

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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.
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SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
VACANT	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 13, 2007

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 22—The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), that Bill 22, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations, now be read for the first time.

Mr. Speaker: The motion moved by the honourable member—the Minister of Labour and Immigration, the minister must be in the chair to second the motion.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), that Bill 22, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundation, be now read for a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), seconded by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), that Bill 22, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act, be now read a first time.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, this legislation establishes three new foundations that will create tributes in memory of peace officers, firefighters and workers who have lost their lives on the job.

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

PETITIONS

Removal of Agriculture Positions from Minnedosa

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

Removal of these positions will severely impact the local economy.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition signed by Gwen Elliott, Ruth Block, Jean Jackson and many, many others.

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

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 businesses and the prosperity of rural communities in Manitoba.

This is signed by L. Grandmont, B. Wahlers, L. Major and many others.

Grace General Hospital ER

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

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—I'm sorry I can't read the first name on the petition; Jarvis, perhaps and W.Green and Varnes and actually, many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Alec Korzeniowski who is from Westbank, British Columbia.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health Care Number of Hospital Beds

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the *Free Press* this morning reported, in an election speculation story, a quote from the Premier: "I still haven't got my to-do list done." We, on this side of the House, are curious about the items on the to-do list that the Premier didn't do. We're wondering if ending hallway medicine is still on the Premier's to-do list.

* (10:10)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will want to go through the election promises of 2003. He will find—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: He will find the location that he had his press conference, Waterfront Drive, which the Province of Manitoba put two-thirds of the money in for the investment in Waterfront Drive, was a promise. We checked it off.

The member opposite couldn't even find a Tory site for an urban vision promise. You know why? Their urban vision of Manitoba is to have a liquor store in Headingley, and it's very appropriate, Mr. Speaker. It's very appropriate, because they put more water, sewer and water infrastructure in Headingley than they ever did for Winnipeg. I wonder—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I'd like to remind all members that I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers in case there is a breach of a rule or departure from our practices. Also, we have a lot of

guests in the gallery, we have the viewing public and I'm sure they wish to hear the questions and the answers. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I guess the next place he's going to have a press conference will be in front of the MTS entertainment complex, which he voted against. His whole caucus walks around with their beer and gets beer all over their lists. After they voted against the MTS Centre, they're all over it every week, being absolute hypocrites.

We have an item to continue to rebuild downtown Winnipeg. We got to the fourth stage of Red River College. We said we would put all the numbers on the Web site for patients. Every day you can go to that Web site and see 1998, which was hidden. When you were chief of staff, you hid the numbers. You had the polling results, you hid the numbers. We have some of those documents written by Greg Lyle. Our hallway numbers are way down from the past.

Mr. Speaker, another item on our to-do list is fulfilling our commitment on education capital. I believe at 10 a.m. this morning, the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) confirmed that we kept our word on the \$135 million of education capital. That's more money than your aunt and you spent in the 11 years you were involved in office.

Auto Theft Rates Reduction Strategies

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Within that toxic stew of an answer, we didn't detect any kind of response to the issue of hallway medicine, which is alive and well. Ask anybody who's been in a Manitoba hospital lately. It's the most famous broken promise in Manitoba history.

I want to ask the Premier if, on the to-do list of unfinished business, he still has cracking down on car theft. Is that another one of his promises that's going in the dustbin of broken promises under this NDP government?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The member opposite—and I mentioned the reduction in hallway medicine, the average in '98 was 28. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker, I had an immobilizer and I would recommend it to all of you.

Some Honourable Members: Oh. Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the average was 28 a day in the year previous to our election. I believe we are at three today.

Members opposite, you know, they talk about the largest broken election promise in history. They and he were involved in the largest theft of a Crown corporation. After they said, and I quote: We have no plans to sell Manitoba Telephone System; two weeks after, they hired their friends, the brokerage companies, the Member for Tuxedo's (Mrs. Stefanson) company and other companies, who eventually broke the law, by the way. They think it's funny to break the law. They talk about law breaking; what about selling shares illegally?

Some Honourable Members: Oh. Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Members who wish to have a conversation, we have two empty loges here. We need some order in this Chamber, and I'm asking the co-operation once again of all honourable members.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite, why doesn't he have, whenever the election is called, his press conference about how he's not going to sell Hydro in front of a Manitoba Telephone System building?

Environment Government Initiatives

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, nowhere in that rant did I hear an answer to the question. There's enough CO₂ in that answer to boost Manitoba's CO₂ emissions by another 20 percent, just like they did last year.

I want to ask the Premier this. He said a number of weeks ago the environment trumps everything else in government, and within four weeks he had broken that promise in the budget. So is the environment promise going in the dustbin of broken promises as well, Mr. Speaker?

* (10:20)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I did talk about theft, theft of a Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker and companies that are close to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: –and companies that are close to the members opposite, called Wellington West, breaking the law under The Manitoba Securities Act for the sale—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: The person, of course, who had the shares that exceeded the limit was one Cubby Barrett, another person who wouldn't be unfamiliar with members opposite.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Once again, we need some order in the House here. We have guests in the galleries, we have the viewing public and I'm sure all members would want to co-operate so that we can have order in the Chamber here. Also, I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers then.

The members who are asking the questions have the right to hear the answers and the members who are going to answer the question have the right to hear the question. So I'm asking once again the co-operation of members.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, I did mention immobilizers and I would point out that the minister yesterday pointed out that we do need a change in the federal Criminal Code. It is very—*[interjection]* Well, Mr. Speaker, members opposite talk about it but there's a number of pieces in the Criminal Code that need changing.

On the environment, we were No. 9 in '99 on energy efficiency. The last two years in a row, the energy efficiency coalition of Canada has ranked Manitoba as No. 1. We have saved as many megawatts as we will build in the Wuskwatim project through energy efficiency. Mr. Speaker, members opposite oppose Kyoto and climate change. We're in favour of it and we were the first province in Canada.

Members opposite were opposed to the water regulations and water standards we brought in on phosphorous and nutrients, the first time ever in Manitoba. We're going ahead with regulations to protect our environment and protect our future.

They're in favour of no regulations. We're in favour of regulations to protect water.

Crocus Investment Fund Accuracy of Prospectus

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, in every answer to every question here today, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has resorted to cheap shots and that's unacceptable from the Premier.

The director of the Securities Commission issued receipts for each Crocus prospectus each year, and this receipt certifies that the prospectus contains no misrepresentations and also certifies that the material facts within the prospectus are true. The receipt for the year 2000 was signed by the Securities Commission director on January 16, 2001, only two months after the Finance Minister briefed the Premier and the rest of his Cabinet that Crocus was offside with its prospectus.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why did he allow the director of the Securities Commission to sign the prospectus when clearly he knew it was wrong?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, one of the great ironies of the members opposite is they continually accuse the government of interfering with certain organizations. Everybody full well knows that the Manitoba Securities Commission is a quasi-judicial body, completely independent from government, that acts on its own.

The member before has asked me to interfere with the Securities Commission. We don't interfere with the Securities Commission. They are responsible for their own activities. They report to their own board. They function as a quasi-judicial body. The very question the member asks portrays his ignorance about how government operates.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the prospectus filed by Crocus was not—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Hawranik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The prospectus filed by Crocus was not accurate and the Premier, the Finance Minister and the rest of Cabinet knew this as early as November of 2000. They had personal knowledge. They also knew that the director of the Securities Commission would sign the prospectus, guaranteeing its accuracy.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Did he allow the director of the Securities Commission to sign the prospectus so that the director could take the blame for Crocus and not the NDP? Is that what he did?

Mr. Selinger: I've got to say, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Lac du Bonnet is really stretching today to try and make a connection.

It's a quasi-judicial body. One thing we do know, though. We do know that the broker, on behalf of Crocus, Wellington West, did sign the prospectus and said it was full, true and plain disclosure. That was the broker that acted on behalf of Crocus Fund. That was the broker the former government allowed to be invested in by the Crocus Fund, which the Auditor General's report said was a transparent conflict of interest, which was allowed by the members opposite when they were in government. They allowed a conflict of interest. They allowed the brokerage to say it's full, true, and plain disclosure, and we will see who's responsible when it comes to court.

Mr. Hawranik: Again, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the rest of his Cabinet had direct personal knowledge that that prospectus was not accurate. They knew that the director of the Securities Commission signed the prospectus certifying its accuracy. They allowed the director of the Securities Commission to sign a false document when they knew it was wrong.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why would he hang the director of the Securities Commission out to dry?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear the major challenges that started to occur in the Crocus Fund were in part a result of the co-investments made by the former Conservative government in partnership with the Crocus Investment Fund. The members opposite were fully aware of what those investments were doing in terms of performance.

I speak of Isobord which went down the tubes after they left government. They propped it up. They knew there were problems with it. If anybody should be accountable for what happened in the Crocus Fund, it's the members opposite when they were in government and their friends and allies at Wellington West. They don't have the courage to admit their own culpability.

Crocus Investment Fund Class-Action Suit

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, the record of this NDP government is that whenever there's damaging information embarrassing to the government, every effort is made to cover it up, to withhold it or to shelve it. Whether it was a maternity report that they put on the shelf, whether it's concerns with the "Spirited Energy" costs which they hide behind Freedom of Information, we can't allow that to happen again.

On May 22 to 25, the Court of Queen's Bench is scheduled to hear pleadings regarding a class-action suit on Crocus in which the government is named as one of the defendants. The allegations range from direct and vicarious liability to abuse of power by this government.

I want to ask the Minister of Justice if he'll give assurance to all Manitobans and to this House that he will not direct or allow his government lawyers to ask for a stay or an adjournment of proceedings to cover up anything that might come forward from those pleadings in anticipation of a provincial election, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, very often when the sheriff speaks, the Member for Steinbach, it doesn't make any sense. The Member for Steinbach often does not speak—[interjection]

We will not and never can intercede in any kind of a case as Justice Minister and Attorney General. The member ought to know that.

I just want to add that it was this government that brought in legislation that allowed the Auditor to do the investigation, Mr. Speaker, that allowed this matter to come to right, something that the Member for Steinbach might take note of.

Mr. Goertzen: I appreciate the assurance from the Minister of Justice that they won't be seeking an adjournment. I think it's important that we have transparency in this case that'll be coming forward next month.

I know that members of the Progressive Conservatives again led another justice initiative last week by asking for cameras in the courtrooms, Mr. Speaker. In response to that, the NDP Minister of Justice agreed with us. He said: Frankly, I think it's easily an idea whose time has come.

I want to ask the Minister of Justice if he'll now confirm and allow cameras in the courtrooms for the May 22 to 25 pleadings so that all Manitobans can actually see what happened with Crocus. He said its time has come. Will he allow those 33,000 Manitobans who lost money to really see what happened with Crocus?

* (10:30)

Mr. Chomiak: I'm sure that all of the constituents at home who are watching this Chamber this morning and every day, Mr. Speaker, are well aware of some of the dynamics of the situation. I want to say that several months ago we asked the court judges to convene and review the positioning of video cameras in the courtroom. Of course we're in favour and I think all members are. It's only a question of how the judiciary are responsible, the security arrangements, et cetera.

I know it's easy for the member to make those statements. There are security issues. There are other issues at stake, Mr. Speaker. We are in favour of it. We're asking the judges to do a review in order to bring it about, and it's something that, as I said in the media, it's something whose time has come.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, it's amazing because the government suddenly seems to be camera-shy. You can't turn on the TV these days without seeing something that ends with: Brought to you by the Manitoba government.

Now, where we finally have the opportunity to have transparency, where something can be broadcast to all Manitobans, the 33,000 Manitobans who lost money with Crocus, where it's already been done in Ontario, where we know that we can bring cameras into the courtrooms; now this government suddenly says: Well, I don't know that we can do it. Well, maybe there's a compromise. Let's broadcast those hearings on TV and then at the end of the broadcast we can have: The Crocus scandal, brought to you by the Manitoba government.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I would point out, Mr. Speaker,—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out to members opposite that the court case goes back to 1992. It goes back—*[interjection]* Can I please not be interrupted.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind members that the clock is ticking, and we're trying to get as many questions and answers in as we can.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the case goes back to '92 and it deals with the legislation passed by members opposite. The Auditor General pointed out it was wishy-washy, which we've changed. It goes back to the staff that were hired, the director of the fund and Mr. Umlah, who was actually promoted under the Conservative government and appointed to be head of the Science and Technology Fund. It goes back to the conflict of interest between an investee company called Wellington West and the underwriter. It goes back to the political appointees, not civil servants, who were placed on the board of directors that approved the Isobord donations, investments and other things. The majority of issues we have to deal with in the lawsuit actually are under the Filmon government.

Health Sciences Centre Nurse Staffing Levels

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, staff on the child and adolescent psychiatry unit at the Health Sciences Centre were told that three full-time, front-line nursing positions and many part-time nursing positions were being deleted and replaced with two management positions and two clinical resource nurses. This is an acute care unit where young patients are in crisis, where there has been increased violence lately. The nurses have told me that they do not feel they can provide safe care with these cuts.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us why the WRHA is now building more layers of administration and taking away front-line nursing positions.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, indeed, our concern for children, for their physical health, for their emotional health, their mental health, is very deep. Our commitment to ensuring that front-line workers, that doctors and that support workers are there for them has been real since 1999. I find it curious strange again that the member opposite, the member who is part of a party that saw 1,500 nurses vanish before our very eyes here in Manitoba, would even wish to mention the

word "nurse" in the public discourse about health care.

Our record on investments on nurses is clear. We're going to keep building, as is our record on children, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, that was a very cold-hearted and arrogant response to this question. These nurses have told me that patient care is being put at risk because of this decision. This is especially concerning because the unit has had two suicides by young people in the last two years, and an inquest right now is happening into the first case. The nurses say this decision right now to cut front-line nurses is another inquest in the making.

So I'd like to ask the minister again to drop her arrogance and tell us why front-line jobs are being cut on a ward like this and replaced with administrative positions.

Ms. Oswald: Once again, I'll state clearly that our commitment to children and their mental health and their physical health is very clear. Our investments in doctors, in psychiatrists and in psychologists is evident. We know that we have 200 more specialists in Manitoba today than we had under the opposition's watch. We know the investments that we continue to make in our nurses, that we continue to make in our doctors, are very important.

The member opposite uses language concerning arrogance. It's commitment. We're going to go forward in that commitment. I used to think that members opposite just didn't want to hear my answers about health care. In fact, they don't want Manitobans to hear their record on health care and, by golly, I can't blame them.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health neglects to mention that over a thousand doctors have left Manitoba under their watch and that our ERs are in crisis and our Grace Hospital ER may close this summer because they have not put a plan in place to keep doctors there. Nurses were not consulted about this change at the psych ward. They were told that this is how it's going to be, despite their voices that were raised about patient safety, patient concerns and staff safety concerns.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health today, based on her answers where she says she has a commitment to child health, would she step in today and would she commit to stopping the WRHA from

making these front-line nursing cuts and replacing them with administrative positions.

Ms. Oswald: Again, Mr. Speaker, I find it curious strange that when it comes to an issue of human resources, that members opposite want to raise this issue. Again, when we're talking about critical care nurses, front-line nurses, the development of nurse practitioners, the development of diploma programs, all kinds of programs towards nursing care, our record has been very clear. Our commitment to children and their mental health has been clear. Our investments in mental health for children and adults have been clear and they're not finished yet. We're going to continue to work with our good partners in the WRHA to ensure that front-line care is the best that it can be. That's a commitment of ours that is undisputable. I would ask members opposite, perhaps, if they would like to review for us what their record has been on human resources in health care.

**Lieutenant-Governor
Energy-Efficient New Car**

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Tomorrow, the Manitoba government Fleet Vehicles is having an auction of government vehicles. On the list is a 1999 big, black Cadillac DeVille. In fact, it is the Lieutenant-Governor's vehicle. It is being replaced by a new big, black Lincoln Town Car.

Can the minister inform the House as to whether this is a new hybrid, energy-efficient Lincoln Town Car that is being purchased for the L-G?

* (10:40)

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, we respect the traditions of our democratic system. We respect the Lieutenant-Governor's Office. We work very closely as an independent office. We do respect these traditions and we want to uphold those traditions. You know, the cheap shots that are taken at that kind of an office are not beholding of the member opposite.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, we just heard the First Minister up here talking about energy efficiency and their vision of everything like that. I just want to know whether this new Town Car, this big, black new Lincoln Town Car is one of these new hybrids that he's talking about. Maybe this is a new type of vehicle.

The Manitoba taxpayers, who will be paying approximately \$70,000 for this car, want to know: Is this an energy-efficiency vehicle?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I would recommend that as many people who can get hybrids in the government fleet vehicle system get them. I'm pleased the Fleet Vehicle people now feel they have the capacity to deal with maintenance in the north which—*[interjection]* Well, I know members opposite don't know where the north is but it's that way, Mr. Speaker. It's where the Golden Boy faces.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Lieutenant-Governor is appointed by the Prime Minister of the day. In this case, I believe it was Prime Minister Martin. It is an office that's independent of the Executive Council and it is independent of the Executive Council for a reason. It is independent of the Executive Council because that individual has the constitutional responsibility if there's a minority government or any other situation such as that to appoint the government of the day. Therefore, they cannot be in a situation where the government decides for them on decisions like this. It's a complete separation. Members opposite know that.

Mr. Reimer: What we have here is a 1999 big, black Cadillac DeVille with 78,000 kilometres on it. I mean, this is a well-used vehicle since 1999, and now it's being replaced with a big black Lincoln Town Car with an engine which is a 4.6 litre. That's the same size as a truck engine.

What is the energy efficiency? Is this a new hybrid engine? I want to know. The taxpayers, for \$70,000, have a right to know the answer. What is it?

Mr. Doer: Well, as a person who drove the former Premier's Jimmy to 140,000 or 150,000 kilometres and as a person who's now driving like, I believe, the Leader of the Opposition, a hybrid vehicle, the decision to buy that kind of vehicle would not be the decision I would make. But I will never be appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba because the Lieutenant-Governor is chosen by Liberal and Tory prime ministers. It's not something I would do.

East Side Lake Winnipeg Development WNO Agreement

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): This government seems content to continue its all-talk-

and-no-action approach to the development of the east side of Lake Winnipeg. After seven years and 22 drafts of an east side planning protocol agreement, the government gave up on the agreement and, after declaring an impasse, has ground the process to a halt.

I'd like to ask the Minister for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin) this: What was this impasse issue that was declared too complex to resolve?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I know members opposite have probably, most of them, not gone to the east side of Lake Winnipeg, and I think a lot of members of the public have never ever been to the east side of Lake Winnipeg. They might drop in for a day and write a story or go up the east side in an airplane and tip their wings, but I've had the privilege of being in the Bloodvein community. I've had the privilege of being in Poplar River. I've had the pleasure of being in Manigotagan.

I want to tell you that in my view, the east side of Lake Winnipeg is one of the most spectacular areas of boreal forest and Canadian Shield and water of anywhere in North America. We want to develop that area consistent with road access, which we've announced. Members opposite didn't announce a pine cone for the east side in terms of investment.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, the WNO agreement was supposed to be a strategic plan document for the east side planning, and now it would appear that the government is admitting that it has given up on the process by declaring an impasse. Members of the WNO and the Council of Chiefs have expressed concern that the East Side Planning Initiative is not moving forward fast enough.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin): What does he have to say to them now that his government has basically admitted that negotiations have ground to a halt?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, 13 out of the 16 First Nations communities—

An Honourable Member: Thirteen out of 14.

Mr. Doer: Thirteen out of 14 of the First Nations communities—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: It crosses a number of departments, and I am pleased and proud to answer the question.

Thirteen out of 14 First Nations communities signed on. I would point out that 97 percent of the people who live on the east side of Lake Winnipeg are First Nations people.

I'd also point out that members opposite used to take treaty land areas and set them aside without any consultation or discussion or partnership with First Nations people. We don't do that, Mr. Speaker. We work with the people who have been there for 3,000 years. We work with them out of a mutual respect, out of a historical and moral belief that working together in partnership on the east side is better than the unilateral actions of the members opposite.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share a following quote by Mr. Elijah Harper, the former Member for Rupertsland and the former member for the NDP caucus who had made a statement to the *Winnipeg Free Press* a while ago about his home on the east side. He had said: We are the poorest region in the country. Harper said: We can't continue to look at government handouts. We have to look at developing resources in our own backyards. Listen to your own [inaudible]

Mr. Speaker, I have asked the minister why his government is not working harder on solving this impasse in developing the east side by allowing projects like the east side bipole line to proceed so that east side residents can benefit from some desperately needed economic development.

Mr. Doer: I was involved with the former minister, Mr. Harper, that the member opposite quotes, on the development of the eastern Hydro line to those eastern communities east of Lake Winnipeg, northeast of Lake Winnipeg: Oxford House, St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack, the communities of Island Lake and Garden Hill, many communities. I don't know whether the member opposite has been to any of those communities, but she should actually take some time and visit all of those communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that in 1992 there was a recommendation of the former government to build a transmission line on that east side, and the former government didn't proceed with it. You will note a couple of weeks ago there was a good map in *The Globe and Mail* that pointed out the three options on transmission to Ontario. The cheapest and closest option is the north option which we've talked about in the past.

Winnipeg Hospitals Emergency Room Procedures

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I table today a letter from Jan Currie, the vice-president of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, written two years ago today precisely. The letter contains 10 recommendations on necessary changes to hospital emergency department procedures after review of a critical incident that occurred, related to Mr. John Klassen.

Can the minister tell us how many of these 10 recommendations have been fully implemented in WRHA hospitals?

* (10:50)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Of course, we take very seriously issues that arise in our emergency rooms, indeed in all of the hospitals. When we look closely at recommendations from a variety of groups concerning improvements in the ER, we have taken these into account. In particular, when we look at our redevelopments of ERs, which we've been very pleased to announce redevelopment at Seven Oaks, redevelopment at Victoria, and indeed, the opening recently at the Health Sciences Centre of possibly one of the finest ERs.

One of the recommendations, for example, is ensuring that we have appropriate services available for those people presenting with mental health concerns. These kinds of adaptations are being made to the new development of the ERs. We're ensuring that those people are safe and secure. That's one of the recommendations we're working on and more.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River Heights, on a point of order.

Mr. Gerrard: I would ask for leave to be able to complete my two supplementary questions.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to continue to finish his two supplementary questions? *[Agreed]*

First supplementary question, the honourable Member for River Heights.

* * *

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, more than three years ago, in response to serious problems then in the emergency rooms, this government commissioned a wide-ranging and very thick review of emergency rooms in the WRHA region. Central to the report which emerged from that was the recommendation, and I quote: Every patient is entitled to and will receive timely access to care in any emergency department within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. Now, back to the letter from Ms. Currie, who talks about a follow-up audit of emergency room procedures. That audit was to be done two years ago.

Can the minister tell us the results of the audit, and can she explain why it is that we have continuing problems in the emergency rooms of Grace, St. Boniface, et cetera, at the moment?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, indeed, Ms. Currie with the WRHA is an excellent employee and pays very close attention to issues concerning nursing, to issues concerning our ERs. We're working diligently to ensure that those recommendations of the emergency room task force on which doctors, nurses and front-line workers sat to make recommendations to us, we're working on those.

Things like ensuring we have additional clerical support for ER doctors so they can devote entire attention to front-line care; ensuring that we have the redevelopment of our ERs with dignity and respect and privacy in mind, perhaps, for example, for those women that might present in ERs in distress with a miscarriage or ensuring that their dignity and respect is being honoured and valued; these are the kinds of things we're going forward with.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, let's get back to a little bit of reality here. Despite the assertions of the minister, there are still recommendations not implemented. There are still problems in many emergency rooms. They still hit the headlines because of these problems. The report done three years ago, still not fully implemented, promises every patient is entitled to and will receive timely access to care in any emergency department within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

I ask again: Why did a patient last night at the Grace Hospital have to wait nine hours before being seen? Why is the reality so different from the government's promises? Why is there report after report, and we still have these major concerns?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I'll say to the member again, when we receive recommendations, we receive reports concerning ER care, or any other kind of care, we take these very seriously. Again, that's why, when we adopt these recommendations in the redevelopment of our ERs, redevelopment at Seven Oaks, redevelopment at Concordia, redevelopment at Victoria, and of course the recently opened new ER at the Health Sciences Centre, we're taking into account those recommendations very carefully.

That's why it's a redevelopment and an expansion, considering patient care, dignity, privacy, and, of course, the investments that we're making in our human resources, ensuring that our ER doctors have the academic programs that they so rightly deserve. These recommendations come directly from our people. We listen to them carefully.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired. We'll move on to members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Riel Constituency, New Immigrants

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize that many new immigrants are coming to Manitoba and to the constituency of Riel. Last weekend I had the pleasure of hosting a reception for new Nigerian immigrants who had come to Winnipeg as a result of the Provincial Nominee Program.

I, together with leaders of the African communities of Manitoba, had the chance to speak with many of the newcomers and to share words of encouragement as a transition to a new life here in our province. It was exciting to be part of such a vibrant celebration of ethnicity and culture that included authentic Nigerian food, enjoyable speeches and displays of beautiful and colourful cultural dress.

Along with ACOMI, I was also glad to be joined by the Nigerian Association of Manitoba and representatives from the African-Canadian Cultural Heritage Centre's Board of Directors who also participated in the reception.

Part of what makes our province so great is its diversity in culture. My hope is that these new Manitobans will not only be able to learn about our provincial heritage but that they will be empowered to share with us the rich experiences, cultures and stories that they bring from their home countries. Our province will have much to gain from their doing so, and I look forward to helping them settle and

succeed as they begin this exciting journey in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2007 Canada Winter Games

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, recently Manitobans had come out in high numbers to celebrate with Team Canada in their gold medal victory on the ice a few days ago. In that spirit, I want to take this opportunity to also recognize another sporting accomplishment in the province of Manitoba.

The 2007 Canada Winter Games were held from February 23 to March 10 in Whitehorse. Manitoba sent a very strong team this year, and I'm pleased to announce that Team Manitoba represented us very well at the Canada Winter Games. Special recognition goes to athletes from my constituency who brought home silver medals in curling.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate and recognize Roslynn Ripley of Melita, April Jorgensen of Cromer, Lorelle Weiss of Brandon, Katie Kruk of Souris and their coach, Jocelyn Beever, of Rivers.

Many of these young women are in their final years of high school. To participate in the Canada Winter Games was certainly an experience of a lifetime. Not only was it an experience to travel to Whitehorse but also to receive the amount of overwhelming support shown by family, friends and members of the community alike.

It is nice to see women's sports and sports in rural Manitoba receive this level of support. It is important that we continue to match and exceed this support at future sporting events. Undoubtedly, the participation in sport by athletes and community alike positively impacts all those involved.

On behalf of all of my colleagues in the House today, I would like to congratulate these young women on their accomplishments and wish them well in all of their future endeavours. Manitoba is very proud of you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Assiniboia Constituency, Community Appreciation Night

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): It is my pleasure to rise today to pay tribute and acknowledge the many committed volunteers that make Assiniboia the

vibrant community that it is. This past week I had the opportunity to honour about 100 volunteers in my constituency at my annual community appreciation night held at Assiniboia Downs.

I always look forward to this event as it allows me to have the chance to meet people both young and old who devote so much time to helping others. Day after day, week after week, these volunteers give of themselves to make a positive difference to our city and province. Margaret Mead once said, Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that has. These people do on a regular basis.

The community takes notice, Mr. Speaker, as I along with the top sponsors of Assiniboia Downs, Peak of the Market, Pizza Hut, MacDon Industries, Chapel Lawn and Tribal Councils Investment Group and others were pleased to provide a great evening, dinner and gifts to these community leaders. This, of course, is a small token of appreciation for the amount of work that these individuals put into their organization. They have excellent time and talent that they share.

The people who were represented were day cares, schools, sports organizations, community clubs, churches, service clubs, health centres, scouts, guides and youth groups. It was a wonderful collation of great people who really give of themselves and make a difference. Many volunteers who attended this evening have been giving of their time for years and even decades. Some of the organizations such as Grace Hospital have committed volunteers working with them for half a century or more. I find it impressive that both the organizations were able to retain and support their lifelong volunteers and give of themselves.

Muhammed Ali says it best, I believe, when he said, "Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth." I think all of the volunteers who attended, as well others who continue to volunteer in Assiniboia and throughout the province, are making a positive contribution to their community.

I ask the leave of this House to include the names of these volunteers in *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Margaret Pokornik, Patricia Adams, Sylvia Shaler, Carrie Jansen-Einarson, Jacki Krostewitz, Shelly Morris, Heidi Schadek, Glen Taylor, Geri Smith, Micki Kemball, Heather Hobson, Ryan Bruce, Tannis Bruce, Kim Zapotoczny, Curtis Vezina, Sue Wakeham, Terry Brownlee, Nancy Newton, Paul Schroeder, Caroline Boyd, Brian Hodges, Rose Judd, Harry Ewachewski, Lillian Atamanchuk, Jackie Murray, Carolyn McNeil, Deborah Gomm, Bill Puddicombe, Doris Johnson, Ginger Adams, Janet Nelson, Maureen Gardner, Connie Newman, Maurice Mazerolle, Diane MacDonald, George Fellowes, Linda Howes, Kathy Brown, Pat Murray, Gloria Loveday, Jenna Lynn Loveday, Teghan Keats, Meagan Kreis, Dave Williscroft, Pat Jarrett, Frank Schnerch, Norma Schnerch, Corina Sellner, Laurelly Nickel, Laurie Williams, Hilda Unrah, Tammie Lang, Joan Einarson, Cameron Donnelly, Rick Hamilton, Darlene Mattes, Ken Mattes, Rene Lewis, LuAnn Lelieveld, Daina Gagne, Doreen Mihalus, Marie Cashin, Debbie Hodgson, Lynda Vance, Eric Devries, Doreen Devries, Chris Little, Sharon Groombridge, Chris Martens, Walter Martens, Glenda Dyck, Monica Pike, Al Mayer, Dan Cassils, Claude Risley, Lillian Risley, Jerry Jones, Agnes Tamoto, Ron Hutsal, Odette Hutsal, Carol Dalke, Harvey Dalke, Trina Cimino, Heather Patterson, Angela Saj, Kim Onagi.

Mr. Rondeau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank all of the volunteers for making a difference too in their community.

Winnstock 2007

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, last night I had the tremendous opportunity of attending an event at the CanadInn Windsor Park entitled the Winnstock 2007. Winnstock is the most successful fundraising event in the history of Winnipeg's financial services community. Dozens of budding young financial services rock stars played on the stage in front of thousands of wildly appreciative fans and fun was had by all.

Since their first event in 2005 Winnstock has donated over \$175,000 to the Arthritis Society and the Movement Centre. Mr. Speaker, bands such as The Dealers, The Artist formerly known as Money, Sound Advice, Poison Pill, Mutual Fund, NSCROW, and even Rocky Rolletti were there to play and share in the fun last night. A cheque was presented to

Maggie Nelson of the Movement Centre for \$85,000 and it was a wonderful contribution to the Movement Centre last night. Special congratulations go to the Winnstock committee, including Gregg Filmon and others from Richardson Partners and special thanks also to the lead sponsor, which is Richardson Partners Financial. Thanks to all those who attended the event to make this the most successful event this year for raising money for the Movement Centre.

The Movement Centre is a non-profit organization committed to improving the quality of life for children and adults with physical disabilities. Through hard work and peer support these individuals are working toward achieving optimal physical and social independence. It should be noted that there is no government funding at all for this organization. It has been incredibly successful on its own and depends on these fundraising events to be able to continue with their worthwhile programs. Thank you very much.

Brandon 125th Anniversary

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to welcome all honourable members of the Manitoba Legislature to my home community of Brandon to celebrate with us our 125th anniversary in 2007. Founded on May 30, 1882, Brandon quickly became known as the Wheat City of the Dominion. As the Wheat City of Canada, this legacy remains today. Since its earliest days Brandon has been at the centre of Manitoba's agricultural economy. Today Brandon is the second largest city in Manitoba with a population of over 40,000 people, serving a trading area of over 200,000 people with a diversified economy and a rich cultural tradition. I am proud to call Brandon my home.

As part of our 125th anniversary festivities, I am pleased that the Gary Doer government has partnered with the Brandon Riverbank Inc. in supporting two legacy projects for the city. The first was the winter lights skate park, which kicked off the 125th anniversary celebrations this past December. The second is a commemorative trail. There are many events planned throughout the year, including concerts, socials, fairs, shows, reunions, installations, tattoos, teas and conventions in addition to the main 125th birthday celebration on May 30.

Mr. Speaker, we have much to celebrate and be thankful for in 2007. I commend and congratulate the many citizens involved in organizing events this

year. Brandon is truly a great community, and it is a privilege to work together with so many in building a better city for all of us into the future. Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite all honourable members of the Manitoba Legislature in joining me in wishing Brandon a happy 125th anniversary.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in subamendment thereto. The debate remains open.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure today to speak in response to the budget speech that we've heard in the Legislature, but before I do that, there are few things I do want to clarify.

One was that earlier today we heard in Question Period the Premier (Mr. Doer) say that the Tories' vision for urban development was to have a liquor store in Headingley. I really just want to say that it's very significant for small businesses outside of the Perimeter Highway. They need to remain viable. This particular Headingley food store has been open on and off over many years. But it's really important that we do support small businesses in rural Manitoba. There are over 500 names on this petition. People in a community of 2,200 people, presumably not all of those people are over 18, so it's a very, very large number of people who are supportive of this. I think that it just shows us today in the Legislature that this NDP government is not supportive of small business in rural Manitoba.

I also want to say before I go on that recently we celebrated the 90th anniversary of Vimy Ridge. I want to tell you that my grandfather was fighting in the battle at Vimy Ridge. Unfortunately, on the 9th of February, 1917, he was injured. His leg was blown off. He was successfully carried behind the lines and transported to England and then back to Canada. So he was not at the battle of Vimy Ridge, but he was with the battalion. I'm very happy to say that he was not killed in that battle; otherwise, I

guess I wouldn't be here. His name was Joe Morris, curiously. His birthdate was November 11 and he would have been 111 this year. When he did die, Premier Douglas Campbell was a pallbearer at his funeral, although he was not the premier yet.

I also want to tell you this morning I experienced a sight of nature which was quite—it was really great to see—I live on the Assiniboine River and this morning the ice broke in front of my house. When that happens, it's a crashing sound, breaking sound of ice, ice crashing and banging against itself and against the banks of the river. It is an amazing thing in nature to watch. It really reminded me of the nature of some of the flooding that's going on in Manitoba right now. Representing an area that does have flooding frequently in the Red River Valley and Morris area, the Ste. Agathe area, Howden area, I'm very, very sympathetic to flooding issues. So today, when I saw the ice break in front of my house, I was very pleased. Hopefully we can see some movement in the Selkirk area, because we certainly sympathize with the people who are flooded in the Selkirk area.

I have represented the constituency of Morris in the Legislature now for four years. It's been a tremendously enjoyable four years. I've enjoyed it very much for the most part. There are some things that I haven't enjoyed, of course, because there are some things that go on between members in this Chamber that are less than desirable at times.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the next four years. I really think, I really believe that today is my last speech from this side of the House, so I'm taking it very seriously. This is the last time I will speak from this side of the House, and next time I speak it will be from that side of the House.

* (11:10)

We know the nature of elections in Manitoba. We have a NDP government for a number of years. People have said to me, it's like the NDP just come in and have a party. They spend all the money. They mess up the house. They mess up everything. Then, when the people have just had enough of this behaviour, what happens? They elect a PC government because they know the PC government are responsible managers of money, of provincial affairs, but the PCs, when they come in, we're always left with a mess to clean up. So it's really unfortunate, but this is just how it happens. The NDP always like to talk about the history of what's happened in Manitoba politics. Well, I'm just telling

you this is the history. When the PC government comes in, they have to put the house in order. They have to make the tough, necessary decisions which we are very, very capable of doing.

I know that Manitoba senses that it is time for a change. It's time for a change. We know that. We feel it. Yesterday when I left the Legislature, what did I see go by on Broadway? The big Hugh McFadyen sign behind a truck going down Broadway that said the Leader of the Official Opposition, which had the leader's name on it, and what did it say? Well, I can't say his name, but it said: For Manitoba, for a change. Yes, today we are going to see the beginning of that change. It's Friday the 13th today. A very bad day for them. A very lucky day for us on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. It's always been a lucky day for me. I consider this a very lucky day. That's why I say this is the last time I will speak for this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about the budget. It's not really always what's in a budget, but it's what's not in a budget. I think what we saw with this budget was like somebody taking a pile of money and throwing it up in the air and it all fluttered down and people picked up a little bit here and there. But nobody picked up very much, and nobody was very happy with it. Anybody that read the newspapers and talked to people on the street knew that nobody was satisfied with this budget. Nobody's happy with it.

With the unprecedented federal transfer payments, again, with Manitoba always going to Ottawa with their hand out asking for more money, "Please, sir," we have \$400 million more this year in the budget from the federal government. We have to really thank the federal Conservative government, and Stephen Harper's government, for all this money that's coming into Manitoba. But what we really do need is our own made-in-Manitoba strategy so that we don't have to be a have-not province. But, with all this money coming in, you'd think, you'd really think, that we could have done better. That's what we're saying.

We don't see all of the things in the budget as a bad thing. As the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) said yesterday, budgets have things in them which are good and budgets have things in them which aren't so good. But, really, what's not in the budget is indicative of this government's commitment to Manitoba.

The government, when they bring a budget forward, always will have something in there that

every member in this Legislature would say, well, that's not so bad and it's good for my area. I can say that Highway 75 in my area needs repair. It does. I am happy to see that there is going to be some money to repair Highway 75. I've lobbied for this for many years, and I am so happy to see that the government is finally listening. I stood out on Highway 75 last winter after driving back and forth on those bumps, and I can tell you that was the most horrific piece of highway in this province. It is the highway that comes right into the capital city, right into the capital city of Manitoba from our southern neighbours.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) had been on the radio just the day before that saying Highway 75 is our showcase highway. Well, I don't think he'd been on Highway 75, at that point, because if he had he would never have said those words. But I'm very happy to see money for Highway 75, and for a glimmer, just for a brief moment, I thought there was going to be more money for some of the other roads in my constituency when they mentioned Highway 59, Highway 52, Highway 3. I'm happy to see that those roads get attention, Mr. Speaker, but they're not in my constituency. They're not in the constituency of Morris. That's most unfortunate because if you look at the constituency of Morris, we have many, many critical pieces of infrastructure that lead into the city of Winnipeg. They're critical for people that haul grain and other agricultural products to and from, and it is incredibly important that we do maintain the infrastructure in rural Manitoba. Unfortunately, it's been neglected for the last seven and a half years.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we see is a budget that the NDP have put some good things in, but not enough, not enough. They will always say, oh, you didn't vote for the budgets. Oh, shame on you for not voting for the budget. Well, we cannot, in all good conscience, vote for the inadequacies of a budget, even though there may be some good things there. It's not good enough. It doesn't go far enough. It doesn't go far enough for the people from Morris. So, therefore, it's very difficult for me to stand and say I would support this budget because I think there are many things lacking.

For example, I want to talk about the funding of education 80 percent through the province and less through the taxes from school boards. This is all not what it seems here. There is no real commitment here to say that school taxes will not be raised in the

future. Yes, they've said that they're going to move toward an 80 percent funding of education taxes through the provincial government and move away from funding through school boards, but there's no guarantee that school boards won't just keep increasing taxes anyway.

There's really no commitment that in five years we will see a reduction in taxes because, yes, we have to listen to the weasel words. We have to read the fine print here all the time, subject to balanced budget legislation. That's the fine print. That's their out. That's the backdoor way of getting out, Mr. Speaker, should things not go the way they want.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, as I said, this is my last speech from this side of the House, and I prefer to be in a position of being a positive person. I'm a positive person. I like to promote. I don't always like to be critical, but, having said that, my role here is opposition. It is my role to hold the government's feet to the fire; must look at every penny they spend to see that they're spending it in the appropriate manners; must scrutinize any bills and legislation brought before the House to make sure there's no adverse effect to my constituents and to the other people in Manitoba.

So we do, on this side of the House, have a role to play as being opposition. It is our duty to pick apart, with a fine-toothed comb, the budget, the legislation, to ensure the best quality for Manitobans. We do that, Mr. Speaker. We do that. In that role, we find ourselves in a position where we cannot support a budget that does not adequately meet the needs of rural Manitobans, of northern Manitobans, of the people of Winnipeg.

* (11:20)

We have great opportunity in this province. We have a great city. We have great cities, Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage, Thompson. We have great cities in this province. We have smaller cities. We have towns. We have hamlets. Many, many great places to live in this province. Then why is it that our young people want to leave? Where are they going? Well, they're going somewhere that they consider to be a better place. Why do they consider it to be better? Because, Mr. Speaker, there are more jobs. There's more opportunity. There's more opportunity for better paying jobs. There's a diverse economy. There are endless amounts of opportunity for our young people. Why can't we have that here?

Well, we can have that here. We can have that here, but what we need is a vision, a long-term plan, a commitment, a commitment from this government to make Manitoba a have province, to make us competitive in taxation, to make it desirable for our young people, our best and our brightest, to stay here, Mr. Speaker.

What can we do in that regard? Well, we need to take advantage of technology, technology that connects our communities so that we don't have to commute. For those who do need to commute we need to have a good infrastructure so that people can travel very easily. These are all things that we can do to promote this province and to help young people make the decision to stay here. We have to give them a vision for the future, not just for slashing their tuition fees and giving them a rebate on their tuition fees. That's all good until they leave Manitoba. We need to have a strategy to keep them here so that they want to see Manitoba as a place to raise their families, to stay here, and that's just not happening.

That, I think, is one of the keys even in child care. We have seen recent announcements from the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) on opening up 500 more spaces for child care, or I should say funding more spaces because funding spaces is not the same as actually placing children in day cares in those spaces. In the same press release, we saw, yes, we're training 252 new early childhood educators who will graduate this year. That's good, Mr. Speaker, but how many of them are going to stay in the field? How many of them are going to go to other provinces, and that's only half of the funded spaces. The key here is getting people to fill the vacancies, the jobs. If you don't have the people, I don't care how many spaces you have funded or how many day care centres you have. If you don't have the people to fill those spaces to look after the children, it's empty hollow announcements.

Part of that is just what I finished talking about is how do we make sure that those people want to live and work and play and raise families and enjoy what we have to offer in this province of Manitoba. That's part of what we need. That's a long-term vision. It's long term, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't mean what do we do for the next two weeks so that we can make announcements before a next provincial election is called. That's all that we're doing here is making announcements for elections. That's not a real plan, because we see a lot of announcements being made now and what are we going to do? Yes,

these are NDP plans, NDP announcements, yeah, and then what happens after the election is over?

Well, I can tell you we're going to win the next election. We're going to put our own policies in place, but we have a long-term vision. We have a plan, Mr. Speaker. I'd really like to share that plan today but, of course, we can't do that because anytime we tell the people of Manitoba what we think would be a good idea, guess what? The NDP adopt the Conservative policies. So what we have is we have all Conservative policies coming from the NDP government. They don't go far enough, obviously, but they're going so far to the right that their core people are starting to say, you guys, you have no morals. You're not supporting your core people. I know that they're telling you that.

I think the thing is the NDP recognize the public wants Conservative policy, so what the public wants the NDP are going to give them right before an election. You betcha. What the public wants, and that's a Conservative policy, the NDP are right there saying, yep, we'll do that for you. But that's morally reprehensible on their part, not to stick to their true colours.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just say that the people of Morris recognize this government for what it is. They have no values. They have no inner strength, no principles, no courage in their convictions. They're adopting our policies, but that's fine because we'll put those policies in place when we form government after the next election. I say let's have an election. Let's bring it on. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the member opposite, I changed around a little bit some of the messaging I was going to put out today, which is positive on the budget.

It is a great privilege for me as the Member for Brandon West to speak here today on our budget, the eighth budget that we've consecutively put forward as a balanced budget here in Manitoba. That is, in fact, the first time in over 50 years that that's happened, and it's been under the direction of our long-serving Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) here that has led our budget to be one of the best Manitoba's ever seen in this budget that we're seeing here being debated today.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to look at past records compared to present day, to future records. The members opposite, time after time after time in Question Period, get very, very excited about setting benchmarks and setting previous examples compared to relevant new-day examples compared to future vision. The budget really brings forward building blocks that we've had over the last number of years here in Manitoba to take us from a disastrous 1990s, and I'll go forward today in putting those examples clearly forward. You can sit, as members opposite, and you can bring forward data that's inaccurate, which we've seen on many, many occasions, or you can actually look at the big picture of clear, defined data that will have reality attached to it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite had talked about education as early as today, and when we look at what we had as a strategy in certainly the Department of Industry and Economic Development of years back that education would be our No. 1 economic priority here in the province of Manitoba to build a strong and sustainable economy, members opposite snickered and said basically that that is irrelevant. It's not something that should be in an economic development strategy, and it's something that is immaterial.

When you look across leading nations and leading countries in the world that have done well with their economies, it has been with the introduction and development of a higher-trained, higher skilled workforce, a higher-trained, higher-skilled society, and the investments that they made in the 1990s—and this is where they do become very touchy—were abysmal.

They reduced educational funding and support on all levels right through our kindergarten through our senior 4 levels in both operations and in capital expenditures. The post-secondary investments that they made were non-existent and abysmal. They drove up personal property taxation for Manitobans by nearly 70 percent over that period of time, and with much less production of relevant increases in any visible contribution to our society.

* (11:30)

In 1999, when we came in, my colleague from Brandon East, as a minister, put unprecedented investments, in fact, in one year nearly the 1990s years in entirety in capital investment in our education system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are facts that are contributable to an economy now that we're developing, and you're seeing far higher people coming out of Manitoba schools now with grade 12 education. You're seeing a higher level of post-secondary education with Manitobans and with people from outside of Manitoba coming to our institutions, and certainly you're seeing the benefit of that with those graduates staying right here in Manitoba.

In investment in education, we've seen some of the best-trained people in the world come out of our community colleges, Red River College, out of Assiniboine Community College, certainly our universities in the province of Manitoba, and staying right here at home which leads to another point in population and migration.

The relevance of looking at true facts: Since 1999, 46,000 people have moved to Manitoba. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's more than the entire population of the city of Brandon. In the '90s, we had net losses of people leaving Manitoba. Members opposite, I know, like to be putting something on the record. In fact, one thing that's been put on the record was the Opposition Leader most recently had put out a message that Manitoba's lost almost 40,000 to other provinces over the past seven years.

What he's not saying is information that Manitobans need to know, which is that that is simply interprovincial migration numbers for Manitoba. We have interprovincial migration. We certainly have international migration, and the combination here in Manitoba is that during our time period almost double in increases in people coming to Manitoba year over year over year. I can tell you that, since 1999, Manitoba has seen a net gain of 3,000-and-almost-300 youth come into the province, and over the same period in the 1990s we lost 2,579 youth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members continually got up on the other side of the House talking about loss of youth. It's clear and it's documented in Stats Can evidence that we are gaining in population in youth in Manitoba for the first time in a couple of decades. We're gaining in our population in Manitoba, certainly the first time in a couple of decades, and more people are staying in our province as opposed to interprovincial migration than in almost three decades.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you take that into consideration where we put forward, No. 1, an

economic development strategy through education and a re-investment in education, members opposite laughed about it. Well, they're not laughing today, and they're certainly not willing to admit that we're doing a far better job, three times as good a job, and retaining, bringing more youth into Manitoba as well as people internationally and interprovincially into our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the labour force as well in the province has seen continued growth. It's been extremely strong over the last 12-month period. When you look at the indicators that are out there, obviously again from Stats Canada, in my own part of the province, in Brandon, we've seen the labour market indicators being extremely positive. During the members' opposite time, those labour stats continually went down, year over year over year, and now we're seeing that the labour market indicators in the Brandon area grew by 1.2 percent in employment and certainly 4.3 percent in employment in the last 12 months. The unemployment rate was 4.4 percent, down from the previous year. More jobs, more youth, more people in Manitoba, more employment and more people who are coming to our province and seeing our province as a good place to live.

Members opposite talk negatively every time they get up about Manitoba being a have-not province. When I'm talking to people in Manitoba, they're saying we are a have province for a number of reasons. When we look at our budget and the way we've built it year over year, they continually look at how they could sell off Crown corporations to balance their budget. That was the only way that they balanced their budget in 1999. Prior to that, a couple of years before that, they had said, absolutely not would they sell off our Crown corporation, the Manitoba Telephone System. They were spending far more than their revenues were bringing in. They had one of the highest debt ratios in the province of Manitoba in its history in a one-year period in the mid-'90s, and they've got the audacity to get up and talk about financing in Manitoba and the way we balance our budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, year over year, we've seen our Finance Minister and this side of the House come in with increased spending in one of the key priorities in Manitoba, in health care. We have one of the highest spendings per capita on health care in Manitoba, and we're very proud of that fact. We certainly have done that with reducing our debt in the province of Manitoba and bringing up the revenue,

and certainly the debt-to-GDP ratio that's one of the best in decades. Our debt reduced by 20 percent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's likely why we've seen five bond-rating increases over our time period in the last seven years from the bond-rating agencies. Members opposite don't like to talk about that. They like to swagger into the coffee shops. They like to tell our producers in our agricultural community that they would lower their taxation and their education taxes. What did they do in the 1990s? This is fact as well. I know they don't like us and they're very touchy about this. They increased the debt of Manitoba. They increased the taxation in Manitoba. They expanded the taxation on gasoline in Manitoba, without contributing more back into our system.

It's evident when you look at our bond ratings now, that right across North America we're seen as being a province that's in a period of incredibly good growth. We're being seen as a province that's balancing our budget for the eighth year, which is the first time, I'll mention again, in 50 years. We're seeing more people come to Manitoba. It's likely why we're seeing headlines, day after day after day, in the paper, such as: Aerospace industry set to soar in the province of Manitoba. Below that, Manitoba, certainly, the wage jump the third highest in the nation. We're seeing another one, just as early as today: Manitoba is in the midst of a multi-billion-dollar construction boom in the province of Manitoba, in highways, it goes on to say, in construction. It's in highways, it's in airports, it's in parking, it's in streets, it's in road repair, and it's in social infrastructure. I know the members opposite don't like those headlines. They continually get up and they talk about negative things that are in Manitoba. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the records don't show that.

The records show we're paying down the debt at an unprecedented level. We're reducing income tax for Manitobans, again, at a level that hasn't been seen for a decade. We're seeing all across the province people that are having increases in the value of their homes. Certainly, you can walk into any coffee shop in Manitoba, whether it be in Killarney, whether it be in Brandon, whether it be in Thompson, whether it be in Steinbach, and you ask of the average Manitoban what they've seen over the last seven years in terms of their personal wealth, in terms of, certainly, their faith in an economy and here in our province, in Manitoba. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you'll hear, year over year in the last couple of years,

Manitobans saying things are getting better in Manitoba in every way for them and their families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite, when they were losing youth, they were losing people out of Manitoba, they were setting unprecedeted debt levels in the province of Manitoba from mismanagement of funding in the province, reducing our services in Manitoba in health care, education. Infrastructure was absolutely abysmal. We lost a decade in our infrastructure, again, which is an economic development tool, because of the members opposite.

In my own community, in Brandon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we go back, and I know the members don't like to use past records. The members opposite promised the Brandon general hospital at that time, that they would reconstruct that hospital over a period of seven years. Year over year in their budget they promised it. Year over year they talked about not being able to balance their budget, and the debt levels were out of control for them, so they wouldn't do it.

* (11:40)

When we came in, in 1999, we promised that would be built, that that hospital would be built and constructed. We did it. People in Brandon don't have a short memory. People in Brandon remember that record very well. During that period, while they were promising to build the hospital and not doing it, they shut down the Brandon Mental Health Centre at that time, with no plan whatsoever. It sat there for a number of years, because there was no planning, no pre-planning. With a massive acreage in the city of Brandon, 450,000 square feet of empty building, we've now begun, through our expansion in education, in post-secondary education, the largest growth in Brandon's history, Assiniboine Community College moving up to that centre.

You're seeing the numbers expand some 35 percent in post-secondary education in our community colleges. It's a matter of growth. Members opposite shut down and mothballed and made hollow promises. We're seeing growth, and all they can do is stand in front of a few buildings in downtown Winnipeg, beside the booming cranes that we see in Winnipeg and Brandon, and talk about expenditures. Well, the reality is our expenditures are on budget, they're on balance, and we're seeing growth.

In their government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were seeing buildings that weren't built. We were seeing buildings that were closed and shut down. We were seeing people leave the province, and we were seeing unprecedented high debt in Manitoba. That has changed. It's turned around. It has been a vision of moving forward. Members opposite spend their day, I'm sure as you do in your car, looking in a rearview mirror, and that's the way they spend their life. They're looking backward continually, where we're looking out the windshield of the car, moving ahead. Manitobans know it. Manitobans know the rhetoric from members opposite is unjustified when you actually use factual numbers and you bring the factual numbers forward.

The members opposite used to swagger into the coffee shops during the '90s and tell the producers: We will reduce your educational taxes. We'll reduce your tax. They did not do that. What did they do? As early as the last few months, have nailed the coffin shut on producers with their federal party and the leader of their party. They're now getting rid of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's think about this for a minute. Manitoba, the centre of the Canadian Wheat Board, and head offices here in the city of Winnipeg, some 500 jobs in the city of Winnipeg, thousands and thousands of jobs in the province of Manitoba, probably more relevant than any other province in Canada reliant on that infrastructure of the Canadian Wheat Board that, certainly, the producers and the farmers hold so dear. What are they doing? They're backing Stephen Harper to reduce those thousands of jobs. Mind you, they did reduce thousands of jobs themselves in the '90s. Now they're supporting the reduction and elimination of the Canadian Wheat Board. That in itself should lose every member on the opposite side their seat with our producers. They raise taxes for the producers. They're eliminating the Canadian Wheat Board for producers. Quite frankly, I don't understand how you could possibly vote for a member on that side of the House with that type of track record. But democracy does work.

Quite frankly, when you look, truly, at a growing economy, more youth, more investment in what Manitobans have told us are key areas in health care, education, and now in infrastructure, some \$4-billion commitment in infrastructure, makes the record of the members opposite extremely abysmal.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll go back a bit to the relevance of past and past history. The members opposite were, like the Conservative Party, which are sellers of Crown corporations, and the members opposite, every one of them sitting across there, has backed, in fact, budgets that have done that. When they eliminated the Manitoba Telephone System, our Premier (Mr. Doer), as early as today, had mentioned maybe the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) should stand in front of the MTS Centre or, in fact, a telephone system building, and say: We won't sell Hydro. They did that in the '90s while he was, certainly, the chief of staff and the adviser for the premier, Premier Filmon at that time. They promised. They stood up and they told Manitobans: We won't do it. We won't sell the telephone system. They did. They sold it. In the meantime, they were certainly privatizing health care during that period of time. They were taking a Crown corporation, that's the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission, privatizing that. We're seeing the federal government, as fast as they got in, eliminating another federal Crown corporation, the Canadian Wheat Board.

The member opposite who now has the ability to be the Leader of the Opposition was part of a strategy in Ontario when the Harris government was eliminating and trying to privatize the hydro during that time. He was an adviser. He had that on his Web site. He was proud of it. He yanked it off pretty quickly, I believe, once other rational minds had said: You know what? Manitobans may not trust you when you say you won't sell Hydro when you have that on your Web site, and I don't blame him for yanking that off very quickly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will privatize Crown corporations. We've seen it. It's part of their policies. Quite frankly, it's not a good way to balance budgets. It's cost Manitobans billions of dollars on that decision. I believe that members opposite will, again, if ever let into the leadership of the Province of Manitoba, quickly eliminate our Crown corporations that are for the benefit of all Manitobans, and Hydro will be one of them. We don't trust at all their saying they won't sell when you look at their past, when you look at even statements about there should be other ways to look at Crown corporations; there should be other ways to consider public-private partnerships in Crown corporations.

We don't believe that. Quite frankly, neither do Manitobans, Manitobans who, certainly when they

look at insurance for our automobiles that's under a Crown corporation and the benefit of that, the debate and the fight with the Conservatives that many, many years ago didn't believe in that. They still don't believe in Crown corporations. They don't believe in a telephone company in Manitoba. They don't believe in hydro-electric companies in Manitoba. All they can talk about is raising the rates of hydro in Manitoba, to put those dollars forward.

The economy is getting better. This budget has eliminated taxation now to the point of almost \$800 million a year over our term in decreased taxation, business, personal income tax and property taxation. We have more jobs in Manitoba, more youth. We have better health care. We have a better education system. We have an expanding economy. We have people in Manitoba who are now looking at members opposite, going, we don't trust members opposite to put us back in debt and we don't trust them on economic strategy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget builds Manitoba. It moves forward in Manitoba. We're proud of this budget. It's going to be interesting to see what the members opposite do when we come to vote on this. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): You know, from a little earlier on in the day, there were a few little sensitivity areas that the opposition got caught on, so we won't dwell on those.

But, yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were all ready to continue with the debate of the budget and everything else. In fact, I gave up my turn to the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) because she's got some commitments, some meetings down in her office. But, you know, it's ironic. I think, if we go back in history, this may be the first time, or yesterday may have been the first time that the budget was interrupted because of smell. I can only think that the budget—it had something to do with the real stinker of a budget that has been introduced here. Maybe that's one of the reasons why. It was percolating and percolating over there with the government and everything else like that, with all their great things that they're talking about. All of a sudden, the budget just blew up. I think that's what the smell was that drove us out of the Chamber here yesterday.

The actual budget itself is leaving a smell here, not only in the Chamber, but I think that when you

go out on the street and you talk to a few people—because naturally the budget that is brought forth by any government is just a great indication of what the government is doing and the wreckage of the finances of what they're going to do. So, naturally, you know, we in opposition anticipated a great budget of some sort of great new revelations or great new direction that they were going to talk about, but what did we get?

* (11:50)

Well, it was just like a shotgun, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It went out there and hit any and everything that could move, you know, we got for funding. Anyone that wanted funding, well, we'll give you some. We'll give you some, trying to cover all the bases of everything else like that. It was just like a big, big stew, a quagmire and everything. I think that's the reason that all of a sudden it boiled up and that smell came out.

My gosh, now we're talking about the budget here and it's very important. It's a very important budget because I think that most likely, because if you look at the timing, this may be the last budget of this government. Then, when we come into power, we're going to have to build a new budget out of the energies that we're going to capitalize in our campaign and the energies that the people are going to bring forth.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the budget that this now-government has brought forth, I believe this will be their last budget. This may be their last budget, so that's one of the reasons why it has in it some spending. I'm not talking about some spending. I'm talking spending, big-time spending. I mean this budget here has got, I believe, it's over \$600-million worth of new spending and the money just keeps rolling in.

In fact, if you look at the budget breakdown, the federal government transfer payments I believe are almost \$400 million of that new spending. So this government here is just enjoying a windfall of money that they can just throw out to anybody that's looking for some sort of debt repayment or IOUs that are hanging out there that the government feels they can pander to for votes. They're just rowing out there like mad.

You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as all MLAs do—and this is part of our reason why we're in this Chamber is to go out back into our constituencies and talk to our constituents because

those are the people eventually that are either going to vote for us or they're going to vote against us. That's the type of things that we as MLAs are responsible for, is to listen to our constituency and our constituents.

So what are they telling us, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well, they're telling us that it's a ho-hum budget. They're not that impressed with it. There is no wow factor involved with this budget. There is no big selling point of this budget so it actually just sort of floated over top of people.

An Honourable Member: They didn't even know there was a budget.

Mr. Reimer: They didn't even know there was a budget, as one of my colleagues has mentioned. So it's something that if this government is going to the people with this great new vision that they feel—they call it a builder budget. Well, it's just like builder Bob that you see at the—you know, that some of the young children are playing with in building all their building blocks and things like that.

They've got a long way to go if they think that the public of Manitoba are going to look at this budget as the panacea of good times to come, because they talk about various initiatives they have taken. They talked about tax cuts and things like that. This government stands up, oh, we've done all these tax cuts and things like that, but there's another side to that. I think it's called user fees and other taxes, these little creepy things. In fact, I think someone has called it sneaky backdoor taxes.

You know something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was quite enthralled with that statement so I thought well, I've got to check through the finance report to see whether that is true. I mean, how can this government that stands up there and says they've cut all these taxes have all these little sneaky taxes coming in. So, you know, they give you a book to read with all their numbers on it and everything else like that. Everybody gets these books and you look at the numbers and you think, wow, there's some big numbers here. I mean these are big numbers. I mean we're talking spending of almost, I think it's almost up to \$9 billion a year. I mean that's, hoo-hoo-hoo, well, that's bigger.

So you look and you go through the book and you say, well, where are all these little sneaky taxes that they're talking about. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have to look a little bit and you start to go through your files and everything else like that, and

you look back on when it was and what it is today. For example, in the company offices, business-sector type of thing, if you want to change your name it used to be \$30; it's now \$40. If you want to change your name registration of a limited partnership, it used to be \$250; it's now \$300. That's enough.

Power of attorney, there's a fair amount of people that utilize this because there's a fair amount of seniors in our province and people that need this type of protection. So the power of attorney, you would think, well, this is a reasonable thing that some people take up, but the fee went up. It used to be \$20; it's now \$30.

Certificate of status, \$20 to \$30. You want to search a title, it's an extra \$10, from \$20 to \$30. So you've done your search and you need a photocopy. For a certified copy, that copy costs you \$15 just for a photocopy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You say, well, I would like an electronic search done for something. Just to bring up the screen it costs you 30 cents per screen. So you're rolling through trying to find something, that 30 cents adds up pretty fast.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's just some of the stuff this government has added on, these little sneaky backdoor taxes. Articles of incorporation has gone up from \$70 to \$100. Articles of amendment, you have to amend your constitution as a company, from \$135 to \$150. These are all things that this government—a lot of these members wouldn't know that because a lot of them have never been involved with business—but you see, this is how this government goes about getting these sneaky backdoor taxes. They go at it just a little bit here, a little bit there, a little bit here, a little bit there.

We talked about the taxes and everything like that. One of the biggest grabs was when they put the PST on labour and services like accounting and lawyers. My gosh, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the labour, in 2006 they collected over \$55 million. For the services of accounting and lawyers in 2006 they collected almost \$24 million. These are huge numbers, huge numbers.

The vehicle registration increase that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) brought in, that brought in an extra \$18.5 million. These are some of the things that are just all adding up as a little bit of here, a little bit there. So what does it add up to by the time you add up all these little nuances of little sneaky backdoor taxes? You've got almost \$450 million of new user fees, \$450 million. If you

add on to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this government raided from Manitoba Hydro a couple of years ago of over \$200 million, what are you up to? You're up to almost exactly the same amount of money that this Premier (Mr. Doer) has stood up and ballyhooed about how they've cut taxes of \$600 million. You add the \$450 million that I just mentioned plus what they raided out of Manitoba Hydro for about over \$200 million, I would think that's a wash.

* (12:00)

I've got to be very careful when people tell me, well, this government is cutting taxes. But at the same time they're coming at you from the side and the backdoor taxes and trying to get more out of you. That will continue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the one thing that this government knows very well, that if it moves you can tax it. They're doing everything they can to get all the taxes they can. I've got to mention, as I mentioned the spending, I was saying \$9 billion, it's \$9.2 billion that they're going to be spending. As I mentioned, this is up \$3.3 billion from the first budget that they brought in seven years ago, \$3.3 billion. It's amazing what that money could have done with tax breaks and encouragement of private investment and jobs that can be created by letting people have their own money and have the ability for them to make the decision as to where they're going.

During that same time period, as pointed out, from their first budget, they have spent more than \$61 billion. A lot of that is new money and a lot of that money is from the federal government, the federal government, because Manitoba is a have-not province, through equalization, because of the fact that our neighbours are doing so well that they are taking in more money and that wealth is floating into Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members of the government talk about their premier being the dean of the premiers here in Canada. Well, I think that maybe he's more likely Oliver Twist of the premiers of Canada. He's awfully good at going down to Ottawa with his hand out, saying I want more, Mr. Harper, I want more. It's the wealth that is being created by our neighbours that is bringing in all this extra money into Manitoba. So what type of initiative, if you want to call it, does the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Cabinet have in trying to recruit, encourage, promote new growth here in Manitoba,

get new industry in here? They say, well, we really don't have to work too hard because Alberta is doing well, B.C. is doing well, Ontario is doing well. They're going to have more money, so with equalization, we're going to get more money, and they did. Last year they got almost \$400-million worth of new funding from the federal government. That's great stuff. We don't even have to work for it. That's a great position to be in. Just sit back and let the money come in. Let the good times roll.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

This government is enjoying unprecedented wealth and growth and it's not necessarily because of what they're doing. It's just because of where we are. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it's still as a have-not province. Now, I don't think that that's anything that I'm proud of. I certainly don't want to keep saying that because I think that there's too much pride, there's too much initiative, there's too much potential within the Manitoba population and the entrepreneurship. But you've got to let them go. You've got to let them breathe. You've got to give them the opportunity to grow and develop themselves and to make jobs, because as I think government recognized and we recognized, over 80 percent of the job growth in Manitoba is small business. Small business is the engine. That's the engine. So what do you do? You give them the ability to spend the money, to reinvest the money that this government should be doing in tax breaks and tax reduction so that that money will go back into their people.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I read somewhere that business, when asked the question what would you do if such and such a tax was eliminated? Where would that money go? I think that almost all of them said it would go back into our employees for recruitment, for retraining and retention for people in our industry. I think that that's normal growth for industry. Industry wants to succeed. Industry wants to grow. Your biggest asset is always your employees. So if you can give your employees more money, more incentives, more training they are not only going to be better for themselves, they're going to be better for your industry and better indirectly for the whole economy of Manitoba.

Those are the types of things that I think it's a mindset that you have to instil in small business and big business too. In fact, big business, they have the ability to say, well, if it's not competitive and I can't see the advantage, they'll move. They'll move to any

other province or any other state, down to the United States even, to get away from oppressive taxes.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be competitive in this world of trying not only to retain the industry that we have but make it grow and bring in more industry, because Manitoba has got a tremendous opportunity to grow. We've got the abilities. We've got the resources. We've got the ability to expand our resources. We've got tremendous opportunities, and I've never heard the government mention potash.

Potash is a huge engine in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is enjoying phenomenal wealth. In fact, believe it or not, I looked on the TSX, the Toronto Stock Exchange, yesterday, and the Saskatchewan Potash company is trading at about \$190 a share. This is a private company that is doing very, very well in Saskatchewan. But that potash development is right on our border, and I know there was often talk about we should be doing something on this side of the Saskatchewan border close to where Esterhazy is in that area, you know, to look for the continuation of the potash mine so that we can get some of that growth. This government has never looked at that, has never even an inkling of going after something like that, to get development here in Manitoba.

So I mean that's just one example. There are other areas I'm sure that we can look at, you know, to make Manitoba more competitive. The idea that this government is creating wealth and that, it's just not happening. The only wealth that we're creating or enjoying is a lot more transfer payments coming in from Ottawa, so if our neighbours are doing well, we're doing well indirectly, but it's the initiative to make a difference and make change. I think that this is what the people are saying and recognizing out on the street right now because I get that, you know, from some of my constituents, not only in my area but other areas. They realize that they're dealing with a government now that is getting to the end of its mandate. It is getting tired. The ideas that they thought were going to come out of this budget really didn't materialize, so I mean they're saying, well, you know, we recognize that maybe, you know, it's time for a change so that whenever the election is called, then we'll be able to look at your government, which is our side of the House, and look at trying to get things done.

But, Mr. Speaker, with those words, I know that there's a lot more I could've put on the record in various other areas, but I thought that I would just

mention that, as alluded to in my opening remarks, I think this is one of the first times that a budget debate has been stopped because of stink. I guess that's the reason why because the budget is a stinker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, before I get into the main text of my speech I would just like to comment briefly on the words of the member who spoke before me, the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer), who was referring to this strange odour that emanated in the building yesterday afternoon. I was present myself, and I worked in the oil fields for 18 years, and I detected that it was the odour, it was a hydro carbon odour that was emanating. While the Member for Southdale seems to cast aspersions on our budget, saying it was a stinker, what the smell actually was, was the smell of asphalt.

* (12:10)

The smell of asphalt in the air, spring is upon us, and as our Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux) likes to say, the people of Manitoba and us, we do love the smell of asphalt in the morning. So, just to correct the Member for Southdale, that's what it was. Spring is upon us and the asphalt machines are firing up, and we are going to undertake our most ambitious highways capital program, I think, in the history of the province—the history of the province—\$400 million. The Member for Southdale might accuse us of being big spenders and so forth, but the fact is that they left this province in such a deplorable state across the board. Whether it's university buildings or hospitals or clinics, our highways, our drainage ditches, everything had been neglected and ignored for their entire decade in office.

So it's required: a new government, a government with a builder's mentality to finally step up to the plate to address this infrastructure deficit, and that's certainly what we're doing. That was evident yesterday when the smell of asphalt penetrated into this very Chamber, Mr. Speaker. So I hope the Member for Southdale appreciates that. I know that the people of Manitoba do.

I want to begin my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by thanking the members of my constituency, the people of the Interlake, for not once but twice now electing me to serve them in this Chamber. It's a distinct honour to stand in this august building, and

it's a privilege. I hope to continue on. With their good graces I will. We'll be returning in the days to come.

I also want to credit you, Mr. Speaker. You've been in that Chair for close to eight years now, and you've done a wonderful job. You've been the epitome of impartiality. I mean it most sincerely that you have truly represented the office of the Speaker well. I look back to previous Speakers, and there's another one that sits in this Chamber as well. The Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) has done a good job as well, but, obviously, hasn't toed the party line as well on that side of the House and has experienced a political assassination by his own people for speaking his mind, for being impartial. It's too bad that that's happened, but I suspect he may be returning as well in some other form, and we are hopeful of that. I think back to other Speakers before I was here who didn't uphold the office as well as you did, Sir, during the debate over the sale of the MTS telephone system. I think the office was greatly discredited by Mrs. Dacquay in not recognizing speakers on our side of the House and forcing closure, de facto closure, on the debate of the sale of the phone company.

But I will get into the main text of my speech which is the theme of this budget, which is a builder's budget. I'm very proud of that because I'm a builder myself. The years that I wasn't working in the oil fields, I was a carpenter. I followed in the footsteps of my father, and I know that building is important. As I said, the previous government neglected this province to the utmost. We're certainly stepping up to the plate. I think of highways. I think of the fact that this NDP government has spent close to \$50 million in highways infrastructure in my constituency, and that compares quite favourably to the record of members opposite. In fact, the only highway they built in the 10 years that they were in office was the road past the house of Mrs. Green, who was the Conservative candidate running against me not once but twice. That was where the highway's work was done, but the rest of the riding was ignored completely.

The same applies to our drainage infrastructure. The ditches were full, the bulrushes. There were poplar saplings six inches in diameter growing out of the drains in the Interlake. We've certainly stepped up to the plate in that regard. Well, just as an example, we came into office, there were nine conservation districts in the province of Manitoba;

we have now doubled that to 18 conservation districts, which is truly the way to approach water management. Just this last budget cycle, we have not increased incrementally the capital being spent in the Interlake region—and that's not just my constituency; there are four constituencies in the region—we have tripled the budget up to \$1.8 million, and that is certainly a huge leap in the right direction in order to address the infrastructure deficit.

I look at schools because, of course, education is very important to our people. First comes our health care, obviously, but then, if we're going to retain youth and build our economy, which we have certainly been doing since we've come to office, then we do have to make investments into our education infrastructure, and that's not just the schools, but the universities and the colleges as well. I think the very creation of a University College of the North was a paradigm shift. Members opposite, of course, didn't even know that the north existed. So, you know, for us to have gone to that degree, I think, is commendable. We've expanded our community colleges. We've got the Red River Princess Street Campus now.

So, certainly, from a higher learning perspective, we have stepped up to the plate, and also on the public schools front as well, Mr. Speaker. I, again, look to my constituency, and I can look at practically all of the schools in my riding have been addressed. Both schools in Fisher Branch were rebuilt in our time in office. We're just completing a brand-new school in the community of Inwood. We've fixed boilers in the Riverton school. We've improved the early years school in Arborg, and on and on and on. We've recognized that in order for our children to learn in a most effective manner, they do have to be in a good environment and that means a decent school, and this government has stepped up to the plate, as have we done when it comes to our health care facilities.

I know I've been speaking of my constituency, but, especially on a health front, you can see that this government does not play favourites, Mr. Speaker. We're addressing all areas of the province, whether it's up in northern Manitoba, which was completely ignored by the previous Conservative government—

An Honourable Member: CT scanners.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: We've got CT scanners in Steinbach. We've built the new Boundary Trails Hospital in Morden-Winkler, which, certainly, isn't

strong New Democratic country, you know. They may be coming over to us at the end of the day, but, for the time being, you know, that is a strong seat for members opposite.

They diddled along for the 10 years that they were in office. They talked and talked about health care and infrastructure. The hospital in Brandon is a prime example. How many times did they announce—

An Honourable Member: Seven times.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Seven times. Seven times they announced that hospital. Well, this government walks the walk, and we built that hospital in Brandon. We built the hospital in Morden-Winkler. We put a CT scanner in Steinbach. We've built a new hospital in Gimli, as well in the Interlake because, again, infrastructure sadly lacking. We put a new clinic into the community of Riverton, put a new ambulance garage in Gypsumville.

When I mention ambulances, well, let's not forget the fact that this government replaced the entire fleet of ambulances so that we can adequately take care of our people. I think, just recently, we've also addressed the issue of transfer fees between facilities to—

An Honourable Member: Sneaky backdoor taxes.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Yes, a sneaky backdoor tax that members opposite, although they talk the talk in regard to rural Manitoba, this government stepped up to the plate and addressed that particular issue.

We've, certainly, been there in support of our farmers, Mr. Speaker. There's no doubt in that regard. Again, right after we came to office, I'd like to remind members opposite, it was this government that put in place unseeded acreage insurance. I remember the Member for Lakeside, Harry Enns, the former Minister of Agriculture, saying, well, we were going to do that. Soon as we were re-elected, that was one of the first things on our agenda was unseeded acreage, but it never happened in the nine or 10 years that they were in office. They talked the talk. They never walked the walk. That's why they ended up on the opposition benches. That's why they're going to stay there for another five to 10 years to come yet.

* (12:20)

On a whole range of issues, we have addressed the needs of farmers, whether it's trying to improve the situation with biofuels, the biodiesel initiatives,

ethanol initiatives, whether it's enhancing crop insurance, whether it's tax relief for farmers, something that the Conservatives like to talk about, but it's this government that actually put in place rebates for farmers up to 60 percent, triple of what we had promised initially when we were elected. We've gone to 60 percent. We're rebating the education tax on farm land. This budget boosted that to 65 percent, and our objective is to go to 80 percent. So that's walking the walk. Members opposite, what did they do? They increased the portioning on farm land. If there ever was an example of talking things up but not delivering, that was a prime example of that.

In regard to our farmers, I just have to look at the travesty that is being perpetrated upon the people of western Canada with regard to the Canadian Wheat Board. This is a disgrace of monumental proportions. If ever there was a blow against the family farm, this is it, Mr. Speaker. To disable this entity that's existed for over 70 years and has served our farmers well, you know that might be their agenda, of course, the corporatization and the industrialization of food production.

They would prefer these family farmers; they want them to stick around. They need somebody to drive the tractors at the end of the day or shovel manure in the hog barns. But those family farmers will not be owning their land anymore. They'll be working for people like my Uncle Cubby, the millionaire farmer that has to own all the land in the countryside. I think he's got close to 60 acres now. Where there might have been 30 families 50 years ago farming, now there's just one man. That's the way they do business. That's the way they operate.

Killing the Canadian Wheat Board is going to kill a lot of those small, average-sized farmers. They're not going to be able to compete, because it's all economy of scale. You've got to get larger, larger, larger. The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) says, that's democracy. Well, if ever there was a farce, it's what's being perpetrated upon us by Mr. Strahl and company. This is beyond the pale, how they have put up this myth that somehow the Canadian Wheat Board can exist at the same time that they function in an open market, when the Canadian Wheat Board has no elevators, they have no grain terminals. To expect them to continue to exist alongside these grain companies is pure fallacy. For them to put this onto the ballot, to try and manipulate and confuse the farmers is a classic sign

that they have no respect for the farming community whatsoever.

I look to an article by Laura Rance, the editor of *The Manitoba Co-operator*. Just to look at some of her comments, they say that the Wheat Board can compete. I will quote what's her name here. She's a representative of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, a very ultra-Conservative organization dedicated to the death of the Wheat Board. She says, and I quote: I believe the Canadian Wheat Board can function in a marketing-choice environment, and I'm spending countless hours figuring out how it can be just that. Laura Rance goes on to say: Now that's blind faith. The only downside to heaven is one must die to get there. Truer words were never spoken.

Mr. Strahl continues in the same vein. His arrogance and disdain for the people comes across in some of his words where he made a reference to himself having the ability to walk on water, if you can believe it. If I walked on water, they would—well, Mrs. Rance goes on to say regarding his walk-on-water analogy: He said if I walked on water, they'd put out a press release saying I couldn't swim. Well, that's just pure ignorance. Pure ignorance and arrogance. It shows no respect whatsoever for producers or for the integrity of the Parliament, and it applies in our Chamber as well. *[interjection]* If he wants to walk on water, Mrs. Rance says: Well, we hope that he can—swim, that is, because as many a preschooler has learned the hard way, this is the time of year when walking on water looks deceptively possible.

Strahl has skated on to the deep pool of western grain policy with all the skill and grace of a five-year-old with blades strapped on for the first time. Well, that is as apt a description of the minister and his attack on this institution is deplorable, and it's deplorable that members opposite, the majority of them from rural constituencies here in this province, have automatically fallen along with the advice and leadership of their masters in Ottawa. The ultra-right-wing new Conservatives have instructed their boys here in Manitoba: Follow suit. Kill the Wheat Board, that's our objective; you're all going to get a lot richer as a result of it. So that's pretty pathetic, but that's the nature of the beast, and that's why they're going to remain on that side of the House. I think it was 70 percent of Manitobans, in a fair plebiscite that said yes or no to the Wheat Board; 70 percent of Manitobans said yes. So watch out boys. You better

change your tune; otherwise, you're going to be there for a long time to come.

The Tories are classic destroyers, is what they are. That's why they don't like our budget. Our budget is a builder's budget. They're destroyers. Any time farmers try and get together to do something to try and improve their position to add value, they muck it up. You just have to look at how they behaved throughout this whole ranchers crisis. I know, I have a lot of ranchers in my constituency. They wanted this Ranchers Choice Beef Co-op, but these guys on this side of the House here, these Conservatives, did everything in their power, they and their cohorts in the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, bent over backwards trying to delay this. I remember all the rhetoric when we were trying to implement the \$2 checkoff in order to fund this because farmers didn't have the money. We recognized that when we said: Well, we don't want your money, just commit your cattle. *[interjection]*

We didn't do that either at the end of the day, unfortunately. But these guys went beyond the pale, and I just think of the meeting in Grosse Isle when we discussed the checkoff. Here we had one of the neo-Conservatives, one of their stars, Howard Hilstrom, former member of Parliament for Selkirk-Interlake, my constituency, stand up at the microphone in Grosse Isle and call for civil disobedience. He wanted civil disobedience. Here is a member of Parliament, a former member of Parliament, a lawmaker, and I might add a law enforcer, as he had a full career as a member of the RCMP. For him to go to such lengths, a lawmaker, a law enforcer and a neo-Conservative, for him to preach civil disobedience was a disgrace to the parliamentary system, and these guys were right behind him at the microphone.

I went to Dauphin and we had Betty Green there, the Conservative candidate who ran against me twice was—

An Honourable Member: How did she do?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: I think she made it two or three times to the microphone to criticize the checkoff. She had to push the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) out of the way a couple of times, I think, because they were in a hurry to be there as well. But that's how it is.

When the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) bent over backwards as Minister of

Conservation to fast-track the water treatment plant that would have put that over the top., these guys were criticizing him, right? And they were accusing us of being socialist, as I recall it. Socialist interveners, but remember their words in this Chamber: Just build it. Come on, you guys, just build it.

Regardless of whether the ranchers were committed to the project, they just wanted us to throw taxpayers' money onto the table with, really, no accountability whatsoever and build these huge

state-owned enterprises. Well, my goodness, if that's not communism, I don't know what is. Here we have members opposite, when they're sitting on the opposition benches—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Interlake will have eight minutes remaining.

The time being 12:30, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 13, 2007

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