

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

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authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
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.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
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.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
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REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
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ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
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

Thursday, April 12, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 21—The Statutory Holidays Act
(Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 21, The Statutory Holidays Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, this bill will provide Manitobans a much-needed statutory holiday between Christmas and Easter. The new statutory holiday will fall on the third Monday in February, and this holiday is proposed in response to broad public support from Manitobans.

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

Bill 217—The Apology Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 217, The Apology Act; Loi sur la présentation d'excuses, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, The Apology Act would allow an apology to be provided to an individual without there being necessarily legal liability. We expect that this Apology Act in its terms may be particularly helpful in areas of health care where mistakes are made, for health care providers to provide an apology without having legal liability. It will also apply in areas which are covered by insurance.

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

PETITIONS

Provincial Nominee Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Immigration is critically important to the future of our province, and the 1998 federal Provincial Nominee Program is the best immigration program that Manitoba has ever had.

The government needs to recognize the unnecessary backlogs in processing PNP applications causes additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

The government needs to recognize the unfairness in its current policy on who qualifies to be an applicant, more specifically, by not allowing professionals such as health care workers to be able to apply for PNP certificates in the same way a computer technician would be able to.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his government to consider improving and strengthening the Provincial Nominee Program in order to recognize and acknowledge how important immigration is to our province.

This is signed by O. Reyes, T. Reyes, E. Reyes and many, many other Manitobans.

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

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 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 P. Shuttleworth, M. Fodey, R. Juchnowski and many others.

Grace General Hospital ER

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government has not ensured that the Grace Hospital emergency room is staffed with a full complement of ER doctors. The ER has been short several doctors for more than two years.

Because of this shortage, only one ER doctor is working on many shifts, forcing long patient waits for emergency care.

Residents of the community fear that the Grace Hospital ER will be forced to close if this ER doctor shortage is not fixed immediately.

The provincial government has not come forward with a clear, immediate plan to address the ER doctor shortage.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), to consider developing a clear, immediate plan to address the ER doctor shortage.

To request the Minister of Health to consider taking all necessary steps to ensure the Grace Hospital emergency room does not close.

Signed by M. Debroni, B. Bjornsson, K. Switzer and many, many others.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Zoë Gross and Stacy Senkbeil who are constituency assistants to the honourable Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell). We also have Margaret Senkbeil of Kemnay, Manitoba. These are guests of the honourable Member for Brandon East.

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

* (13:40)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health Care

Review of Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Last week the government announced their limited and late review of regionalization within our health care system here in Manitoba, politically motivated in the lead-up to an election campaign with a time line of December of 2007 to report. We heard today from the Catholic Health Association and their concerns that the current closed-door process for health care decision-making is designed to block meaningful public input into the future of our own health care services.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the concerns raised by the Catholic Health Association, will the Premier today commit to open public hearings as part of the regionalization review?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, certainly we have reduced the number of health authorities when we came into office from 13 to 11. We certainly know that the Catholic hospital—and people

disagreed with the members opposite when they established regionalization to begin with. In fact, at St. Boniface Hospital, I recall when we came into office that they were creating an out-patients' program at St. Boniface Hospital emergency ward. There was a huge argument between the Conservative regional health board for community services with five vice-presidents, and the acute care hospital board with six vice-presidents. They were fighting each other over who should have jurisdiction. They were going to meetings after meetings.

We went from two boards to one board in the city of Winnipeg, and we think that is appropriate. Certainly, the Catholic health officials have had legislation put in place from the beginning. We put in place legislation to protect faith-based institutions as they asked us to do, but the member opposite will know that when the Conservatives brought in this program to begin with, the Catholic hospitals opposed them.

Mr. McFadyen: We know this government has more bureaucrats working for fewer boards. That's not the point, Mr. Speaker. The indication today from Father Bob Girard was, and I quote: Our concern is that the RHA system has grown out of control and lowered morale while the burgeoning bureaucracy continues to drain resources away from direct patient care rather than bolstering the system as originally designed. That's the end of Father Girard's quote.

Now for years the government has been dismissing opposition comments about the burgeoning bureaucracy. Is the Premier today going to dismiss Father Girard's comments on that same point?

Mr. Doer: Au contraire, Mr. Speaker. We are having this review after 10 years because we want to hear from patients and people. We know when the member opposite was working in the Premier's directorate, the policy office, we know that the Catholic hospitals opposed the regionalization of health care and that's well on the record. But that's why we created the 10-year review, because the status quo should never be assumed to operate in perpetuity. We created the review to ensure that patients, people and others who have concerns about the original Conservative regional program, which we have reduced from 13 boards to 11, can take a look at moving forward in the most appropriate way.

We didn't enshrine legislation to deal with the faith-based institutions.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite feigned indignation with the Catholic hospitals, the Mennonite hospitals. The Grey Nuns were saying: Don't bring in this regional program. Don't bring in frozen food from Mississauga. Don't bring in Connie Curran to decide the future of health care. I would say—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out that we have an experienced nurse that's on the board from Manitoba, not from Chicago. The experienced nurse is not going to get \$4.5 million U.S. We have Jerry Gray, the former dean of the Asper School of Business, chairing this body. We have a former health administrator in the review. The review is intended to take a 10-year look at the future of regionalization and its strengths and weaknesses.

Members opposite, you know, they absolutely, unilaterally, brought this legislation in. I will look to the former Health critic about our record on this issue. I think we were quite concerned about it at the time. I think Mr. Gray, who has co-chaired a Premier's Economic Advisory Council body on health care, is a very competent person. He's very capable. I saw him make an excellent presentation on the future of manufacturing just a couple of weeks ago. He's a proven person who is smart and bright with a lot of integrity, and more importantly, for a review in health care, he's from Manitoba.

Community-Based Organizations

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we know that Dr. Gray, who's an excellent individual, is operating within the very constrained rules of engagement that the government has given him where they're going to allow for e-mail submissions from the public. Other than the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) who likes to hide in his office and issue e-mails, there's no opportunity for meaningful dialogue under this process with the very people who rely on our health care system and with those community members who, for more than a century, have been the leaders in building Manitoba's health care system.

The Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has introduced The Apology Act today. We think it's very well-timed. In light of that, I wonder if the

Premier would like to today apologize for the fact that he's been running with an unwritten, unspoken policy over all these years of squeezing community-based organizations out of the delivery of health care in Manitoba. It's wrong.

Will he today apologize?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, you have a number of people that brought this legislation in unilaterally. The member opposite that's chirping from her seat, of course, the former—oh, she forgot this. She had amnesia about the fact that she was a legislative assistant to the former Minister of Health. You have people two seats down that jammed this into the Concordia Hospital. They rammed this legislation through the Legislature. Did they promise it in the election campaign in '90? No, they didn't. No, they didn't promise it. Did they tell us they were going to bring this in unilaterally? No, they didn't. They also didn't tell us about—oh, we have no plans to sell the telephone system at that time either. Another classic—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and you talk about St. Boniface Hospital. I would like to point out that the report dealing with cardiac surgeries where we had two sites and the recommendation to implement the site at St. Boniface Hospital, that was something again that was rejected by members opposite, totally rejected. The independent advice they had was rejected by members opposite. We implemented that report. Now, we feel after 10 years of reducing health authorities from 13 to 11 when we came into office, we feel after 10 years we should have a review of the effectiveness of health authorities in Manitoba. We trust the people who we appointed to do the job.

I can assure members opposite we are listening to all people in health care. That's why we have people who were line nurses, you know, who actually know a lot about patient care as opposed to a U.S. consultant who rammed in firing of nurses and rammed in the regionalization program. The apology legislation actually applies to the former Cabinet, many of whom sit in benches across the way.

Health Care Community-Based Organizations

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Premier (Mr. Doer) that

it was us who called for a cardiac review long before they even implemented it and long before Diane Gorsuch died waiting for heart surgery. It was never the intent of regionalization to push aside community-based health care in the delivery of health care services. We were never intending that community organizations be pushed aside in this delivery.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health why she has allowed community-based organizations to be pushed aside in the delivery of health care.

* (13:50)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is just factually incorrect once again. Indeed, this 10-year review with three experts on the external review panel has, as its mandate, to receive information from the public; voices of our faith-based organizations, of our community health providers. This will be critical in doing exactly what the review is intended to do, and that is to ensure that patient care and front-line care is at the centre of all of our discussions, and that the system works its way towards the best possible improvement for those patients.

Community-based care, Mr. Speaker; you don't get a whole lot of care in a community when you fire 1,500 nurses and send doctors fleeing from the province.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Minister of Health that it's Father Girard who is putting forward a lot of these comments. The community-based organizations are feeling very, very disrespected and marginalized by this government. We've seen that come forward in a news release today from the Catholic Association, and we are here representing their views in putting forward their comments that they feel marginalized and disrespected.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health why they have allowed community-based organizations to be treated so poorly.

Ms. Oswald: And, of course, we listen with interest and with care to what all Manitobans are having to say related to the regional health authority review and, indeed, relating to health care broadly. You know that in 2001, when we amended The RHA Act to enshrine the direction that regional health authorities have to take when considering religious or faith-based organizations, that was a clear and strong show of support for what the faith-based

organizations do for our community. We know that we are constantly hearing from our faith-based organizations, meeting with them regularly, hearing their voices. Their role is critical in the care of our Manitobans. We wouldn't discount that, Mr. Speaker.

Misericordia Health Care Centre

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): We have learned that the government has a closed-door deal with the Misericordia hospital, and we understand that announcement might be made very, very soon, perhaps even tomorrow, a closed-door deal with the Misericordia.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health now if she could please tell Manitobans what the contents of that deal might be with the Misericordia hospital, if she would be prepared today to share with us what their plans are for the Misericordia.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Indeed, negotiations have been going on for some time with Misericordia hospital and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority concerning their role and participation in regionalization. We look forward to the outcome of those negotiations. We know that patient care is at the centre of those discussions, and it seems curious strange to me, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite would talk about closed anything with Misericordia when they shut down the ER just prior to their plans of shutting down Seven Oaks.

Auto Theft Rates Reduction Strategies

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): For the past eight springs, the NDP have launched failed auto theft strategies. This spring, even as Winnipeg goes towards another record number of auto thefts and attempted auto thefts, they did the same thing. I want to refer, Mr. Speaker, to failed auto theft strategy No. 2, which was launched on May 31, 2001 at an NDP press release entitled, "Auto Theft Preventative Initiatives Introduced," where the NDP Minister of Justice promised to, and I quote, tackle auto theft head on. That was back in 2001, and since then there's been an increase in auto thefts by 5,000.

Mr. Speaker, why should Manitobans believe them today when they misled Manitobans five years ago?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I think it speaks for itself. There was no auto theft strategy from 1988 until 2000. There was no strategy. When two of my

constituents got killed by auto thefts, there was no action on the part of the government.

I'm proud of the fact that we've taken it on, even though it has required resources from the Province to beef up the police, even though we've had to go to Ottawa to ask them to tighten up the criminal law that they're responsible for. We've tried to co-operate with all levels to decrease the number of auto thefts, and I'm happy the federal government is onside, the City is onside and the police are onside to try to reduce auto theft. I wish members opposite had recognized it before.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the NDP Minister of Justice is proud of the fact that they have eight auto theft strategies, and they have increased auto theft by 5,000 annually in the city of Winnipeg.

Let me refer now to NDP auto theft strategy No. 4, dated January 7, 2003, where the then-NDP Minister of Justice stated, and I quote, that there had been progress on all five areas of the auto theft strategy and that auto theft is going down. That was back in 2003. After that, auto theft went up by 5,000 a year, and we've seen many, many serious incidents of auto theft since.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Justice please tell us: Was he misleading Manitobans in 2003, or is he misleading Manitobans today?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I recall, auto thefts were around 7,000 a year when we assumed office. Indeed, the member is right. Auto thefts have gone up, and we've put in place strategies to deal with auto theft. We follow the Regina protocol. We put in place a police-led auto theft unit through MPI. We put in place an immobilizer program.

I want to quote from Loren Schinkel, head of the Winnipeg Police Association, quote, it's not time to draw a line in the sand, it's time to dig a trench and say that is enough, and it's time to start at the federal level.

That's why we were in Ottawa two weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, asking—and do members opposite support our amendment to the Criminal Code to make auto theft a more serious offence than theft of a paddle?

Mr. Goertzen: That doesn't mean very much from the NDP Minister of Justice who campaigns for federal members who gut legislation like conditional sentencing in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to refer to auto theft strategy No. 6, which was released April 21, 2005, entitled "Crackdown on Auto Thieves Expanded." There the NDP Minister of Justice said that he was confident that they would get this stubborn epidemic in check.

Mr. Speaker, in 2001, they promised to tackle it head on; 2003, they say the strategy is progressing; 2005, they say they're keeping it in check. And auto theft has nearly doubled under their watch.

Will the Minister of Justice please confirm today that if Manitobans want change when it comes to justice, they'll have to vote change, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I note the member indicated that he actually is aware that this is not *Law & Order*. This isn't the United States.

The member knows that the federal government is responsible for the Criminal Code. As recently as two weeks ago, they advised us that they would enhance the Criminal Code to make it tougher. The member knows we've increased prosecution funding by 80 percent, the Province has. The member knows there's 150 more police on the street today than when members opposite were governing. They did not take action. We've taken action in every area possible. Immobilizers, curfews, tougher probation, driver suspensions, and areas that the Province has jurisdiction, we've taken action. We're working with the City and the federal government. I suggest he get onside and work with us, not against us.

*(14:00)

School Divisions Budgetary Directive

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): A classic example of spend more, get less. It's the NDP way, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Education made his funding announcement on January 29, and then for some reason waited until the last minute to warn school trustees to change their budgets if they had a surplus of 4 percent or more. Mr. Speaker, this sudden announcement came out of left field and gave school divisions less than a week to rewrite their budget. This lack of respect by the Minister of Education is bad news for students, teachers and for school divisions.

Why, Mr. Speaker, when he made his announcement on January 29, did he wait until

March 9, less than a week before the budgets were to be submitted, to issue the directive to school boards?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, that's an interesting comment coming from the spend-nothing-on-education party. We have a very good working relationship with all our partners in education, including MAST. We've been working very hard with MAST on a number of issues. MAST recognizes that we are the government that's put in \$185 million more into base funding in education, compared to \$7 million net by members opposite.

With respect to this particular announcement, it was again an opportunity to work together with our partners. We met with the school divisions that requested to meet with me. We talked about how we could work together to make this palatable for taxpayers, and the initiative saved over \$6.7 million, which, by the way, was almost the same amount that members invested in the entire system.

Mrs. Stefanson: It's interesting that the Minister of Education claims that he has a good relationship with stakeholders in the education system, Mr. Speaker. I have a letter here from MAST dated March 17, 2007, where they say, and I quote, MAST and its member boards are deeply troubled both by the nature of the directive and the manner in which it was communicated to school boards and to the media. Coming only six days before the statutory requirement to submit the 2000 special levy to the municipality authorities, the directive allowed no time for careful analysis and planning, end of quote.

Mr. Speaker, why did the Minister of Education demonstrate such a complete lack of respect for all stakeholders involved in the education process?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, part of the stakeholders: there are trustees, there are the teachers. The students, the volunteers and taxpayers are all stakeholders, along with the provincial government. The member opposite would probably want to go over the statements made by the Minister of Education. For the last three years he's been saying, please, use the surpluses that have doubled and tripled in your school divisions from the '99 period. Please use it for education and please use it for tax relief.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the fact that the Minister of Education funds education at a level equal to the rate of the growth of the economy. I am

proud of the fact that education taxes are going down under us. They went up 68 percent under the Tories.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, if the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) had such respect for all stakeholders in the education process, why did he not issue the directive on January 29 when he came forward with his side of the budget? Why did he wait until March 9, less than a week before the school divisions were to submit their budgets?

Mr. Doer: The Minister of Education had a chart of all the surpluses and he asked the school divisions to incorporate those surpluses in their budget decisions. So, Mr. Speaker, he did do that on the January date, consistent with two years before.

This budget contains a \$125 reduction for every homeowner, apartment dweller and condo owner. Why is the member opposite and the Tory caucus voting against a \$125 reduction in this budget? Why are they not accountable, Mr. Speaker?

Provincial Budget 2007 School Taxes

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): The Finance Minister indicates on page 24 of the budget speech that at the end of five years he plans to increase provincial funding to 80 percent of total public expenditures in schools. However, once again, there is a caveat: provided he can balance the budget.

So I ask the Minister of Finance to confirm that this is not a firm commitment, that this is not a guarantee that he will fund 80 percent of the cost of public education within the next five years. Confirm that.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I can definitely confirm we will continue to balance budgets like we have for the last eight years.

I'm hoping the member will take advantage of The Apology Act and act quickly to apologize for all the misinformation he's been putting on the record in the last few days. It's been a toxic stew of misinformation, starting with the leader, moving over to all the pettifoggers all across the front bench. All of these guys have no clue what they're talking about, Mr. Speaker, but for sure we will balance the budget today and tomorrow.

Mr. Hawranik: The only apology that should be coming forward in this Chamber is from members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, according to the latest FRAME Report, 71 percent of the total cost of education is currently covered from general revenues. Increasing funding to 80 percent means an increase of only 9 percent within the next five years. This increase in funding will only happen if the NDP does not weasel out by pointing to yet another caveat as an excuse not to follow through.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Will he guarantee that school taxes on every property in Manitoba will be lower five years from now than it is today? Will it?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, every time we've lowered property taxes in this budget, they voted against it. When we took the ESL off, \$100 million; we removed an entire tax on education with respect to property. They voted against it. When we increased the property tax credit from \$250 to \$325, they voted against it. When we went from \$325 to \$400, they voted against it. When we went from \$400 to \$525, I bet you they'll vote against it, too.

When it comes to keeping our promises, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt who does it, and there's no doubt who votes against it.

Mr. Hawranik: The only tax decreases have been offset by tax increases [*inaudible*], and he knows it.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have been feeling the burden of 5, 6, 7 percent, even double-digit increases, in school taxes year after year under this NDP. They want a commitment from the NDP that their school taxes will be lower five years from now. They don't want caveats. They don't want meaningless promises. They want lower school taxes.

So I ask the Minister of Finance to stand up today for seniors, to stand up today for low-income Manitobans, for homeowners, for business owners. I ask the Minister of Finance: Stand up and tell us all that all of our school taxes will be lower in five years than they are today. Do that.

* (14:10)

Mr. Selinger: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm so glad the member brought up the issue of fees, because in that toxic stew that they released yesterday, I thought they'd throw in a couple of e-mails just to make it interesting, but they didn't do it.

They ignored the Northern Patient Transportation Program which eliminated \$8.3 million of fees

they levied against northerners every time they had to come south to go to a hospital. They ignored \$7 million in reduced ambulance fees for inter-facility transfers. They completely ignored the equalization of hydro rates for \$16 million which helped all of rural and northern Manitobans. They voted against it, Mr. Speaker.

This is the amazing thing. When they were in office, they put a tax on school supplies. We'll keep all our promises, and they'll vote against it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River East has the floor.

Manitoba Hydro Building Budget Overruns

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I know the applause from the other side was just giving the Minister of Finance an opportunity to calm down a little bit, let his blood pressure drop before he has a chance to answer another question.

Originally the budget for the new Hydro building was \$75 million. That budget eventually grew to \$258 million, including contingency. Now we learn that the building will cost at least \$20 million more and is five months behind schedule.

Will the minister for Manitoba Hydro indicate today what actions his government is taking to protect Manitoba Hydro ratepayers from the seemingly out-of-control growth of the budget of the new Hydro office tower?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member expressing her concern for my blood pressure because I must tell you, every chance I get an opportunity to answer a question from the members opposite, my blood pressure goes down and I feel a heck of a lot better.

When it comes to the Hydro building, the original commitment by the members opposite was to build it in Waverley West. That's where they wanted to put it. We now know that by consolidating all those employees into a downtown location, over 2,000 people downtown there, we will actually save money on rent. We will actually save money on overhead. We will have the most energy-efficient building in North America. We'll bring 2,000 working people downtown. We'll improve the downtown economy. We'll improve Winnipeg as a

place to live and work. We'll do it with no increases in hydro rates like the member opposite—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, we already know that the cost of the skyscraper downtown is already sky-high and, even worse, the budget continues to climb. At \$278 million, the new Hydro building is going to cost \$400 per square foot.

I ask the minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro: What guarantees can he give that the cost overruns at \$278 million will be the final budget? How much more are Manitoba Hydro ratepayers going to see the cost skyrocket?

Mr. Selinger: I can tell you that building, in the way it's designed and constructed, will save millions of dollars annually on operating costs which will go to the bottom line of Hydro. I can also tell you we won't do what the members opposite promised. They've promised to increase hydro rates so they can reduce taxes, which means they're going to transfer profits out of Hydro to reduce taxes. That's what the members opposite are promising to do. I can assure you we won't be doing that.

Capital Projects Government's Financial Management

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Well, with those non-answers, I can understand why this government, when I asked for information under the Freedom of Information Act on cost overruns, that information was denied. Now it's clear why the government chose to hide the information, Mr. Speaker. The \$30-million contingency has been spent and an additional \$20 million on top of that is being added for a total of \$50 million in cost overruns.

Mr. Speaker, with these cost overruns, the cost overruns on the floodway and the cost of Wuskwatim going from \$665 million to \$1.3 billion, I ask this minister: Why should Manitobans have any confidence in this government's ability to manage any major capital project?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it's pretty easy not to have any problems when you don't build anything for 12 years when you're in government. That's what they did. They did absolutely nothing.

Our approach is to build the future of this province. One of the key building blocks to building the future of this province is to build our hydro

resource. We have built that to the advantage of all Manitobans. We will keep Manitoba Hydro as a Crown corporation under public ownership. Members opposite want to privatize Manitoba Hydro. They want to do it for public-private financing. They want to put the new head office in the suburbs. They want to take dividends out of Hydro to lower taxes. They basically want to use it as a tax cow for their election promises.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River Heights has the floor.

The Apology Act Request for Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I note that after eight long years the NDP have finally come to the conclusion that the bureaucracy-centered RHAs are having some major problems. Because the minister doesn't know what to do, she has now called a review.

Mr. Speaker, one of the many problems is the persistent culture of sealed lips, a lack of openness and accountability. I know the minister refuses to support our party's Health Care Accountability Act but I ask the minister today whether she will support our party's Apology Act as a way of helping all within the system to get past the sealed lips and the closed circumstances and be able to say I'm sorry, without having legal liability.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the bill was tabled 30 minutes ago. I will read it thoughtfully and carefully.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, no one accused the minister of being a fast learner. I know that. In the gallery today and around Manitoba—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: In the gallery today and around Manitoba are individuals who have been grievously wronged by our health care system, family members who died or nearly died as a result of the way the system has worked; or more accurately, the way the system has failed people. Yet, Mr. Speaker, no one within the system has taken it upon themselves to say, I'm sorry for what has happened. No one will

admit that something went wrong in these cases. They are quite simply terrified of the legal consequences of admitting a medical error or a critical incident has occurred. It's the families who—

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

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I believe I'm the single person in this House taking his bill seriously today, and I will indeed review what it is that he has put forward. I indeed am aware—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Oswald: Perhaps I'm the singular person in this House who hasn't made a wisecrack about his bill today. I'll clarify that point.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Oswald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this issue most recently came to public discussion, it was when we proclaimed the RHA amendment act which had built into it a number of mechanisms to ensure that patients are fully informed that they didn't have to ask for information about critical incidences and that it was provided to them—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for taking this seriously. In a number of circumstances, of which I'm aware, cases have been reviewed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba. Letters of criticism have indeed been sent out to physicians as a result of mistakes which were made and yet there has been no one in the health care system to say, I'm sorry for what has happened. This is what has happened.

It's time to get the system to work in a better way. There has been an Apology Act on the books now in British Columbia. It's working. I ask the minister to take this seriously and see if she can support this act as a way of moving the health care system forward.

* (14:20)

Mr. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, indeed, when the RHA amendment legislation was proclaimed earlier this year, again, patients would have even more openness

and opportunity to seek clarification to find out what went wrong if something went wrong. They have to be informed of the facts of what happened and the actions that were taken. They must have access to the records of incidents and have copies made for them if they so desire.

If this act that's being tabled today, this bill that's being tabled today, can, indeed, augment that protocol, I'm interested in looking at it, Mr. Speaker. Families deserve the support of the health care system. Once again, I say to the member I'll look at it seriously.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

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

Prior to routine proceedings on April 4, 2007, the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) raised an alleged matter of privilege regarding the purported intentional and deliberate misleading of the House by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) on the subject of Crocus Investment Fund. At the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable Member for River Heights moved that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) be replaced with a minister who has not so deliberately misled this House and the people of Manitoba.

The honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer), the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) 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 privilege of the House had been breached in order to warrant putting the matter to the House.

The honourable Member for River Heights 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, this is a similar issue that has been raised in our Legislature many times over the years.

The first test that a Speaker must apply when such a claim comes up is whether or not the member raising the matter of privilege has provided specific proof of intent to mislead on the part of the member in question. Speakers Phillips, Rocan and Dacquay have many times in previous rulings cited the necessity for specific proof to be provided on the record that the member purposefully and deliberately set out to mislead the House. Speaker Phillips made one such ruling, Speaker Rocan ruled this way seven times, while Speaker Dacquay made nine such rulings. I, as Speaker, have made nine such rulings.

Speaker Dacquay went as far as to advise the House that without a member admitting in the House that he or she had a stated goal of misleading the House when putting remarks on the record, it is next to impossible to prove that a member had deliberately intended 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 does 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 the facts which, according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 31(1), does not fulfil the criteria of a prima facie case of privilege.

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. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I would challenge the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support? [*interjection*]

Okay. The honourable member has support.

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.

Formal Vote

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support? [*interjection*] The honourable member has support.

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

* (14:50)

Order. The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 28, Nays 19.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained. We'll move on to members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. Norbert Outing to Festival du Voyageur

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak about an event I organized for the enjoyment of my constituents.

Last February 16, I was fortunate to attend the Festival du Voyageur along with many seniors from the St. Norbert and Fort Richmond neighbourhoods. This event is the largest winter festival in western Canada. The first festival was held in 1970 and attracted an estimated 50,000 people. It has grown since then and today over 160,000 people attend annually and enjoy the many attractions, including Fort Gibraltar, the ice sculptures and numerous entertainers. The goal of the festival is to highlight and promote the Franco-Manitoban cultural heritage by reflecting back upon the era of the voyageurs and the *joie de vivre*.

I would like to recognize the hard work that went into organizing our trip to the festival. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Helen Stanchuck, Pauline Bouchard and Maryanne Dybka, who promoted the outing throughout the constituency of St. Norbert. Our efforts were so successful that we needed two city buses to pick up the over 70 interested participants.

We drove down Provencher Avenue to look at ice sculptures, took photos at Fort Gibraltar and then made our way to the Radio-Canada Trading Post located in the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre. There we enjoyed an excellent lunch and entertainment by the musical group Johnny Cajun. On our way back, we took the scenic route home, viewing the ice sculptures down Broadway.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate and thank everyone involved in the Festival du Voyageur for their hard work in putting on such an exciting and special event. It truly brings people together to enjoy a part of our heritage and brightens what could otherwise be a very dreary winter month. This event could serve as a model for other constituents, and I would also like to say thank you and congratulations to all my constituents who attended.

Community Futures East Interlake

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the Community Futures East Interlake which was recognized as the winner of the annual Minister's Award for Excellence and Innovation. In addition, I would like to congratulate Ms. Pat Roy, board member of the Community Futures Parkland, who received the Minister's Award for Excellence in Community Futures Volunteerism.

The awards were sponsored by Western Economic Diversification and presented by the minister, the Honourable Rona Ambrose. They

recognize excellence in the Community Futures Initiative which is designed to operate at the grass-roots level to support economic development in rural areas.

The Community Futures East Interlake supported a project by the Stonewall and District Innovative Crop Committee to develop a strategy for diversifying and increasing the productivity of agricultural operations. The project is indicative of the great work being done in Manitoba's rural communities to expand their economic opportunities. The Community Futures East Interlake has shown tremendous leadership in supporting such initiatives and is very deserving of this award.

Ms. Roy has been extremely active in her community in a number of ways. She has been involved with the Community Futures Initiative for two decades, offering her expertise on rural economic development. This type of long-term commitment to the community is obviously deserving of recognition. I am pleased to offer my congratulations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Plessis Road Family Resource Centre

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about a very important project facility in my constituency of Radisson, the Plessis Road Family Resource Centre. Located at 1190 Plessis Road, it acts as a drop-in centre for the families living in the local Manitoba Housing Authority site and other neighbourhood people.

The centre offers many programs such as employment-skills training and preparation for job interviews, conflict resolution and crisis counselling, parenting for teens and many other services. There is also access to computers, community dinners and a food bank. My wife, Raj, and I have been participating in several exciting events and activities at the centre. There have been barbeques, an outing to Transcona Trails, Halloween Family Fun Night and Santa Night, among others.

This centre is a success. Since it opened in May 2006, there has been an increase in attendance for all programs, and every week new people access the programs. A sense of community is being built. A community kitchen takes place every Monday and it's very busy. Some participants have also begun to make a community quilt.

I also would like to recognize the hard work and dedication of employees and volunteers who make this centre a positive force in the neighbourhood. I

would like to thank many members of the steering committee who have worked together to help the centre to become a success. To name a few: Carol Fletcher, who has been a real support with creative ideas to bring to the centre, and others include Maureen Barchyn, Donna Jacobs, Amanda Younka, Shelly Coupland, Donna Wiltshire, Trish Ward, Pam Craig, Melissa Matychuk, Gwen Howe, Ginette LeGal, Gary Wilde, Lisa May, Darin Yee and many others.

* (15:00)

Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very good neighbourhood program that helps participate and promote the social, cultural, and education needs for the people living in the neighbourhood. Together we would like to build a healthy and better committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Martin Harder, Mayor of Winkler

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge the many accomplishments of a local leader, entrepreneur and businessman. His Worship Martin Harder was recently elected mayor for the City of Winkler for which I would like to congratulate him. He is also CEO of Jordan Mills Inc., a soybean crushing plant near Winkler and founder of Delmar Commodities, a grain business. Martin has shown great commitment to Winkler and the province of Manitoba. He has invested in our agriculture economy, working directly with Manitoba farmers.

Jordan Mills was built with the investment and hard work of people from Pembina Valley. It is a local business that I am glad to say has seen much success. It produces a quality product, operating 24 hours a day, five days a week. Jordan Mills has grown quickly and was recently recognized in 2007 by *Manitoba Business Magazine* in the 20th annual 50 fastest-growing companies list.

I would also like to recognize how much he has given back to our community and how he has helped others. He is on the Winkler Community Development Board of Directors for the Winkler Chamber of Commerce.

Martin is a man of faith and has dedicated much time in his role as the national chaplain for Gideons International in Canada. His business, Delmar Commodities, helped co-ordinate grain donations from Manitoba producers for a local charity, World Harvest for Kids. I would like to thank Martin Harder for his community and business leadership.

He is a talented individual that I know will continue to succeed.

St. John's Lutheran Church 100th Anniversary

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to St. John's Lutheran Church of Winnipeg on their 100th anniversary. This congregation began with 27 committed North End families under the leadership of Pastor E.G. Albert. They met faithfully for German services in a chapel on the corner of Aberdeen and McGregor until 1912 when they built a new church at the corner of College and McKenzie. As they grew, the need for a new building became apparent and in 1959 the current building was erected at the same corner. Eventually, St. John's integrated English services into their Sunday worship schedule and, to this day, they retain both German and English services to accommodate worship in both languages. Last year, the church had cause to celebrate as Annemarie MacIntosh became the first member of St. John's to be ordained as a Lutheran pastor. This was an exciting milestone for their congregation.

Within the community, St. John's is involved with the North End Sponsorship Team, NEST, in sponsoring refugees from around the world and helping them adapt to Canadian life. In doing so, St. John's has extended the love that they profess to the larger community and for the people that they help. This has not gone unnoticed. Many anniversary activities are planned for this year, including a dinner on April 22, commemorative events at the annual picnic and a fall dinner. I congratulate St. John's Lutheran Church on reaching this milestone and for being a strong pillar of faith and an example of service in the North End. I celebrate along with you, the 100 years of faithfulness this church has shown to its members and to the greater community. May you continue to be a beacon of light and faith for many years to come.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE

(Fifth 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 proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton), who has 15 minutes remaining.

The honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, have you concluded your comments?

An Honourable Member: I've concluded.

Mr. Speaker: You concluded your comments? Okay.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I have to admit that I was certainly looking forward to have the Member for Thompson, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, put a few more comments on the record today. I listened intently to his comments yesterday. I have to give the Member for Thompson, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, some credit for his ability to speak in this House and, certainly, to represent the views of his constituents. We know that one of the reasons I guess he's been around as long as he has is that he pays very close attention to what his constituents have to say, and he does reflect that, although it might be somewhat different from what the constituents in River East might think. He does a good job of representing his constituents, and I always enjoy the lively debate and the comments that he does put on the record.

Mr. Speaker, at the outset I just want to thank the constituents in my constituency of River East for expressing their confidence in my ability to work in this Legislature on their behalf and to try to address some of the issues and concerns that they bring forward on a regular basis. Although I haven't been around quite as long as the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I'm not far behind.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate and maybe just go back with a bit of a history lesson for some members of this Legislature who haven't been here quite as long as I have. I want you to know that when I was first elected in 1986, I was elected as a member of the opposition. We spent, and I spent my first two learning years in this Legislature as a member of the opposition, and I saw something that was quite historic in 1988 when a member of the government side of the House actually voted against his own Finance Minister's budget and brought the government down. Now, I think that is an historic event. I don't believe that's ever happened in the history of the province of Manitoba, and that put us

into an unexpected election and brought us as a Conservative Party to a minority government in 1988 in the Legislature. So we see how the democratic process works in our province. Very often governments get a couple of terms in office and then Manitobans look for change.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I have noticed in my many years though in this Legislature is that it seems that Conservative governments are in power when times are tough, when the economy isn't doing very well. Belts have to be tightened, tough decisions have to be made in order to keep the province on a sound financial footing. And those were the years that we encountered shortly after 1988 when we were elected to a minority government and, subsequently, in 1990 to a majority government. We went into the worst recession since the Depression in the history of the province of Manitoba, and we had difficult years to govern. There wasn't money coming hand over fist from the federal government. As a matter of fact, it was a Liberal federal government that cut transfers for health and education to the province of Manitoba by some \$250 million in one fell swoop. Those were difficult times. I'm sure if we go back and look, the federal government was having difficulty managing in tough years too, and they made that kind of decision, but it impacted significantly on our ability to put a lot of new money into a lot of programming.

So we saw the kinds of decisions that were made through the '90s, and they were prudent decisions. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, I was proud of being part of a government under Gary Filmon's leadership that saw us through some of those difficult times and brought us to a point in 1999 where our province was in a pretty good financial position. We had had several years of balanced budgets. We made choices and decisions that were difficult and which many people may not have agreed with, but they were decisions that had to be made.

*(15:10)

Mr. Speaker, we saw in 1999 as things and conditions improved in the province, that Manitobans in their wisdom, I guess, decided that it was time for a change in government and did elect the governing party today to office. I remember having a discussion with our Premier (Mr. Doer) after we had lost government. We had talked about how one of the things that we had done that we should be very proud of was that we had left the province in pretty good fiscal shape for the new

government. It was probably one of those things that would come back to haunt us because there was money. We talked about the 50-50 plan which, certainly, Manitobans couldn't get their mind around in 1999. The billion dollars that was talked about then certainly came to be and more. We've seen this government have unprecedented good fortune, I suppose. Some of it is good fortune and some of it is bad management that would have led them to the kinds of transfers that they've had to receive from Ottawa, or that they are receiving.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I guess as a Conservative and believing in sound fiscal management and trying to ensure that we live within our means, I have some difficulty with a government that, year after year, spends more than they generate, puts themselves in a position where we have become a have-not province, where we believe that the way to generate revenue in the province is to go cap-in-hand to the federal government and say: Give us more; we can't manage to live within our means.

Mr. Speaker, I have difficulty with that type of government. I have difficulty, philosophically, thinking that we should spend more than we take in, tax more, raid Manitoba Hydro revenues when we believe we need more, when we can't manage to deal with unprecedented growth in revenue in our province.

I have to indicate that, regardless of political stripe, there isn't any government that does absolutely everything right or absolutely everything wrong. Goodness knows, Mr. Speaker, during the '90s when we were in government, did we make all of the right decisions? No, we didn't, and I think we would admit that readily. We did not. No government, no human being makes all of the right decisions. When I talk to people at the doors in my community and we talk about certain issues, I can admit quite readily that there were mistakes that were made, but, my goodness, we're all human. I think if we all looked around and examined ourselves, are any of us perfect parents? Do we make all of the right decisions all of the time in our own personal lives? No, we don't. We have to admit that sometimes we are wrong, but what we try to do is learn from those mistakes and grow and try to do better.

Mr. Speaker, we can readily admit that. We can readily admit that there were some things that we could have done differently in the '90s. I guess I look today at the government and I see by answers in this

Legislature to questions, very serious questions, very important questions the arrogance that's developing. I mean, I guess arrogance is the best word. When a government has been in place for a period of time, sometimes they believe that they're above accountability, above questioning on what they've done and what they haven't done. To this date, I have not heard this government admit that maybe, just maybe, things could have or should have been done differently.

The general public out there, I know the people in River East are starting to question whether it might not be time again for a change in government. They're questioning whether this government really has had really a major impact in any way on their daily lives. I'm hearing it at the doors as I go door-to-door. I certainly know that I am advocating on behalf of many, many who have found that the health care system is not there for them and for their families when they need it.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the major promise that the NDP made in 1999 that got them elected was what? It was to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million, and what do we see today? We see, almost eight years later, patients lined up in the hallways. We have a government, we have a Premier (Mr. Doer) and a Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) that have both stood up in this House and misled members of this Legislature and members of the Manitoba public by saying that there are zero patients in hospital hallways today.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that to be wrong. Manitobans who have spent days languishing in the hallways still today waiting for care know that this government hasn't delivered on its promise, and we know that they are looking to try to ensure that there is a change in government.

I just want to go back and say that, in the area of health care, we did not make all of the right decisions. I will readily admit that. We did not, and I will not stand up today and be holier than thou as we've seen the Premier and the Deputy Premier stand up in this House and mislead Manitobans by indicating that there are zero patients in the hallways today under their watch.

Mr. Speaker, it's not true. Manitobans know it's not true. That's arrogance. That's the height of arrogance that we're seeing from a Premier and a Deputy Premier that should know better. Manitobans won't be fooled by what they're seeing and the answers that they're receiving on health care.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans won't be fooled into believing that this government has managed Hydro in any positive way. Manitobans know, my constituents know that this is the first government that passed legislation to dip into the coffers of Manitoba Hydro for \$203 million, and Hydro didn't have the cash on hand. They didn't have the money. So what did they have to do? They had to go out and borrow that money. Well, do you know what it cost the ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro? It cost over \$400 million to borrow that money to put into the coffers of the government because government couldn't manage to spend within its means.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know, and Manitobans know that this government spends out of control and, when they can't manage their affairs, they go to the Crown corporations to try to get money. We know what happened in 1988. We know one of the reasons the government was defeated was because they politically manipulated Manitoba Public Insurance. They kept rates artificially low before an election. Then, right after an election, by the stroke of a pen around the Cabinet table, would raise those public insurance rates.

* (15:20)

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans saw through it, and they voted them out of government as a result. But this government is no stranger to manipulation of Crown corporations. We saw that in Bill 11 that was just introduced last year and passed where, first of all, they wanted to cross-subsidize natural gas with clean energy. Even their own Ed Schreyer called that policy perverse.

He took on his own government members and said that they were out to lunch when it came to policy around energy, but this government went ahead with Bill 11. The other piece of Bill 11 was, again, another slush fund, another way for government to get its hands into Hydro revenues and set up a slush fund for government purposes where, around the Cabinet table, government could decide how much money they would skim off the top of Manitoba Hydro to put into their own coffers because, you know, they're not getting enough from the federal government. Mr. Speaker, \$600 million more isn't enough. We need more. We've reduced ourselves to the level that we, again, continue to go and ask someone else to solve our problems in our province rather than having the courage to stand up, to fix the issues with the money that is available to us.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that likes to spend, to spend out of control. We've seen time and time again that we have a government and a Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that does not know how to manage his own affairs. I would hate to see what would happen if he managed his own personal affairs like he's managing the affairs of the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that the Minister of Finance is a very hard person to believe when he brings in a budget when he has stood up time after time in this House and indicated that he knew nothing about the Crocus scandal. He knew nothing back in 2000 or 2001 and 2002. He was pretty red today in Question Period, but he sure didn't see the red flags that were there when they were raised with government.

Mr. Speaker, we know, and Manitobans know because I have been going door-to-door. It's not only the people that invested in Crocus that have concerns about this government, but it's people that haven't invested. You know, it hasn't been something that I've asked people. It's something that people have volunteered on their own. They believe that something underhanded has happened by this government because of the answers or the non-answers that have been provided by this Minister of Finance and this Premier (Mr. Doer).

They all know that they are going to be on the hook for the \$200 million in lawsuits that Manitoba taxpayers are going to have to pick up because of the mismanagement, the scandalous mismanagement of the Crocus file. So there isn't any Manitoban that's going to be untouched by this. The sooner we can get a public inquiry, and the sooner we can get to the bottom of the issue where we have the Premier and the Minister of Finance and the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) and the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) putting their hands on the Bible and swearing under oath to tell the truth will we ever get to the bottom of what government's role was in the Crocus scandal.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a list of things that we have said we will not support in this budget. There are many things that I will support in this budget. There isn't any budget that any government brings in that is all right or that is all wrong, but it does indicate that the policies of this government are not reflective of the policies of what a Conservative government would be.

Mr. Speaker, we will be going into an election campaign. *[interjection]* I know that the Minister of Conservation or Water Stewardship or whatever is quite vocal from her seat from time to time, but she has nothing to be extremely proud of in her tenure as the Minister of Family Services. So I think that maybe she should—*[interjection]*

Well, yes, and I have to admit I will apologize for making any derogatory comments. It's not normally my style. I will apologize because I don't usually make personal attacks. From time to time I have been personally attacked, and I won't mention any names on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, I want all Manitobans to know, I want my constituents in River East to know that I will be pleased to continue to serve them should I be re-elected. I have no guarantees and none of us in this House have any guarantees. None of us will be government for life. So I think that all of us should feel a little humble from time to time, knowing that the people in our communities who elect will make choices and will make decisions. Sometimes they make different decisions. They don't always vote in the same manner, and we all have experienced that. So I just hope that all of us as we go into the next election, for those who are running—for those who aren't, I wish them well and hope that their lives after politics will be rewarding, long and healthy. For those of us who are here, I know some of us will be back and others won't. That is the nature of the political process.

I have to say that things will be different. Policies will be different. We will articulate those as we move through the election campaign. I have every confidence that our policies will be policies that can do much better than what is in the budget that we see before us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tim Sale (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, I would just begin by thanking the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) for her comments to all of us who are not going to be seeking election again. Indeed, I am looking forward to life after politics. I understand from colleagues who are experiencing that life that it is fascinating and good, and that grandchildren are a source of endless fascination. So I thank her for those comments, though I must say I had some disagreement with the remainder of her comments.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of serving on Treasury Board for more than seven years. In that time I watched a Treasury Board and a Finance

Minister make decisions which put Manitoba's finances on a stronger footing every single year. Balancing budgets for eight years in a row has never been done in Manitoba's history. But I think, more importantly, some of the critical decisions that perhaps don't get a whole lot of public attention, and probably don't get a whole lot of popular understanding, have been so incredibly important to the stability of Manitoba's finances.

For example, the recent decision to fund 75 percent of the liability for the teachers' pension fund at a cost of a very competitive rate, less than 5 percent. To put into a fund which has had an annual return in the last three years of in the 13, 14, 15 percent region is clearly not just a prudent financial decision, it undergirds a pension plan that serves over 13,000 current teachers and over 8,000 retirees. So that's a decision that probably only the teachers might be particularly pleased with, but it takes a liability that is in the region of \$2 billion and funds it, puts our province in a position for the very long term to assure teachers, who I think are some of the most important members of our labour force, that their pensions will be secure. That is a structural decision that this Finance Minister and this government made.

* (15:30)

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we came into government, there were no guidelines for capital spending. Indeed, the previous government didn't even tell the people of Manitoba some of the money they'd spent. For example, they kept off the books spending of over \$100 million on the casino renovation project. They kept off the books work that was to be done in northern Manitoba. They refused to do some things that they were ordered to by the courts, of a capital nature. Perhaps even more sadly, they promised projects that were significant in the \$60-million, \$70-million region, in Brandon, for example, and then didn't do them. There was chaos in the capital spending.

This government has put some discipline in capital spending, some of which as the Health Minister I was subject to, and with some difficulty, as the Finance Minister might tell you from time to time. I made some very strong pitches for capital projects, but they had to fit in the cap. We had to manage our priorities to fit within a capital cap. That's the first time in Manitoba there's ever been the discipline of a cap on capital spending.

Similarly, my colleague the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) has a cap on his capital spending for highways. It's a 10-year program, a five-year program. There's some vision into the future. We know what we're going to be doing. In our schools program, my colleague the honourable Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) has the largest capital program we've ever had, but he, too, has to live within a cap, because this government has managed our debt-to-GDP ratio, which is the key indicator for the entire bond rating sector. It's absolutely the key indicator. The debt-to-GDP ratio has decreased, I believe, if the Finance Minister will confirm, about 25 percent during our time in office, the debt-to-GDP ratio.

Some Honourable Members: It has gone down 20 percent.

Mr. Sale: Twenty percent.

Now anytime your ability to finance your debt goes down, what that's telling you is that you're moving in the right direction. You're doing so incrementally, year after year after year. The general public of Manitoba may not provide the kind of understanding of how important that is, but I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the bond raters' point of view, that's why we've had, I think it is now five upgrades, five upgrades in our bond rating, which tells you that the international market looks at Manitoba and says for the last eight years there has been sound government that has managed the long-term debt, has brought it more in line with the capacity of the province to pay, and, by the way, during that time has cut the cost of servicing our debt almost in half. We were paying over \$400 million when we formed government; we're paying just over \$200 million this year to service our net government debt, which has decreased every year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it used to be that the Conservative Party had the reputation of being the fiscally prudent party. It's very interesting how they've lost that over the last number of years. They lost it first when they were government, when they ran the biggest deficits in history and ran our net debt up substantially during their time in office. So, first of all, they talked the talk, but they didn't walk, because they ran up our net debt, they ran up our debt-to-GDP ratio, and they ran deficits that were of a record nature.

Now they had what might be termed a death-bed conversion to the notion of balancing budgets and brought in legislation to do that, which we agree

with. We think that balancing budgets over a period of time is a very important thing to do. We agree with that legislation. But what are they doing now as the opposition? It seems that anytime a Crown corporation invests in something, that's a bad thing. Yet, you know, over on those benches there are people who are businesspeople. There are wealthy farmers. There are individuals who have been in business at various points in their lives. They understand that incurring debt when you can make money is a good thing.

So how do they think we're going to build dams to sell power without incurring debt? Yet they stand on their feet and say, because Manitoba's gross debt, including its Hydro debt, has gone up, that's a bad thing. Well, you can't have a modern economy if you don't invest. They've not only then gone from not understanding the importance of balancing a budget, running big deficits, running up the debt-to-GDP ratio, they now criticize this government for investing in hospitals, in schools and in the Hydro corporation. They got rid of the other corporation that we invested in. In fact, we're the first government in Canada to have digital switching throughout our system, because we invested. What did they do? They gave that gift to the private sector, including their friends.

Let's understand who sits on the MTS board today. A former premier sits on that board. Who drove the Brink's truck away with the lawyers' money and with the brokers' money, \$46 million? They talk about Crocus. That \$46 million went to all the brokers. It went to all the lawyers, \$46 million in fees. In that period of time our rates for basic phone system went from the lowest in the country to one of the highest in the country.

But, you know, the amount of money that was transferred to the private sector was not just the \$46 million from Manitoba Telecom that was privatized, in spite of the Premier's promise, both in northern Manitoba and rural Manitoba, in Dauphin and in Winnipeg: No, we're not going to privatize the phone system. The real transfer of wealth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was in the share value. The shares were issued at an unbelievably low price of \$13. Where did they learn that? Well, they learned it from the "Iron Maiden" herself, Maggie Thatcher. She sold off all of the British Crowns at absolute fire sale prices. Of course, people made a great deal of money and thought: Isn't this wonderful; we'll buy shares in our own companies—first of all, they forgot they

owned them in the first place—so we'll buy them and then we'll make lots of money from our shares.

The phone company sale raised about \$ million. I'll just remind members opposite that perhaps weren't here when that was done, about \$760 million. The worth of that corporation today is over \$2.1 billion, and it reached that level within the first year of its being privatized. Nothing happened in that year. There was no investment. There was no new business. They simply did business as usual. They kept their book of business from Manitobans, because Manitobans are loyal. If they're not concerned about other things, they are loyal. They're very loyal to their phone company. So Manitobans stayed with MTS, and within that first year the share values tripled.

People perhaps don't realize what that means, but what it means is that \$1.4 billion was transferred from the wealth of the public to the wealth of the few. It was transferred to the wealth of the shareholders. The wealth, sadly, of those with large stock options, including the senior officers of the corporation and the members of the board of directors, including, of course, spouses of former members opposite and former members opposite, all of whom have very nice retirement packages in the form of stock options. Now that is the largest single transfer of wealth in Manitoba's history, from the public who owned a corporation to the few who profited from it, \$1.4 billion transferred in one year. That's incredible.

So, when I heard the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) yesterday bragging about how proud he was of their government's action in privatizing Manitoba Telecom, here he is in the House still smiling and bragging about how proud he was in privatizing Manitoba Telecom, he could only be saying how much he'd been thanked by his wealthy friends in the brokerage community, the legal community, his former premier, his former leader's spouse, and others, who benefited from the stock options. It would be delightful to know, absolutely delightful to know how many of the members opposite bought shares the day they were issued. How many of them bought them at \$13 and have sold them at \$46 where they are today?

An Honourable Member: Still have them.

Mr. Sale: Still have them. You're waiting for Telus to take it over, no doubt. That's what you're hoping for. Telus will buy it out at \$55 and you'll quadruple

your money, off the backs of Manitobans. What a sad comment on greed.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I heard the Member for Russell bragging about how proud he was, I knew why he was proud. He was proud because his friends made an awful lot of money and the rest of his constituents lost a lot of their wealth.

*(15:40)

I also want to make a few comments on the Leader of the Opposition's (Mr. McFadyen) comments in his second day of speaking interminably, an interesting history lesson. First of all, he got the age of our province wrong by a decade. As I said at the time, it was probably because he was wanting to forget the Filmon years that just kind of washed out that 10 years. So it's 137 years not 127, but then he went on the next day—and this time I wonder whether this was a mistake or whether it was deliberate. I will leave it up to him to judge, but he said, and I'm quoting from *Hansard*, page 733.

These are the words of the Leader of the Opposition. "We've seen a 480,000-tonne increase in greenhouse gas emissions between 2004 and 2005." By the way, that's because the mining industry took off in Manitoba because of metal prices, but nevertheless a 480,000-tonne increase. "The highest percentage increase in Canada," he said. That's interesting. He said that that was a 20 percent increase.

Well, either his staff can't do math or he can't do math or he deliberately used a number to create a fiction because a 480,000-tonne increase on a 22-million-tonne base is approximately 2 percent, not 20 percent. He has a decimal point problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I know that's kind of trivial in some ways. A lot of people have trouble with decimal points, but when you then use that to create a fiction which you're going to put in a public statement, the fiction of a 20 percent increase, and then use that to punish someone for an increase which didn't occur, then I think we have to ask about the commitment of the Leader of the Opposition to putting facts on the record correctly.

The correct fact is, yes, there was a 480,000-tonne increase. Yes, it was due to mining activity. What does it represent? It represents 2 percent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not 20 percent. We took that amount of greenhouse gas out of the environment by

shutting down Selkirk and by doing a number of other things, not the least of which were the energy efficiency programs of Manitoba Hydro.

So I just want to ask the Leader of the Opposition if he would do the right thing and simply stand up and put the correct information on the record: Yes, it was 480,000 tonnes, but I made a mistake. I have trouble with math. It is not a 20 percent increase. It's a 2 percent increase, and yes, it was due to the mining industry doing record business in that particular year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me move to the health care system. The members opposite seem to have a great deal of difficulty with the question of ambulance fees. They somehow don't see them as fees. So, when they trot out their comparison of fees, they conveniently forget that this was the government that ended the Northern Patient Transportation fee which they put in to penalize northerners. Secondly, this is the government that ended the interfacility transport fees which were so discriminatory against rural Manitobans, a fee which they put in place during the 1990s under Donny Orchard, their former Health Minister. They forget that.

Now again, did they forget it or did they deliberately ignore it to create a fiction? That's the question that they have to answer for themselves. What was their intention? Was it to mislead Manitobans or did they simply forget about those fees, worth, I think, a total of \$13 million between the two of them, which, of course, means that our fees went down, not up, in net terms, not the fiction that they're attempting to create.

They also seem to forget that under their government we had the most neglected and run-down ambulance system in Canada with coaches that still had been hearses in their early days and must have reminded patients rather uncomfortably of their origin when they were transported for any reason. They had a system in which the fees charged to rural Manitobans were discriminatorily high. They also had a system in which the training levels for staff varied from nothing in some parts of Manitoba to a reasonable standard in the city of Winnipeg, the city of Brandon and the city of Thompson.

In that context, would they not recognize that putting a provincial-wide, dispatch system in Brandon, putting all new coaches on the road, raising the training standards and eliminating interfacility transport fees marks a tremendous improvement for

their constituents as well as the constituents of our members? Why do they then neglect to take that fee into account when they make their little spurious comparisons?

I want to also refer to St. Boniface Hospital, the announcement today that the hospital is going live with its patient information system, which will allow us to have on-line lab results, diagnostic test results, patient history. Currently, over a million patient records have been entered by hand over the last year and a half into this system. It's a modern admission, transfer and discharge system that has all the clinical information at the ward level, at the level of the doctor's fingertips.

It's an expensive system, but let's just do a little history of this system as well. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Sterling Lyon government, a deal was cut with the Burroughs company. This was another one of their economic development strategies that failed. They cut a deal to have a hard drive plant located in St. Boniface quite near the Canadian Mint. The quid pro quo for that little deal was that the Burroughs company would get a lock on the admission, transfer and discharge systems for Manitoba hospitals. The first installation would be at St. Boniface Hospital. Well, they were right. It was the first installation. It was also the last installation. The system was never used anywhere else. The Burroughs company is out of the computer business, and the ADT system, which was supposed to be such a great deal, cost us a factory that went bankrupt, essentially closed, cost us an ADT system that was built for the 1960s, installed in the 1970s and failed all the way through the '80s and into the '90s.

Their idea of economic development is to give sweet deals to individual companies, guarantee them a lock on the market, and then hide their heads in the sand when the company fails or goes under. So, when they're criticizing, let them remember Iris Systems, Iris Systems which was going to provide remote meter reading. Let them remember Isobord, which they co-invested with Crocus in, in fact, twisted Crocus's arm to invest in Isobord and lost, in aggregate, over \$30 million. Let them remember the Faneuil corporation, which not only proposed to bring call centres to Manitoba but also proposed to break the law. They wanted to take the databases of Manitoba Telecom and mine those databases to find out where people were phoning and what they were buying and they would then implement precision marketing.

The former premier brought Faneuil here, which was really a loose connection of failing call centres from the Chicago and Tennessee areas of the United States, brought them here under a nice new name and proceeded to dump \$27 million into Faneuil, which was all lost.

They backed Winnport, all lost. They backed Westsun, all lost. They were partners in Shamray, all lost, \$45 million in that case. The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) will have a particular memory of the Shamray corporation and Michael Shamray. Perhaps the first part of his name is indicative of his behaviour. But the Filmon government invested in it through the Manitoba capital corporation.

So their actual financial record is abysmal. They couldn't balance budgets. They lost the most money in Manitoba history in deficits. They invested in losing companies, which in total lost over \$80 million during their time in office, public money. Now that's not all the private money that was lost; that's just the public money that was lost.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is interesting now that it is now that the banks and the bond market companies are saying this government is the prudent government; this government is the government that balances budgets, that brings down the debt-to-GDP ratio, that brings down its net debt, and is deserving of five credit upgrades. I want to congratulate the Finance Minister and all of his colleagues and all of our colleagues in government in achieving something that was never achieved under the previous government, five credit upgrades, lower debt-to-GDP ratio, lower debt and balanced budgets.

I think one of the really fascinating things about the last few years has been the degree to which this government was in tune with the public on what I think is the defining issue of the next government and, in fact, the next national governments of most countries, and that is the sustainability of the way we currently live.

*(15:50)

When I was asked to assume the Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology, I was absolutely, well, I was delighted to do that on behalf of our province, but what I found was that this Premier (Mr. Doer) and this government had already paved the way by asking the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, who's a friend of mine, and I've often had fond thoughts of, to write a report for us and say what's

the path forward in terms of sustainable management of our economy.

Lloyd wrote that report for us and put us on a path to a sustainable and green policy framework that has, frankly, astounded many of my colleagues who were ministers of other provinces and the business community of the western world, because here's a little jurisdiction in the middle of North America that goes on *Newsweek* cover as the greenest regional government going. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker—[interjection] Are you okay, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The greenest government in North America, the climate change group, gives this province an award in terms of its green policies. The Suzuki Foundation gives us an award in terms of our green policies. And so, I think, one of the most enduring legacies that I'm honoured and humbled to have been part of is that, before the general public got it, certainly before the Liberal government federally got it, and long before the national government of this country will ever get it, this government understands that, for our children, our grandchildren and our children's children, the legacy that we have to leave is a sustainable planet, a sustainable economy, a sustainable way of living.

That's why I think when history gets written, it will be noted that it was this government that finally began to take seriously the need to change how we do public policy. So, when we, for example, as a government said all new government buildings will reach the LEED standard, silver at least, minimum standard, the general public probably didn't realize how important that is, but that means that over time, every single government investment in buildings in Manitoba will be at least 30 percent more efficient than the current building code. We've got Red River College; we've got new nursing homes; we've got a variety of public buildings which reach the LEED standard.

We've got a commitment to the Power Smart program that has already saved us 300 megawatts of power. The potential there is to save at least another 600 or 700 megawatts simply by doing things like turning off lights, substituting fluorescent bulbs, changing the way we drive, using cars that are more energy efficient, insulating our buildings, just the things that we already know about, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But this government has put a mark on that whole public policy framework, and we've been recognized around the world for being the greenest

regional government going. I'm very proud of that. I'm very proud of it, but I'm also concerned that, in this next election, we draw some very clear lines between the government represented in Ottawa by those who think that all we need to do is slow down how much worse it gets and this government that knows that we have to turn it around. We have to change the way we do business and actually lower our carbon emissions and lower them substantially, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

In real terms, Europe is already committed to a 60 percent reduction in CO₂ emissions; 60 percent. We're still talking in Ottawa about whether we should go up, but just more slowly. I think the Conservatives in this country just don't get it. The public gets it. The Environics poll today made it very clear. The public recognizes that they have to change, that governments have to change, that industry has to change, Mr. Speaker. I think that will be the defining issue of the next crop of provincial politicians.

In closing, I want to say a word of thanks to you, Mr. Speaker. I want to express, I guess, my own apologies if I have behaved inappropriately from time to time. But I want to close by just saying, on my own behalf, I have felt badly for you when you have had to repeatedly bring in rulings which previous Speakers, Conservative and NDP, have made over and over and over again, and when members challenge your rulings on areas where they know full well that the rulings of the Chair have been consistent and even-handed. At some point that becomes an abuse. I understand your tolerance and I applaud it, but I really wonder when members opposite challenge the rulings of the Chair that have been so consistent over different governments, I wonder what their motives are. They can't be to live within our rules, and I would ask that they seriously think about how much they bring into disrepute the rules of this House when they challenge things that they know, that they know absolutely are outside the rules.

So, Mr. Speaker, my thanks to all honourable members. The time I've had here, I've enjoyed most of it, not all of it, but most of it, and I'm looking forward to being active in the community to work for a more sustainable world in the long run and to continue to work for the needs of children, particularly our youngest children, because they are the future that will make our planet more sustainable

because they know that's the only thing we can do. Thank you.

House Business

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the rule 31(9), I would like to announce that, in the event that private members' business is considered next Thursday morning, the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Rural Job Loss, Centralization of Jobs sponsored by the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

Mr. Speaker: For the information of the House, in the event that private members' business is considered next Thursday morning, the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Rural Job Loss, Centralization of Jobs sponsored by the honourable Member for Minnedosa. That's for the information of the House.

I've been receiving some complaints about irritation of eyes and throats and stuff. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to recess the House. We'll look at coming back at 4:15. I want to blow some of the air out and find out what the problem is. Two minutes before, you will hear the chimes. Okay? We will recess the House.

The House recessed at 4 p.m.

The House resumed at 4:27 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order. As previously agreed, I'm going to call the House back to order.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I understand there are still some challenges with air quality in the Chamber. I would propose with agreement or leave of the House that we call the clock 5 o'clock. This would be counted as a budget day, and that we meet next week with the Government House Leader, myself as the

Opposition House Leader, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to schedule perhaps some make-up time. But today does count as a budget day, and we'll see the clock as 5 o'clock.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, as the acting Government House Leader, I think we're quite aware of the odour that was in the House, which, I understand, is from tarring on the roof. I did note for the record—I would like to note that there was a day where the tar could have been more directly applied to members of the Legislature, but we're not in that era, along with a dose of feathers.

We certainly had a problem with air quality earlier. I think it's still a bit of an issue, and I think from our side we would concur with the suggestion put forward by the Official Opposition House Leader that we call 5 o'clock. We can certainly discuss the lost time. This is an official day in terms of the budget debate, but if there are members wishing to speak, we could certainly look at that. I'm sure the Government House Leader will look at that. So we would concur with the suggestion from the member opposite.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate that we're in support of it, but, with the idea of trying to make up for it, the suggestion is possibly Tuesday morning as that day. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: So what I'm hearing, is there agreement of the House to call it 5 o'clock with the understanding that today does count as a budget debate day, and that the House leaders and one of the independent members will meet and they will discuss additional hours? That will have to come from the direction of the House leaders.

So is there agreement to call it 5 o'clock then, and this counts as a budget day? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 12, 2007

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