing and ours is to keep the human power growing, social justice growing, universal social system, universal health care growing. It is like following a religion that says we are all children of the same God, and by that virtue we are brothers and sisters. We believe, following that doctrine, we need universal health care for all because all human beings are our brothers and sisters.

Mr. Speaker, another obvious example is the climate change strategy, and this is a very, very unique example of how the political dynamics of those who are real believers and those who are fake, distinctly become obvious. I remember in 2001 Premier Doer established a climate change strategy just after being elected. I was working as a consultant with a business enterprise, and when I heard that this was something that was done in Manitoba, I was amazed by the futuristic vision. No wonder that our Premier and the province were given the No. 1 award on climate change by *BusinessWeek*.

In 2001 and 2002, while I was working with this particular corporation—and by the way, let me say that there are lots of people, top executives, wealthy individuals who are equally concerned on the society, on the future of our environment, on the future of our children and are on our side of the debate—this CEO of this corporation related to me a story. He said he was walking with some of the environmental activists on this street of Toronto supporting Kyoto Accord, and amazingly, when you see anything which is a progressive thing like that, Kyoto Accord, which looks at the future, which looks at protecting our environment and our society, then typically those who are right-wing minded would laugh at you in thinking that how can this be accepted when the economy will be slow, you know like Americans have done. George Bush was laughing at one time, saying that we are not going to dismantle economy by supporting an accord like Kyoto.

So it was something that at that time it was perceived that it was not really healthy for the economy. There have been several studies done in the world where people have proven that such social programmes not only saves society, it also creates jobs, it also creates new economy, it also creates new ventures that employs people, and people prosper. So here we are after some time, when people know that this is something that is very much liked by people.

Mr. Speaker, this is my problem in terms of explaining that when obviously there is a wind that blows in that direction opportunistic politicians will say, me too, and here Prime Minister Harper suddenly became an environmental activist, and he said environment is No. 1 criteria. It was not the ideology. It is political opportunism that they want to see to catch votes. But people are not fools. They understand the difference. They understand who is coming from what angle. They understand whose value is what, and we are very proud that, starting when I joined, when I started here in Canada, and I saw Tommy Douglas's movement and Edward Schreyer, the premier, I decided this is the political move, this is the political party that I have to work with because this is looking at the future, this is at looking at building our society, this is looking at building our children's future, and I'm proud that I'm continuing that.

I also like to talk to our respected Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) who is suddenly supporting Manitoba Hydro and wind power and is becoming now a clean energy expert. The question is

trust, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans have been robbed of their best Crown jewel called Manitoba Telephone System by just changing after the election. Before that, Premier Filmon said no. After the election, yes, because it makes economic sense. So people don't trust. People would not trust when you make a political endorsement during election and then withdraw just after election. That is the ideological difference and people are not fools, so they will not buy this.

* (16:10)

Now, one of the very serious issues, very sensitive issue, Mr. Speaker, it's hard on me to really not speak, and at the same time also speak because this is a very sensitive issue to me personally that led me to enter politics. And that is health care. I have spoken on every budget speech, every speech here on this issue. This has gone inside my own personal inner self that when I see the memories of '95 and '96, I get terrified and I get scared that if I don't fight, and if after me other people don't fight to continue the universal health care, continue the Canadian values of our system, what shall we leave the world behind? What kind of society will we leave behind?

My late brother, Dr. Shashi Shekhar Jha, who was a professor of sociology at the University of Winnipeg, was a dedicated social democrat. He refused to go to the U.S. for treatment because he thought: While people are waiting here, I would not like to jump the line and go there. He waited, let alone be operated, he could not see even a cardiologist because it was '95 that the people who were doctors were fired, nurses were fired, reduction in medical college seats were going on. It was a very scary situation. I lost my brother during that period, Mr. Speaker. That sad experience made me extremely, extremely sad. Not only that. During that period an American consultant who was hired to fix health care did a very simple job: fire nurses, fire doctors, close hospitals, save millions of dollars in that way. During that period, I've repeated so many times and I'll repeat once more, that my children moved from Manitoba. They're brilliant physicians, but they moved from Manitoba because they could not get opportunities here.

So I am getting pretty emotional, Mr. Speaker, but I have to say this: that I see no shame on the Tory benches to bring a person, who worked with Connie Curran in firing a thousand nurses, up in the gallery with nursing students as a Conservative-nominated candidate for Radisson. Mr. Speaker, I have no

respect for any politician who changed colours to see whether the silver screen will display them. This candidate in Radisson has no capability on any issue and she has only one motive, to somehow get elected. No, people are not going to be fooled by disguised personalities and hidden ideologies to fool people.

Health care remains the challenge that we all know has an ideology. We do not want to Americanize Canadian medical health care. That has been stated clearly by people who are from this side versus those who say, well, we will have the public purse to pay for the private clinics. That is really entering into a system that will pollute the universal health care and bring Americanization to the Canadian medical system. That is not going to happen, Mr. Speaker, as long as a single New Democrat will be alive on our scene in Canada because this is something that is not acceptable to us as a value.

On this issue I must say, Mr. Speaker, credibility is another issue I'd like to talk about. On the clarity of where we all stand, I must say I have seen the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) swinging and supporting me too. On OlyWest, he said, me too. I would like to say this: People of Radisson, people of Winnipeg, people of Manitoba would not trust that person who changes his colours because it's an election issue. So do it. After that, dismantle it. I am standing tall here, I stood tall with my colleagues from Transcona to stand with our people and said no to OlyWest, and I'll continue that. I went to City Hall, opposed City Hall putting that thing on our throat. I'm standing again tall on that issue and with my people, with my party ideals, with my own personal thinking and supporting economic growth, but I oppose this particular thing at City Hall.

Mr. Speaker, the budget addresses the issue on education by committing the funding to 80 percent of total public school education expenditure. It reduces middle-income tax by 42 percent reduction. It has also close to 6,000 low-income earners from the tax rules it has taken out.

I can see when the Tories were campaigning in 2003, I remember the education system would have eliminated the physical education and music from the classroom. I commend the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), who has not only promoted music and the art in the school, but we have just announced about physical activities to be a part of the curriculum of high school and junior school students.

This is something that is healthy for our children. That is something which is very futuristic and preventive for the health system.

Mr. Speaker, I can keep on hours and hours for speaking on the salient features of the debate, but I would leave it up to my other friends to speak on. Including, I'd like to share with this House something that I enjoy doing when I visit the schools in Transcona and Windsor Park. I see little kids, younger kids, smiling; and when the school teacher introduces me to them and says this man works you know where, where that Golden Boy shines from the magnificent building that we have, the children look at me with hope. The children look at me with their eyes shining, smiling, and looking at future, as if they're telling me, please do not darken our future. Please keep the good work going. Let us not rewind what we have been building for them. Let us not go back; let us look forward.

I have met several mothers working hard to support their families. I have met several dads working two shifts to keep up their families, prosperous, healthy and happy. I have met many seniors with tremendous pride in their eyes. I have met many people who take a tremendous amount of pride to be part of building Manitoba. Their contribution in building our past is something that we must be acknowledging, and this budget has addressed some of those issues for seniors of our society. We need to continue building safe Manitoba, prosperous Manitoba, equitable Manitoba and, above all, socially just Manitoba. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to rise today and to respond to the budget address. Let me begin by, first of all, I guess, understanding that we will be going to the polls shortly. I want to take this opportunity to thank our pages in this House and as well as the table officers for continuing to do the wonderful job that they do in serving us in this Legislature. I also want to commend you, Mr. Speaker, for the job that you have done as the first elected Speaker in our Legislature, and indeed, serving us very proudly and very justly in this House. We certainly appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I've been listening to the addresses to the budget, and sometimes when we rise in our places in this House, we forget that what we say is going to be recorded in the history books of this province through the *Hansard* process. When we

do forget that, we sometimes make casual comments, and even though they are not relevant to the issues of the day or, in fact, represent the truth necessarily, because we have this large dome over us which protects us from going out and repeating those things in the hallway, we take liberty with that. I find some objection to that, because I believe that this is a place where we stand to represent the people who have elected us.

Mr. Speaker, when I listen to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) deliver his address to this House, I was insulted by the fact that previously he had risen in this House and given information to this House that was proven to be inaccurate and false.

* (16:20)

Mr. Speaker, I'm not the only one who understands this. If you were to ask media, reporters, Manitobans in general, they would tell you, yes, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) did mislead this House, mislead Manitobans, in the comments that he made with regard to the Crocus Fund.

But, when he came back to deliver his address, an honourable person has to understand that within these halls we have to also be careful about how we address the public and ensure that, in fact, the things that we say are indeed accurate. I was expecting that the Finance Minister was going to apologize to Manitobans for having erred and for having put information on the record that was not, in fact, accurate.

But he failed to do that, Mr. Speaker, and in the eyes of many Manitobans and us on this side of the House, the Finance Minister just dropped several levels in terms of his integrity because he did not do that. That's why you heard the points of privilege in this House, because people representing Manitobans in this Chamber rose to their feet to voice the objection of Manitobans to that kind of action by the Finance Minister that was less than truthful.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, that's not why I'm speaking today. I'm speaking to address the issues of the budget. This budget, although it's like fairy dust—it sort of scatters a little bit of goodwill for everyone—it does not address the true picture of what Manitobans need. I think the papers and the media spoke to that. Manitobans' reactions, whether it was from the Federation of Business, whether it was business groups, people who were working for the service industry, they all indicated that although this budget scattered a little bit of goodwill and a little bit

of money to all sectors, if you like, it did not address the key issues that we depend on in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) is very clever at that because he knows he's going to the polls, and by doing a little bit of good for everyone, he thinks he's going to gain the approval rating of all Manitobans. All one has to do is look at this budget and you can see right through it. When you read things, for example, like the middle-bracket rate for individuals paying taxes is going to drop from 13 percent to 12.75 percent on January 1, 2008, one can't be fooled by thinking that there's going to be some sort of massive reduction in the amount of taxes that I'm going to pay. This is a mere quarter of a percent, and it's not going to come into effect until January 1, 2008. This was the budget for 2007. So we're almost going to be into another budget year before any benefit is realized, and the benefit here is minimal to zero. *[interjection]* I hear some chirping from the other side of the House, and I'm glad they're engaged in this because they should be.

Mr. Speaker, then we have a statement made in the budget that says, starting January 1, 2009, they will begin to implement a multiyear plan to lower the first income tax rate to 10.5 percent and increase the first income tax threshold to \$35,000. But when is that going to happen? Long after they're out of government. This is supposed to happen on January 1, 2009. Now, this is a budget that was supposed to be presented for 2007. So what benefit is there for people living in today's fiscal reality? There isn't any.

Now, if they think they're going to take this to the people and get re-elected on this kind of garbage, then I ask them to go out and we'll see what Manitobans tell them. *[interjection]* Now, Mr. Speaker, I hear more chirping, and I'm glad that the minister of post-secondary education is finally engaged because it means that at least she's paying some attention.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me say one other thing. This government has talked about tax reductions, and today the critic for Finance I think put it squarely on the record. For every dollar that this government says it saved Manitobans in terms of tax reductions, it has increased taxes through the backdoor, whether it's through fees or more taxation, and those aren't done through legislation. Those are done through Order-in-Council, the backdoor, the sneaky way in which you are going to cause Manitobans to pay more whether it's for going to the park, taking their

children to the zoo, taking their children to the park or wherever it might be.

That's the way this government operates. It's all smoke and mirrors. When you consider that 42 percent of this government's increase in revenue comes from the federal government, you can understand why this province, unfortunately, has become the Newfoundland of Canada. That's a sad commentary. When we see Saskatchewan forging ahead—now, Saskatchewan, when we were in government, never, ever used to be competitive with Manitoba. We would compare ourselves to Alberta. And who are we comparing ourselves to now? We can't even compare ourselves to Saskatchewan because they're forging ahead.

Where is this government going? Well, Mr. Speaker, they say well, we're bringing Manitobans back. Well, sure. Ask some of our families where their kids are going. They're going to Saskatchewan; they're going to Alberta. They, unfortunately, aren't staying here.

Now, I think Manitobans are smarter than what this government gives them credit for. They will judge this government in the next short while, as they do every day. I recall, last night the Premier (Mr. Doer) was at the hockey game, I believe. You know, the camera flashed over to Mr. Doer, or the Premier, I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I retract that, and was there a loud cheer when his picture came up on the screen? What did Manitobans say? They booed him. That is an indication of how Manitobans feel about this party, this government and this Premier. Now, I know better. I know that that happens, and that's an expression of the disgust and the lack of trust that people have of this government.

Mr. Speaker, it isn't hard to spend money, especially someone else's money. That's what this government has been good at, spending someone else's money. Manitobans work hard. If you look at how we are taxed in this province compared to other jurisdictions, we pay some of the highest taxes in the land. This government is supposed to be looking after us, but they don't care. They don't care about the taxes that are paid. All they do is care about the money that they have to spend.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the debt of this province, where is the debt of this province going? *[interjection]* Somebody said down? Where is that coming from? If the member would identify himself who said "down," I would like him to stand up and put that on the record, because the debt of this

province continues to escalate, continues to escalate. If you look at the per capita debt of this province, it is almost higher than anywhere else in the nation. That is sad commentary on a government that has been in power for seven years. When we were in government, we looked after Manitobans and made sure that our debt was collected. We passed the balanced budget legislation. Why? Because we had NDP governments in this province that spent far more, far more, than they had a right to spend. They drove this province into an enormous debt and into an enormous hole.

I'll tell you how well this government manages its money. When they get a windfall from the federal government, they still have to go to a corporation, a provincial corporation, and raid their funds to be able to balance the books. Then every time you turn around, there's a new fee, a new fine, a new tax, but it's all done through the backdoor.

Then they, you know, get hung up on things. First of all, they'll go back seven years when there was a different government, and they'll start blaming that government for something because they can't take responsibility. Or they'll blame some other corporation or something for something they're responsible for. And now they're going to fearmonger. They're going to tell everybody, oh, those Tories, they're going to sell Manitoba Hydro. Now, nobody'll believe them, but I guess it makes them feel good to say it. They're the ones who are selling off Manitoba Hydro assets. They're giving them away. They're selling them off. Not this side of the House. We're going to make sure that this is a utility that is protected for Manitoba.

* (16:30)

Now, Mr. Speaker, when you talk about selling off a telephone system—I want to talk about that for a little bit because I'm proud of what we did, because today I can call my children in Alberta, where, unfortunately, they've gone because of this government, and you know something? We don't have to pay very high long distance rates because we can call our children in the evening and have very low rates, but, if you were in Saskatchewan, can you do that? No, because it's a government-owned utility. They'd like to give it away, but nobody wants it. If you look at the rates we enjoy today in Manitoba telephone, I'm kind of proud that we were able to privatize it. I'll go out there and tell Manitobans that the best thing we could have done for the Manitoba Telephone System was what really happened.

Now, I remember the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who's yapping from his seat over here, was standing along with his colleagues along the back row over here because they wouldn't participate. He stood in the House and he spoke for what, three hours. He got the unlimited time to speak for about three hours on the issue, or was it longer? It seemed like a long time. Maybe it was longer than that. But, Mr. Speaker, what did he really say? He was down to reading his grocery list. That's how engaged in the debate he was. He was reading things from *Hansard*. [interjection] Oh, he's telling me now he read the phone book too. Well, maybe he did. I don't know, but that's how engaged he was in that whole debate. It was nothing but bluster.

But, Mr. Speaker, we move on. Today they tell us, well, at first, they were telling us we had laid off a thousand nurses. Today, it's up to 1,500. Well, what we did is exactly what they did when Boundary Trails hospital came to be. They had to lay off people from a particular union because that's the union contract, and then you have to rehire them simultaneously under a different agreement. Well, that's exactly what happened, but they picked up the figure that we released, a thousand nurses. The media told them that that's a lie.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Derkach: It's a lie, and you can't call it anything else but a lie. They're living a lie. This government is living a lie.

I know a lot of nurses, and they're not too happy with the way this government is performing health care. Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at health care. It's supposed to be the most important social service that we have. Now, let me tell you how this government has treated health care in its seven years. First of all, they decided to close rural hospitals. The Premier (Mr. Doer) came out and said he would guarantee that the hospitals wouldn't close, but what happened? Hospitals in Rivers, hospitals in Erickson, Rosburn, Wawanesa, and the list goes on and on and on, these facilities are closed today.

So what we did is we went from hallway medicine to highway medicine, and people are dying on the highways. Now, the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) wouldn't understand this because he's never lived in a rural setting. [interjection] Well then, if he has, maybe, maybe he's never used rural health care.

An Honourable Member: I lived in Glenboro.

Mr. Derkach: Oh, he says he lived in Glenboro. Well, glory hallelujah.

So I retract that because he did live in Glenboro, but, Mr. Speaker, then I would expect that he should have a better understanding of health care than he does, because, if he lived in Glenboro, he would know that in rural Manitoba you are treated as a second-class citizen in this province.

This government has decided that we're going to have brand new, good-quality ambulances, which is great. But, Mr. Speaker, those ambulances don't save people when one has a heart attack and you're 45 minutes away from a facility because the government has chosen to close the facility in your community.

Mr. Speaker, if you were living in Clear Lake today and you had a heart attack, it would take that ambulance 45 minutes to get to you, at a minimum, and this government says, well, that's a pretty good standard. Well, you know what happens to a person who's had a serious heart attack in 45 minutes. Don't call the ambulance. You call the undertaker because that's the reality, and they should know that. That's the way that this government has treated rural health care. Additionally, if they send the ambulance out to you, you're going to pay through your nose.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I remember the debate in this House about northerners having to pay \$50 to get on the air ambulance to come into Winnipeg for health care. This government said, we're going to abolish that. But it's okay for a rural person from southern Manitoba to pay the entire shot: \$2,000 and \$3,000 for a trip to Winnipeg.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they claim they got rid of it. No, they finally got rid of it, but I still have constituents that are fighting with the regional health authority to get money back because they were charged \$3,000, \$2,000 for a ride from one hospital to another because the services were taken away in rural Manitoba. So those people have to be transferred into a city hospital. That's not their fault. That's the government's fault.

What have they done with the money that was supposed to go into health care? Where has it gone? Where have the millions of dollars that have come from the federal government gone?

An Honourable Member: Health care.

Mr. Derkach: Oh, health care. But where? Is it out there in rural Manitoba? Have you been there?

An Honourable Member: Yes, it is.

An Honourable Member: MRIs, CAT scans, new hospitals.

Mr. Derkach: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We'll put it into a fancy, what do you call it? A foyer in the Brandon hospital, wonderful foyer in the Brandon hospital. We're all proud of it, but they forgot the rest of the hospital, because some of the rooms in that hospital are still the same as they were 15 years ago and 20 years ago. It's fine to have a nice foyer, but put some beds in the hospital.

Let's talk about personnel. Let's talk about doctors. Let's talk about lab X-ray technicians where we have shortages in, Mr. Speaker. Now, this Premier (Mr. Doer) said that he would fix this hallway medicine, this hospital thing. He said, if we need more nurses, we'll get them. If we need more docs, then we'll put them in there, and I'll do it with \$15 million. They were going to do it with \$15 million in six months. In six months, he was going to fix it. They fixed it all right. Today it's worse than it's ever been.

As long as I was a minister, I never remembered people dying in the hallways, or, pardon me, in the waiting rooms. Today, under this government's watch, we have people dying in the waiting rooms. We have people lying on the emergency room floors bleeding, waiting to get access to health care. Is it the hospital's fault? No. No. It's the way this government has mismanaged the health care system of our province, and Manitobans know that.

Have you looked at our personal care homes outside of the city of Winnipeg? I walked into my own personal care home in Russell, Manitoba, and I'm embarrassed, Mr. Speaker, at the way they have allowed this facility to deteriorate. But they claim that they're doing great things for health care. Walk into these personal care homes. Take a look at how people are living. Take a look at how you've neglected them.

An Honourable Member: We have one in Thompson.

Mr. Derkach: Oh, yes, Thompson. Oh, yes, we've got one in Thompson, for sure. Well, Mr. Speaker, there's more to this province than Thompson. There's more to this province than Thompson.

Mr. Speaker, what about rural Manitoba? What about the agriculture sector? Where is it in this budget? Where is the increase? Now this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is living under some delusion. She has no clout around the Cabinet table

because there's absolutely nothing for agriculture in this budget. Now, the things they point to are crop insurance where they increased the rates, and the rates are paid by the producers and they say: Well, look at the increase in the budget. Well, my God, I think Manitobans are a little smarter than that. But they are fixated. They are fixated on the Wheat Board issue. Now, that's long gone.

Okay, Mr. Speaker, we said from the very beginning, farmers are smarter than this government. They will decide. It won't be this government. Well, when they found that they were losing the vote, they said: Oh, the votes aren't right. You know, the questions aren't right. But, if they had been winning, do you think they would have said the same thing?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Derkach: No, I don't think so. Now, this minister, instead of saying to the farmers: Farmers of Manitoba, you're smart enough to make the decision. You make the decision. We'll abide by it. No, no, no.

An Honourable Member: They spent \$80,000—

* (16:40)

Mr. Derkach: They spent \$100,000. Was it 100,000?

An Honourable Member: Yes, close to it.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, what did we get out of it? The same thing we got in the cattle levy: zero. The only persons that have gained anything out of this levy are the board. Just like the Wheat Board vote. What did it prove? What did it do for Canadian farmers? What did it do for Manitoba farmers? Zero.

An Honourable Member: Billy got 360 a day. Did you know that?

Mr. Derkach: Billy Uruski, the former Minister of Agriculture, gets \$360 a day for sitting on the cattle levy board.

An Honourable Member: He doesn't even know what a cow is.

Mr. Derkach: He doesn't know what a cow is because he doesn't have any. He was the one who killed the cattle industry in this province in the first place. Remember the cow-calf operation when all the farmers said to him: Mr. Uruski, it's not going to work. But he knew better. You know where the cattle industry went? To Alberta. Do you know where the grain went? To Alberta. Do you know where our kids went? To Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture talks about—you know, now we've got call on the federal government to get this disaster program going. Well, she's a disaster, all right. But she's going to call on the federal government to get some disaster program going. Not a bad thing at all. But where's the province? Where are they with the CAIS program? Where were they with the negative margins? They're always blaming someone else. She's always pointing the finger at somebody else, but she can't take the responsibility because she hasn't got any clout around that Cabinet table. That's why rural Manitobans are going to reward them in the just way.

An Honourable Member: We'll see.

Mr. Derkach: Absolutely, we will see, Mr. Speaker, and we look forward to it, and maybe it's time that Manitobans did speak up.

Mr. Speaker, the budget that was presented by this Finance Minister is one that this government can't take a lot of comfort in. It is not one that they can go to the people and say: Look at what we have accomplished in terms of managing and being stewards of your money because they have not done justice to any of it, whether it's in the area of social programming, whether it's in the area of trying to entice and attract investment into this province, and that's a big thing. If our tax regime is so far out of whack that we can't attract businesses, we can't attract business and manufacturing and added-value processing into this province, we are not going to be competitive. This government has not allowed us to be an attractive, competitive place for investment throughout this country.

So, Mr. Speaker, I regret that we cannot, in good judgment, support this budget to any measure. The people from my constituency were not only disappointed; they were appalled that this government has not addressed some of those issues that are so outstanding.

The issues of infrastructure, highways, rebuilding some of those roads that need rebuilding. Highway 16 is falling apart. We have bridges in this province on major highways that have been closed because of this government's inability to be able to monitor and to address the crumbling infrastructure.

When you talk about crumbling infrastructure, all you have to do is look at Highway No. 2 at Wawanesa where the bridge is closed, or look at Portage. Take No. 1 to Portage and you have to take a detour because this government neglected to

monitor and to ensure that the infrastructure was put in place so that our highways could stay open. How much more of that is there? Take a drive down Highway 16, and it is an embarrassment, Mr. Speaker, that this is the second trans-Canada highway, and the condition that it's in. We can't even compete with the highways in Saskatchewan anymore.

The minister of highways today, when you ask him a question, stands up and talks about the 1990s. Well, take responsibility for goodness' sake and do something that you have responsibility for.

I am being told that my time is up, Mr. Speaker, and I do want to say that I'd like to go on. Nevertheless, it is a sad day in this province when a government cannot really address some of the current needs that Manitobans have in its budget address. So, with that, I can say that I will be joining this side of the House in not supporting this budget of this Finance Minister. Thank you.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I always find it is a great privilege to speak on the budget. It's one of the two main debates in this House, and it gives us an opportunity to reflect not just on the immediate budget that's before us—and, certainly, this is a fine budget; certainly, one of the best in many years—but to engage in a debate about the future of this province. But I must admit that if you're reading the *Hansard* and watching this debate, you'll see that it's a pretty one-sided debate, because, as we saw from the member opposite, if you were to sum up his speech, I think the highlight was when he said he was proud that he was part of the government that privatized the MTS in 1995.

Now, you know, Mr. Speaker, it took him 12 years to say that. He didn't say that at the 1995 election, and he won't say in the next election that, if elected, they would privatize Manitoba Hydro. But I want it on the record that the member opposite said what we know. You know, with me going on a few Web sites over the next period of time that Tories are proud to be privatizers. We're proud of the public ownership of Manitoba Hydro. That's why we'll keep it under public ownership.

But I realize this was a theme with members opposite. Mr. Speaker, has anybody here watched various sorts of nostalgic shows like *That '70s Show*. We saw earlier, we saw the member opposite talk about the debates. He went back to the '80s. He was talking about Bill Uruski in terms of his record as

Minister of Agriculture, and he had a fine record. I watched yesterday the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) preaching doom and gloom. We went back again to the decade before, the previous decade. I even noticed the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen)—it was interesting. If you ever wonder about the Conservatives, why we talk about, they wanted to go backward. He actually went right back to the original history of Manitoba. It was kind of interesting what he included and what he left out. I'm going to get into Uncle Willy's Buffet a little bit later on because that was the real highlight of his speech. But, you know, he started with John Norquay, he started with Premier Macdonald, kind of skipped Rodmond Roblin as premier, I guess because he actually nationalized the phone system. He was a Conservative.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, he went a great length to do this sort of historical scan, and it was, like, one paragraph on the NDP. No mention of Ed Schreyer, no mention of Howard Pawley and, certainly, no mention of the current premier. What I found interesting was his rather light-weighted efforts to defend the integrity of the Filmon administration. Now, he's a former premier of the province who served for many years in this House. I certainly don't agree with him, but I respect his time of service. But you know what was interesting? If you read the defence of Premier Filmon, his main defence was to suggest that how dare we say that there's a record, the Filmon record, and the current Leader of the Opposition was the architect of it.

You know what I noticed, Mr. Speaker? I read it and I read it again and I read it again, and it really confirmed pretty well what I've always said. By the way, the Leader of the Opposition skipped a decade. He got up and spoke, and I realized it was a mistake on his part. It's got Tory math on the budget. He said we had a 127-year history and it was pointed out that it was 137 years. I wonder what 10 years he left out. Because, if you read his comments in *Hansard*, I don't think you could find anything in there he could point to that was an achievement of the Filmon administration. It certainly wasn't building our hydro capacity; it certainly wasn't renewing our health care system, innovation in terms of education. They, certainly, weren't going to talk about the infrastructure. I realize that this is part of their whole strategy because, as much as he took some offence to our attack on his record, what he's really trying to do, if you look at it, is eliminate any memory of those 10 years, just wipe it out. Some of us were talking, by

the way, how, if you do a Web search, it's almost like the Leader of the Opposition is the invisible man of Manitoba politics, no past. I'm not sure about his future either, but we'll let the people of Manitoba decide.

The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition was Premier Gary Filmon's chief of staff. That's a fact. You may not find it on the Internet except for one site, Mr. Speaker. I won't spell it because I think that references the Leader of the Opposition by name. You won't find any reference to that. You certainly won't find any reference to the fact that the Leader of the Opposition also provided really important policy advice to another great figure of Canadian political history, Mike Harris. Does anybody remember Mike Harris?

*(16:50)

If you wonder why, Mr. Speaker, I think it's pretty clear. It's because the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) would want us to believe that he has no past, but we know better. I won't just judge. I'm not going to re-debate the 1990s. Most people I talk to would rather not relive that again. You won't see much desire for a '90s show in Manitoba. You know, Connie Curran, privatizing MTS. I mean, attempts to privatize health care. I realize that the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) would be a prime player in that now. You know, proud to be a privatizer. I'm sure he's going to be quite—and this is brave, running around his constituency explaining that. But the reality is that there's even more recent evidence of what the Conservatives are really all about. Now, I'm saying what they're really all about. On top of what they said six and nine and one year ago, six, nine months and one year ago, what the Leader of the Opposition said when he sought the leadership of the Conservative party. What was the winning, new platform that he was running on? I remember he was all about the need for more private health care. Now, that's a winner. He also targeted the need for a public-sector restraint. Hmm. Filmon Fridays. Does that come back to memory?

Then, even before we brought in the regulations for water protection, he said he'd roll them back, he'd get rid of them. Now, this was the Leader of the Opposition when he was talking to Tories, right? I usually believe that leadership campaigns, party conventions really expose a lot about what people are and what they stand for. Certainly, I took some great delight at reading Ken Waddell's comments. I look forward to his contribution in the election

campaign. I've got a lot of respect for Ken Waddell. I think he's a whole Web site in himself in terms of what he represents, in terms of the Conservative Party.

Mr. Speaker, that was then and this is now. I want you to compare the reality of what the Conservatives did when they were in office, when the Leader of the Opposition was the architect, what they said they would do when they were campaigning, what the Leader of the Opposition said. What's happened since then? Let's put this to the credibility test. Let's see if the "C" in PC stands for credibility.

Well, the first thing is the Leader of the Opposition announced he's actually now in favour of the tuition freeze. Well, after seven years of being pounded by members opposite who have an elitist view of education, this new leader comes along and says he's in favour of the tuition freeze. Do you believe that? Do I believe that for a moment? I mean, he sat on the board of governors when there was an increase of more than 50 percent in tuitions. Was he against those tuition fee increases then? Well, maybe, just maybe there's a sort of whiff of political opportunism in the air.

Number one, let's start with that. I remember we announced a short time ago University College of the North capital fund. I've never been more proud than to stand in Thompson, and I know the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) stood in The Pas and we announced an historic investment in the future of this province. When we're investing in northern Manitoba, we're part of this province too, Mr. Speaker.

I remember when members opposite—you know, in the last election, 2003, the only thing they were going to cut was the University College of the North. The only thing, Mr. Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Can't hear you.

Mr. Ashton: OK, there. I'll speak louder for the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). The only thing they were going to cut was the University College of the North. By the way, their leader didn't have the guts to come here in Manitoba and make that statement. He didn't campaign once in northern Manitoba. So much for concern about all of this province. But you know what? It didn't just stop there. We passed the legislation, and then we started dealing with the capital needs of the University College of the North. You know what? The Member

for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) came out and said we shouldn't put one cent into the capital for the University College of the North, not one. Said it should go elsewhere.

I don't know if he's been to Thompson recently. I don't know if he's been to Thompson very much. I want to be generous here. I know it was Easter recently, but we've had more sightings of the Easter Bunny, I think probably, than Conservative MLAs the last few months. The Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) says she has been there, Mr. Speaker. You know, I love it when Tories have to, sort of, go back and say, well, I was there once a couple of years ago. What I noticed, by the way, is that the member didn't have the guts to come to northern Manitoba and say that, but his leader now, his leader has announced that well, maybe, they like the University College of the North funding for capital. Now, I just want to put this to the credibility test here. Do you believe the NDP that fought for and brought in the University College of the North and the University College of the North capital funding, or do you believe a newly minted Leader of the Opposition who, all of a sudden, turns his back supposedly on seven years of Tory policy, in fact, a couple of decades of Tory neglect?

But, Mr. Speaker, I've got to say that there's nothing that, really, I want to put more to the credibility test than OlyWest. You know, I look at the Tory Agriculture critic (Mr. Penner). I'm still waiting for his speech in this House saying that, like his Leader of the Opposition, he is, quote, unquote—and I think he probably has to sort of read those kinds of statements that prisoners of war have read in the past—"I am opposed to OlyWest."

Because, Mr. Speaker, after the Tories opposite slammed us of bringing in the pause in hog production, when the Leader of the Opposition, when he was in favour of the Clean Environment Commission hearings, but didn't want a pause, does anybody in this province believe that the Leader of the Opposition and the members opposite could be taken seriously in terms of OlyWest? I did not hear a word in the Member for Russell's (Mr. Derkach) speech, not a word in the Member for Emerson's (Mr. Penner) speech. I want to hear the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) get up and say that he's against the OlyWest proposal. But, you know what? I need to say this, but the members opposite are acting like Liberals because we've seen the Leader of the Liberal Party say one thing inside the Perimeter

and one side out. They're doing the same thing at OlyWest.

Mr. Speaker, we've taken on the challenge of protecting Manitoba's water, and we're doing it through regulations; we're doing it through the Clean Environment Commission; we're doing it through the pause. We need no lectures from members opposite when it comes to OlyWest. They have no credibility on OlyWest. They have no credibility on the environment. Their record speaks for itself. Let their policies speak for themselves.

I'm just realizing that my speech might be seen as somewhat partisan. You know what, Mr. Speaker? There is a certain aroma in the air. You know that smell. I know it's partly spring. You know, maybe, just maybe, there's a hint of an election on the horizon. I think you can see it by the way, by the fact that the members opposite are adopting the time-old strategy they always adopt. You know, the wolves are putting on that sheep's clothing. Warm fuzzy Tories, right? They're even bringing in their amendment. They're concerned about climate change, and they were against us signing the Kyoto Accord internationally. The warm, fuzzy Tories are now—they already believe in the tuition freeze. Come on now, repeat after me. I'm saying to members opposite, you know, you've got to add that to your statements: "I believe in the tuition freeze." The warm, fuzzy Tories are going around, they're trying to just hog any sort of issue they can grab ahold of. They're trying to do it desperately. You know, even University College of the North, and OlyWest, the whole bit.

But you know what? We all know what's behind it because we know what they do when they're in government. We hear what they say when they're running for leader. We hear what they say in their debates in the Legislature. They're proud to be privatizers. They're against protecting our environment. They don't give a you know what, Mr. Speaker, about regions that they don't represent. I'm proud of the fact that we represent all three regions of this province: rural, northern and urban. We don't just show up in parts of the province once in a while. We make a real effort.

You know what? Is that reflected in this budget? Right on, Mr. Speaker. It is reflected in this budget. But you know, I was struck by the fact that the Leader of the Opposition called Uncle Willy's Buffet, right? Now, I never actually ate there, but it just struck me that it shows you a sort of, that little hint of elitism there. I know it wouldn't be classified as the Dubrovnik's budget, but I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition, when he drove by Uncle Willy's Buffet, had something against what was a popular restaurant in its time. But that's the Tories for you. They're elitist. They're wolves in sheep's clothing. You know what? Does anybody believe the Leader of the Opposition? You've got a choice: Backwards to the nineties or forward under the NDP.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 15 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 11, 2007

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