

Second Session - Thirty-Ninth 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-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	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.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
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MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
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McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
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NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
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SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 20—The Gunshot and Stab Wounds Mandatory Reporting Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 20, The Gunshot and Stab Wounds Mandatory Reporting Act; Loi sur la déclaration obligatoire des blessures par balle et par arme blanche, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: This bill will provide both clarity for health-care providers and protection for the public.

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

Bill 21—The Advisory Council on Workforce Development Act

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), that Bill 21, The Advisory Council on Workforce Development Act; Loi sur le Conseil consultatif du développement de la main-d'oeuvre, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: This bill establishes an advisory council to provide information and advice to the minister about work force trends and about initiatives, policies and strategies for developing Manitoba's work force.

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

Bill 225—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Bicycle Helmets)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 225, The Highway Traffic

Amendment Act (Bicycle Helmets), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, mandatory bicycle helmet legislation changes behaviour, increases the use of bicycle helmets, prevents serious head injuries and saves taxpayers' dollars. This is actually a quote from Dr. Ward, and that's the essence of what this bill would do.

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

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting-placement clients.

This is signed by Lorrie McCasky, Rachael Voth, Marilyn Braun 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.

Dividing of Trans-Canada Highway

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The seven-kilometre stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway passing through Headingley is an extremely busy stretch of road, averaging 18,000 vehicles daily.

This section of the Trans-Canada Highway is one of the few remaining stretches of undivided highway in Manitoba, and it has seen more than 100 accidents in the last two years, some of them fatal.

Manitoba's Assistant Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation told a Winnipeg radio station on October 16, 2007, that when it comes to highways projects the provincial government has a flexible response program, and we have a couple of opportunities to advance these projects into our five-year plan.

In the interests of protecting motorist safety, it is critical that the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is completed as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider making the completion of the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley in 2008 an urgent provincial government priority.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider evaluating whether any other steps can be taken to improve motorist safety while the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is being completed.

This is signed by John Larkin, Barb Larkin, Andy Larkin and many other Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Retired Teachers' Cost of Living Adjustment

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Since 1977, Manitoba teachers have made contributions to the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund Pension Adjustment Account,

PAA, to finance a Cost of Living Adjustment, COLA, to their base pension once they retire.

Despite this significant funding, 11,000 retired teachers and 15,000 active teachers currently find themselves facing the future with little hope of a meaningful COLA.

For 2007, a COLA of only 0.63 percent was paid to retired teachers.

The COLA paid in recent years has eroded the purchasing power of teachers' pension dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider adequate funding for the PAA on a long-term basis to ensure that the current retired teachers, as well as all future retirees, receive a fair COLA.

This has been signed by Marilyn Huska, Pat Harding, Madeline Coopsammy and many, many, many other Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Crocus Investment Fund–Public Inquiry

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

The 2007 provincial election did not clear the NDP government of any negligence with regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

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

The provincial auditor's report, the Manitoba Securities Commission's investigation, the RCMP investigation and the involvement of revenue Canada and our courts collectively will not answer the questions that must be answered in regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by F. Ines, P. Rarhma, L. Ines and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Road 481

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Provincial Road 481 between PTH 68 and PR 276 is in a state of major disrepair.

Potholes and washboarding have become common along this stretch of road.

The safety of persons travelling on this road has been compromised because of this deterioration.

The road is the primary transportation link for the people of Cayer and Crane River and is the only road residents can use to access those communities.

These roads are subject to heavy travel and have worn down over time with little maintenance, leaving them in a state that presents a safety risk to the people that rely on them.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to examine the state of PR 481 to see first-hand the state of disrepair that this road has become subject to.

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to consider action that will see this road repaired and subsequently maintained for the safety of local residents.

This petition is signed by Elizabeth McKay, Daniel Beaulieu, Blair Campbell and many, many, many others.

Manitoba Liquor Control Commission— Liquor Licence Fees

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for the petition:

The Manitoba Liquor Control Commission has substantially raised the cost of annual liquor fees for restaurants, cocktail lounges and other Manitoba businesses.

The MLCC justifies this increase by stating that the cost of an annual licence is being increased to better reflect rising administration costs.

For some small-business owners the cost of an annual liquor licence has more than doubled. These fee hikes are a significant burden for business owners.

The decision to increase the annual licence fee, while at the same time eliminating the 2 percent supplementary licence fee payable on the purchase of spirits, wines and coolers, has the effect of greatly disadvantaging smaller businesses. Small businesses which do not purchase liquor from the MLCC in large volumes will not receive the same benefit from the elimination of this supplementary fee. Instead, they are facing substantially increased costs simply to keep their doors open.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider working with MLCC to find alternative means of addressing rising administrative costs.

To request the minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider working with MLCC to revise the decision to implement a significant annual licence fee increase.

TO urge the minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider ensuring that the unique challenges faced by small businesses are better taken into account in the future.

This petition is signed by Ron Jorgensen, Crystal Bailey, Kim Dill and many, many other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Monsieur le Président, je suis très heureux de déposer les rapports suivants: Manitoba Public Insurance Preliminary Unaudited Quarterly Financial Report, quatrième trimestre, 12 months ending February 29, 2008.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to table the following reports: Manitoba Public Insurance Preliminary Unaudited Quarterly Financial Report, Fourth Quarter, 12 months ending February 29, 2008.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Kelvin High School 90 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Janice Bazan, Mr. Gerry Urbanowich and Ms. Rachel Wall. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Public Safety Government Initiatives

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we saw here in the city of Winnipeg our 10th murder in a time period of less than three and a half months. If it keeps up at this rate through the balance of the year we're on track for at least 35 murders this year putting us back into a very unenviable position of being the murder capital of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the murder that took place yesterday occurred on a block that isn't normally known for crime and violence, and such acts reduce the sense of safety and security for many Manitobans, particularly those living in communities represented by NDP members of the Legislature. It sends a terrible signal to all Manitobans, to those who live here and who might consider living here.

These NDP MLAs who are represented by their constituents to protect them and provide safety and security know that they haven't had a government that's been on their side and standing up for them within their communities.

Manitobans are looking for real action. Manitobans are telling us that public safety is their top priority. Instead, Mr. Speaker, in the recent budget the government barely made mention of public safety and the actions contained in it were pitiful.

I want to ask the Premier: Why is it that the NDP is so out of touch with the concerns of regular Manitobans when it comes to the safety of their communities?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, victims of any violent crime or alleged perpetrators of crime, no matter where it happens, no matter what community

it takes place, no matter what neighbourhood an alleged murder takes place or an actual murder takes place is serious for all citizens of Manitoba. It is not a partisan issue. It is an issue for all our community and all the people.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the victim yesterday was in a location that we are in touch with. We just announced recently more money for a wellness centre and a recreation centre in that area. We also announced on top of other police funding that we've made in the past additional funding of police officers in Winnipeg and Brandon, RCMP officers who are also extremely busy in this province, additional funding for RCMP members.

I know that the member opposite was at the crime announcement yesterday with the Prime Minister and the federal Minister of Justice, and we went through a number of areas where we thought there was good progress in terms of laws that had been changed in Canada. We also pointed out that we supported C-25, a law before Parliament.

I would also point out that some of the laws that have been passed recently take effect in early May and some others that we think are very important in early July of 2008. We continue to believe, Mr. Speaker, that investing in prevention—and we note the \$500,000 in the budget for inner-city recreation where we know the lights are out when buildings are available. We believe in more police officers. We believe in more prosecutors. We believe in the prosecutors' ability to prosecute with tougher sentences. The work that's been done in Parliament that's been positive we applaud. The work that still has to be done we look forward to.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this is an extremely important issue for all of us, and I would not reduce it to partisan constituency considerations.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Premier that it's not a partisan issue. I think it is an acknowledged fact that most of the incidents that have taken place in recent time take place within constituencies that happen to be represented by government members, so I don't think that there's anybody that would deny those facts. The reality is that for eight years we've been hearing answers like that from this government.

* (13:50)

We've been hearing them talk the talk when it comes to dealing with crime, but clearly the approach is not working. When we look at the level

of violence that is occurring here in our city, when we look at the fact that the Hells Angels moved in in 2000 after the NDP came to power and we look at the various other things that have taken place throughout our city and province, whatever they're doing, it's clearly not working.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we were going into the budget we asked for the government to make public safety a priority. We asked that they embark on a very reasonable and affordable plan to add 350 new personnel to our justice system between police in both our cities and our rural communities. We talked about the need for our Prosecutions branch to get the resources it needs to be able to do its job. We talked about support for the judiciary and also the construction of a new facility.

I want to ask the Premier why it is that he feels he can afford to throw away \$1.5 billion on the bipolar line, but he doesn't have enough money to fund our justice system.

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the number the member opposite is using is fictional. Secondly, when the member opposite is talking about some communities, most of them, quite frankly, have a lot of members on the government side and we'd like to thank the people for that support.

During the election campaign, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, you know, would grandstand in front of Earl's in election ads. That might be the kind of junior Republican strategy that members opposite employed in the last election campaign, but, of course, after they promised—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: After the election campaign, after they promised a reckless tax reduction that they never costed and the people realized that—the people are always the smartest of the pundits, Mr. Speaker, because they actually know what's going on.

After they did that, they came back and this year before the budget, they said, oh, spend at the rate of inflation. Only spend at the rate of inflation. So the reckless tax cut last year; spend at the rate of inflation this year; go to the Chamber of Commerce, say that's what I would do if we were in government.

Mr. Speaker, the Justice budget is three times, four times, the rate of inflation in Manitoba. Of course, last week, the \$60 million for agriculture was not enough. Did the member opposite go to his

convention in Brandon and outline his plan? No, he didn't have a plan. He had no plan for agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, \$60 million was not enough last week when the gallery was full. This week, four times inflation or three times inflation is three times greater than what the member opposite proposed in the media when he was making an opposite comment, as what he did a year ago. That would result in the layoff of police officers, the reduction of Crown prosecutors, no money for the inner city for community-based recreation programs, the reduction of the two police officers in Brandon, the elimination of the RCMP extra positions in Manitoba.

At least we're consistent from one day to the other, Mr. Speaker, and I would suggest to the member opposite if he's going to change his position again tomorrow, we'll stay tuned.

Four times inflation, but we still have a major challenge in this community. There's no question about it, Mr. Speaker, but I suggest to the member that he should actually try to be consistent. I think it would help him in terms of being consistent on this very important—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. McFadyen: I think anybody who goes back over projections and numbers on a look-forward basis will find that we have consistently been right and he has consistently been wrong all the way back to 1999, every single time, Mr. Speaker.

Up and down the line, Mr. Speaker, he's been wrong every single time. Every single time we have released plans, he has come out for his short-term political purposes and attacked them. In the long run, we've been vindicated and we will again be vindicated when we talk about the need for policies that—*[inaudible]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: —our province.

Now, I just want to correct one inaccuracy that he's been repeating time and again, Mr. Speaker. We called for spending at the rate of economic growth. He's been running around saying that economic growth is going to be 3 percent in Manitoba this year. We think it's reasonable to be able to manage within the rate of economic growth if you don't waste money on things like Spirited Energy campaigns, \$3 million and counting; \$1.5 billion on the power line by taking the long route. I know the Minister of

Finance (Mr. Selinger) argues he's only throwing away \$640 million on that project. But, either way, what we're talking about is a small fraction of what they're going to throw away on that project, Spirited Energy, and all the other examples of waste and mismanagement that we have seen under this NDP government.

It's a matter of setting priorities, Mr. Speaker. They don't believe in tax cuts according to his comments now. We believe tax reductions to make us competitive will bring people and investment to Manitoba and increase provincial government revenues. That's the difference between him and us. That's why the *Free Press* refers to the dead-hand Doer administration and why they refer to us as the optimists.

I want to ask the Premier now: Why won't he do what Manitobans are calling on him to do? We have 10 dead Manitobans so far this year. Why wouldn't he do what law enforcement officials are calling for and build a new jail so that we can put those who are interrupting the security of our communities behind bars so that Manitobans can feel safe in their community?

Mr. Doer: The member opposite should be aware that there is \$35 million more in the capital budget and a considerable number of positions in the public service for the new Milner Ridge facility, the additional facility. There is a new facility being built for the replacement of the women's jail.

Mr. Speaker, when we came into office there was not one correctional officer approved in the budget for the Headingley Correctional Institution, and the money in the budget for the capital investment in both the correctional facilities and all the health capital was off the books. Off the books. It didn't exist. It was in ether. That's why the members opposite could stand in front of Earl's, because their promise is costed in ether rather than real dollars and real spending, and then they come back and say, oh, you've increased the public service. Well, it's jail officers at Headingley and a future in Milner's Ridge.

Mr. Speaker, last year the members opposite said there's nothing to do with federal laws to be changed. I'm glad the Member for Lac du Bonnet today, in the *Brandon Sun*, says we need to get those federal laws changed. I'm glad his Justice critic or his Finance critic, his Justice critic has got a different position than they had last year.

I also want to say that last year the members opposite, one of their great predictions was the immobilizer program would not work in Manitoba. They were very critical of the immobilizer program. I want to thank the police officers, I want to thank everybody in the community and I want to thank MPI for bringing in an immobilizer program to reduce car thefts and danger on our streets from that very serious issue also in our community in Manitoba.

Public Safety Government Initiatives

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Winnipeg continues to be a very dangerous city under this NDP government. Yesterday's homicide was the 10th homicide in the city of Winnipeg for this year so far. We're on track again, again to become Canada's murder capital.

I ask the Minister of Justice: Why has he failed to make our communities safer?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I find it very, very curious, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Lac du Bonnet yesterday would tell the *Brandon Sun*, and I'm quoting something like this: That the NDP government ought to get the federal government to make tougher penalties in the Criminal Code. Let me repeat that: The NDP government ought to get the federal government to make tougher penalties in the Criminal Code.

Where has he been for five years? Every day they stand up in the House and they say we blame Ottawa, and he says yesterday, finally, the NDP should ask the federal government to make the penalties tougher. Where has he been? That's what we've done, and we've had co-operation, and that's one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:00)

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, one thing I know about the Justice Minister, I know where he's been in the last five years. He's been running from the criminals of this province.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's homicide was particularly disturbing. The victim was shot at least twice after the criminal emptied his gun with eight shots on a street that's a normally quiet neighbourhood in this city.

So I ask the Minister of Justice, again, answer the question: Why has he failed to make public safety a priority for his government?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I actually grew up two blocks from there and actually lived there recently.

I want to know why the member yesterday for the first time after every speech of members' opposite—and I've been here—on the budget said, you keep blaming Ottawa. You keep blaming Ottawa. You keep blaming Ottawa. The member said yesterday, when is this NDP government going to go and ask Ottawa to make penalties tougher? Where has he been when the Minister of Justice, the former minister, went to Ottawa? Where is he when I went to talk to Rob Nicholson and we got changes to the Criminal Code taking effect May 1, dealing with dangerous weapons, taking effect July 1 to deal with impaired driving. Those are Manitoban issues. That's changes in the federal Criminal Code, Mr. Speaker, and, in addition, we put resources in the community that keep people out of crime.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the problem here isn't the federal Conservatives. The problem here is his support of Jack Layton. That's the problem.

On Monday he'll stand with the federal Justice Minister and support his initiatives and on Tuesday he'll campaign with Jack Layton here in the city of Winnipeg. That's the problem.

Public safety is the No. 1 issue to Manitobans but not to the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, last month there were 10 shootings, this month three. Last month three Winnipeggers lost their lives. This month another Winnipegger lost his life.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Why has he failed to make public safety a priority?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, when the all-party task force went to Ottawa, we met with all three parties who supported the bills that were brought forward regarding the Criminal Code.

Mr. Speaker, when I went down Semple Avenue in 1996, after three individuals had been murdered on Semple Avenue—involved with the Hells Angels—in 1996, when I went down to Semple Avenue, which at that time was in my constituency, I knew we had to get more resources into the community. I knew we had to hire more police officers. That's why there's 150 more in Manitoba now than there was in '99.

We know that we needed programs like Spotlight that look at the hundred most difficult individuals to deal with. We knew we needed programs like Turnabout. They voted against every single program, Mr. Speaker.

Public Safety Government Initiatives

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): He was a grade 12 graduate who'd taken a year off school to figure out his future. He was an athlete, a boyfriend and a good son. He was only 17. He was killed by a stray bullet in downtown Winnipeg. His name: Phillippe Haiart. He was an innocent bystander caught in the crossfire.

I'd like to ask this government: When are they going to do the right thing, get tough on crime so that more innocent people do not die or are hurt in this city?

Mr. Chomiak: I want to indicate to the House I've had some very, very moving and very important meetings with the family, Mr. Speaker, who I find to be of extraordinary forgiveness and extraordinary support in this matter.

I want to assure all members that when we took our 11 amendments on gang violence, including drive-by shootings to Ottawa, the minister responsible for the Criminal Code told me and all the other 10 Justice ministers that Ottawa would introduce some of our amendments, including drive-by shootings, into the Criminal Code of Canada by the end of the year, and I think Rob Nicholson is a man of his word.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, a man was walking in a parking lot in Charleswood near a convenience store when two girls approached him and both stabbed him. The man was 19 years old. The girls were 14 and 17 years old.

So how many more teens are going to have to worry about being stabbed or hurt as they go for a Slurpee, while this government sits here and doesn't do what they should be and get tough on crime?

Mr. Chomiak: About a year and a half ago, when two young people were murdered on the Island Lake First Nations and we sent in 30 RCMP officers on the ground and put in place some programs for the community, we at that time vowed that we had to change the direction of the Criminal Code.

That was one of the precipitators, Mr. Speaker, of our changes to the Criminal Code that we presented a year ago, a year ago about this month that we went to Ottawa with our 11 amendments and which the federal Minister of Justice has assured me that the first tranche of those changes, including drive-by shootings and some of the random violence matters dealing with gangs and gang violence, will be brought into legislation this year. I believe Mr. Nicholson and the federal government and all of the parties in Ottawa are men of their word on that.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, the way the minister talks about federal opportunities, it makes you wonder why they stand and invite Jack Layton or Pat Martin onto their stage and say stand side by side with them while those two are gutting what is happening in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, a 17-year-old girl enjoyed some shopping at Portage Place Shopping Centre. At 7:30 she left to go home. She goes to a car in a parking lot where many of us have parked. She is approached by a 19-year-old male, forced in her car and viciously raped.

Mr. Speaker, whose daughter is going to be next because this government will not get its act together and send out the message that they are tough on crime?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, ever since we've been government, this particular member has had a propensity to bring deaths to this Legislature on a consistent basis. I've never seen anything like it in this Chamber in my life. She might ask her seatmate why he stated publicly yesterday that we ought to start lobbying the federal government to make the Criminal Code tougher, why her seatmate from Lac du Bonnet yesterday said we ought to do that on crime, when for years we've been looking for their support on these matters and they have been stunningly silent and tried to give the impression that we had the responsibility for criminal law.

Mr. Speaker, we put in more programs. We are a leader in Canada in terms of preventative programs and we've been applauded across the country for safer communities, fortified buildings, Turnabout, Spotlight, all programs that we—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Livestock Industry Government Initiatives

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, this morning I spoke with a mayor from a southern Manitoba community whose business and industries

are deeply tied with the livestock industry including pork and cattle production. He and other municipal officials will be meeting soon to discuss the pork industry, the impact of this economic downturn in their communities.

I ask the Minister of Agriculture if she's taking part in this very important meeting or is she going to stay safely within the perimeter of the city of Winnipeg?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, our livestock producers are indeed facing very serious economic challenges. They are facing challenges because of high input costs, a high Canadian dollar and loss of sales to the U.S. market for certain products.

Mr. Speaker, our government has recognized and has met with both the industries. That's why we put in place extra programs. Before we brought the budget in, we put in additional programs that the livestock industry asked us for. The pork producers asked us for a loan program to help with their cash flow. Cattle producers asked us to defer their BSE loans. We did that and we put in place a payment of close to \$15 million for the cattle producers.

Mr. Speaker, many people depend—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: Representatives from a major accounting firm have warned Manitoba's livestock sector that it is on the brink of collapse. Don't take my word for it; read it in today's *Free Press*. This government refuses to call the Standing Committee on Agriculture, refuses to lead an all-party task force to Ottawa to fight the challenges of this livestock industry.

I ask the minister again: Why is this minister refusing to come up with new strategies challenging the livestock industry? Why are producers in rural communities taking the bull by themselves without leadership from this government?

* (14:10)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I find it very, very interesting that the member opposite continues to call for the Standing Committee on Agriculture to meet when Conservatives met in Brandon last weekend and there was no discussion about the livestock industry or the crisis that was in the livestock industry. The only agriculture item they had on their agenda was how to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board, the one place where producers have power in the marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite, if they have ideas, should bring them forward. They did not bring forward any ideas at their convention, and now they say they want to go to Ottawa. On the one hand, they told us we shouldn't be blaming Ottawa, and now they want to go to Ottawa.

Mr. Eichler: I'll remind the minister that her federal counterpart doesn't even know the difference between SARS and BSE, Mr. Speaker. We'll call them the anti-farm party. That's what they boil down to.

Mr. Speaker, farm families have spent years and years building their operations only to be hit by economic trade and storms, none of their own making. Yet the provincial government seems content to sit on the sidelines and prepare to empty barns.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Agriculture: Why is she pretending to have a handle on this issue? Once they shut these barns down, they may be closed forever and never be opened. Shame on this government. Shame on this minister for her inaction. Shame on this government for not doing the right thing.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, the member opposite says it is an economic issue, and it is an economic issue. Then he says the government is emptying barns.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the government is not emptying barns. Producers are making economic decisions. Producers are making a decision as to whether or not they can continue to feed these animals. It's a very serious situation. That's why, prior to the budget, we put in place nearly \$70 million in additional money. That is why we had to add money last year into the AgriInvest and AgriStability programs.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious situation and we are working with the industry, and we will continue—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Wuskwatim Dam Project Status

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) trumpeted the Wuskwatim project in his latest budget, but what he failed to mention was the fact that the project is way behind schedule, has doubled in budget and they can't find

anyone to build it. The budget was \$800 million and now the proposed budget is over \$1.6 billion.

Mr. Speaker, we ask the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro: When will this project be built and what will the final cost be?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, the members may have missed it, but the project actually is ongoing. They're working on the cofferdam as we speak. The project is going ahead.

The project has been restructured in terms of the tendering process in order to allow more people to bid on the various aspects of the project, so they've broken it into three sections. Each section will proceed with procedures which will allow a wider array of companies to bid on it. Training has gone on. Roads have been cleared. Workers are out there. Over 75 percent of the people working on the project are First Nations people from the immediate area.

Mr. Speaker, the project will proceed.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans want concrete answers. They want concrete contractors instead of endless empty rhetoric.

The worst part of this whole situation is they can't even find anyone to build this dam. It's hard to believe with the increase in budget, they still can't find anybody to contract this particular project.

Now, I ask the Minister for Hydro: Are they actually going to find someone to build this project or is the NDP caucus itself going to have to work here on weekends? So, is this minister, is he responsible? Is he going to pour some concrete? The Minister of Energy, is he going to help run the backhoes?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the project is under way. The members have missed that. They are proceeding with work on the cofferdam. Three-quarters of the people employed on the project are northern residents so that they get the benefits. The project will proceed to be built. The CEO of Hydro has said the project will still be profitable. The increases in costs are less than increases in other projects of a similar scale in other parts of North America.

I can assure the members opposite that we will not lose any time on proceeding to build that project. All he has to do is pay attention and he will know the project is proceeding, with northern labour.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I think it's time to give the minister some facts on this project. In 2004, the projected cost of this relatively small 200 megawatt project was \$800 million. The latest projection as of today is \$1.6 billion.

Mr. Speaker, we have a government that has mismanaged—has managed to double the Wuskwatim budget, and the dam itself is not even under construction. Manitobans want to know: When will this government complete Wuskwatim and what's the cost to Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the project's proceeding in an environment of rising energy prices throughout North America, which continues to make the project viable. The project's actually being constructed. Work is going on. Contracting is going on. Training is going on. There is a work camp there; 75 percent of the employees are First Nations people from northern Manitoba.

I can assure the member opposite—he calls it a small project—it's 220 megawatts more than they built in their entire period in office. It's infinitely more energy, and it's just the beginning of many more good projects to come.

Elie Tornado Victims Financial Assistance

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, on June 22 last year, an F5 tornado struck the village of Elie and several homes were completely destroyed. In fact, they totally disappeared. Others in the area suffered damages from flying debris. Trees were damaged and shelter belts were ripped right out. Clean-up is ongoing and the debris is still being uncovered this spring. The Premier (Mr. Doer) promised financial aid to those affected, but this government has not followed through with meaningful relief.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for EMO. Does he believe that \$1,200 is adequate for a family that lost their home, all of their possessions and, in fact, only had the clothes on their backs?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously any citizen in this province that has suffered loss.

The member opposite I think perhaps misunderstands the Disaster Financial Assistance program and perhaps misunderstands the fact that

tornadoes are eligible for private insurance. So it's important to keep in mind that the kind of assistance the people in Elie and other communities received included private insurance and where not insurable a significant amount of disaster assistance as well.

I want to say to the member, if there are any specific cases, she's more than welcome to raise that. There's also an appeal process. But the bottom line in Elie, Mr. Speaker, is there were very significant private insurance payouts.

But where private insurance was not available, EMO and the Disaster Financial Assistance program was there.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier came out to Elie for a photo op after the tornado, promised financial assistance and then he left. The Rural Municipality of Cartier has pointed out that the tornado victims did not get a lot in the way of financial aid for clean-up costs.

In a letter to EMO the council explained, and I quote: The maximum amount given to those who were the most affected was \$1,200 net, and those in the surrounding area who also suffered considerable damage were given as little as 50 bucks.

Mr. Speaker, this is shameful. When will the Premier honour his promise and compensate the victims in accordance with the actual costs that they incurred to clean up their properties and rebuild their homes and lives?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have had the responsibility of visiting many communities affected by—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:20)

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the case of the Gull Lake incident and in the case of the—*[interjection]* I've had the responsibility of visiting some very, very serious situations, whether it's flooding, fire and tornadoes.

Mr. Speaker, in the Gull Lake situation, there were some programs that did not fit the specific costs, particularly for agricultural producers, and we found a way notwithstanding the conditions of private insurance. If there are any specifics dealing with the people of Elie where private insurance does

not fit some of the hardships, we will specifically look at it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the first responders, Hydro, CN, a number of other municipal officials and leadership for their rapid response on Elie.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, shortly after the Premier was in Elie, he told a Winnipeg media outlet, there will be funds required from the Province; tangibly we will be there with you. Well, the only people with them in Elie were fellow Manitobans who raised \$93,000 to get them back on their feet. In one case, a family received almost \$19,000 to help rebuild their lives, and that was from the generosity of everyday citizens in this province. But where was the provincial government? Well, they're busy cutting cheques for 50 bucks.

Can the minister tell this House: Is he satisfied that a \$50 payment will actually help Manitoba tornado victims? Is this the kind of tangible assistance this government offers?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that the member put on the record that we announced back in February that we're estimating, as a result of the damage from tornadoes last year, that there will be a disaster financial assistance program of \$4 million–\$4 million.

I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, to put on the record that there are members of that member's caucus who criticized us for focussing in on Elie because not enough was happening in southwest Manitoba. Well, I want to put on the record that that \$4 million is part of our commitment to each and every part of the province.

They, Mr. Speaker, may try the divide and conquer. They don't even have a consistent view in their caucus, but if there are specific concerns, let her raise it. Four million dollars for disaster financial assistance programs shows that Manitobans do care about tornado victims.

Child Safety Legislation Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: Today, Liberals tabled Bill 225 which provides for the mandatory use of bicycle helmets. Last week, we tabled legislation to end smoking in cars and to provide for mandatory use of booster seats. Each of these Liberal bills, which, by the way, are law in other provinces, protects the well-being of

children by putting the safety and health of children first.

I ask the Premier: Will he join the Liberals and put the children of Manitoba first?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would note that just recently the Department of Healthy Living had a very, very positive program to make helmets more affordable for children, particularly in targeted areas. Many children took advantage of that. One issue for children is the issue of affordability.

We do look at any private member's bill that's proposed here. We look at it very, very carefully because we actually believe that we don't have the exclusive right of good ideas. We believe all Manitobans do, including members opposite.

We're looking now at the wording on banning plastic bags. I would notice that Manitoba's the first province, Liberal, Conservative, or otherwise, to prohibit plastic bags at the liquor stores. We're the first ones in Manitoba. There are some difficulties with this bill, dealing with the sale of garbage bags that might be plastic. Does it cover newspapers in terms of the wrapping around it?

There are lots of issues to deal with, Mr. Speaker, but we'll look at any good idea. We believe 1,200,000 Manitobans all have good ideas, and that's why we listen.

Bicycle Helmet Legislation Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Premier to look at this bill because the evidence is absolutely overwhelming that mandatory use of bicycle helmets improves the use of bicycle helmets, reduces injuries, saves dollars and saves lives.

Last week, three times, we raised the issue around Tammy Hardt, who was injured with a head injury, and she is an example of what can happen with a head injury. She was walking her bicycle, didn't have a helmet on. We could call this the Tammy Hardt bill, if you like.

I would ask the Premier and the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) whether they would support this bill in the memory of Tammy Hardt—well, not in the memory but to honour Tammy Hardt and to make sure that children in Manitoba are protected.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): We are about protecting Manitoba children.

We've proven it time and time again with our legislation around Healthy Child Manitoba. What we've done is we have taken an approach of where we want to educate. We want to provide Manitobans with affordable helmets. We've done that. In 2007, almost 13,000 helmets went to Manitoban children. A thousand helmets were given to KidSport to hand out to low-income children also.

We're making sure that helmets are made accessible. But, along with that, we are also providing education programs through the Healthy Schools Initiative. What we want to do is we want to prevent head injuries, not continue to pass legislation. Thank you.

Police Services Resources

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, we would like to be able to see more police officers in our streets, in our community police offices. This government really needs to assess the need to review how the province is wasting police hours. Yesterday I brought up the issue of police stations virtually in our Health Sciences Centre because of the government's inability to deal with trying to free up the opportunity for police officers to leave our health institutions.

Mr. Speaker, we could talk about our courts. Every year, thousands and thousands of police hours are wasted in our courts because this government has not been able to get the police out of the courts and into the streets.

My question to the Minister of Justice is: Will he recognize that there is a need for us to review how the Province is wasting police officers in our province.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member who stated publicly all last year and this year that he did not think we needed any more police officers. He stated that publicly, and we know what happens to that member's comments when he states them publicly.

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that, in fact, the Front End Project which is a court streamlining project, received a UN award for streamlining the court process and reducing the wait times with respect to courts.

As we speak, there's the City of Winnipeg who are responsible for the Winnipeg police department,

who are reviewing the activities of the police department. Mr. Speaker, we are more than pleased to work with the police to free up their time in order to do the kinds of activities that we all want them. That's why we have police in schools. That's why we funded 150 more police officers in the province, and, I might add, the member not only spoke against it, he voted against it.

Action speaks a lot louder than words from the Member for Inkster, who has said many things in this House that have proved to be very, very inaccurate in the hallway. I need not remind him of some of them.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Hockey Day in Canada (Winkler)

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I would like to congratulate the city of Winkler on its successful experience in playing host to the popular CBC event *Hockey Day in Canada*. While just the honour of being selected as the host location was gratifying for the community and surrounding area, to the delight of the local residents, a myriad of Canadian hockey celebrities descended on the city for the event. Our famous guests were unanimously enamoured with the vibrancy and palpable enthusiasm for the sport that was felt throughout the parts of the community, from the outdoor arenas to diners and coffee shops.

Some of the high-profile personalities that shared the weekend in Winkler and Morden included former women's hockey star Cassie Campbell, CBC sports commentator Scott Morrisson, former NHLers and CBC hockey analysts Wendel Clark and Kelly Hrudey, as well as the highly recognized host of CBC's *The National*, Peter Mansbridge, who hosted an edition of the show from Winkler. Of course, headlining the weekend were the visits from the immensely popular CBC hockey personalities, Ron MacLean and Don Cherry. Having had a chance to meet many of these individuals, including Don Cherry, at a banquet held in Morden, their approachable and engaging personalities were enjoyed by all their fans and immediately connected with the friendly community-oriented spirit that was on display all weekend.

Our guests did not hesitate to interact with the local residents, whether in conversation or out on the ice in the game of pick-up hockey, and were able to take in a number of special events, including a high school hockey game featuring the Winkler Zodiacs as well as a sold-out Manitoba Junior Hockey

League match featuring the hometown Winkler Flyers.

The theme chosen for the event was The Journey and was perfectly suited for hometown hero, Dustin Penner, whose inspirational path to the NHL epitomized the spirit of the event. Dustin even made the journey to Winkler, quickly flying, returning to his hometown for the evening between playing hockey games for the NHL club, the Edmonton Oilers. He helped kick off the festivities by dropping the puck in the ceremony prior to the South Eastern Manitoba Hockey League match-up between the Plum Coulee Express and the Morden Redskins.

Overall, the weekend was provided not only as a once-in-a-lifetime thrill for Winkler and the surrounding area, but it demonstrated our proud and vibrant community spirit, dedication to sport and success in nurturing strong and positive role models on a truly national stage.

Thank you very much.

* (14:30)

Adult Learning and Literacy

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. McGifford) proclaimed Manitoba's Adult Literacy Act, the first of its kind in Canada, at the opening of the first Pan-Canadian Interactive Literacy Forum.

The Adult Literacy Act will formalize Manitoba's commitment to addressing the need for higher levels of adult literacy and commits the government to develop a new adult literacy strategy. The act will come into force on the 1st of January 2009.

The act commits our government to undertake a consultation process towards the construction of a new adult literacy strategy. Relevant government departments, adult literacy practitioners, business and labour organizations, Aboriginal and immigrant organizations and communities, and other key community stakeholders will be participating in the consultation process. The adult literacy strategy consultations will conclude this summer.

Mr. Speaker, with budget 2008, our government will invest an additional \$1.1 million in adult learning and literacy, bringing to \$19.3 million the support for adult learning and literacy and more than doubling funding for adult literacy programs since 1999. As a result, adult learners will have more

opportunities to better their lives with several new initiatives to strengthen and support adult learning and literacy. This is good news as it better prepares Manitobans for fuller participation in an increasingly knowledge-based economy.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate all the organizers and participants attending the Pan-Canadian Interactive Literacy Forum. Congratulations are also in order for our Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. McGifford) who is extremely committed to promoting and supporting adult learning and literacy.

Airport Farm Project (Neepawa)

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous volunteer efforts of some of my constituents. Their outstanding contribution to the local community makes improvements to recreation facilities possible and serves to strengthen the already vibrant community spirit.

The formerly named Yellowhead Farm Project, now the Airport Farm Project, was founded in 1997 by Brent Cosgrove, Mike Sinchcombe, Ray Drayson and Kelvin Jarvis. The purpose of the project has been to provide additional funding for the Yellowhead Centre in Neepawa and now also helps support the local curling club.

The farm project contributes annually to the community by committing a parcel of agricultural land and then drawing on local producers and agricultural industries to help volunteer and donate supplies in order to make cultivation and harvest of the crop a success. Last year's Canola crop produced a strong return for the Airport Farm Project, netting \$45,000 for the local recreation facilities. Over the course of the project's 10 years in existence, it has contributed a quarter of a million dollars to the Yellowhead Centre and the Neepawa Curling Club.

This tremendous contribution to the local community, however, does not come without a cost, and the cost is paid by the volunteers and those who donate supplies to the Airport Farm Project. Those who have been involved in agriculture are well aware that there is often precious little time available during the summer months to be spent away from one's own farm or agribusiness. The individuals who year after year sacrifice their limited time for the benefit of the community deserve our gratitude.

I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the airport project over the years, as well

as its predecessor program and urge them to continue with this support and contribution to the community. You are building more than just infrastructure improvements. You are building our community. Thank you.

30th Anniversary of Flin Flon Toastmasters

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, a 30th anniversary is a major milestone for anyone. I would like to mark the 30th anniversary of a very well-known organization that has deep roots in the constituency of Flin Flon. Toastmasters International Club 2065 in Flin Flon celebrated three decades last week. The Flin Flon group has a very active and engaged group of citizens who are regular attendees at meetings and sessions.

Toastmasters International Clubs provide very useful training in public speaking and in protocols for running an efficient, formal meeting. As a former teacher, I know how apprehensive students are in undertaking public speaking. In fact, people often say that public speaking is a No. 1 fear for most individuals. Mr. Speaker, having strong oratorical skills is an important part of any person's education. Toastmasters members are known the world over for their honed public-speaking skills and their skilful management of meetings.

Mr. Speaker, the Flin Flon group meets every week for an hour at a time. It is an excellent opportunity for people to connect and polish their oral communication skills. Flin Flon Toastmasters International also has started a very popular poetry-reading group in conjunction with the Writers Guild and the Public Library. Forty-five people came out to the first meeting. It was wonderful to see folks reading their own poetry and sharing with friends and neighbours. I truly enjoyed participating in the poetry reading last year and hope to attend again in the coming years.

One of the highlights over the 30 years of Flin Flon Toastmasters was being able to host the Division C contest in 2006 which included members from all over rural and northern Manitoba. I particularly want to wish a founding member, Harry Hobbs, a happy 30th anniversary with the club. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Harry will be a 40-year Toastmasters International member next year. Harry and his wife, Glenda, are icons in the creative arts community in Flin Flon.

Also, I wish to thank club president, Dorian Kent and his executive for inviting my wife and I to

the club's memorable 30th anniversary celebration last week at the Victoria Inn.

I would ask all honourable members to join with me in congratulating Flin Flon Toastmasters International Club 2065 for 30 years of excellence and wishing them 30 more years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Gordon Campbell

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, on January 12 at a special ceremony in Brandon, Gordon Campbell of Killarney was honoured with a life membership to the Manitoba Association of Agricultural Societies for over 50 years of service to the Killarney Agricultural Society and a lifetime of volunteerism to his community.

Mr. Campbell has extended himself beyond anything that was ever asked of him. His drive and perseverance are a true inspiration to all those he has touched. He has given of himself to others and to his community, and he is most deserving of recognition. From the time Mr. Campbell was a young man, he had an interest in the Agricultural Society. Given that his parents were involved, he was often able to tag along with them. This interest grew, and since 1953 Mr. Campbell has served in virtually every position for the Agricultural Society. Mr. Speaker, he has served as president, secretary-treasurer, gate chairman, assistant manager, chairman of the swine committee and as chairman of the home craft displays.

In addition to his services for the Ag Society, Mr. Campbell has taken a leadership role with many other organizations in the community such as the Killarney Boy Scouts, the Killarney Legion, the Killarney United Church. Further to that, he has served as a volunteer ambulance driver, a volunteer first responder, and he coached the local junior Bells Ringette team.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members here today to join me in congratulating Gordon Campbell for being given an honorary life membership to the Manitoba Association of Agriculture Societies. His dedication and outstanding leadership have made him a role model to people everywhere. We thank him for his hard work in helping to make the R.M. of Turtle Mountain and the province of Manitoba a much better place to live. I would also like to thank the Killarney Agricultural Society who recognized

Mr. Campbell's work and who nominated him for this honour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS
BUDGET DEBATE
(Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Springfield, who has 19 minutes remaining.

* (14:40)

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, my time was split in half, so I will try to pick up where I left off yesterday afternoon.

I want to go back to the *Winnipeg Tribune* article of March 27, 1957, where the then-opposition Finance critic, Gurney Evans, who represented PC Winnipeg South, had a great quote in the paper. It says: He turned to a charge that the government had failed to lay a foundation for the future progress of the province.

In the last few moments I have remaining in my time, I do want to address that concern. That was the concern back then; there was a government that had been in office for a long time, had become incredibly stale, had become very cautious in its approach. The premier at the time was known to not being one of making bold decisions and, basically, it was a caretaker or a status quo government. At that time, the leader of the opposition, Duff Roblin, was challenging the government to move the province forward. It was clearly not something that then-Premier Campbell was prepared to do.

The question is, as the question was then: Is status quo good enough? Is that what we need today? Is that what they needed back then? As we know, Premier Roblin came into office, swept into office, and he brought with him a lot of sweeping changes, that, even today, we still view as being very modern. Here we have the father of the modern education system, which all our children enjoy. He was one who developed the floodway and many other

changes. At that time, the question was: Is status quo good enough? The answer was no.

That is the question that we are asking today, if you would have followed question period: Is status quo good enough?

We have a Premier right now, the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), who has become fairly comfortable with his position, with power, and has become a status quo premier. What makes it very difficult for us as a province is the fact that we have international and national forces that are facing us, and what I would call the potential of an economic tsunami coming at Manitoba. So far, Canada and the province of Manitoba have been somewhat isolated or insulated from this economic tsunami.

I spoke with a businessperson on the weekend, happened to bump into him, and they own a business in the United States. He said it went from being a mere dispute insofar as economic terms are concerned, to an all-out bar fight. He said it is so ugly right now in the economy in the United States, all bets are off. It has become so nasty, so rough in the economy, that it is something that they have never lived through in their years and years of having been in business.

Can Canada, can Manitoba withstand that kind of economic tsunami? I would say the worst thing we can do is have a premier and a government that believes it's just status quo, good enough. That is dangerous. That is unfortunate because we should be looking at what might be coming at us within a year, potentially a year and a half.

As we know, in Canada, there tends to be a bit of a lag time. Whether it's an upswing in North America, whether it's a downturn, there tends to be a little bit of a lag time. Even when you see the kind of numbers that are coming forward, the growth or the rapid increase of value of housing is not there anymore. It's at best levelled off, and in certain areas it has basically started to decline.

One of the reasons for the economic boom in western Canada, the games that are being prepared for in British Columbia—an awful lot of labourers being used, a lot of capital is being invested. Those projects are basically coming on-stream and are almost completed. The same goes for a lot of capital projects across western Canada.

So the question is: Is it a good thing to just have a status quo government? Is that what we need in a province that could be facing an economic tsunami?

I would say one of the things that concerns me the most about our Premier (Mr. Doer), is he seems to be rather disengaged from the day-to-day operating of the economy. He still wants to walk about, or his favourite term, swagger into the coffee shops, as if the economy has not seen any dark clouds coming at it. That is a problem and when you look at the different reports coming out, we know that the banks have had to, the financial institutions, the banks, have had to have some severe write-downs insofar the loans are concerned coming out of the United States.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

What will that effect be on us as a province? We've heard warnings that Ontario is potentially slipping to have-not status. Manufacturing is in difficulty. From what I understand, some of the major corporations, manufacturing corporations in Manitoba are going to a reduced work week. Yet we have a status quo government with a disengaged Premier. That's dangerous. That is so dangerous when we know that there are economic problems of international scope and starting to be shown on a national scope.

This budget does not adequately protect Manitobans from this kind of a disaster that we've seen in the United States. It doesn't protect us. It doesn't insulate us from that kind of a potential problem that could be facing us. I would suggest it's another one of those reasons why we should not be supporting the budget, and, in fact, supporting the amendment that had been put forward by the opposition leader.

I would say that as I travel my community there's a lot of concern, whether it's in agriculture or manufacturing. People are starting to become more and more concerned with their personal finances. We've heard it over and over again. In fact, I read an article from one of the last couple of days' newspapers in which they're saying, take your tax return, whatever it is, and pay down debt. The author of the article said it may not be sexy but it might pay huge dividends in the long term.

Pay down debt, personal debt, as much as you can. That would be a piece of advice that should really be passed over to this government, to the

Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). In these last good days we should have been paying down as much debt as we possibly could because of what might be facing us.

I thank the House again for the opportunity to get up and speak, and I advise this House to not support this budget as it does not protect Manitobans and the people of Springfield. Thank you.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to put a few words on the record regarding this budget and how it addresses the needs of so many of the people in Kirkfield Park.

The plan to maintain gains and hold steady is one that has resonance in our community. The prudent manner that this government has maintained throughout its mandate is one of the key reasons that the people of Kirkfield Park chose overwhelmingly to be a part of renewing our mandate last year. This budget gives them the reassurance that they made the right choice as this budget reflects their needs and concerns.

It is a period of growth, and steady, solid growth, not that of the fragile boom and bust scenarios we are seeing elsewhere. Like many others in my community, I returned to Manitoba because of the implications of those unstable and often short-term booms which come with the increased financial pressure on families who cannot find things like affordable housing regardless of what economic carrots are dangled in front of them as a result of market driven implications of such short-term boom times.

What we have experienced in this province has been solid and steady growth that has been matched and even lead with the investments made by this government and reflected in this year's budget.

L'investissement dans les personnes et dans des gains fiscaux solides pour tous, tout en assurant la qualité de la vie pour tous, est quelque chose qui donne à chaque Manitobain et Manitobaine la paix d'esprit. Ils savent que notre économie, bien qu'elle soit toujours intégrée dans une plus grande dynamique globale, n'est pas comme une maison de cartes qui est sujette aux caprices des cycles négatifs.

Un plan basé sur la durabilité et un budget qui reflète ce plan est une indication de la planification holistique à long terme qui assurera l'avenir pour tous les Manitobains et Manitobaines. Je suis fière de faire partie d'une équipe qui s'engage dans une telle

planification prudente et réussie, plutôt que de rechercher le flash et l'impact à court terme, au risque de notre futur collectif.

Translation

Investing in people, in making solid fiscal gains for all, while ensuring quality of life for all, is something that provides every Manitoban with peace of mind. They know that our economy, while always integrated into larger global dynamics, is not like a house of cards that is at the whim of boom-and-bust cycles.

A plan based on sustainability, and a budget that reflects that plan is an indication of long-term holistic planning and securing a future for all Manitobans. I am proud to be a part of a team that engages in such prudent and successful planning rather than looking for short-term flash and impact, at the risk of our collective future.

English

Early modernist architect Louis Sullivan said that in good design form follows function, meaning that the function of an item determines how it is designed so that it will function optimally. I believe that the form this budget has taken is a direct result of the function that it serves. That is, to successfully provide a solid, stable and sustainable economic framework for all Manitobans to grow and thrive, and to do so in an environment where there is security in knowing that, while they can prosper with the upturns in the global economy, there is a greater degree of protection from the negative cycles which hit harder in other jurisdictions.

* (14:50)

So, with this, Madam Deputy Speaker, moving forward from the needs of individuals and their personal needs being met to the larger vision of how we grow and develop as a community and province, I'd like to discuss why this budget is the right thing and, therefore, well designed for so many in my neighbourhood as well as all Manitobans.

Increasing the education property tax credit, for example, is one of the first concerns brought to me on the doorstep, and something that has been addressed continuously under this mandate. This year's budget will save Manitobans \$24.5 million in this area alone. Along with increasing the basic personal exemption by \$100 and adding to the spousal and dependant amounts, people are able to keep more of their hard-earned money in their

pockets, something that resonates as many people fill in their tax forms this month.

In addition, the introduction of the primary caregiver tax credit in '09 addresses the needs arising from the fact that people live longer lives and often choose to remain in their homes cared for by family.

L'investissement dans les personnes commence également dès les premiers stades de la vie et cela est de nouveau reflété dans la forme de ce budget. En investissant dans l'éducation, nous permettons à nos enfants et aux générations à venir d'avoir un début sain dans la vie et nous les accueillons dans une société où ils peuvent prospérer et perpétuer la force et le dynamisme de cette province.

Translation

Investing in people also begins from the earliest stages of life and is again reflected in this budget's form. By investing in education we provide our children and subsequent generations with a healthy start in life and welcome them into a society where they can thrive and perpetuate the strength and vibrancy of this province.

English

Investing in our children's education is an investment in all Manitobans' future and a critical component of a strong economic strategy. In this budget, this government continued its commitment to quality education by providing incentives to school divisions to lower their tax base so that public schools can move to an 80-20 funding model, and this year's \$53.5-million increase is the largest single-year increase in more than 25 years. This increase provides support to all school divisions and indicates the commitment of this government to investing in our most valuable resource, our children.

I am proud to see that this budget invests an additional \$5 million in new funding to improve access to quality child care in Manitoba, bringing the total increase in child-care funding since 1999 to more than \$60 million. Madam Deputy Speaker, these investments will fund more child-care and nursery school spaces, establishing a new training and recruitment fund, and increase the salaries for our hardworking early childhood educators.

I have to say, as a mother of a teenager and looking forward to my son's future post-secondary education and his academic career, I, like so many people of Kirkfield Park, am happy that Manitoba is the most affordable place in Canada to get a post-

secondary education. By maintaining the tuition freeze put in place in an earlier mandate and moving forward toward an incremental return to the fee levels of '99, this government is working to find a balance for all stakeholders in keeping education affordable and accessible while providing a funding base to ensure ongoing excellence. This extension is complemented by offset funding increases to universities and colleges, therefore, raising the financial assistance to \$8 million in the coming years. We work to ensure that education remains affordable, accessible, and of excellent quality.

Of all the commitments we made to Manitobans in the area of post-secondary education, the one that resonated the most with the families in my community was our commitment to the new tuition fee income tax rebate which returns 60 percent of eligible tuition fees, up to a maximum of \$25,000. So this means an arts student in my neighbourhood graduating this year could claim tax rebates totalling over \$7,000 in the next six years.

L'investissement dans l'avenir économique de la province est également reflété dans la baisse du taux d'imposition des petites entreprises à 1 pour cent d'ici 2009, par rapport à 8 pour cent une décennie plus tôt. Ajouté à la réduction du taux général d'imposition des sociétés et à l'élimination progressive de l'impôt sur le capital des corporations pour les entreprises de fabrication, cela montre que notre province est ouverte aux affaires et que nous travaillons afin de rendre le Manitoba un lieu formidable pour le développement des entreprises. En même temps, nous reconnaissons que certaines tendances et développements au niveau de l'économie mondiale peuvent être stimulés afin de maintenir notre économie au premier plan pour ce qui est de la croissance future.

Translation

Investing in the economic future of the province is also reflected in dropping of the small-business tax rate to 1 percent by 2009, down from the 8 percent of a decade earlier. Coupled with the drop in the general Corporation Income Tax rate and phasing out of the Corporation Capital Tax for manufacturers, it shows that we are open for business and working to make Manitoba a great place to grow businesses. With this is also the recognition that trends and developments in the global economy can be fostered to keep our economy on the forefront of future growth.

English

The introduction of the new digital media tax credit, book publishing tax credit, and the enhancement of the successful film and video tax credit are all indicators that this province and this government see the rich potential for growth in the 21st century. We are in an era where information and technological dissemination are the keys to economic development, and fostering economic growth in these areas will continue to grow and develop our economy with a solid successful and diversified base, again, providing security from the capricious whims that can destabilize economic growth from single-source economies, as we've seen elsewhere.

I would also, Madam Deputy Speaker, like to thank members of this Cabinet for the announcements that they have made today that, again, reflect what they are giving back to our community and what this budget does for them. Our Competitiveness, Training and Trade Minister today announced that \$3.8 million will be used to support the creation of 1,100 new apprenticeship training seats, as well as the recommendations of the Apprenticeship Futures Commission for things like the apprenticeship tax credit, which will, again, provide an employer who hires a certified journeyperson from an apprenticeship program a tax credit of up to \$2,500 a year for two years for each journeyperson hired. This is a great thing that we're providing, and this shows the investment that this government is making in its budget.

Most significantly, we need to realize that we also need to invest in a green future, because it ensures that all Manitobans can enjoy a future that is grounded in solid environmental protection coupled with strong economic growth. We have seen through previous years, and in this budget as well, that it isn't so difficult to be green after all. As a leader in geothermal installations and building green buses, this government's budget takes this to the next level with a plan to be the first jurisdiction in Canada to meet legislated Kyoto targets by 2012. Our ongoing investments in this year's budget in hydro, wind, biofuels and geothermal are part of a vision for the future that confirm that a strong, green and diversified economy are what is needed, and that we are building this to maintain our place as leaders in environmental legislation and practice.

Investing in education and the economy is vital to the successes of any jurisdiction, but they need to be backed by ensuring that there is a healthy

population to build, grow and sustain them. We have more doctors and nurses due to the diligence of earlier budgets of this government, and this year the one investment in health care that has the most significance for Kirkfield Park is the creation of a first-of-its-kind graduate program to train 12 new physician assistants over the next two years, with the \$1.2 million provided in this budget to fund additional nurse practitioner positions in emergency rooms for primary and acute care settings as well.

I would also like to congratulate the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) for her announcement today regarding the \$4-million multi-tier plan to recruit and retain more doctors for Manitoba, again, something that has resonance both in Kirkfield Park and throughout the province. The idea that now the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Medicine can offer a two-year northern and remote family medicine training extreme residency program, it delivers the dual benefit of improving access to physicians in northern communities while again boosting the specialized training for new doctors in urban areas. So this initiative, costing \$1.5 million per year, is something that really puts back into the health-care system and ensures that all Manitobans have access to health care.

To quote Dr. Dean Sandham, he says, "This is the quickest, most effective way to get more feet on the ground in remote and northern communities and to provide excellent education and service."

So, again, congratulations to the Minister of Health for listening to the people of Manitoba and the people of Kirkfield Park.

These kinds of commitments indicate the strong commitment that this government has made in the past and into the future to the health and well-being of all Manitobans and to ensuring that education, job creation and economic growth occur hand in hand to build a stronger Manitoba now and in the future.

In closing, Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget, the ninth balanced budget of this government, is one that is good for Kirkfield Park and good for all Manitobans.

Il y a tellement plus qui pourrait être dit au sujet de la force et de la vision dont il fait preuve, mais je laisserai du temps à mes collègues pour qu'ils partagent leurs pensées sur les avantages offerts par la multitude de programmes qui sont en cours ou qui sont lancés par ce budget.

Translation

There is so much more that could be said about its strengths and vision, but I will leave time for my colleagues to share their thoughts on the benefits of the multitude of programs that are ongoing or beginning with this budget.

English

I congratulate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) for the work he and other members of this Cabinet do to ensure both the short- and long-term growth and success of Manitoba, to the benefit of all Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I do want to put some words on the record about this budget and the budgetary policies of the NDP, as misguided as they are, and I will explain my position on that.

Certainly, they like to think of this as a green budget. We would think of this as a recycled budget with many re-announcements, many re-announcements, and then the codicil to stay tuned, because they didn't put things in the budget. They just said, well, stay tuned and you'll see what happens later. Well, Manitobans want to see right now what this budget is going to bring forward, quite an underwhelming, uninspiring budget, which raised a number of comments from other parties in the private sector and in the public sector, Madam Deputy Speaker.

* (15:00)

You would think that, with the beginning of a third term, a government would take the opportunity to put forward their vision for the future. They have the opportunity to be very innovative and bold. You'd expect that by someone just coming into office again, but no, instead, we see recycled, tired ideas again this budget, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We would just like to say that they haven't learned that in good times, when you enjoy good economic times, that is a time when you take money and you pay down your debt. You put money away in the rainy-day fund because we know that the economic cycle goes up and down, and when it goes down, this government is going to go down with it because they will not know how to manage the affairs of this province when they find themselves in an economic downturn. What will happen is eventually that turn will come; we won't have the money in this province. The federal government will

say, we can't give you any equalization payments, and then this government is going to be in trouble because they have no idea how to manage money. They'll leave a legacy of debt to our children. This budget is not about the future, and it's certainly not a budget for future generations, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We have seen in this budget expenditures, a 6.2 percent increase in the spending in this province, Madam Deputy Speaker. That comes at a time when we're relying so heavily on transfer payments and equalization payments from the federal government. What that says is that our neighbours in Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Québec, they're all paying more money into Manitoba. We're collecting money from them, so that we could actually go out and say we have more nurses than they do, for example.

Now, it won't be long before those provinces turn around and say, wait a minute, why am I working very hard in my economy to be a have province so that you can sit on your duffs and allow the federal government to channel money to you? It just doesn't make sense. It's just like if you're in a neighbourhood, if your neighbours on both sides of you are working very hard to contribute and you aren't working very hard, they are having to give you money so that you can live higher than they are. It won't be very long before you won't be able to hold your head up in your neighbourhood. Right now, Manitoba is going to have a hard time holding our heads high when we go to our neighbouring provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario.

I know that our critic for Finance has said to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that he should be sending thank-you notes to the other provinces, saying, thank you very much for your hard work, thank you very much for making your provinces have provinces so we can continue to be a have-not province here in Manitoba. That is just wrong-headed. It's a wrong attitude to take and it should not be rewarded. That kind of attitude should not be rewarded.

Every year our government spends more money and drives us more into debt. They keep saying, we'll let someone else pay for it. What kind of a responsible attitude is that? We'll take all the money, we'll spend all the money, and then we don't care. We'll make our neighbours pay for it. That's not leadership, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are just

mortgaging our future, and we're mortgaging our future for our children and their children, but this government really doesn't care because they don't think that they're going to be around. They think in future generations they won't be here, so it doesn't matter to them. They have no sight and vision for the future. They don't care what happens. All they care about is their politicizing all the money that flows out from this government to their political friends, so that they can remain in government.

We also see that there are so many things in this budget that we would like to have seen that aren't there. There's no emphasis on getting tough on crime. They have not put the resources into the justice system to allow the justice system to do their job, and instead we will continue to see a revolving door of criminal activity in this province.

We hear about shootings and stabbings, and that cannot continue to go on. We need to feel safe in our homes and safe in our neighbourhoods, and this government just doesn't get it. They just aren't doing it, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Small business in this province has been neglected. They would like to see a move towards the reduction of the payroll tax, which is such a regressive tax. It just makes young entrepreneurs in this province look to neighbouring provinces to set up business and to set up their families and raise their families and stay there and contribute to those economies.

When you look to people to grow the economy, you have to look to the private sector not to the public sector. That's where the growth in this province has occurred, all in the public sector. We need to look at encouraging young entrepreneurs to get into business so that they can hire people, because that's where wealth creation happens, in the private sector, not in the public sector because that is just government controlled and government driven.

I know members opposite would like to see all of the people in the province employed by the government and control over everyone in the province. *[interjection]* Yes, I know that they'd like to see it because that's their socialistic values and that's their socialistic roots. I know that's what they would like to see, but we know and they should know that socialism does not work.

Wealth creation is driven by the private sector and the people that take a risk and borrow money to provide opportunities for job creation in this

province. When you have healthy business growth in the private sector, that allows those people, if they are successful—which this government would have them not be successful; they want to drive business out of this province—but if you want business to be successful, then you have to offer them the appropriate incentives so they don't go elsewhere with their business and take their employees with them.

When there is wealth creation created by the private sector, those are the people that give back to the community in so many ways. They invest in the arts. They volunteer their time. They give to many worthwhile causes and charities. Many of the people that have created businesses, that have created wealth in the province are great people that drive the charitable organizations in our province. Small-business people that are in our communities and who are able to have some measure of success, they are the ones that contribute. They're the ones that contribute prizes for the local hockey tournament. They're the ones that give to the local Chamber of Commerce for a raffle. They're the ones that provide those types of things in our communities.

This government doesn't understand that. They think that government should run everything, and that's why they like to see growth in the public sector so they can create jobs for their friends and bring them into government and pay them on the backs of ordinary working taxpayers in Manitoba, so they can then have them under their thumb, under and controlled by them, employed by them, controlled by them so they'll vote for them, Madam Deputy Speaker.

* (15:10)

Again, I'd just like to make a few points as well about the agricultural sector. This hasn't really been addressed at all in this budget. In fact, the hog producers and the cattle producers are in dire straits, and we see a real problem here. When you have a problem in the agricultural sector—our province has been built on the agricultural sector, and many businesses spin off because of the agricultural sector. So we have to address these problems. Yet this government fails to see the need for a strong agricultural sector in this province. They just don't see the need to put resources into rural Manitoba. We know that's our support base, not theirs.

I should also as well mention, how they talk about reaching 2000-level greenhouse gas emissions by 2010. This is just laughable. Reaching 2000 levels

would require reduction about one mega-tonne. How visionary is that, Madam Deputy Speaker? They brag about their plan for emission controls and yet, they won't even see anything happen until after the next election. Then they won't have to be accountable for it at all.

I'd like to also talk about some of the other things that people have said about this budget. Brandon Chamber of Commerce president, Lee Bass, said he was unhappy to see the province's debt increase under the 2008 budget. Bass also expressed disappointment that the education property tax credit continues to apply only to residential properties and not businesses.

Speaking on behalf of Brandon's Poverty Committee, Glen Kruck said he was very disappointed in this budget.

Dave Angus of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce said: "Nothing would help this economy more than sending the signal of eliminating the payroll tax," which this government did not do.

Graham Starmer of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce said he's disappointed that the government chose to increase spending rather than pay down the debt.

Adrienne Batra says, "Never in Manitoba's history have we relied so heavily on the prosperity of our neighbours to the east and west."

Wayne Helgeson of the Social Planning Council says, we are not excited.

David Northcott of Winnipeg Harvest says, "There is no commitment to eliminate child poverty."

Shannon Martin says, "This budget is friendly to only one group: the government."

Pat Wedge says, so \$5 million, we have seen that before in budgets other years. It's a rerun in terms of numbers and it's a thin amount of money and it doesn't go very far. In fact, Pat Wedge says \$5 million is just a spit.

The government is telling us the economy is firing on all cylinders and they're driving the bloody car into the ditch. That's Shannon Martin again. And it goes on and on about people that talk about why they think this budget is not a good budget.

Robert McLean, a Manitoba hog and grain producer and vice-president of Keystone Ag

Producers, says: It is a crisis, and for those producers I don't know what to say. They are going to be hugely disappointed.

So Madam Deputy Speaker, with all of the people around this province saying a ho-hum budget, a very underwhelming budget, a very uninspired budget, a budget that doesn't do anything except support the local interest groups, special interest groups, that this government relies on to help them get elected.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget fails on so many counts to address the real issues for Manitobans. It fails because it fails to move Manitoba forward in becoming more competitive. It fails because it failed to end reliance on federal equalization payments. It's failed because it's failed to curtail spending and instead, increase spending by 6.2 percent. It's failed to encourage private-sector growth, which is the basis of wealth creation. It's failed to reduce taxes, instead \$9 of new spending for every tax dollar of tax relief. It's failed to reduce our staggering debt. It's failed to provide adequate resources to combat crime and stop our revolving-door justice system. It's failed to support seniors and low-income Manitobans and instead has again raised the Pharmacare deductible so that seniors have to choose between milk and medicine.

It has failed to end hallway medicine. People, 86-year-old women, are forced to use the bedpan in a hallway in front of other people—in the hallway. That is such disrespect. It's atrocious, and this government should be ashamed of their dismal record. They have not ended hallway medicine, and, no matter what they do, they will never live that one down.

They failed to recognize the city of Brandon. They failed to plan and meet the urgent needs in infrastructure, education, and child-care needs. They keep on failing, failure after failure. They've failed our most vulnerable children, our children in the child welfare system, because the more we've seen more money, more money, more money pumped into the system, and yet children are still dying in child welfare in Manitoba. This government even refuses to call an inquest into the death of Gage Guimond.

They have failed to address the challenges in our cattle and pork industries again, just saying to the farmers, like the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) once said in this Chamber, maybe they should just go and get a job on the floodway. Shame on her for that. Shame on her for not addressing the serious problems in rural Manitoba.

This budget has failed any significant progress in eliminating greenhouse gas. They have failed to address the environment. They have failed to reverse their misguided political decisions to run Bipole III down the west side of Lake Winnipeg, spending up to a billion and a half dollars more just so that the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province can have a legacy that he will put his name, perhaps, on the boreal forest in Manitoba, but that's going to cost the taxpayers of Manitoba \$1.5 billion, just so their arrogant premier can have his name on a project when he's gone.

For all of these reasons, Madam Deputy Speaker, I cannot support this budget. I will not be supporting this budget. This budget is bad for Manitobans, and Manitobans know better. They certainly know what is happening and where the money's going and flowing out to the special interest groups so that this government can just get itself re-elected and then they don't care what happens to the rest of Manitobans. Again, they sit in here cheering and cheering when I say that they know that's what they're doing with the money, instead of spending it for the betterment of all Manitoba. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It's a pleasure to rise today. I wasn't sure which way the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) was going to go on her speech, but at the end she's decided that she's not going to be supporting this budget, which is regrettable. I'm, of course, honoured to speak and honoured to speak in support of this budget, which is the ninth budget of our government. It's the ninth straight balanced budget in a row. That is a record.

When the Tories were in office, they ran debt after debt, deficit after deficit after deficit. I'll go into that later. That is the Conservative legacy. That is the legacy of the great Gary Filmon government, putting our children in debt as they did. As we all know, they ran up the highest deficit in the history of this province.

* (15:20)

But, you know, it's got to be tough to be a Conservative. When you listen to the Member for Morris and other members here, they're so depressing. It's so depressing. They're always so negative. They are the duke of doom, over there, the prince of darkness. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), he calls himself a vulture. He calls himself a vulture. That's not our words. That's his own words. Well, we don't disagree with him in any

way, but you know what, Madam Deputy Speaker? Manitobans, they see good things happening every day in this province, every day in this province, and I'm glad to see that the Member for Morris has already given us our fourth term. *[interjection]*

As I said, the Member for Morris has already said that we're guaranteed our fourth—*[interjection]*

Madam Deputy Speaker, can you bring some order to the group please? *[interjection]*

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

You know the reality is that these Conservative MLAs have never had it so good, and they know that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I sit over here close to them and I see them on budget day. They're waiting and waiting, oh, please fund my project, please build my hospital, please build my emergency ward in Portage la Prairie. Please build my new nursing home in Neepawa, please do my new hospital in expansion to my hospital in Steinbach, please do work in Portage la Prairie, please pave my road in Morris. Day after day they're waiting to see good things happen in their constituency because we are doing things that they did not do when they were in government, and they know that to be the case year after year. Not only that, they're absolutely shameless about it because they go and they vote against our budgets.

So what is the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) going to do when he votes against this budget that provides a new nursing home in Neepawa? Is he going to go back and tell his—*[interjection]* Is he going to go back to his constituents? How is he going to explain that to his constituents. Also the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), how is he going to explain his voting against the budget that's enhancing the hospital in his constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker?

They go and they huff and they puff; they're having a huff-and-puff party here, Madam Deputy Speaker. We see this day in and day out. As the Premier (Mr. Doer) said, they're the woulda-coulda-shoulda party. We would have done this if we were—*[interjection]* Well, we should have done that. The reality is that they did nothing in government and now, when they're in opposition, they're going to correct everything. That's what you have to do, you have to look back when they were in government to see what they did, and then you will know what they're going to do next.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they ignored so many things in this province. The proof of that again where they had a convention or their AGM in Brandon on the weekend and they completely ignored agriculture. They completely ignored it. They stood up in the House here. We had a very good debate on the future of the agricultural sector. They go to their convention a few days later and they completely ignored it. What did they say? During that debate I listened to all members and I didn't hear a member actually say what they're going to do to deal with some of the crisis in agriculture, especially in the livestock industry, in the cattle industry, in the pork—What did they say? Did they say, well, we're going to spend, we need to spend this much or that much?

No. They said that they would take the money from Spirited Energy, which has maybe only about a million left, and then they said they're going to take \$400 million or whatever, a billion dollars from Hydro, and they're going to give it to farmers. Is that their policy now? Then today in question period they said, take the money from Hydro and give it to the police.

I don't understand what their position is when it comes to that particular policy. They said that they want to use money from Hydro to give to the farmers; they want to use money from Hydro to give to the police. I guess that's their policy. They expect Hydro to fund all the operations of government, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As I said, they talk a good game in opposition, but we all know that they failed, Madam Deputy Speaker, to deliver when they were in government. All you have to do is listen to their speeches. I've been listening to their speeches here for the last number of days, and the first half of their speeches they say we have to cut government, we have to make government smaller, and then in the second half of their speeches, they have just said, we need more money for our own projects.

I remember the former Member for Southdale, I liked him, and he was an honest guy. He said in this Chamber that he wanted a new school. I said, won't that add to the debt? He goes, well, that's good debt. I said, oh, I get it, because when it goes to your own riding, that's good debt.

That's typical of these Conservatives in this Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker. The first half of their speech, they criticize the government for spending; the second half of their speeches, they are asking for projects which they'd not fund—roads,

schools, hospitals for farmers. What do they offer as a solution? They offered a 2 percent solution. Two percent solution, you know, which is less than what we are paying now. I asked the Minister of Agriculture—I think that was that we've spent 7 percent increase in agriculture last year. Well, the Conservatives want 5 percent less. They want 5 percent less and that's going to solve the problems. But each and every one of them stood up here the other day and said, more, more, more. That is why they are doomed to be in opposition for many, many years to come.

As we know, the last election, I sat here and all the Conservatives were coming over to us and they were saying, oh, we're going to win that seat, we're going to win that seat, we're going to win that seat, we're going to win that seat. They had us all, you know, losing the election. What happened? Oh, my, honey, I shrunk the party. You know, that's the Leader of the Opposition's—I think he's got that on his wall: honey, I shrunk the party, Madam Deputy Speaker.

You know, they talk the good talk, but once they get into government—well, hopefully, they'll never get back into government. They have no plan other than to criticize the good work of our government. As I said, that is why they are doomed. They are doomed to spend many more years in opposition.

I just want to refer members, especially for the new members, to refer them back to the financial statistics, 10-year summary for when Filmon was in power. Let's just start with the 1990-91 budget. Was there a surplus that year or was there a deficit? There was a deficit: \$359 million. Next year, a deficit, \$304 million; '92-93, \$766-million deficit, the highest in the history of the province. That is their legacy, Madam Deputy Speaker: '93-94, \$460 million; '94-95, \$196 million.

Then they sold MTS. They sold our crown jewel in our Crown corporations. They sold it to their friends for a quarter of the value. They said they sold it to their friends for a quarter of the value. They took the money to try to win the 1999 election, which, of course, we all know they did not succeed to do.

So, when you add up the millions and millions and millions, and that is the summary, that is the truth. Madam Deputy Speaker, they ran up deficits. That is their legacy to Manitobans.

The other thing was the issue of the federal transfers. You can see, in 1992, they received close to 40 percent of their revenues from Ottawa. You know, now that we receive less than that and what did the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) say? The Member for Russell said we're a welfare state. But he sat around that Cabinet table taking 39 percent of his revenues from Ottawa. I don't know if he thought he was running a welfare state, but that was the truth. People need to look back. All you have to do is look back in the summaries of when they were in government. They have a terrible, absolute terrible, despicable legacy when it comes to managing the finance in this province. I think it's important that people do put some of these facts on the record.

The Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) was going on about the, you know, the private sector. I think it was once said you look at the sports page, as people go to the sports page first because it speaks to, highlights human achievement and success instead of the front page, which often will highlight human failures and shortcomings. But you know, recently, all you have to do is go to the business section of the *Free Press* to see, I think, that Manitobans are very optimistic. Here's an article from last year: Manitoba seeing spike in jobs. We have the second-lowest or lowest unemployment rate in the nation.

Here's another one, August 17: Construction industry roaring. I go on and on and on. I mean, here's another one from just a few weeks ago: EDS growth equals to 1,000 jobs in the private sector coming. Now, did we hear that? We didn't any of this from any of these Conservatives in this House. All we heard, day after day, was gloom and doom and negativity.

* (15:30)

An Honourable Member: Down to 17 seats next time, Greg.

Mr. Dewar: Well, the prince of darkness, he's hoping for a recession, the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik). He wants the times to go down. That's unfortunate.

But, if there was, and I did raise this, if we do hit economic hardships, we do have over \$660-odd million right now in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which was, I think, when we came into government, only about 260 million, so we've increased it significantly.

There's another headline, "Manitoba growth rate to lead the country." All you have to do is look into the upward magazine, which is the voice of the construction industry in Manitoba. Why don't you guys look at this magazine and read about all the project after project, every project: the Husky ethanol plant in Minnedosa; there's a \$7-million apartment being built; there's a new police station being built. You know, on and on and on. All you have to do is take a look at this. I don't know why you guys ignore—*[interjection]* I just did. You just ignore this good news. It's absolutely amazing, these members of the Conservative caucus, if they were to actually—anyway, I want to talk a bit more about our budget. I could go on and on about the incredible shortcomings of the Conservative caucus, but, as I said, we've delivered our ninth balanced budget in a row. I want to congratulate and thank our Finance Minister over there for doing such a wonderful job, which I said is a record.

We're also projecting in this a surplus of 96 million, and the Fiscal Stabilization Fund will have had 663 million by the end of 2007. We are making significant efforts to pay down the debt, over \$110 million, which is the largest payment in Manitoba's history. It equals to, with the nine years that we've been in government, we've paid down \$924 million in debt.

We've also announced significant tax savings for Manitobans, over \$180 million, and by the time this budget is finished in 2009 they'll have been saving taxpayers over \$1 billion. We've increased the education property tax credit to \$600, which, I believe, Filmon went the other way on that. He actually lowered the tax credit by \$150, I believe. So we've not only reinstated that, or we took back the Filmon cuts, we've increased it to now \$600.

In my school division—I want to thank and congratulate the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson)—in Lord Selkirk School Division this year, there is no increase in our taxes. In fact, we'll appreciate a decrease thanks to this budget.

An Honourable Member: That's wonderful.

Mr. Dewar: Well, of course, yeah. He said it's wonderful. Of course, it is. The first time, when the Filmon government was in power, it was probably double-digit increases annually, and that is the truth.

I could go on and on about the tax cuts, but we want to talk here a bit about these tax savings for our businesses. We're providing \$120 million in tax cuts

to Manitoba businesses. We're dropping the small-business tax rate, which is the lowest right now, to 1 percent, which will save businesses close to 10 million a year. I know the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) was commenting on this earlier. We're reducing the general corporation tax rate to 13 percent and reducing it eventually to 11 percent. We're eliminating the corporate capital tax for manufacturers.

I have a significant manufacturer in my community, the Manitoba Rolling Mills. I was interested in reading some comments put on the record by myself and others during the Filmon years. I remember the Rolling Mills, at that time, were laying off dozens of steel workers, hurting the Selkirk community. Those were during the Filmon years. Now it's a very robust industry and doing well. My colleague from Flin Flon, I know, will be eager to talk about all the good things that are happening in his community as well.

I could go on, but one of the most important things we need to recognize is that Manitoba has a significant advantage over other communities. It's not just dealing with taxes. It's the overall Manitoba advantage.

I want to, as well, inform the House that since we've formed government we've had six credit agency improvements, six credit upgrades. Again, a record. But I want to speak a bit about Selkirk, in the Selkirk area. We announced in this budget that there will be enhancements made to the Selkirk Mental Health Centre. Construction's well under way in the redevelopment of that facility. I'll be there to cut the ribbon, I believe, in September. I'll invite the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) to come along and join me on that. I had the great honour just last year, Madam Deputy Speaker, of opening the new school in east Selkirk, the first new school in our community in over 30 years, and that's—again, I thank our ministers of Education.

We've announced that we're going to be twinning Highway 59. People come to Selkirk and see it's, as I said, a very robust community. Our waterfront was redeveloped a number of years ago. We've announced that Selkirk will be—*[interjection]*—oh yeah, of course. The Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) mentions that we had a coal-burning generating station, the thermal generating station in east Selkirk. We converted that to gas. I thank the member for his efforts on that. It's been announced that Selkirk will soon be getting a new hospital to

deal with the poor hospital built by the Sterling Lyon government.

The Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) talked about the new icebreaker and the innovative approaches that our government's taking to deal with ice jams. I can report to the House that there's no ice jam this year in Selkirk and that's good news for all of us.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that there are others who wish to speak, but I just wanted to say, for the benefit of my Conservative friends, I think they should revisit their objections to this budget. I think they should revisit their stated stance of not supporting this. *[interjection]*

As the member said, we did support your budget back in '99, so maybe you should reconsider your objections and support this budget. Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I would urge the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) to pay close attention to some of the information that I'm going to put on the record because it might clear up some of the misinformation that he just put on the record.

I think he bought into his own party's spin and rhetoric and has not spent enough time really looking at the numbers and looking at what this budget actually means.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to stand before this House on behalf of the people of Charleswood and put some comments forward on the eighth budget of the NDP.

I am very, very committed to the people I represent and it's my opportunity, always, to bring their comments forward here to the Legislature and speak on their behalf and represent their views. I also have many opportunities in my critic role in the shadow cabinet to also address certain issues here, and I will be spending, as a critic for Advanced Education, a little bit more time today speaking about advanced education, more than I might have an opportunity to speak on some other areas.

In all honesty, I was really hoping for something a lot better for Manitobans in this budget. I was wanting to see something there that would ensure and encourage Manitobans to start dreaming again, once again of what this province could be. Sadly, after all these years, I've finally come to realize that we're never going to get anything better from an NDP government because this government does not

get it. They're basically, and inherently, underachievers. They do not truly understand how to make a province great, how to make a province grow, how to make a province thrive, because that is not part of an NDP mentality. They're okay with taking the easy way out. As an Alberta MLA a few years back said in a newspaper, that this is a lazy government, that this is a lazy NDP government. Obviously, what we saw from this budget, too, is that practice does not make perfect. It was a budget that was full of recycled announcement, it was unfocussed, it was tired, and it firmly entrenched us as a have-not province.

* (15:40)

This government, and I think I've said it year after year, should be very embarrassed about where they are taking this province. They should be very embarrassed at how other provinces are looking at Manitoba, because Manitoba is now getting a pretty poor reputation as a province always with its hand out, as a province that is always taking the easy way out, a province that spends more time and energy pointing their fingers rather than taking responsibility, and if they can't get anywhere by blaming somebody from the past then what they will do is they'll confuse, they'll mislead, they'll put out smoke and mirrors. A number of those instances are pointed out time and time again about this government.

This government should be very embarrassed about what other provinces, other MLAs, members of Parliament are saying about them in terms of their lack of initiative and their unfocussed approach to budgeting in this province, because it is starting to paint a pretty poor picture of Manitoba. We wonder why people don't want to move here from other provinces. We wonder why businesses don't want to come here and establish themselves. We wonder why young people want to leave for better opportunities. Well, you don't have to look very far, other than budget after budget, to find out that this government is not going to take Manitoba where it needs to be, because it's unfocussed, underwhelming and underinspiring.

I think people were looking in this budget, and I really was—I thought, well, maybe now's the time we'll see the grand vision. Maybe it will be more than just the little bits that they throw over everything. I was hoping that we would actually see something articulated really well, a laid-out plan, rather than something that was no more than a PR

exercise. At a time in recent history where we have never seen the kind of dollars flowing into a province, either from all the taxes that are coming this way or from the federal government, we would have thought that this government would have been more on the ball in terms of what they presented to Manitobans. At a time when they should have been preparing Manitoba for an economic downturn, they just coasted.

In fact, in some places, instead of just coasting, I think they came to a standstill, a halting standstill. That will not prepare Manitoba well. If we have a recession south of the border we will all be affected, Manitoba particularly more than other provinces because Manitoba is one of the most reliant provinces on equalization and transfer payments than any other province in the country. If there is a downturn, and the federal government is going to have to make some tough decisions, guess who is going to suffer the most: the one province that has its hand out all the time, that has not made any effort in this budget to prepare us better for a downturn. It's going to be Manitoba that is going to be profoundly affected by what could be coming down the road. Why a government would just coast in times like this is beyond a lot of people.

This government spends a lot of time and energy, and they don't seem to get much for it, in putting a budget forward. In fact, it was interesting, and I would just like to point out, it was an article, actually, some comments made in a newspaper about this government and how it likes to point fingers like it's 1999. I'd just like to put on the record, and it's not every long, but I would like to read this out to the members opposite:

Our NDP government loves to remind Manitobans how much better off they are now compared to the 1990s. The constant references to the province's dark days under Progressive Conservative rule are so ubiquitous that they become a bit of a running joke among political junkies. Sure enough, there they were again, littered throughout the Finance Minister's budget announcement yesterday. The phrases "since 1999" or "prior to 1999," or others like them, appear no less than 31 times in the text of his speech. You could have made a drinking game out of watching him deliver it, but you probably wouldn't have made it all the way to the end. We think this whole spiel has already gotten a bit old, but we really hope the Finance Minister drops it by next year when he is set to deliver his 10th budget. After a decade in power, it'll really

stretch the limits of credibility to keep pointing fingers so far into the past.

You know, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) should really heed that, because it is becoming a joke amongst the media and amongst political pundits at how this government has not taken responsibility as a government after almost 10 years and stood on its own two feet and stood up and could defend what they put forward as a budget or a policy. When they can't defend it, we instead see many members in this House or the Premier (Mr. Doer) get into the gutter, bring out the bullhorns, because that's a whole lot easier to speak to that than to speak to some of their policies and to speak to their budget.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there's nothing in this budget that prepares Manitoba to weather an economic downturn or to make us as competitive as our western neighbours. Everybody was looking at something in there that we could grab onto that could say we are becoming competitive.

Their post-secondary policies have very, very egregiously failed. When they look at their post-secondary pillar as one of their pillars for an economic strategy, we can see why the rest of their economic policy is failing because one of the most significant parts of it they basically and very seriously failed in and that was post-secondary education.

We see expenditures that have been cranked right up in this budget, and for every \$9 in spending there is only \$1 in tax cuts. That should probably not surprise anybody because, again, I would say this government really doesn't understand what creates wealth in a province. I think they truly believe that this is okay to do, but Manitoba, they have entrenched us firmly as a have-not province. We are the only have-not province in western Canada and that is embarrassing.

If Ontario ends up because of the manufacturing issues there and the crunch that they feel, if they end up in a very serious downturn, this province had better be ready to figure out what to do, because they're sure not ready now in terms of what that downturn is going to do and the ripple effect it's going to have on the federal government and then on Manitoba.

We rely in an unprecedented way on a record level of equalization payments and that has gone up year after year after year. When almost 40 percent of

the spending in Manitoba comes from people in Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario, this government should be embarrassed. This Finance Minister and Premier (Mr. Doer) should take out a thank-you letter and put it into all the newspapers across the country because everything that's happening here, all the good things that are happening here, are largely due to the hard work of people in other provinces, because this government is too lazy to do the right things that it needs to do to put in place a solid and sound budget.

At the same time they crank up spending. With all this money flowing into Manitoba, they increase the debt. When we look at what that is going to do to the future of Manitobans, to the young kids that come to the galleries here every day, it is going to be so hurtful to future generations of this province, because they are the ones that are going to have to pay for the debt that this government doesn't seem to understand what effect it's going to have as they continue to crank it up.

There has been an overall increase of \$6 billion to Manitoba's debt since 1999. Only would you ever, ever see that with an NDP government, because I don't think you'll find other governments that are ever even close to being that irresponsible.

The debt-servicing cost for this year is \$806 million. Imagine, Madam Deputy Speaker, what this province could do if we did not have to pay for those debt-servicing costs. If we did not have to pay for those debt-servicing costs, every Manitoban would have another \$3,000 in their pocket. *[interjection]* Imagine what a family of two could do with \$6,000 more.

* (15:50)

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are still the highest-taxed jurisdiction west of Québec, and, you know, on top of big spending, increasing debt, high taxes, grabbing at every opportunity to try to pick our pockets, a 34 percent increase in deductibles, in Pharmacare deductibles, since they have formed government, raiding a rainy day fund when, in fact, they've got so much money rolling in to this province. And you add all of that together, and we do not have a province that has a lot to feel good about.

Shannon Sampert, an assistant professor of politics at the University of Winnipeg, said about the budget, and I quote: For those of us looking to the Doer government's budget for innovation and vision, we were disappointed. I am wondering what the

Premier is so afraid of. He can afford to make some bold policy decisions and he hasn't. This budget gives a few crumbs to everyone but fails to provide sustenance for any, particularly for post-secondary institutions in the province.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation said, and I quote: The provincial government is on life support. Never in our province's history have we relied so heavily on handouts from other provinces, and there is no end in sight. The government's claim that Manitobans have saved a billion dollars in taxes since 1999 is erroneous, since fees and levies have gone up by the same amount. The overall outlook for Manitoba becomes even more bleak when we're looking at the growing debt.

Interesting comments have also been made by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, and I would certainly like to point this out and encourage the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) to pay attention to this which might correct some of the errors that he put forward. I will quote from some comments published in the *Manitoba Focus*: A recent report from the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics tells us that Manitoba's capital investment for 2007 is expected to increase by 11.3 percent. It sounds pretty impressive until you look at the extent to which we rely on public-sector purse strings. For example, while Manitoba's private-sector capital investment is projected to increase by \$370 million in 2007, it will be outpaced by a public-sector ramp-up of \$510 million. The rate of annual growth of our public sector's capital spending outpaced the private-sector increase in each year, and every year, from 2003 to 2007.

The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) is sitting there pounding his desk. I don't think he understands what that means. He doesn't understand what that means. Nobody wants to invest in Manitoba. He doesn't seem to get this. The Chamber of Commerce also says, to add to these concerns, we rely more heavily on the public sector for our capital investment than any other province. We're No. 1 at 31 percent with Québec and New Brunswick rounding out the top three at 27 percent and 26 percent, respectively. That is not good news.

I would also point out that what the Chamber wrote, and the member may want to listen to this part: a similar problem exists in relation to our job growth, only now the story goes from bad to worse. Returning to the report from the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, this government's own bureau, Manitoba's

total employment in the first eight months of 2007 grew by 1.2 percent compared to the same period in 2006. That is the second lowest rate of job growth among the provinces. This paints a sad picture of Manitoba at many different levels. So the reality, Madam Deputy Speaker, we cannot stand on our own two feet here in this province. We are relying on crumbs and change, loose change, from elsewhere.

This government has not gone and taken the steps it needs to make us a strong province, make us a have province, and make us competitive. And if we can't even compete with Saskatchewan, who can we compete with? Why does Ottawa have to be our sugar daddy? Why does this government need a sugar daddy? Why can't they stand on their own two feet? Why is this government so happy to use transfer funds? It is sickening, Madam Deputy Speaker, to see how so many members across the way do not understand what this means. They truly don't. So we shouldn't be surprised at what we see coming from an NDP, 'cause they don't get it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are so many areas that I really would like to touch on and I see that I'm soon going to be out of time. But I will indicate that, in health care, what they have done is propped up the status quo. We see no innovation from this government, so health care is not going to take the steps it needs in order to move beyond the status quo. Throwing gobs of money at health care without innovation does nothing more than prop up the status quo, where we have over 1,000 nurses short in this province; we have over 100 specialists short in this province. This is after 10 years of an NDP government. This is a government that said they were going to come in and fix it all. They were going to fix hallway medicine in the ER with \$15 million in six months. That has never happened, and they have failed horribly and miserably to do that. Now they're increasing deductibles in Pharmacare, where it's going to hit seniors and the working poor very, very much.

Child care: They totally missed the boat in this budget on child care. They've been talking so long about putting out a long-term plan, well, they're about a year behind in that, and I don't know what they're waiting for. Where is their long-term plan for child care? The statistics out there should not make anybody over there very comfortable, and everybody is waiting for this shortly to be announced. Well, we've been waiting over a year now, and where is their plan for child care in Manitoba?

Child and Family Services: Kids are continuing to fall through the cracks and this government, in my view, is largely responsible for that happening because they did not do what they should have done several years ago, and that is do a thorough review of Child and Family Services before they devolved it to other agencies and devolved those problems with it. That was very irresponsible and very politically motivated by this government, and now what we have are kids falling through the cracks.

I've mentioned before, post-secondary education has been failed by this government, and I think there's a lot of information out there now that totally supports their failure in this. The tuition freeze did not do what this government said it was going to do. They failed in that horribly. It was a lot of political posturing and optics, basically, is the game they played rather than doing what was really in the best interests of the province and students of this province, is to make some tough decisions so that Manitoba can compete in a global economy, so that we can compete with other parts of the world and that we can compete with other provinces. Instead what they've done is they've squeezed our universities, tied their hands behind their back and basically hurt students in this province because they didn't have the nerve to do what was right. Again, they always, as an NDP government, take the easy way out. We see it in Justice. We see it in many other portfolios of ministers across the way.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, with a budget like this which was pretty pathetic, I have no intention at all of supporting it.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington): Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak in favour of this government's budget. The constituents of Wellington, whom I am humbled to represent, will be best served by this government's 2008 budget. I thank the Finance Minister for the well-prepared budget that will benefit all of Manitobans.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this year's budget which, by the way, is the ninth straight balanced budget, offers Manitobans from all walks of life opportunities for the present and a bright future for themselves and their families.

* (16:00)

Last year, with the brief chance I had visiting with Wellington constituents, one of the questions I asked was how life has been treating them. It was very encouraging for someone like me, who did not

aspire to be a political candidate, to hear that the party I represent was well received by the majority of the residents I spoke to. When they saw my campaign materials to be from the party in government, I was able to engage most of the residents who were home at that time in brief conversations which gave me a strong sense that a third straight victory for the government was at hand.

It was a delight to hear from both men and women but more from women, that they approve of the present government, especially the party's leader, the Honourable Gary Doer. The high approval rating for the party leader did not come as a fluke or just mere luck. It was such because this government's previous budget delivered what Wellington constituents, as well as the rest of the constituents in the whole province, needed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please allow me to share with you and the rest of the honourable members of this House my heartening experience while campaigning in the Wellington constituency last year. Being without any door-to-door campaign experience, I was at a loss on how to start a conversation once someone answered the door. I don't know how it came to me, but suddenly I just thought of showing the campaign material with our party leader's photo to residents who checked out from their window who the person knocking or ringing the bell was. To my surprise, some 80 percent of residents who were home at that time spoke to me warmly and assured me of their vote. About 20 percent were not happy to see me, that's fine. Some verbalized their displeasure, and some simply signalled for me to go and leave the place.

For the 80 percent who opened their doors, it was cool to hear their parting comments. One woman, she must be past her 50s, asked me to tell our party leader that she was available. One woman, must be in her 40s, told me she had a crush on our party leader when our leader was then in opposition.

I was also warmly received by most of the men who were at home at that time. When I showed them our party leader's photo, I was told that they will vote for me because they want our party leader to be the Premier again.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the 2008 budget, just like previous years' budgets, will resonate well with families from my constituency.

My fellow honourable members from this side of the House have eloquently outlined the clear benefits

the 2008 budget brings in the area of education, health, economy, labour and immigration, housing, family services, justice, transportation, rural municipalities and for northern Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at this time, I would like to highlight the benefits the 2008 budget will provide to families from my constituency.

I strongly support the 2008 budget since it will mean that primary caregivers will be eligible for an 85 percent per month tax credit up to \$1,020 per year. It's very important, especially coming from a culture where caring for the elderly and the sick is a natural action for us. This is a big help for people who would care for the elderly and for the sick members of their family.

Also, the 2008 budget removes the PST from non-prescription drugs to aid those who want to quit smoking. This, too, is very important as we all know it's no longer popular to be a smoker. Although we realize it's very hard to quit once you've started smoking, but for those who realize the health benefits, as well as the economic benefits of quitting smoking, removing PST from non-prescription drugs to help them quit smoking is most acceptable and most welcomed.

Also, budget 2008 reduces personal income tax for every taxpayer by increasing the basic personal exemption by 100. This, too, is valuable for people, especially for those who are finding it difficult to make both ends meet because of the many demands of raising a family. To have children, especially growing children, your expenses will be enormous, and we want the best for our children so any amount that would be added to reduce personal income tax is most welcome.

As well, budget 2008 increases the education property tax credit by \$75 up to \$600, saving Manitobans an additional \$24.5 million annually. For someone who values living in a home, regardless of the size of the home, this education property tax credit will be a big help to these households.

As well, budget 2008 drops the small-business tax rate, already the lowest in Canada, to 1 percent on January 1, 2009. Some people from my constituency who are already working or holding a full-time job are also thinking of starting their own business. With this small-business tax rate being the lowest in Canada already, a 1 percent deduction is certainly a big help for small businesses.

Budget 2008 also provides funding for more prosecutors and 20 more police for this year toward 100 more police positions over the next four years. People from my constituency are to be blessed by these additional police officers in our area. Unfortunately, some of the areas in Wellington are targeted or have been targeted by bad elements of society and the presence of more police officers would add some safety, a sense of safety to people from my constituency.

Especially budget 2008 is most welcome since it invests \$5 million in new funding to improve access to quality child care in Manitoba. It's deplorable, Madam Deputy Speaker, that our federal government has not taken this task seriously. This task is offloaded to the provinces and Manitoba, I'm happy to announce, has accepted this task and investing \$5 million to fund quality child care in Manitoba.

* (16:10)

I also notice, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the 2008 budget is offering or providing an additional \$1.2 million for immigrant settlement and other services. As we all know by now, through the Manitoba Nominee Program our population has increased to some, I know for a fact, that over 7,000 new immigrants came from the Philippines alone, the highest source country for new immigrants in Manitoba. Next to the Philippines is Germany and some 10,000 more were added to our population last year. Providing an additional \$1.2 million for immigrant settlement and other services will be a big boost, a big help to new immigrants, to new Manitobans as they find their way and settle in Manitoba. For them, they will find out for themselves and, later on, they will announce it to their friends and family that they did the right decision in settling in Manitoba.

Immigrant population is very vital, not just for Manitoba, but for the rest of Canada. I'm heartened to hear that just yesterday, I was at the Convention Centre, and there were small-business owners, as well as HR from big corporations who told me that they're very happy to welcome new immigrants in the work force because they found out that new immigrants are conscientious workers, they come on time, and they are reliable. They have found that their productivity has tremendously increased because of new immigrants and even the foreign workers.

So providing an additional \$1.2 million for immigrant settlement will certainly go a long way

towards ensuring that productivity and education and training for new immigrants in the labour force is ensured.

I would have some more to say, but I will hear what the members opposite will say and I'm sure the rest of the fellows from my House will reply to you.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I would like to congratulate the Member for Wellington on her first budget speech. I think she had a lot of important things to say, but most of them I couldn't hear, but I'm sure I'll be able to read it in *Hansard* tomorrow. I do want to clarify a few things in regard to debate on budget 2008, but first of all, before I do that, I want to thank the people of Lakeside for returning me to the great Legislative Assembly here in the province of Manitoba. I certainly take that responsibility very seriously. When I look at budget '08, I look at the constituency of Lakeside and what was actually in the budget for it.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Unfortunately, the highways that we look at, as far as infrastructure's concerned, when we look at Highway 6, there's a small mention of Highway 6 of which most of that money is actually going to be spent in the northern part of the province of Manitoba. From the Perimeter to, actually, the Interlake boundary, there's a fair amount of work going to be done, but there are some very dangerous curves, there are some very serious accidents that have happened as a result of those deadly curves on Highway 6 and we would certainly encourage the government to re-evaluate those positions and ensure, in fact, that safety would be the No. 1 issue and not just about making sure the political will of the government is looked after rather than just those of held ridings.

We look at Highway 227. That land has been bought since the 1980s. That's the connecting route which would have been route 16A, the bridge that goes over the Selkirk area that never made it to completion. Far as 16A's concerned, the bridge was built, but the rest of it wasn't. We've been lobbying the government very heavily as a result of that property being bought and that would and could take a significant load of traffic off of the fact that Highway 1 is very heavily travelled and that would also save an awful lot of traffic off that main route and also increase the tourism for those communities along that route.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I know that Route 44 going through Beausejour has been done; we just need to finish it off and make that connecting loop. We'll certainly continue to lobby the government for that.

When you talk about the east-west connections, Highway 415 and Highway 229, a number of people from the west side of the constituency—doctor in Teulon—Stonewall and Gimli, and unfortunately those roads were not part of the budget as we had made several applications and presentations to the minister. Unfortunately, we didn't see anything done there either.

When it comes to health, I noticed there was a press release out today from the minister in regard to the placing of doctors that are graduating within the province of Manitoba. I have a constituent that graduated just this past year. Unfortunately, they had to leave the province in order to do their internship in order to find a place. That's very unfortunate. We had 75 doctors, I believe, that graduated. Only 30-some positions of those will actually stay in the province of Manitoba, tax dollars that actually educated those people, and now they're being asked to leave the province.

Unfortunately, as we see people of a professional level leave and exit this province, most of the time they don't come back. I find that very disturbing. I think that there would have been a way. If we could have encouraged those and found spots for them within the province of Manitoba, we would have less reliance on trying to find doctors to come from overseas. There are some very well-educated doctors that, in fact, do come from immigrant status into the province of Manitoba, but what we have found is the fact that a number of these people have to drive taxis or work in construction or whatever they end up having to do before they're actually able to utilize those education courses that they did take in those other countries.

We hear rhetoric about what happened in the 1990s. This is the only reference I'm going to make in regard to the 1990s and that was in the year 1999 when the Doer government talked about \$15 million in six months in hallway medicine. I can tell you from family experiences, constituency experiences that it's a terrible state, and I find it deplorable that this government can stand up in this House and talk about what a great job it's doing, blaming everything on the 1990s. Unfortunately, what we've seen is that seems to be their only comeback rather than dealing with the issue that is actually at hand.

I know the issue that we need to face is the current conditions, the current situations, and not dwell on the past and I know that they love to do that. Unfortunately also, the personal care homes in our particular area were missed again in this budget. The regional health authority has made numerous requests. It's been the No. 1 priority for our area. We have people that are leaving the rural community and being forced out of their homes, out of their community into communities that are not as well known to them and, quite frankly, a number of people in rural Manitoba were the ones that—usually the husband just drove. Very seldom, a lot of the women, especially on the farms, drove the vehicle in the field but never got their licences. A lot of them are actually separated from their family as a result of being uprooted and moved over into personal care homes in other areas. We find that totally unacceptable. We think there's a need and desire in order to bring more personal care beds within rural Manitoba, and we certainly would encourage the government to have another look at that.

Also, I want to touch on rural policing. I know in my particular area, the radius of the city, we're finding that yes, there have been a number of people that have moved out into rural Manitoba. We're certainly glad to have those people in rural Manitoba within that commuting distance, but also comes with that, more crime. We've seen an increase in grow ops within the Capital Region, so to speak, of the city of Winnipeg.

Also, we just don't have enough resources for our police officers in order to handle the investigations that, in fact, do need to happen. I know of two particular grow ops, one of which was busted last year. We still have another one that's going on in the area, for which they just don't have the resources in order to make the final crunch and arrest on that particular one as well, but certainly we would encourage more policing in rural Manitoba.

* (16:20)

As far as the finance side of things, they talk about their spend, spend, spend, and they're able to spend, spend, spend. Unfortunately, that will leave us a huge debt. We'll be forming government in three years. I'm not going to give them the benefit of taking the government on another four years after this next three. I feel very optimistic that we, on this side of the House, will be able to let the government defeat themselves.

They're getting very arrogant, very full of themselves. I can see very clearly by their budget that they really don't have a clear indication about where they want to go with the finance other than wanting to spend, spend, spend. Whenever you look at the expenditures, they're 6.2 percent from 2007, which is every \$9 spent and there's only \$1 in tax cuts. That bothers me significantly. I always prided myself and my children about talking about fiscal responsibility.

That brings me to the bipole issue, east-west. When my grandchildren are going to inherit a legacy of the west side of the bipole, that is so important to the province of Manitoba and to the people of Manitoba, but to bring that extra debt onto my grandchildren and their children, I find totally unacceptable. Probably, in all likelihood, a number of us in this room won't be here to see it, but our legacy from this NDP government will definitely be carried on as a result of their mismanagement on this particular file.

Also, I want to just briefly touch about the lack of initiatives being brought forward on Child and Family Services. It's unfortunate this government doesn't take the issue serious enough. We have still children and family members that are not getting the care, not getting the service that they need. In fact, a number of those people are still in the hotels. Unfortunately, this government needs to have another look at that. We find the budget, as far as Child and Family Services, totally unacceptable to meet the needs of today's demand.

I notice the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) had talked about the education and what a great job the minister had done in regard to keeping the costs down. Well, whenever you have a government that is as heavy-handed as this government is, and the way they presented the fact about the education costs, and whenever they talk about the secondary education costs, on one hand they talk about the tuition freeze, the next hand they talk about lifting the tuition freeze.

In fact, we have universities that are crumbling as a result of the tuition freeze and, unfortunately, we find that the government has mismanaged this file. They've given notice that they're about to lift that freeze in 2009 and start finally paying attention to the actual university costs, the cost of professors, the cost of infrastructure, the costs that are so important in order to keep those educational facilities up in the

standard which the people of Manitoba, in fact, rightly need and deserve.

I do want to spend the rest of my comments talking about the agricultural sector, and I want to talk about the minister's MCEC committee and a letter that was recently written by Gaylene Dutchyshen from up near the Roblin area. Her letter to the editor, which appeared in Monday's paper, April 14, talked about should we have a beef industry at all. I find that very deplorable. We have a member of the MCEC that is questioning whether or not we should have a cattle industry in this province. I find that shameful.

We have been imposed a \$2 levy that's been forced on each and every producer, and we've seen nothing from this organization as far as increase in slaughter capacity. We have an industry that's in a term of crisis right now that, in fact, needs that processing plant. We have a need that we should have been negotiating within the province of Manitoba to encourage processors to come. We did see a move with Ranchers Choice and mismanagement of that particular file. We have equipment that's sitting in Dauphin that's collecting rust and dust. We have an owner of that building that wants the equipment out. We've seen nothing from the MCEC in regard to having that machinery actually put into a building, put to use, of which it would, in fact, extend the processing capacity within the province of Manitoba, would, in fact, help our producers, if nothing else, at least, just for the freight costs alone, at some \$40 to \$80 a head, depending on the size of animals, would certainly be a step in the right direction.

Also, in regard to the letter that the MCEC member, Gaylene, had put, said that if we can raise and package premium Manitoba beef and export it for more money per kilo, we have a chance to rebuild our industry and help improve overall quality of life and diet for our customers and for all Manitobans. But that doesn't sustain the industry. Unfortunately, what we found is that beef is a very large operation and it's a large operation within the province of Manitoba.

We need to find more markets. When you look outside the box, we need more value-added, and this type of thing that we need to do when we're talking about processing plants, whether it's with pork or beef in this province of Manitoba—we've seen it with Pizzey's Mills out of the Russell area. They looked outside the box. They looked to industries that would

make their industry be able to grow and prosper, and have done a fantastic job. Governments have a right and an obligation to make sure that those operations do have a chance to be looked at and have an opportunity to see more value-added.

I know that because a result of the crisis that's in the agriculture sector, particularly cattle and pork, what we've seen is an excess of the cows within the province of Manitoba. In fact, Martin Unrau, the president of the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, which is just one of hundreds and thousands of ranchers expecting to sell off their animals this year, and they're turning under their pasture land which is marginal land and they're turning that into acres of grain which he expects, just himself and his operation, some \$80,000 in profits as opposed to raising cattle. There are other operators that do the same thing.

That brings us to a very serious issue. In fact, when you look at the *Free Press* articles that were written, as far as erosion's concerned, we talk about the environment, we talk about safety as far as water nutrients are concerned. This is one of the ways that we should've been expanding—the ALUS program in the last budget. We saw no increase in that. I know that's something that the Keystone Ag Producers in fact did lobby the government on and did lobby our party as well to encourage it, and we certainly have encouraged more money to be spent on the ALUS program. In fact, the cattle producers brought a proposal forward for the minister in regard to their particular proposal for something similar to the ALUS program where we'd be able to increase our herd capacity, keep that herd capacity, at a level which would still be sustainable. Unfortunately, we never saw anything of that nature in the budget as well.

The oversight that has happened in the provincial economy as a result of agriculture, and I know the minister stands up in the House day after day when I ask her questions in regard to the livestock sector, and the amount of money that's been dedicated there shows that this government is definitely out of touch. We are getting more calls now than probably I have ever had in the years as the critic for our party in regard to the crisis that is out there in the agriculture sector with livestock, in particular the cattle and the hog.

I asked the minister this afternoon if she was going to attend the meeting that was going to be held by the mayors and reeves in the southern part of the

province and obviously she wasn't aware of it. She would've had mention of it, but the unfortunate part is that we need to be at these meetings, we need to have the grass roots. We started some two years ago after we saw what had happened with the grain industry, the mismanagement of the CAIS file. We saw that there was a need for the agriculture committee to be called, and we started calling for that some two years ago right after they introduced the \$2 levy. This would not have happened and had the uproar that had happened without the fact of the government being heavy-handed and forcing it onto our producers.

The sad part is that this government's out of touch with our producers. Whenever we listen to the farmers, they give us a lot of good ideas and if we would have the Standing Committee on Agriculture, we'd be able to pass some of those ideas on, in fact, to this government because not one of us is, as I've said before—in fact, last week when we asked a matter of urgent public importance to be gone over by this government, and the government granted us that opportunity, which we do appreciate, a number of our colleagues did, in fact, put some very interesting and productive ideas on the record for the government to consider, but it certainly does not address the issue of the crisis that's out there now.

* (16:30)

We have a number of producers that are going broke each and every day. We have feed companies that are going broke each and every day. We have businesses that are affected each and every day, on a day-to-day basis. We're talking about not just the pork industry, not just the cattle industry. We're talking about the electricians. We're talking about the concrete people. We're talking about the people that sell machinery. We talk about people that sell tires. We talk about the insurance brokers. There are a number of people within the province of Manitoba that are affected by agriculture. We talk about some 15,000 just in the pork industry that are directly involved. Multiply that out times at least four, which is a very conservative number, that's some 60,000 people that are affected by agriculture just in this province of Manitoba in one industry on its own.

I see that my light's flashing already, and I'm just starting to get into the nitty-gritty, unfortunately. I'll try and wrap up here as quickly as I possibly can, but I do want to come back to what we had talked about earlier in regard to the consultation process. We talk about AgriInvest and AgriStability. These programs

are crucial to our farmers. They're crucial to the fact that we need good consultation. We need good market programs that are going to be able to take up the slack whenever we need those, in fact, to fall back on. It's crucial that these do have the right steps in place.

We saw in the CAIS program that that, in fact, did not happen. Now we find that the programs are not working for our cattle and hog producers. The money's not flowing. We need to get money in the hands of these producers as soon as possible, as quickly as possible, before we lose that whole industry. I know that, unfortunately, as a result of the mismanagement of this whole agricultural sector and the finance side of things, the educational side of things, the child and family services, unfortunately, this government has seen the mismanagement of their own selves.

I do want to put on record that we will not be supporting this budget. Unfortunately, as a result of that, a lot of people and a lot of hurt are still going to be continuing on. In the next 30 days, I tell the government, stay tuned, stay, in fact, that a number of producers will be hurt, a number of businesses will be hurt. As a result of that, the economy in the province of Manitoba will, in fact, be on the decline. Unfortunately, this government is not ready for it and that's very unfortunate.

So I thank, this time, the House for an opportunity to put these things on the record, and that concludes my remarks for today. Thank you.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Acting Speaker, on House business, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Wednesday, April 23, at 7 p.m., to consider the Auditor General's Report – A Review of Crown Corporations, Accounts and Compliance Audits dated March 2004. I'd like to also announce the following individuals will be called as witnesses for the meeting: the Honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), and Diane Gray, Deputy Minister of Finance, Federal-Provincial and International Relations and Trade.

I have further announcements. Pursuant to the rule—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Wednesday, April 23, 2008,

at 7 p.m., to consider the Auditor General's Report – A Review of Crown Corporations Council and Compliant Audits dated March 2004. At that meeting, the following individuals will be called as witnesses: the Honourable Minister of Finance, and Diane Gray, Deputy Minister of Finance, Federal-Provincial and International Relations and Trade.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the House. I'd also like to announce, pursuant to the rule concerning PMRs, that next Tuesday's PMR will be sponsored by the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and deal with trafficking in human beings. Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): It has been announced that the PMR on Tuesday will be sponsored by the Member for Burrows and will be dealing with human trafficking.

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Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): I'm very pleased and honoured to put a few words on the Budget Address. I'm also pleased to continue to be able to represent Assiniboia. It's truly an honour to serve in this Chamber and truly an honour to do community service, because I think it's very, very important to all of Manitoba that people take the time and effort to represent them. I know it's difficult because you're spending lots of time and hours, no matter what side of the House you are at. So I really to have to commend the people for their dedication to their communities.

I am also pleased to be on this side of the House because I truly am an optimist, not only as a member of the Assiniboia Optimist Club, but I am an optimist because I do believe that we do have a wonderful opportunity. We have a wonderful province, we have a wonderful future, and we are growing on a strong foundation that's based on education, based on long-term planning, and based on a good solid plan. I'm pleased because if you see what's happened in the last few years; in the 1990s, I know there was a lot of population out-migration. I know economic GDP was flat; I know that there was a certain belief that what you had to do was race to the bottom. You had to be the lowest cost, least qualified, least educated work force, and that's what the members opposite truly believe.

We have a different view. We believe that we can be a high-skilled, high-quality, highly educated community, a province that flourishes on research

and development, flourishes on innovation and flourishes on competing effectively with the rest of the world. So I look at what's happened in the last 12 months, and if you note, Statistics Canada said that the private sector's jobs are up 21,400 in the last 12 months. The private sector's up 12,100 jobs; unemployment's down to 4.3 percent. We have got a labour-force increase of 9,500, employment up 8,900, and what's interesting is that the labour force is at the highest level in Manitoba's history. That's nice to show because it shows that, in spite of the problems that are being experienced and are real south of the border and are being experienced in Ontario—there have been some huge economic disruptions because of the dollar, because of economics—and so it's nice to see that Manitoba has been able to increase the labour force, increase the amount of people who are working, and actually have an immigration of 10,000 to 12,000 people in the last year.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

That's important because when the members opposite put interesting information they get on their research, and I am sure they that they continue to do research watching *The Simpsons*, as they continue to do, and so what we try to do is do research reading StatsCan, reading research, reading the generally accepted research gurus, and what we try to do is put factual information on the record. That means that the population has been increasing, and it has been increasing.

The number of young people in Manitoba has been increasing. We have better retention, and we are actually having an immigration of lots and lots of people. I am pleased to say that. This is where we contrast the members opposite from us.

Their view—and I'll talk a little bit about energy for a moment—on energy was to build coal plants. That was their goal; in the early years, their goal was to not build hydro, but to build coal. So that was their energy vision. We had a different vision on this side of the House. We believed, previous governments believed, in hydro; they believed in building hydro; they had a vision. So members opposite called it "lemonstone"; members opposite said it was stupid to build hydro. We believed in it, we built it, and now we have a surplus out of a Crown-owned company that is making money and creating benefits in our province and has for years.

When we talk about building additional dams, we are talking about building additional dams in co-

operation, in partnership with Nelson House, and that's really exciting because it's again building hydro for clean energy exports. When I talk about our vision, when the members opposite were in power, they talked and talked and talked about energy policy. We actually built a 99-meg wind farm. We have 300 more that are going out through hydro, and so we are going to have 400 megs of wind. That's a huge, huge vision of building the economy of rural Manitoba, building new jobs and clean, dependable energy being exported and used in our province.

* (16:40)

When I talk about where we are going in the future, I look at the green manufacturers' tax credit. That's a very positive thing. When the members opposite were in government, again there were no manufacturers of geothermal heat pumps. Right now in this province we have two manufacturers of geothermal heat pumps, and they are exporting that to the Middle East, to Asia, et cetera. So we're exporting manufactured goods around the world.

Other examples of where we believe that we need to compete is the Composites Innovation Centre. Mr. Speaker, this is a partnership between the federal government, the provincial government and academia and businesses. What we're doing is we're using new-age materials, which are lighter, stronger, less corrosive and that's being used in the new Boeing plane, the Dreamliner. We have moved from a simple manufacturer to a designer manufacturer of this new plane. It's exciting because what we're doing, is we're working in a level 1 building of the No. 1 plane, the most fuel-efficient plane in the world. It's exciting to move from about 480 to about 1,500 employees in the Boeing plant in Winnipeg. That Composites Innovation Centre is being utilized in other things, like in the bus industry, other aerospace initiatives and even in our manufacturing.

So what we're trying to do is build for the future more fuel-efficient vehicles, better materials, less intrusive materials, more natural materials, and that's what we're doing in the Composites Innovation Centre. Sean McKay, who is the director, has done an absolute remarkable job of commercializing about 149 different products.

The other thing is, I just heard some speeches about the crumbling university infrastructure. I've been pleased to announce a number of times at the University of Manitoba, the new University of

Manitoba engineering complex where, what they've done is, they continue to move forward, whether it's with new 3D imaging, different components, the ISIS where we're talking about manufacturing in monitoring new age materials. That's all positive things. I think what it does is it shows that we can continue to be first and be very, very green.

An example of the contrast between us and the Conservatives, the former government, was, under the former government, we were ninth in energy efficiency. Under the Energy Efficiency Alliance they were ninth, which is not last, it's one step up from last. Under our government, two times in the last couple of years, we were No. 1. So we were No. 1, and I'm pleased that we were No. 1.

We've announced energy efficiency strategy on building greener buildings, and I'm pleased to see that we have lead buildings now.

We actually have very, very positive approaches on windows, on vehicles. I laughed yesterday; I was actually not prepared for the question from the members opposite on the ZENN car and the low-speed car. The reason why I was surprised at that is because Westward Industries has been in Manitoba for many, many years, in fact, decades, and so they've been manufacturing low-speed, high-efficient vehicles in Manitoba, and in rural Manitoba. I was surprised at the question because, the question was: When do you want to make sure that these are legal? Our answer is: As soon as possible. As soon as we safely can get those on the road, this will save money, save energy and improve Manitoba's manufacturing industry. This is a triple win, and I was surprised I got that from a rural member of the Conservative Party because they chose not to do it for multi-years when they were in government. I am pleased that our government will move forward on this initiative.

So, when we talk about the difference to have the sold energy, no, the Conservative government has never sold energy. The Province, under the NDP, continued to sell new energy deals, and we will continue to do so in the future.

Did they do any new transmission? They complain about building transmission. In 1993 they had a study that said, please build transmission. You're wasting it. There's too much resistance on the line. We need to build new transmission. What did they do? They did nothing. What did we do? We're moving forward to build new transmission so that we can have new sales, less loss, line loss through

resistance, and we will move forward. We will, in fact, move forward on the geothermal.

Now, we talk about new industries: research and development. I am pleased to see that in 1999 there was about \$19 million in R&D, and I'm pleased that we're well on our way to doubling that amount in a very few years.

I'm very, very pleased that this budget, and one of the strong reasons I'm supporting this budget is just in the MHRC, Manitoba Health Research Council grants. They move from \$1.9 million to \$6 million in this budget.

I am pleased that we have gone up 300 percent in R&D. That helps the life sciences companies. That helps develop high-end research, helps with the treatment of diseases like heart and stroke, diabetes, et cetera. So, people learn not only new drugs, but new ways of treating, new ways of getting early intervention and making a difference. We are leaders in that. Whether it's the Richardson Centre for Functional Foods, whether it is St. Boniface, whether it's the U of M, we're contributing millions of dollars to research, which makes a difference because of commercialization, and it makes a difference in the outcome of people's lives, and I'm pleased on that. I'm pleased that we're basically moving towards doubling, in a very few years, on the R&D spending.

I'm also pleased in new media. Members opposite, their idea of new media is turning on the TV. What we believe is we believe that there's life that can be accepted in new concepts. So you take the gaming industry, new media graphic design. I know the members opposite never even heard of it, but I'm pleased to see that we actually have a training course in Red River, which is training some wonderful things that the Red River has done through the assistance of my colleague the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford). We've got a world-class training course training 3D animators and graphic designers.

What's nice now is we have leading industries, whether its Frantic Films or others. I need the members opposite to understand the growth potential. This industry's moved from \$10 billion to \$20 billion and is quickly moving to \$50 billion a year. It is much larger than the movie industry in the world, and projections have it at \$100 billion. So these little video games, new media, animation, graphics, new imaging, this is huge. We have gone up in Manitoba in the last three years 1,850 percent increase.

We have lots of people earning decent money. We have some game developers in Fortune Cat, where we're developing world-class games that could be marketed throughout the world. We're developing and commercializing some of these enterprises, and what we're doing is we're accepting the new jobs. We're going into the new industry where there's huge value added.

I know that we've done well as far as economic development. I know that there are some left-wing organizations like the Royal Bank of Canada that has said that we're going to be No. 1 in growth, that said that we're going to have the highest increase in capital spending in the country. I know that they've said that we have done a very, very good job of investing the manufacturing sector.

I look at the advance manufacturing initiative, which is housed in the CTT, and what that's doing is it's bringing in manufacturers to incorporate new techniques to be very, very lean and be able to compete, and by doing that many years ago, by taking the capital tax off, by changing the corporate tax. The members opposite may squeal about dropping the taxes, but their taxes remain flat. In fact, they were at 17 percent and had been, remained so for many, many years. We have dropped them to 12 percent over time, from 17 to 12 percent. That's a considerable drop.

When the members opposite squeal about tax cuts, they didn't realize that it was 8 percent small-business tax rate under the Conservatives, which was the highest in the country. We've dropped it to the lowest in the country.

Mr. Speaker, what we've also done is a one-window effect, where we make sure that businesses can be conducted on line. That's bringing us into the new economy. We're making sure people can pay their bills and different costs on line. We're making sure that it's simple, and we did that as an NDP government because we listened to business. We listened to in excess of, 39,000 businesses because what we do is, we believe together we can learn.

So, in conclusion, I believe that we have a truly bright future, whether it's the EDS announcement of up to 1,000 jobs, whether it's new dam constructions, whether it's the mining industry which is up 300 percent, or the oil and gas industry up 600 percent. I believe that we do have a truly, truly bright future. I am an optimist. I think that I'd like to be leading Canada. I think we truly can be a have province, but we can by building on our strengths,

which are people and investments in green industry, and growing our industries.

* (16:50)

The former government, the Conservatives, believe that you get ahead by selling your assets. We believe we get together by building our assets, which are human assets and people through education, assets in companies by working together to make sure that they can be profitable and competitive, and building our economy through working together and in partnership. That's the view of our side. We're optimistic, and we believe we have a bright future. I'm sorry that the members opposite will not see an optimist view, not vote for the have province that we can truly be and we're moving towards, not vote for a budget that placed us first in the country as far as economic growth. I'm pleased to support that because I believe by raising all people to a higher level, we all can share, more and more people will be affluent.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I've been listening to the minister that put his comments on record. He's talking about this real optimism that's out there. I would suggest that he should take a look in the mirror and look at the realism of it. That's what I want to point out in the next few minutes regarding this budget that I'll be talking about. I think that we do have to be realistic. It is something that I have learned in business over my lifetime. I believe that we have a government in place here who is not looking at the realities of life. I will point that out in just a few comments a little later on.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to just thank my constituency, the Pembina constituency, for giving me the opportunity to be back in the House and to represent them here. I know that, since the election, this is the first budget that we've been able to debate. Consequently, as I indicated, I want to thank them for the opportunity to be here.

I also listened to what the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) had to say. He spent more time on talking about the issues that we were bringing forward than debating the budget. I found that rather interesting. Consequently, he didn't have anything really positive to say about the budget that had been presented. In fact, I found that the comments that were made on this side of the House, and I sort of took those to be a positive for my colleagues, the comments that they had made, in fact, he was

somewhat supportive of that. As I say, Mr. Speaker, I find that it was rather interesting that he would have spent so much time in trying to berate and talk about the comments that my colleagues had made to the budget itself.

I believe it's important that we do put some accurate statistics on record, and that we do, in fact, present these to Manitobans, because Manitobans, by and large, don't have the time to go through a budget the way we have who sit here day after day. We also have research staff who had the opportunity to go through it and to break down these numbers for us.

When you have, as this budget had, we have expenditures that are up by 6.2 percent from the '07 budget. They are saying that the increase is 3.3 percent, but, reality is, it is 6.2 percent that they have gone up. For every \$9 in spending, there is only \$1 in tax cuts, \$573 million in new spending versus the \$63.8 million in new spending changes that we see. The \$100 increase in the basic personal exemption is less than inflation. The inflation for the past year would have been, then, \$160. We would have brought Manitoba up to the same level as Saskatchewan. But, no, as we have said time and time again, where the Premier (Mr. Doer) used to refer to being happy with being on keel with Saskatchewan, we now find out that we are desperately falling behind what they are doing.

Just to add to this, Mr. Speaker, there is no reference to getting rid of the job-killing payroll tax. This tax is discouraging growth within our province. I represent an area where we have business growth taking place on a continued basis. They are doing it in spite of this government. There are no supports that are given by this government, nor to encourage them to continue to expand.

Manitoba is now a have-not province. We are relying on a record level of equalization, a 13 percent increase from the '07. We're now getting dangerously close to 40 percent of the provincial revenue. Mr. Speaker, I have learned also in my short lifetime that, once that you start getting something like equalization or even stabilization programs, it creates a dependency on the person who is providing those dollars. A very good businessman, a friend of mine, in fact, told me this years ago. He said: Mark my words. You make some of your worst decisions in the best of times. Now, I know that the NDP, the socialists across the way, would not understand that. They wouldn't understand what that means. I do indicate to them that that is a fact. *[interjection]*

Okay, I'm sorry, I apologize. You don't like to be called a socialist. I mean, that's the reality of it. So, yeah. *[interjection]* There we go. I like that. There's a reference made here.

There's been an overall increase of \$6 billion to Manitoba's debt since 1999, \$6-billion increase. The other thing that I have learned through my short lifetime is that you cannot borrow your way to prosperity. That's what this government is trying to do. They're endeavouring to, they're attempting to borrow their way to prosperity. Look to Ontario. Bob Rae, what did he try to do? And he was booted out of the government of the day. He was trying to borrow his way to prosperity, and it does not work. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned about the direction and the approach that this government is taking.

Just to back up some of the comments that I have made here. When you go and you read and you always—and I know that the comments that are made from the members opposite are: Well, yes, this is just what the Conservatives, that's what they think. But let me draw your attention to what some other people are saying. Here's a highlighted one: "Western weakling. NDP seems content to rely on charity of others."

"Just over a year ago," the Premier (Mr. Doer) "made the public statement that 'we don't want to be behind Saskatchewan.' Unfortunately, that is exactly what is happening under the watch of this government. Despite the many minor announcements and re-announcements in Budget 2008, Manitoba—now the only have-not province in the west—is being left behind.

"Saskatchewan's aggressive moves over the past years to reduce taxes and improve its investment climate are paying off in spades. Meanwhile, Manitoba's approach to the economic competitiveness can charitably be described as underwhelming.

"The difference in approach affects your wallet. If you are a two-income family of four earning \$60,000, you pay \$445 more than the same family in Saskatchewan and a whopping \$1,906 more than the same family in B.C. What would you do with an extra \$445 . . . ?"

Well, Mr. Speaker, the point being that nowadays with mobility, our young people who are leaving the province are looking at these numbers. They're saying, eventually I don't care what that top

number is that I'm earning; it's what I take home that counts. That is just the reality out there.

Another one I want to read is called an "Enervating budget." "The old song about being down so long that everything" looks good or "looks up resonated in the provincial budget Wednesday. Every bone tossed, every difficulty glossed—every opportunity missed—was cheered by the government backbenchers, happy as always" about the Finance Minister's talk on the budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, here, again, is another third party indicating that the backbenchers were just out there clapping their hands, but, really, missed it completely. The budget wasn't energizing, and this came from the reporters who were locked up as the budget was presented to them, "concluded that the only surprise, the only deviation from the kind of endless political timidity not seen in Manitoba since the dead hand of the Campbell era 50 years ago. . ." Now, this is what happened. Not since 50 years have

we seen this take place, "was an announcement that the government plans to introduce a tax on coal that will take effect at about the same time as Manitoba Hydro ceases to burn coal" in Brandon. Well, now, that's rather interesting. That's what you would call timing.

Well, here's another headline: "Deeper in debt, NDP tries to quietly mortgage our future with latest budget." Well, my goodness, Mr. Speaker, that's again third party indicating that we have a problem.

Another one: "Debt ballooning." And here are some of the comments. It's amazing—

Mr. Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) will have 20 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

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