

Second Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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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.
JENNISSON, 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.
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MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
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TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 17, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 227—The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Reporting Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 227, The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Reporting Act; Loi sur la déclaration obligatoire de l'ensemble des troubles causés par l'alcoolisation fœtale, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, Bill 227 is designed to provide help for children with fetal alcohol syndrome by ensuring as early as possible a diagnosis because there's so much we can do for these children when they're diagnosed early.

It will also provide an improved information base on which to plan a better FASD strategy, both for the support for these children and for the prevention of FASD.

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

Bill 22—The Worker Recruitment and Protection Act

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan), that Bill 22, The Worker Recruitment and Protection Act; Loi sur le recrutement et la protection des travailleurs, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Allan: This new legislation replaces the existing Employment Services Act which governs activities of third-party placement agencies in Manitoba.

This act will strengthen and modernize the legislation to provide protection for temporary foreign workers from unscrupulous recruiters, level the playing field for employers to meet labour

market demand and protect children in the modelling industry from sexual exploitation.

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

PETITIONS

Personal Care Homes—Virден

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virден): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial government has a responsibility to provide quality long-term care for qualifying Manitobans.

Personal care homes in the town of Virден currently have a significant number of empty beds that cannot be filled because of a critical nursing shortage in these facilities.

In 2006, a municipally formed retention committee was promised that the Virден nursing shortage would be resolved by the fall of 2006.

Virtually all personal care homes in southwestern Manitoba are full, yet as of early October 2007, the nursing shortage in Virден is so severe that more than one-quarter of the beds at Westman Nursing Home are sitting empty.

Seniors, many of whom are war veterans, are therefore being transported to other communities for care. These communities are often a long distance from Virден and family members are forced to travel for more than two hours round trip to visit their loved ones, creating significant financial and emotional hardship for these families.

Those seniors that have been moved out of Virден have not received assurance that they will be moved back to Virден when these beds become available.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider taking serious action to fill the nursing vacancies at personal care homes in the town of

Virден and to consider reopening the beds that have been closed as the result of this nursing shortage.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider prioritizing the needs of those citizens that have been moved out of their community by committing to move those individuals back into Virден as soon as the beds become available.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by Shirley Kennedy, Bonnie Creller, Bernice Draper 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.

Power Line Development

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The reasons for this petition are:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct a third high voltage transmission line down the west side of Lake Winnipegosis instead of the east side of Lake Winnipeg, as recommended by Manitoba Hydro.

The NDP detour is more than 400 kilometres longer than the eastern route recommended by Manitoba Hydro experts.

The line losses created by the NDP detour will result in a lost opportunity to displace dirty coal-generated electricity, which will create added and unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to an additional 57,000 vehicles on our roads annually.

The former chair of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee has stated that an east-side bipole and a UNESCO World Heritage Site can co-exist contrary to NDP claims.

The NDP detour will cut through more forest than the eastern route, and will cut through threatened aspen parkland areas, unlike the eastern route.

Former member of the Legislative Assembly Elijah Harper has stated that the east-side communities are devastated by the government's decision to abandon the east-side route, stating that this decision will resign them to poverty in perpetuity.

MKO, an organization that represents northern Manitoba First Nations chiefs, has stated that the

government has acted unilaterally to abandon the east route without consultation with northern First Nations despite repeated requests by MKO for consultations.

The NDP detour will lead to an additional debt of at least \$400 million related to the capital cost of line construction alone, to be left to future generations of Manitobans.

The NDP detour will result in increased line losses due to friction leading to lost energy sales of between \$250 million and \$1 billion over the life of the project.

The added debt and lost sales created by the NDP detour will make every Manitoba family at least \$4,000 poorer.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to abandon the NDP detour on the basis that it will result in massive environmental, social and economic damage to Manitoba.

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the route originally recommended by Manitoba Hydro, subject to the necessary regulatory approvals.

This petition is signed by Andrea Gilling, Drew Ostash, Shawna Stroud and many, many other Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a 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 Susie Wiebe, Louise Peters, Pete Peters, Gerald Klassen and many, many others.

The Elections Act Amendments

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

In the constituencies of The Maples and Wellington serious allegations were made about inappropriate behaviour by high-ranking NDP members, and the Premier (Mr. Doer) failed to show leadership in enforcing a political code of ethical conduct.

Elections Manitoba has made it clear that it does not have the jurisdiction or the authority to enforce in any way a shared code of ethical conduct.

The '99 Monnin inquiry clearly wanted an effective code of ethics, not the current non-enforceable code of ethics that the Premier and others continue to ignore.

The '99 Monnin report states: "If the political parties fail to implement a Code of Ethics by December 31, 2001, that the standard Code be made compulsory by legislation."

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Manitoba Legislature to consider acting on the 1999 Alfred Monnin report and include the principles of a shared code of ethical conduct into The Elections Act.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by A. Abarientos, T. Farini, A. Tonelete 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.

This road is the primary transportation link for the persons of Cayer and Crane River and is the only road residents can use to access these 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 the road repaired and subsequently maintained for the safety of local residents.

This petition is signed by Robert Richards, Jeannette Richards, Toby St. Germain and many, many others.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Brian Ross Borkowsky of Teulon Elementary School, Joan Karen Duerksen of John Pritchard School, Bradley Daniel Dowler of Springs Christian Academy and Dany's Dorge of École Précieux-Sang, and their families who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson).

Also in the public gallery we have from Carberry Collegiate 34 grade 9 students under the direction of Mrs. Raegan Dyck. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Wisconsin Power Sale

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): At 9:30 this morning, just before the education capital announcement, the Premier and his minister for Hydro mismanagement, as well as the CEO of Hydro, announced that they had arrived at a tentative arrangement to sell power to the state of Wisconsin.

Mr. Speaker, while certainly the growing worldwide demand for energy is creating great opportunities for us in Manitoba, I wonder why it is—*[interjection]* So this is the particulars about what's going on in the world. Now the question relates to what's going on here with this NDP government in Manitoba.

The question is: Given the opportunities we have, I wonder if the Premier is aware, as he's building power lines to the west, I wonder if he's aware of the fact that, in fact, the state of Wisconsin is to the east.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, yes, I'm certainly aware of the geography, the fact that the power line will have to go from Manitoba to Minnesota and then it will move from Minnesota—that's why it's a three-party agreement on the transmission—to Wisconsin. I certainly want to say to the member opposite, I hope he's had a chance over the weekend to review the geography of Canada when he pointed out that Manitoba, on Friday, was like the Churchill Falls situation where, of course, Québec is in between Labrador and the U.S. border. It's kind of a Stockwellian view of geography in Canada.

I also want to point out, Mr. Speaker, on the weekend, the member opposite and his team, his team of people handed out a map to people in Brandon pointing out that Brandon is not on the map, but the only problem is—not on the map of Manitoba—they produced a map that had two-thirds of Manitoba called northern Manitoba off the map.

I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition appreciates that the power actually comes from northern Manitoba. The future, the vision of Manitoba is in the north, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: I want to thank the Premier for that colourful response.

Mr. Speaker, the risk of building power lines directly into other jurisdictions is what creates vulnerability. Now, the Premier, I know he talks tough about federal Conservative Cabinet ministers in the House. I know that to their face, he's on his knees singing in their praises. He's a pretty different character here in the House, talking tough about federal Cabinet ministers; a different story whenever he's in their presence when he goes weak at the knees.

I want to ask the Premier and let him know that we're certainly aware of the geography of North America. I'll table a map, Mr. Speaker, which shows that the power is being generated in northeastern Manitoba. It's leaving the province in southeastern Manitoba. The customers are all to the east.

So I just want to ask the Premier: Since the power starts in the northeast and leaves from the southeast, ends up going to the east, why is he building a power line to the west?

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, there are two reasons to build a power line, and I would point out that the members opposite, in government, turned off the lights of Conawapa. We negotiated the Conawapa deal. They cancelled it. That is very clear. Conawapa, of course, is a dam that we've already talked about—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we pointed out that this transmission line actually goes to Minnesota and it then proceeds to Wisconsin. *[interjection]* Well, the members opposite laugh, but there's 250 megawatts of power in this agreement to the state of Minnesota. Members opposite called it on the back of a cocktail napkin. It's now before the Minnesota regulators in the state of Minnesota, in Saint Paul.

Mr. Speaker, the proposal that is to Wisconsin was discussed with the utilities that have announced the agreement. It was discussed between the Republican and Democratic senators and the House of Representatives in Minnesota and in Wisconsin. They also know that environmental issues are very, very important for the future of these proposals.

This sale, Mr. Speaker, renders a house of cards that have just fallen down. Every argument the member opposite has made, his false statement about the cost of the converter stations has just fallen like a house of cards with the announcement today.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I just point out that our very realistic estimate of the catastrophic financial cost of this decision does not include the reliability discount that's going to come from building a less reliable line. It doesn't include the added maintenance cost, doesn't include the extra 60 kilometres of forest. It doesn't include the settlements that are going to have to take place with all the private landowners in western Manitoba, the 16 First Nations.

I hope that the Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick) has taken a close look at the map that Hydro is now distributing showing the bipole lines cutting right through St. Norbert as the bipole goes south of Winnipeg.

I want to just ask the Premier: In light of the fact that the catastrophic financial cost of this decision will be, by the time it's all said and done, in excess of \$1.5 billion for future generations of Manitobans, I want to ask him again, since he hasn't answered the question—he talks about approvals when 15 out of 16 communities on the east side want the line. Let me just ask him one more time and see if we can get a direct answer. If he's selling power to the east, which includes Minnesota, by the way—Minnesota's to the south and east; it's on the map as well—if he's selling it to the east, why is he building a line to the west?

Mr. Doer: The do-nothing option cost Manitoba billions of dollars because members opposite cancelled Conawapa, cancelled transmission, didn't build any transmission in Manitoba.

It was an NDP government that negotiated the Limestone Agreement and the transmission to the Minnesota Xcel power sale. It was the NDP that negotiated Conawapa which has cost Manitoba's economy billions of dollars, the members opposite turning off the lights and turning down that project. It is the government again that has negotiated the increased 250-megawatt sale to Minnesota. There's a co-operative agreement between the Hydro utility, Minnesota and Wisconsin in its proposed terms of sale.

Environment is already being debated from 25 years ago in terms of Manitoba projects in Minnesota. I want to thank the Member for

Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) who has been very helpful in putting a balance of what happened 25 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the document that Mr. Brennan tabled at the legislative committee in December, in front of the whole committee, indicated a capital cost of \$410-million additional for the can-do project that we have proposed, and the member opposite is using taxpayers' money to mail out fictitious \$1.5- billion numbers. He should correct the record.

Manitoba Hydro Wisconsin Power Sale

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, there seems to be some confusion over the east versus west debate.

Now, we had this same confusion a couple of years ago when the Blue Bombers were placed in the East Division. Mr. Speaker, there might also be some confusion in that the Edmonton Eskimos and the Green Bay Packers who are from Wisconsin also wear the same colour of jerseys.

Mr. Speaker, just for clarification, does the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro know the difference between east and west?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Well, this discussion may take the prize for the most facile question that we've had this week.

Members in this House know the difference between building and doing nothing.

Members on this side of the House know the difference between an ecological southern boreal forest and a free-standing tree. There is a huge difference in terms of the ecological integrity of the east side, which members have completely ignored.

Members of this side of the House understand the value of having a long-term plan for the economy of Manitoba, a green economy with good quality power that is wanted by our neighbours to the south of us, and members of this side of the House have a will and determination to advance the interests of Manitobans, not come forward with nickel-dime comments like the members opposite.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba fans of the Minnesota Vikings and the Green Bay Packers know they are located south and east of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, if this sale goes through, the simple geography reaffirms the daffiness of this Premier's (Mr. Doer) west-side route.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro now reconsider this reckless decision?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the opportunity to set the record straight.

Members opposite led by the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) have consistently provided inaccurate information to this House. If you go back to the standing committee on Hydro meeting, the CEO and president of Hydro said the future cost of a west-side line compared to an east-side line would be about \$410 million, starting in the year 2018.

Members opposite have completely misunderstood that a converter station is needed for the new hydro transmission line for reliability purposes and, in addition, to carry additional capacity.

Today's announcement confirms that we need those transmission lines on the west side for the additional capacity that will be required for Conawapa and Keeyask in partnership with First Nations peoples.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister to refer to the map that was tabled today in the House. It makes no sense to build a meandering transmission line that almost touches the Saskatchewan border, curves back east to Winnipeg, down to Sprague and into the U.S. This proposed hydro sale reinforces our argument for a direct route on the east side of the province.

Mr. Speaker, in light of this proposed deal, if the NDP doesn't change its mind and build Bipole III on the east side, as we've said all along, it makes me wonder if our Premier (Mr. Doer) would pass the geography portion of *Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader*.

Mr. Selinger: It's unfortunate that the normally sincere Member for Turtle Mountain is taking lessons in gratuitous comments from the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) because that's exactly what he's done.

The reality is this. One of the many reasons that Manitoba hydro is a premium product in the international marketplace is because it's considered a clean, renewable resource.

Members opposite would like to put the entire reputation of Manitoba Hydro at risk by putting a transmission line through a future UNESCO World Heritage Site. They would roll the dice on the future export markets from Manitoba Hydro which in the next 10 years, at present day situations, are worth \$5.5 billion.

If they want to roll the dice on multibillion dollar contracts, they can do it while they are in opposition, but I can assure you they would never do it if they ever become government.

Public Safety Government Initiatives

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, our streets are not safe. A couple of days ago, another victim was stabbed in Winnipeg, this time just for his hat.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: How many victims are necessary before this Justice Minister makes safety a priority?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, since 1999, we've funded 155 new police officers, hired 23 Crown prosecutors. Budget 2008 adds an additional 20 police, including 10 for Winnipeg and 2 for Brandon. Every one of those measures members opposite spoke against and voted against; in addition, programs like the Cybertip, brought in by this side of the House, the safer communities that shut down over 300 prostitution and crack houses, et cetera, that have been shut down, Mr. Speaker, \$500,000 for recreation centres for inner-city people.

I don't think members opposite understand what is going on on the streets of Winnipeg or around Manitoba, and they certainly don't know what's going on in the north by their comments from the first two members in the House, Mr. Speaker, in order to make those kinds of judgments.

* (14:00)

Mr. Hawranik: Shootings in March. Shootings in April. Four Winnipeggers are dead. Stabbings on the streets. It's a daily occurrence and happening anytime day or night. There is no place to run and hide from the violence Mr. Speaker.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: There is nothing in the budget to address the escalating violence in Winnipeg. Why has he failed to address the violence?

Mr. Chomiak: Programs like the bracelet program that we put in place, programs like the high-intensity probation programs, more police on the street, more public education and laws like drive-by shootings; we had a drive-by shooting on a First Nation in Alberta, where a two-year-old child was shot in Alberta.

We need a national law on gangs. That's why there's a committee between Manitoba and the federal government to bring in some anti-gang laws before the end of the year. That's what the federal government has promised me, and I take them at their word.

Mr. Hawranik: We have drive-by shootings in Winnipeg on a monthly basis and this Justice Minister isn't concerned.

On Monday, Ashley Fleury was shot and died later that day. He was a quiet man and he kept to himself. He had no history of violence, Mr. Speaker. He was simply at the wrong place at the wrong time.

So I ask the Justice Minister: How many innocent Manitobans need to die before this minister recognizes that violent crime is out of control in Winnipeg?

Mr. Chomiak: In 1996, when I was an MLA and three individuals were murdered on a street in my constituency, three individuals were murdered as a result of gang violence on a street in my constituency, I vowed if we were government we would take action.

We did, Mr. Speaker, with safer communities, fortified buildings, more police, more Crown prosecutors, more people on probation units, more importantly programs like Turnabout that has helped a thousand kids, programs like Spotlight that helps kids that are in trouble get off the street and off the gangs, programs for recreation. Over 130,000 children have gone to Lighthouses, which are schools that are open after hours and on weekends, to have a safe place, something that we vowed to do and will continue to do and members opposite voted against.

Seniors Safety Government Initiatives

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): The NDP solution is more programs, more crime.

When it comes to safety this government has failed miserably to protect our seniors. Last year, 77-year-old Margaret Peters was the victim of a

violent home invasion. Two men forced their way into her Fort Rouge home, choked her, hit her in the head with a rifle and pushed her down the stairs.

Why is there nothing in this budget, Mr. Speaker, where seniors like Margaret Peters will feel safer in their home?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm happy to note that this budget expands our senior safety program across the province of Manitoba, both in urban and in rural Manitoba. I don't know if the member was aware of that. There was no program like that from the lean mean years when programs were slashed and cut, 1988 to 1999.

We've got a safer community home program in rural and urban Manitoba specifically designed for seniors. I'm very pleased we've expanded it in this year's budget.

Mrs. Rowat: Margaret Peters was brutally beaten last year, Mr. Speaker, not in 1990.

Last month, another victim asleep in his home was invaded in his home. He was hit; he was stabbed in the back and chest and his home was ransacked. Violent crimes like this are becoming more prevalent under this NDP government and in our communities.

When will this government take some concrete action to ensure incidents like this don't happen again?

Mr. Chomiak: I'm very familiar with the low-level junior Republican tactics of members opposite. They had no issues. In the last campaign all they ran on was ads about crime and scaring people, Mr. Speaker.

An Honourable Member: In front of Earl's.

Mr. Chomiak: In front of Earl's, one of the hangouts of the reputed organizations that were rampant and started here in the 1990s. We've taken action and put in place programs. In addition, members opposite joined us on our trip to Ottawa to ask for additional penalties on the Criminal Code which is operated by the federal government.

I'm happy to see that some of those changes have come true, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to see that more changes will come true on the Criminal Code of Canada. And the way members opposite talk about—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, I am encouraging the minister to save his rhetoric for somebody that really cares.

The seniors deserve to have answers, especially the seniors who have had their homes invaded and have been brutally beaten. These seniors have spent their lives raising their families, paying taxes and building our communities, and this NDP government is bringing those communities down.

When will this government take the safety of seniors seriously and take action to reduce or reverse the trend, increasingly violent attacks on Manitoba seniors?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I note that now that auto theft is down 30 percent to 40 percent, we don't hear much of a peep from members opposite. You know, it is still too high, but members were against every measure we took on our auto-theft initiative, and now that the numbers are down there's not a peep from members opposite.

I encourage any members who are running federally next election to make sure the Criminal Code—it's a federal act—is changed to incorporate the changes that we went to Ottawa with the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), the leader of the third party, community members, police officials and people from First Nations communities to ask for changes to Canada's Criminal Code.

I urge them to make those changes so we can do more than just have programming at the provincial level, which is all the jurisdiction that we have, Mr. Speaker.

South Perimeter Bridge Repair Project Status

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, taxpayers need and deserve some answers from this government about the bungled south Perimeter bridge over the Red River; \$12 million in taxpayers' dollars and climbing and no end in sight to this mess or no results .

When will the work begin to fix this mess and will it be finished this year?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, the south end of Winnipeg is very busy. It's booming. The economy in Manitoba is booming. There are many, many highway projects taking place this summer with our \$4-billion 10-year plan.

There's going to be a lot of roadwork taking place in Manitoba, so I'd just ask drivers, please, to be courteous of those workers on the highways. Please be driving safely and take care for all those workers that are working on our many highways this year.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I hope there won't be more bungling like we've seen in the past with all the new construction.

Work has already started on the Fort Garry twin bridges, and the south Perimeter bridge is still in a state of disrepair and could certainly impact the movement of emergency vehicles across the river.

For the record, can the minister indicate what his plan is to ensure timely emergency services are delivered to Manitobans on both sides of the river when it's needed?

Mr. Lemieux: The bridge is open and, Mr. Speaker, it's never been a case of an issue of safety with regard to its more long-term performance on this particular bridge. Consultants have presented us with a plan and when the engineers took a look at what was happening with the bridge, they want to ensure that we're getting a 40-year performance from this bridge. I want to assure the taxpayers of Manitoba that we are certainly looking after their dollars ensuring that when someone is given a contract in good money to build a bridge, we're going to make sure that that job is done right.

Now, the Member for River East, I know she's very envious of the fact that we're building, you know, the northeast Perimeter Highway. She couldn't get it done when she was a Cabinet minister in the previous government. We're doing it, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, those kinds of answers from the minister certainly don't give any confidence to the people in the south part of the city of Winnipeg, when they're concerned that if an ambulance is called or an emergency vehicle or a fire takes place in their community, that this government, because of its bungling, may have created some additional problems to get those services.

Mr. Speaker, will he stand up today in this House, instead of those kinds of slimy answers, and indicate clearly, give some comfort to the people in south Winnipeg that they will receive emergency services when they're needed in their community? Can he give them that assurance?

* (14:10)

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, the MLA for scare tactics is at it again. The other day she attacked civil servants for not fixing a bridge and taking care of it.

We've got a plan in place. You have to take a look at what the problem is and find out first before you proceed and go ahead.

Now, she attacks—you know, looking at the emergency services people, somehow they're not going to be able to move fast enough, quick enough. Mr. Speaker, we have very, very competent people with regard to emergency services. We have very competent people with regard to the Highways Department, and I wish she would stop scaring the people of south Winnipeg with regard to a lot of these issues.

Mr. Speaker, we are very cognizant of the fact that there is a challenge here with regard to this bridge, and we're going to take care of it in a methodical way, not a knee-jerk quick fix that's not going to last us 40 years like this bridge should.

Livestock Industry Processing Plants

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, in today's *Free Press* is a bankruptcy notice for Ranchers Choice. The co-op members worked very hard to get this project off the ground. Unfortunately, this NDP government mismanaged this file from the very beginning.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture outline for this House which creditors will be paid, who will be on the hook for this government's mismanagement of slaughter capacity within the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raises an important issue. I wish he would have put as much importance on this issue when producers were trying very hard to increase slaughter capacity in this province. What did members opposite say when producers were trying to increase slaughter capacity? Members opposite were saying, we don't need more slaughter capacity in this province. They were more beholden to their friends in Alberta and they would not put their support behind this project.

Mr. Speaker, we know that producers worked very hard on that project. We also know we have to continue to work to make sure we do—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: The poor leadership of this government is why it fell, Mr. Speaker.

It's been nearly five years since the first case of BSE was discovered in Canada. What we have seen of this government is a \$2-per-head tax imposed on our cattle producers. Yet we have seen no new beef-processing plants. In fact, I'm told one plant is on the edge of closing, if it hasn't already.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister ensure that their \$2-per-head backdoor tax on our cattle producers won't be used to bail out this government's commitments when it comes to Ranchers Choice bankruptcy?

Ms. Wowchuk: I'm not quite sure, Mr. Speaker, where the member opposite is going on that question, but I will tell you that this government is committed to working with producers to increase slaughter capacity.

The member opposite may not be in support of the \$2 levy, but if he looks at the record, producers are leaving their money because they believe that they can be part of the solution and they can be part of having increased slaughter capacity in this province.

I say to the member opposite, there are people that have—and there have been announcements made by the enhancement council. We will continue to work with producers and processors that want to—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this minister has collected millions annually from our cattle producers through this backdoor tax, yet we have nothing to show in terms of meaningful expansion of cattle processing here in this province. Manitoba pork producers are suffering as well. Can we expect the government to impose a backdoor tax on them next?

Mr. Speaker, will the minister do something meaningful to save our livestock industry before she runs it all out of the province?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that our cattle producers and our hog producers are facing very significant challenges because of the high Canadian dollar, high input costs, the impacts of country-of-origin labelling. The cattle producers and the pork producers both came to my office. They came to us asking for support and we listened to them.

The pork producers asked for a loan program because they needed help with their cash flow. The cattle producers came to us and asked for cash assistance, and they asked for a deferral of their BSE loans, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we listened to the producers and we put those programs in place. The cattle producers asked us for a mustering fee—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Bill 227 Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, to the Premier (Mr. Doer), there is so much potential for positive success and achievement in children with FASD, providing they're diagnosed early. Children with FASD who are diagnosed early can have and develop productive lives as adults and be happy people and productive citizens. Bill 227 will provide the Chief Medical Officer of Health with the information that will ensure that children with FASD in Manitoba are identified early and helped.

Is the Premier and his government ready to stand up and to provide and support better measures for children with FASD in Manitoba?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): We have been providing quality service for children with FASD since we took office in 1999. We have made investments, investments in a continuum of care right from prevention to treatment, diagnosis and interventions. We've worked with people within the community. We've worked with parents. We've worked with foster parents to develop a system that's strong. We have some very important initiatives. One is Stop FASD. It is respected around the world, the work that we do.

We announced our FASD strategy last year. We've got positive comments from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs who said that it was very important and a quality piece of work.

What we've done is through Spectrum Connections, as well, making sure that we provide those services.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, when I've asked in this House before about the incidence of FASD, the government has not known the answer. They've said it's very difficult to diagnose FASD. We have trouble counting numbers from one minister; there's no precision from another minister. For eight and a half years we have been stonewalled by this government

when we ask about incidence of FASD in Manitoba. How can you help children when you're travelling blind and you don't know what's happening in the province.

I ask the minister and the Premier (Mr. Doer) whether they will support Bill 227 to provide the information base to better support children with FASD in this province?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I have to disagree with the member across who challenges us that we're not working together. Healthy Child Manitoba is a committee that works out of Cabinet. Eight departments worked together to develop this strategy. It is a co-operative strategy that is collaborative across all departments: Education, Family Services, Health, Healthy Living. We're working together and we have developed a strategy which is respected across Canada. Mr. Speaker, this strategy includes education, prevention, interventions, diagnosis. We have diagnostic clinics within Thompson and Winnipeg. We continue to work with the professionals.

Is our work done? No, it's not. We will continue to work. This is a preventable diagnosis and we will work together and we will develop a strong solution.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this government, in eight and a half years, has failed to provide any evidence that the incidence of FASD is decreasing.

My supplementary to the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson): Manitoba schools are now legally mandated to provide appropriate educational services for children with special needs. Children with FASD have special needs. In order for school divisions to better plan, they need information on the incidence of FASD in their regions.

I ask the Minister of Education whether he will support Bill 227 in order to ensure that school boards get the information they need to better plan and to help children with FASD.

* (14:20)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We will certainly review Bill 227. We will look at it throughout our strategy that we have already developed. Education is a partner with our strategy. We work across the board. We work with the different departments: Education, Family Services, Health and Healthy Living. We work with the school teachers. We are providing them with the supports that they need. We provide them with the education. We work with the families to ensure that the supports are there for the students and for the

children. We were the first province to initiate screening at birth.

Mr. Speaker, 97 percent of parents are responding to these questionnaires that we are providing. This is essential for us as we continue to develop our strategy and to strengthen it. We will continue to work with all of our partners and try and continue to make a difference.

School Infrastructure Government Funding

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, in keeping with Education Week, I understand that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth made an important announcement today that will impact our school infrastructure across this province. Can he inform the House of what was contained in that announcement?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I was very pleased today to announce that our capital commitment for Manitoba schools infrastructure is \$60 million, which represents an increase of 33 percent. It's an increase of \$15 million over our last capital plan.

That means our total funding for capital projects for schools in Manitoba, since 2000, is \$483 million. This will allow us to move forward on a total of 100 projects, which will bring our total number of projects in excess of 1,000 since we've been engaged as government. This includes addressing needs short term in Winkler with a four-classroom addition to Emerado School, as well as initiating planning to address the needs in both Steinbach and Winkler due to the pressures for immigration and increased enrolment.

Projects throughout the province of Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Letellier Bridge Project Status

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, it's been nine years since the sorely-needed Letellier Bridge project has been shelved by this government. Many, many people rely on this bridge each and every day. Especially noteworthy is the fact that five school buses cross this bridge twice a day throughout the school year. There's now even a Web site, www.201bridge.com, that asks people to predict when the bridge will fall in the river. Is this the type of publicity that agencies like Travel Manitoba

would want when trying to promote travel within our province?

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation tell this House today what the delay is in tendering this very important project?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I see the MLA for Emerson is trying to take over scare tactics from the MLA for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

Again, Mr. Speaker, the MLA knows very well that there are a number of things that we're looking at with regard to purchase of land, with regard to environmental issues that we're looking at with regard to the replacement of this bridge. I have to say that I've spoken to this MLA personally with regard to this particular issue.

Again, trying to scare or frighten the farmers or businesses in the area is not helpful, quite frankly, because the department has a plan to address this particular bridge.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, promises don't instil confidence in people who have to use this bridge on a daily basis. They've heard the same promises over and over again for over eight years. There's no work in sight. Motorists need a concrete signal that this government is actually going to proceed in the long overdue bridge work.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation finally tell us when this government intends to tender the Letellier Bridge?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, once again, we hear from an MLA on that side. One day, it's cut, cut, cut money. The next day, it's spend, spend, spend.

Mr. Speaker, budget 2008 states that we're moving forward on Manitoba's priorities. We continue to pave the way to a brighter future for all Manitobans. His constituents will be watching to see how he votes on over a \$400-million budget with regard to Infrastructure and Transportation.

So his constituents will watch to see if he's going to be supportive of the plan this government has in place for renewing our infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Professor Narain Gupta

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise today to pay tribute to the life of

Professor Dr. Narain Gupta, a scholar and distinguished professor of mathematics at the University of Manitoba. Some of the family members are up in the gallery.

*(14:20)

He was born in Jammu, India, and attended Aligarh University, completing a Master's degree in mathematics and law. He obtained his Ph.D. from Australian National University where he met his brilliant wife, fellow mathematician Dr. Chander Kanta Gupta. They migrated to Manitoba in 1967 where Professor Gupta joined the faculty of the University of Manitoba, becoming a full professor in 1973 and a Distinguished Professor in 2000.

Professor Gupta received much international recognition throughout his career. He was named a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, a rare honour given to scholars in the field of science. He also received the Killam Fellowship and the Senior NATO Scientist Award and his work on the dimension sub group problem earned him a place in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Not only a scientist, Professor Gupta had also a great presence in the community, and he was one of the most humble and polite individuals I have ever met in my life. Along with his academic recognition, Professor Gupta was also honoured by the Indo-Canadian community many times, including once by the Indo-Canadian Cultural and Heritage Association.

Mr. Speaker, even though Professor Gupta was a non-partisan, a non-political, he attended my fundraising events and told me once: I admire your courage and community leadership. Keep it up. Keep working at it.

Those very words are very precious to me, Mr. Speaker, and I thank him for his kindness. Many Manitobans will share with me that today we celebrate the life of Professor Gupta. We have lost a great scientist and a scholar, and the Indo-Canadian community has lost a jewel in their crown.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

EcoOdyssey Program

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, Brandon's young people have yet again become the victims of this NDP government's rampant and disappointing grab for mediocrity. EcoOdyssey, an award-winning and renowned educational program,

will be taught for the last time this year at Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School.

Since 1997, the EcoOdyssey led by Mr. David Barnes has taught students about responsibility, community service and instilled in them a genuine love for nature and learning. It has taken education outside of the classroom to apply academics and life skills in the real world. This extraordinary program has helped students to strive for and surpass personal bests. In addition to several expeditions in Manitoba's wilderness, students completed a major project of their own choosing related to environmental sustainability or social justice. For his dedication to outstanding teaching and commitment to his students, I sincerely would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. David Barnes.

The cancellation of the EcoOdyssey is not the fault of the school division or the principal of Crocus Plains. They were forced to make this tough decision in order to comply with the government's mandated physical fitness program. What truly boggles me is that, when increasing numbers of young people are struggling to stay healthy, this government's mismanagement would force the end of a program that encourages physical fitness and lifestyle. Students, parents and teaching peers have raved about the EcoOdyssey. It has helped promote leadership, civil responsibility and sustainable environmental practices. This school had the impossible choice between a librarian and the program.

Surely, this government can find the funds to keep the EcoOdyssey available to more Brandon students. If we do nothing, then this NDP's mediocrity will stifle and burden another generation of Manitobans. The Premier (Mr. Doer) and his NDP claim to support the environment and Manitoba's young people. If they do, Mr. Speaker, then let's see them put their money where it belongs and back into the EcoOdyssey program.

Thank you.

Interfaith Model Passover Seder

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): On April 1, I was very pleased to be able to attend the 16th annual Interfaith Model Passover Seder organized by B'nai Brith Canada and Congregation Shaarey Zedek. In a time when we must confront all forms of discrimination, Mr. Speaker, these types of interfaith exchanges are very important to fostering understanding and unity among people who hold

different religious beliefs. In sharing with each other, we find that we hold much in common, the need to remember past oppression and pain while valuing the hope and possibility embodied in our children.

* (14:30)

The honourable members for Riel, Flin Flon and I were privileged to be part of the Passover ceremony, which included the traditional meal as well as an opportunity to learn about the Torah. Rabbi Alan Green was very welcoming as he led us through the Seder, explaining the significance of this ancient ritual and entertaining us with some very non-traditional Passover songs.

This Sunday, April 20, will mark the first day of Passover which commemorates the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt and their liberation from slavery. As we reflect on the meaning of this struggle for freedom, it is important to take a unified stand against all forms of hate.

I am sure all members of this House were alarmed to read of the recent increase in reports of anti-Semitic incidents. We all must do our part to ensure that all Manitobans from all walks of life are treated equally and with respect.

On behalf of my colleagues who also attended the Seder, I would like to thank B'nai Brith Canada, Congregation Shaarey Zedek and Rabbi Green for the warm welcome extended to all in attendance. Through events like this we all can learn more about each other and foster a culture of understanding and respect in our communities. I truly believe that this approach is the way to keep building Manitoba's peaceful and open society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

David Hochman

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate David Hochman of Carlowrie, Manitoba, for capturing the world championship in sled-dog racing at The Pas Trappers' Festival this past February.

Entering this championship race, Hochman's seventh, he faced an experienced field of competition which included a number of world-renowned mushers. The three-time Manitoba champion along with his 10-dog team of Alaskan Huskies crossed with German short-hair Pointers were able to outlast their competitors over a gruelling course of 169 kilometres.

Hochman described the feeling as winning the Stanley Cup. The team, finishing its journey in an astonishing six and a half hours, managed to maintain an average speed of close to 30 kilometres an hour. The pace Hochman's team was able to sustain was even more incredible considering the harsh weather they faced with frigid temperatures approaching minus 40 Celsius.

Despite the extreme cold, the event attracted 12,000 spectators who would witness Hochman's victorious race and many of whom may have expected the established favourite Saskatchewan musher, Kevin Cooke, at the finish line but instead were greeted by the hometown star.

Overcoming experienced competition and harsh conditions, however, was not the only challenge that Hochman's team was forced to overcome. As ardent dog-sled fans are aware, Hochman is an anomaly within the sport as he hails from the southern Manitoba community of St. Malo and did not grow up immersed in a culture of sled-dog racing.

In fact, Hochman grew up in St. Boniface, became inspired by the Festival du Voyageur and would later master his craft under the tutelage of Winnipegger Larry Tallman.

As well, I would be remiss if I did not congratulate one of my fellow colleagues, the MLA for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), who had the good fortune to be in attendance for Mr. Hochman's exciting victory. Again I would like to extend our congratulations to Mr. Hochman on achieving the highest standards in the sport and for his exemplary representation of Manitoba at the world stage of dog sledding.

**James Armstrong Richardson
International Airport**

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): The James Armstrong Richardson International Airport in my constituency is establishing itself as one of the great transportation hubs for air, bus and rail shipping in Canada. With the decision to relocate the Greyhound bus depot to the airport campus, Winnipeg is well on its way to submitting itself as a transportation hub.

The complex will include a 10,000 square foot passenger terminal and a 10,000 square foot cargo terminal connected by an overhead canopy and is set to open in mid-August 2009. With the addition of a bus depot, Winnipeg's airport will become the first intermodal transportation facility in the country and

the first Canadian airport with a bus depot on its property.

This is not the only good-news announcement for the airport. Canada Post has announced it will build a 250,000 square foot complex just east of the airport. Canada Post has said their vision in Winnipeg is setting the standard for Canada Post across Canada as it plans to spend about \$1.9 billion in the coming years to expand its role in the nation's mail and parcel delivery system.

Mr. Speaker, this new facility will make sorting mail quicker and safer for Canada Post staff and is a very exciting addition to the Winnipeg airport campus.

Winnipeg was founded as a transportation hub and has remained a very important gateway, not only to western Canada but also to locations all over the world. I think this visionary step toward enhancing Winnipeg's capacity as a transportation superpower will be an important investment toward continuing to build Winnipeg and Manitoba.

The Winnipeg Airports Authority has also announced an exciting program that will provide travelling members of the Canadian Forces and their families with access to the travel lounge by Palliser. This arrangement will be the first of its kind in Canada and is a creative way the airport can support over 40,000 Forces members and their families travelling through Winnipeg. This significantly contributes to the many strategies that are welcoming our service men and women home.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to extend my congratulations to the Winnipeg Airports Authority and all partners for their commitment to building Winnipeg's airport and expanding their campus. I am proud to be behind their vision for our airport.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE

(Sixth Day of Debate)

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

honourable Minister for Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), who has 20 minutes remaining.
[interjection]

Okay. The honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration has completed her comments?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Now, I will now recognize the honourable Member for Carman.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd certainly like to give my input into why we should vote against this budget, and there are many, many reasons for that.

First of all, though, I believe that we should really review what a budget is about.

A budget is about a vision for your future. It's about goals and accomplishments. I've done many budgets for my own business, and I am very well acquainted with doing budgets. It's the ability to access your financial tools and how to best use them in the coming year.

So, when this budget was presented last week, I sat here with pen in hand and notebook ready to make notes, but by the time we got down to announcing the grant for the Centre Albert-Galliot in Notre Dame de Lourdes, I realized I may as well put my pen away. That announcement and that grant was actually given in June of 2007. So I realized by that time, there is no vision here. There is no planning for the future. It's only talking about what's already happened. But then I also realized too, though, that the NDP really does have a vision. Their vision is to re-announce, as in Notre Dame de Lourdes, re-announce the 18th Street Bridge in Brandon. I believe we're getting close to 18 times for the 18th Street Bridge.

But it's also a vision to stifle, control, discourage business and the jobs that businesses create, and it's jobs that make Manitoba strong. It's something that this government just doesn't understand. They have the feeling that it's only public-sector jobs that create strength in Manitoba, and that is not right.

Their expenditures are projected to be up 6.2 percent, despite global warnings of an economic slowdown. Most other jurisdictions are already planning for an economic slowdown, but there's no incentive and no project projections from this Province about an economic slowdown.

I guess that's why there's no plan then to pay down the \$19.5 billion in debt. The debt will continue to rise with this government, and it's the debt that future generations will be faced with.

* (14:40)

We remain the highest-taxed regime in western Canada. We're the only western province with a payroll tax, and I guess this is what this government feels proud about. We're approaching 40 percent of the budget coming from the federal government. It's coming to 40. At the rate you're spending, it will be at 40 percent very soon.

And if they're going to argue about 40 percent and say it's only 32, I still don't think that's something to be proud of. But just wait, don't despair. All is not lost in this budget. Be patient. I was waiting for it. The basic personal exemption is going up a whopping \$100. Never mind that inflation alone would have accounted for \$160, so I'm already \$60 behind in this little number here, and then, as I was recovering from the shock of this \$100 tax credit that I'm going to get and reading through the budget, I see where Autopac registration is going up \$20.

Pharmacare is going to go up six bucks a month, \$72 a year. If I go to a provincial park, and I usually do during the summer, registration is going up for a park permit \$4, and I usually camp. So, if I'm going to camp for a week this year, it's going up a dollar and a half a day, so I'm up \$11 there. Angling fees, fishing licences, they're going to go up three bucks. Never mind in Australia that they're free, but here they're going up another \$3. I add those together and that's \$110. So, for all the glorious announcements of a \$100 increase in the basic personal exemption, I've just lost \$110 through the year, plus I've lost on bracket creep.

Talk about making big-spin announcements and then nickel-and-diming you on the back side, but it's not done yet; we still have to wait. Personal property registries are supposed to go up so that if I do buy a vehicle or something like that and finance it, I'm sure the bank is going to absorb that and not pass it on to the customers. Vocational institutions, to be announced how much the increase is going to be. So, if I take a course at Red River or Assiniboine, it's going to go up. There's going to be an increase in assessment and building cost manuals, on and on and on it goes. Instead of making meaningful tax cuts, they make a big announcement about a small cut, or a small cut to yourself, and then take it all back through the taxes.

I also noticed, in my critic portfolio in Intergovernmental Affairs, that fire and paramedic tuition fees are going up \$2,000. I didn't realize that we had too many fire and paramedics in the province, so now we're going to raise the tuition another \$2,000. It's another slap to the municipalities.

There's no indication in this budget about signing the Building Canada Fund, and I was in Brandon yesterday at the municipal officials seminar where the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton) was speaking, and he was pleading with the municipal officials to press Ottawa to get on and sign the Building Canada Fund.

An Honourable Member: Blame Ottawa again.

Mr. Pedersen: I've never heard that before. Blame Ottawa, that's got to be a new tack. If they would have had the floodway done on budget without the over-budget spending on the floodway, we would probably have the Building Canada Fund signed. This Building Canada Fund is extremely important to municipalities to finance infrastructure projects that are still coming, that they want to do.

The city of Brandon was ignored again in the budget, but I also heard that loud and clear as I went from door to door in Brandon last weekend. That message was loud and clear: Brandon is ignored again.

If the south Perimeter bridge is any indication on transportation issues, the mismanagement of that. As the Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) was announcing his website, www.201.com I think we should start another one, Mr. Speaker, www.southperimeterbridge.com, and let's put guesses on as to when the traffic will be flowing on both bridges, on all four lanes.

An Honourable Member: And the cost overruns.

Mr. Pedersen: And the cost, of course, that's another thing. Maybe when we're doing that, when we're getting that website up, we could put projections for cost overruns on that one, too. That would be interesting to see, and it would certainly be interesting to know what it really will cost us in terms of overruns.

As we see this bungling on the transportation and how it's costing extra money, it all comes at a price that will be that much less roads and that many less bridges fixed throughout the province. While they often tout this \$4 billion that they're spending

over 10 years, the reality is, how much of that \$4 billion is going to be misspent, misappropriated and generally lost through this, this mismanagement of the Transportation Department?

I also noticed in this budget there was absolutely no mention of rail line abandonment, a huge issue in our constituency and in southern Manitoba. I guess they just don't care. Heard that before.

I also heard it today about Winnipeg, Manitoba, being the hub of the transportation of North America. That's right, Winnipeg can be. But did you know that a hub is part of a wheel and a wheel has spokes, and spokes, in this case, would be rail lines? And if we end up with no local rail lines in southern Manitoba, south of the Trans-Canada Highway, you've got a pretty crummy wheel there, and it's not going to stand up.

While they talk about grandiose plans for a transportation centre, other centres continue to build. *[interjection]* Yes, we can blame the feds for that one too, I'm sure.

An Honourable Member: Who gave away the railway?

Mr. Pedersen: It's just a lost cause to even talk to this government about saving rail lines because they just won't even consider it. It wasn't even in the budget, so I guess they just don't care.

Agriculture was another big zero in this budget. Again. AgriInvest is NISA reincarnated. All you have to do, if the minister would, if the Ag Minister would actually go out in the country and talk to livestock producers. They don't have any money to put into AgriInvest, so they're going to miss out on this one again. AgriStability is just a new name for CAIS that's being reincarnated from the CAIS program.

An Honourable Member: That's what Harper wanted to change.

Mr. Pedersen: The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) likes to blame the feds for that, but then she also takes great credit about putting, what is it, \$60 million into it, or something like this? If you're putting money into it, you must actually believe in it.

Do you have a new idea? Well, gee, maybe we should call the Agriculture Committee and maybe we would get a couple of new ideas.

An Honourable Member: Oh, there's an idea. Do your job, Rosie.

Mr. Pedersen: Maybe if you did your job.

I also heard yesterday from MASC that the person that was at the Manitoba agricultural—whatever it's called, it used to be MACC, now it's MASC; it's kind of like Zorro now—Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation, that the Ag Minister doesn't even come to speak to that group, so I guess—*[interjection]* Outside of the Perimeter. What can we do? *[interjection]* Well, I can remember MASC because the employees said we're all supposed to come to work in Zorro masks now. That's how we remember the acronym for it.

The Minister of Agriculture refuses to give her vision. Perhaps she has no vision, but where agriculture in Manitoba is going to be? We know we've got problems right now. It's been well addressed in this House of what the current problems are in terms of the livestock business, but we've yet to hear where the Ag Minister is, where she sees agriculture in Manitoba two, and five and 10 years down the road. It's up to individuals in the ag business to make it happen, but it's the Ag Minister who should have the vision to see where agriculture is going.

* (14:50)

The BSE loans, the extension of that. Delaying principal is just delaying dealing with financial issues. We already know that MASC Stocker Loans are \$21 million in arrears, something that the Ag Minister won't talk about. What's the plan?

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Have you ever had a stocker loan in arrears? I can tell you from experience dealing with feeder co-op boards—and I was on a feeder co-op board, still am—if you don't collect those loans, those cattle are gone. There's \$21 million—I'm willing to make anybody in this House a bet—that they won't collect on. It makes Crocus look a little small now, but that's the way they are. Don't talk about it. More debt does not get you out of debt. Cash advances can help you through a tight spot, but they don't get you out of debt.

The \$2 head tax on cattle, while issuing a bankruptcy notice for Ranchers Choice assets, really sends a good message to the cattlemen out there.

The hog industry is down. Again, I would like to see some meaningful solutions, not just talking rhetoric and blaming the feds and blaming everybody else about how we can rebuild the hog industry.

Maybe we don't want to; maybe that's why the moratorium was brought in. I think the indifference was shown when we had a gallery full of livestock people and the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) stands up and introduces Bill 17, which is a moratorium. However, he wouldn't stand up and speak to it. So I guess we know they're going to hide behind on that one.

The biodiesel is all talk and no action. Great announcements of where they would like to see it go, but where are the plants? I keep hearing about five plants in Manitoba. There's one, I believe, in Arborg and one doing cooking oil in Rivers, right? Then where's the rest? Where are these other three, and, when you mandate 5 percent or whatever it is you're mandating, how are you ever going to reach that? There are no targets, but we had the grandiose announcement saying that we're going to get there. There are no achievable means. Yes, that's right; it's photo ops. We're good at that. This government is good at that.

Rural development. It's totally inactive, totally ignored by this government, non-existent. They even changed the name. What is the name for it now? What's it called now? Rural development, what did you change the name to? If a program doesn't work, change names so that everybody just forgets about it and can't do anything with it.

An Honourable Member: I think you're wrong there. You can't remember it.

Mr. Pedersen: You abandoned the program. You changed the name, and you can't even tell me what it is now.

Oh, it's achieving—no, it's achieving something. I'll get it yet. *[interjection]* Creating opportunities. There, I knew that if I stood here long enough, they would. Now, how does—*[interjection]*

That's something like the GO centres. We're not really sure what the go-go centres are really there for. When I talked to employees who know that it won't come back on them, they have no idea what their job description is now. They have no idea—*[interjection]* I guess if there's no direction from the top—

An Honourable Member: All they can do is win elections. That's the only thing they can do right.

Mr. Pedersen: Well, winning elections, and then the arrogance shows, but you know we need—*[interjection]*

You can joke about this, but this is serious out in the country. We've got people who are really hurting financially and not only do we have people hurting financially, but we also have a lot of opportunities out there who are being stifled because they do not have a business climate in which to grow their business. It's really unfortunate. Bills like Bill 17 just build on this idea that there is an anti-agriculture, anti-development in the rural areas.

The Farmland School Tax Rebate, why does it cost \$400,000 a year when you could do it at source?

An Honourable Member: Don't charge it.

Mr. Pedersen: If you're rebating it anyway, why are you charging farmers and then having them do the paperwork? Oh, I know. It's creating employment for \$400,000 a year. You could do it at source. It's so simple. But, apparently, they don't want to do that.

In my constituency we have a little project called the Treherne Dam project, which I know the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is familiar with. We continue to have problems getting the funding for the study on it. It would be so reassuring if the Minister of Agriculture would give us some sort of vision for development, what this government would like to see in the next few years for development. The lack of interest, the lack of commitment only tells us one thing: we're not going to get it.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I guess, in summary, this budget shows Manitobans the document is not about what you can do or what can be achieved. Again, I just reiterate that that's what a budget is about. There is none of that in here. Rather, this budget is a tax-and-spend document that will hurt Manitoba in the short-term, and it sets Manitoba well behind our fellow jurisdictions around us. You see things happening all around us, and we think, in Manitoba, we have so much potential and it's not happening.

But, like the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) has said, they don't care. It's because we can. There is no reason why they have to do anything. They're going to sit back and spend and spend and drive us farther into debt and reward themselves for it.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): It's my privilege to stand in the House today to put my remarks on the record and, of course, to offer my unbridled support for this blockbuster budget.

We certainly do feel very proud of the fact that this is a budget that is going to continue to provide

stability for Manitobans and continue to provide opportunities for Manitobans and their families. We know that this budget, of course, is very forward thinking, responding to the priorities of Manitobans, which, indeed, began in listening to Manitobans—what a concept—and, in fact, making commitments to Manitobans in last year's election. So this budget is the beginning of a very, very good start to fulfilling those commitments, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I'm very, very pleased to put comments on the record on behalf of my constituents in Seine River. The people in my community are very concerned and very supportive of a budget that puts as a priority safe and growing communities. We know that this budget comes forward with even more investments in Community Places. Members of my constituency have been the beneficiaries of these kinds of grants in the past and are very pleased to hear that this program is going to augment opportunities for the many groups that put themselves out there every day to provide services for their fellow Manitobans.

Of course, safety is a very significant topic on the doorstep, in coffee shops and in school grounds where we have conversations. I know that my constituents will be very pleased to hear that we will be adding 20 more police officers to be able to provide that response and that service in the event that our families need that.

* (15:00)

I hear very regularly from members of my constituency that in those situations where the police have to be called and where individuals, sometimes young people, need to be picked up and need to be dealt with, we know that the visceral reaction of these people is to find a way to help. Young people need to have opportunities to make changes in their lives. Sometimes, young people haven't had the greatest start, and, although we're working very diligently to ensure that no child in Manitoba has to experience that, regrettably, it does happen.

So, while building our police force in order to ensure safety in our community, I'm also so pleased that we also see the expansion of programs like Lighthouses in this budget, safe places for our young people to go to thrive and learn and grow, and develop leadership skills so that they can extend a helping hand to those around them and to build people into the fine adults that they can be.

I know that my constituents will also be very delighted to learn of the \$200-million investment in

this budget that will go a long way to help with our roads, with our transit system, and to continue to augment public safety. These are very important investments for the people of my community, and I'm very pleased to see the government responding to that.

One could easily say that the major industry in the constituency of Seine River is really that of schools. We have a lot of schools, a lot of young families, a lot of developing families, and we were very delighted to learn, of course, of unprecedented levels for Manitoba schools, another blockbuster announcement today by the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson) in talking about developing capital infrastructure and talking, of course, about building and growing that funding so that we can develop our programs and develop learning for our young people in Manitoba. I know that teachers care deeply about this, school administrators, but, most importantly, parents and their children. So I'm very glad to see our continued investment in lifelong learning.

We're going to continue to build on our commitment for child care. We know, during the election, that we committed \$11 million over two years, and we've made a first step with a \$5-million commitment that will involve the training and recruitment of early childhood educators, arguably some of the most important professionals that exist in our community.

We look forward in the coming days to the unveiling of the multi-year plan for child care. We know that in past years, in laying down the groundwork and laying down the plan, we, indeed, saw doubling of funding for child care in Manitoba. We saw a continued commitment to publicly funded child care and not the demonization or privatization of child care, as some people I know would prefer. So we're looking very forward to coming forth with that multi-year plan and making very robust investments because we know how important they are to Manitoba families, oftentimes Manitoba women, Mr. Acting Speaker, and we're very delighted that that plan is going to be coming forward as promised.

I was also very pleased to see continued investments in libraries and in literacy. These are topics that are very, very important to the people of Seine River. I've had the privilege of hosting an annual book-swap event at the Dakota Community Centre, a very vibrant place to go and visit, to play,

to learn, and I know that the families that come to visit that event and participate in that event have very strongly supported our government's commitment to literacy. This budget is no exception to that.

I'm also very pleased to see that we're going to continue in this budget to keep on building Manitoba, a \$4-billion commitment to modernize highways and bridges, to ensure that we have wastewater upgrades. What's more important, Mr. Acting Speaker, than the water when it comes to speaking of our health? I know the people of Seine River are keenly interested in work that's ongoing with the floodway expansion, and continued investment in that is very, very important to them.

The protection of water and our environment is top of mind to the constituents of Seine River. They care deeply about what they can do as individual citizens and what their government can do to show profound and meaningful change in the way that we look at the world and the way that we respect our earth. I'm very pleased that this budget does speak of multi-year funding in a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to continue with water conservation programs, offering opportunities for individuals to purchase water-saving appliances and the like, to put forward significant investments, like \$5.3 million, to conservation districts. These are items that are of great interest to the constituents of Seine River that also oftentimes have the privilege of being members of cottage country. So all that we can be doing together to ensure that our earth is healthy is very, very important.

Overall, Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm really pleased that, once again, we see this budget coming forward in an environment of a growing economy. It's another balanced budget. We know that we've continued to have credit rating upgrades, six of them in fact, and we know that tax reductions for families and businesses continue in a fair and balanced way.

Of course, it would be most important for me to speak about our continued investments in health care. I do admit a natural bias toward that topic, and I am very, very pleased that we are working very diligently to meet our commitment of bringing 100 more doctors to Manitoba. We know that this is a time of very intense international competition for medical professionals, for doctors in particular, and we're very pleased that we as a government have seen a net increase in the number of doctors every year since being in office, since 1999.

I know that I've heard members opposite play a little monkey business with some numbers about migration of doctors. I think I recently heard the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) say something about 1,000 doctors leaving Manitoba. The salient point is, when we're talking about net increase and net loss, if we use the numbers of the Leader of the Opposition, we could also say that 1,900 doctors came to Manitoba in the same period of time. That would be from the same piece—he always leaves that part out, interestingly. But what Manitobans really care about is the net increase.

What we saw during the decade of neglect, of course, was loss of doctors every single year that the Tories were in office. Since we've taken government we've seen a net increase of doctors, last year, according to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, being a record-breaking year with a net increase of 54. That pleases us greatly when we've made a commitment to Manitobans to increase our number by 100, and we're very, very pleased about that.

I'm also delighted to show that in this budget we're fulfilling our commitment, our very, very robust commitment, might I add, of bringing 700 more nurses to Manitoba. This is really an important and an ambitious commitment. Some people criticized us for having such a large number, but the fact is that we need, we need, that number of nurses to serve people all across Manitoba. Members opposite might not be aware, so I'm really pleased to tell them today that recent numbers from the colleges of nurses, that's the College of Registered Nurses, the College of Licensed Practical Nurses, and the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses, show us that today, or in the last year, Manitoba has seen a net increase of 200 nurses to the province of Manitoba. That's a net increase of nurses. So we've now moved to nearly 1,800 nurses that we've been able to bring to Manitoba since 1999, essentially turning around the bad ship Tory that fired a thousand and drove another 573 out of the province. We've been able to turn that around, and we've been able to grow our nurses. Certainly, we know that, when patients are in their most difficult times in hospitals or in personal care homes, they want to have the nurses at their bedsides, and we've made a commitment to do that.

One might be shocked to learn and remember that during the election campaign when we were making a bold commitment of adding 700 nurses to our complement in Manitoba the members opposite could not muster one.

This is unfortunate, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I would continue to go on that our commitment to expand the medical school is such an important one for the people of Manitoba. We know when we came into office on the heels of a very damaging decision by the members opposite to cut the spaces in medical school from 85 down to 70—it's a decision that haunts us still, here in Manitoba—that we made a commitment to raise that level, and we now have gone from 70 seats in medical school to 100. We've seen recently, or in the past months, the second class of 100 medical students start their first year, and we've shown progress in this budget to move to 110 seats.

*(15:10)

Of course, we've correspondingly increased the number of residencies. I was very pleased the other day to make an additional announcement on number of residencies that will enable doctors to make a decision to pursue a career in family medicine in the north for a return-of-service agreement. In exchange, they'll be able to pursue a specialty of their choice.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it's my belief that not only do we need to bring doctors to Manitoba, but we need to bring doctors to places in Manitoba that need them so desperately. We know that in a time of intense national competition for doctors places in the most remote and most northern areas of our country and, indeed, of Manitoba, they have had an extremely difficult time being part of that competition. We believe that our announcement concerning providing family practice opportunities in exchange for specialties in rural or in remote in northern Manitoba is going to change the face of Manitoba and the way that doctors are going to be provided to the people who need them the most. It's a moral responsibility, and I believe we're living up to that.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there are many other things I can talk about that this budget provides for, whether it's the expansion of dialysis in more remote regions, whether we're talking about redeveloping capital infrastructure like the emergency room at the Portage hospital, whether we're talking about continuing on the road to developing a new women's hospital. There are many things in the area of health care that we could be very proud of on this side of the House.

Health care is challenging and I would never say otherwise. For every success that you have, there's another challenge around the corner. That's why we

believe that health care needs to continue to be a priority for us all because, in those moments when we need help the most, we need to know that help is there and that facilities are there and that technology is there.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to comment just for a moment on something I've noticed in recent months, and that is that members opposite appear to be very sensitive or appear to imply that their past record on health care is no longer relevant. In fact, you will hear them howling at the moon on this topic. Don't talk about the '90s, they say. What have you done for me lately, they say, and I could give them the list again, but they haven't ever to imply in this House and in the public that what happened in the '90s isn't relevant and I respectfully must disagree.

We could talk about the history of a little over a week ago when the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) stood in his place and said that we should be funding health care at the rate of economic growth. What I suppose he didn't do was a little arithmetic at that time. Our increase to health care is 6.5 percent and just loosely, generously calculating what the Leader of the Opposition was saying, he was going to cut \$135 million from this year's budget in one stroke with a comment like that. What exactly does that mean?

I have some theories about what the members opposite would do when they would cut \$135 million. They might fire 1,759 nurses, because that's what \$135 million is or they might cut payments to over 500 doctors in Manitoba. That's a quarter of Manitoba's doctors and they might do that. That would be \$135 million. What else? They could maybe close the Victoria and the Grace Hospital altogether. That would be \$135 million to this year's budget, but maybe that wouldn't be it. Maybe it would just be the cancelling and the construction of the new ER in Portage, the new ER at Bethesda in Steinbach, the Neepawa PCH, the Brandon Linac and the new Selkirk hospital. Maybe that's what they would do in this year's budget to cut \$135 million.

The opportunities really abound for making a statement like that, but that was only a week ago. How about six months ago then if you don't want me to talk about what you did in the 1990s? What about what was said six months ago? The Leader of the Opposition stood in his place in Steinbach and said, you're spending too much money on capital construction for health.

An Honourable Member: What?

Ms. Oswald: That's what he said: You're spending too—I don't know what the member from—Peter George Dyck. Is that Winkler, the member for Winkler who's very genuinely asking for the construction of a new personal care home? *[interjection]* Pembina, thank you very much, the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck). Je m'excuse *[My apologies.]*

I don't know what the Member for Pembina would say to the Member for Fort Whyte about the—do they chat in caucus, do you think, about don't spend any more money?

So a week ago he wanted to dump \$135 million from this year's budget, and six months ago he wanted to criticize us for any capital construction for health. How about a year ago? One year ago, he said boldly to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, I believe it was, though I want to show no bias to any media outlet, he said that health care would no longer be their priority. *[interjection]* Well, that's for sure, but that was a year ago.

Okay, they don't like me talking about history, but one week ago it was minus \$135 million. Six months ago we weren't going to be building any more health capital. One year ago he said publicly that health wasn't their priority and 10 years ago he had his hands on the controls when a thousand nurses got fired, when they cut the seats to medical school and when there were fruit flies in the operating room at the Health Sciences Centre.

So I understand that members opposite are sensitive about anyone on this side of the House talking about their record, and I understand why they might want to say that it's not relevant any more. But what I would say is I respectfully disagree, Mr. Acting Speaker. We need to remember every single day that health care is a priority for Manitobans; it has to remain a priority of government. I believe that their record, as it stands, frightening as it is to recall, is entirely relevant, and we should talk about it every chance that we get.

With just a few minutes left, Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to offer once again my support for this budget, this budget that is balanced, this budget that is fair, this budget that listens to Manitobans and understands what their priorities are and works very hard to address it. I hope that members opposite, in the name of adding some relevancy to the debate,

can indeed stand up and support this budget. Thank you.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and participate in debate on the Manitoba budget 2008 which is entitled Opportunity and Stability by this government.

Now, opportunities, well we're left wondering. Stability, well, perhaps, but let's try and knock this budget down to understandable terms. We've heard a lot from members opposite about how this budget is one that they can support and that it's truly reflective of the wishes and wants of Manitobans. But let's bring this down to what potentially people can truly grasp a hold of.

Let's take a few households on a street, and let's call this household in the middle here the Manitoba family. Let's take the home to the left of this residence and call that the Saskatchewan family, and then further down the Alberta family and the British Columbia family. On the other side of the Manitoba family's home is the Ontario family home, and here we are in the Manitoba family home. So how do we explain what this budget truly reflects on the future of Manitoba?

We'll go over and try and first off explain it to the Saskatchewan family. We'll make sure we take our tin cup with us because that's our mission. We're going to the Saskatchewan family, and we're going to ask the Saskatchewan family for a contribution to our household. The reason for that, one must explain, is that we want more in our family than we can afford and because we are only anticipating a raise this year in our family income of about 3 percent, but our wishes and wants within our family household are about 6 percent more than we're currently earning. So therefore Manitoba family says to Saskatchewan family, we need you to help us so that we can get the things that we want in our family home.

* (15:20)

Well, the family in Saskatchewan, they want to be good neighbours, so they contribute. So this is duplicated again in the Alberta family home and the B.C. family home. Then the Manitoba family goes the other direction and goes to the Ontario family home and asks them for a contribution to their family income here in Manitoba, but this Ontario family home, they've had layoffs. Their family income is

going down, but because they are a good neighbour, they do contribute.

So this is all well and good, Mr. Acting Speaker. We've had contributions from all of our neighbours on the street. Things are pretty good. You know, we're looking really fine here in the Manitoba family home, but what they didn't say at every visit to their neighbours was that this is just for this year. We're going to count on you next year, the year after that and the year after that. How long do you think the families in our neighbourhood are going to continue to place in our hands because we can't make it on our own? I don't think this is going to continue. In fact, good neighbour policy is indeed alive and well here in the confederation we call Canada, but it's going to come to an end because the Province of Manitoba continues to go, tin cup in hand, looking for others to work harder and longer and smarter, so that we, in our family home here in Manitoba, don't.

Now, another thing is, though, within this budget, all of the contributions from our neighbours, it's still not enough. It's still not enough. No, sir, in this budget they're calling to add to the debt of this Manitoba family home as well. So what this government needs to do is to explain to every family here in Manitoba that even with all the money coming from our neighbours, we still can't make it. So, what we're going to do is we're going to call a family meeting here in our home, and we're going to tell our children that because I want to satisfy my wishes and wants, and in this case, the New Democratic Party, want to keep with popularity here in the province of Manitoba and keep on governing, that we are willing to mortgage our children's future. We are willing to look our children in the eye and say that we are going to depend on you so that we can have a better lifestyle. We are going to buy the things that are going to satisfy our wishes and wants today and you, when you grow up, are going to be responsible for paying off the debt for those wishes and wants being satisfied.

I encourage—in fact, I ask, of every member in the government's side of the House to take this scenario out and try it in their own neighbourhood. Go to the homes on either side of where you reside and tell your neighbours that they have to contribute to your household because you are not living within your means. I don't think that this is something that would be repeated year after year, and even yourselves would feel comfortable in doing so.

So the question begs to be answered: Would you do something as an MLA that you, as an individual, as a good community person, would not do in your own neighbourhood?

I don't think you would, and I don't think if you looked yourself in the mirror that you would want to, either. And I don't think that you'd be proud of doing so. Yet I've heard time after time after time again, in the carefully scripted responses over on the government's side of the House, that they're so proud of what they're doing, so proud of what they're able to accomplish, and when they go home, they're actually ashamed of what they're doing. Really, truly ashamed. *[interjection]* The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) says this is a pathetic example. Well, I couldn't agree with him more because that indeed is an excellent description of this government's budget that has been put forward before the House today.

Now, there have been many, many things said in here, in this House, over the course of the deliberations on the budget that, I would say, deserve a little bit of a rebuttal. Well, the honourable minister that spoke of all of the glowing statistics, statistics that come from Statistics Canada, that says Manitoba is such a moving, aggressive province in Canada. Well, let me just read the most recent article that starts to evaluate already 2008's performance here in Manitoba.

It states: "Major building activity in Alberta and Ontario lifted investment in non-residential construction 1.6 per cent."

The article goes on to say, but here in Manitoba, "Manitoba was one of six provinces to record a decline in non-residential construction spending," during the first quarter of 2008.

Well, ladies and gentlemen opposite, I know members on this side of the House fully comprehend that last statement. But that is an indicator of business here in Manitoba which government relies on in order to accomplish what they have undertaken through taxation. If people are not willing to invest in their businesses here in Manitoba, to build for the future, as this report states, we are in trouble here in this province. This government seems to be not very recognizing of it. In fact, I think they're oblivious to the fact. Listening to some of the members opposite, it is really, truly shameful.

Now there has been a lot said of the bad old 1990s. Well, many of the individuals across there, even though they were here in the 1990s, still don't

understand that Manitoba went through a recession in the 1990s. In addition to that, there was a change in government in Ottawa that was determined they were going to make the balanced budget work in Ottawa. What they did, they did it on the backs of the provinces. What they removed from support here in Manitoba was over a billion dollars in transfer payments. That was a significant blow to balancing the budgets here in Manitoba, that a considerable effort had to be made to do so, because if anyone knows anything about the way government functions, in fact, the government coming into power truly has to deal with the past governments' expenditures.

A lot is made of the biggest deficit in Manitoba history occurring under the Filmon administration. But little is talked about, little is talked about from that side of the House that the deficit and obligations of this province were, in fact, incurred by the New Democratic Party. It took that many years in order to try and deal with the obligations and debt that the previous NDP government was responsible for. They don't even make any reference to the '80s where the Auditor General did not even sign off on one of their accounting years. Unprecedented, that the Auditor would not recognize that this government was keeping the proper books. Well, that is something to be remembered.

* (15:30)

Also, we have to remember all of the things that were going on at the same time. We can't forget about MTX, the monies that were spent in the sands of the Middle East on behalf of Manitoba. We can't forget also Saunders Air. Whoa, Saunders Air, boy, oh, boy. That's a company that really took off on Manitobans, I have to say that. We can't also forget about Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, where the improprieties of the Pawley government, thereby raiding the ratepayers and insurance holders of Manitoba who require Autopac's insurance in order to license their vehicles here in the province of Manitoba. Again, a fiasco that this government never ever wants to remember.

We just listened right now also, too, to the current Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) extolling that the Filmon administration actually fired 1,000 nurses. Well, I hear a lot of echo across the way from the government members, and they have forgotten that the actual definition of firing a nurse in the current administration. If they do, then they will

know that their administration has fired more than 1,500 nurses.

I give one example to the oohs and aahs over there because of their selective memory, the Victorian Order of Nurses were all fired; over 300 nurses were fired by this government. Yes, they were rehired just as most of the nurses during the Filmon administration.

Also, we will recognize as well, and I'll give you another example for which your definition also holds, towards the 1,500. There are more than 500 nursing staff that had to be laid off—fired, in your terminology—from the two respective hospitals in Morden and Winkler in order to be rehired in Boundary Trails. That is exactly the same scenario that was experienced in the 1990s. These honourable members of the government side of the House have a failed memory when it comes to that.

But, I will say, I should offer a compliment. I'm trying to always be balanced. I will say that your communication and your continuous rant on this topic has been effective. But we will look further into what has taken place in the criticism of the frozen food. I know that the former Minister of Health went on at length day after day after day about the frozen food being served to our veterans in Deer Lodge hospital and those that are in other hospitals that are in need of health-care services. But what did he do when he got into power? He went and he looked at the quality of the food, as Minister of Health, and what did he do? I know the answer is coming.

An Honourable Member: He didn't eat the food.

Mr. Faurshou: No, I guess the answer isn't coming, Mr. Acting Speaker, from the other side of the House. So I will, then, enlighten the members opposite.

The government bought the company that was supplying the frozen food because it was the best way of providing nutritional food to the persons that were in our health-care facilities. Isn't that something? To criticize and then were so impressed with the company, they bought the company.

Also, speaking of purchases, a lot was made of the Pan Am Clinic. Pan Am Clinic was a thorn in the side of the New Democratic Party, and said that it was offering services to a select few, and that we were going to change this. But what happened when they became government? They found that this quality of service was indeed offered to everyone

and that they wanted to, in fact, get in on it. And what do we do? We bought the Pan Am Clinic. Another point in fact that what was happening was indeed the right thing. They recognized it was the right thing, and they've made sure that it was now an acquisition of this government.

A member opposite, I know, was very, very keen, the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), about the Lighthouses program. I know he knows and will recognize when speaking personally that the Lighthouses program was modelled after the program in Portage la Prairie at the North Memorial School. It was a program that was set up by the Portage la Prairie School Division in co-operation with the community in the north end of Portage la Prairie.

That was the same area that welcomed in more than 300 Waterhen residents that were displaced from their homes because of strife and disagreement. That program, I will say, is one that I am very, very pleased has been expanded to Portage la Prairie. I am pleased to say that this government recognized another good idea of the Filmon government or, in this case, the Portage la Prairie School Division of which I was a member.

Now, a lot has been said about this budget, but I am a farmer and I cannot hesitate to delay any longer because my time is running short to recognize what this government does to agriculture. This government recognizes—they say in every opportunity how important agriculture is to the province of Manitoba, yet when it comes down to really truly looking to the future of Manitoba, and agricultural industry here, what does this government say? This government looks at Agri-Food Research and Development Initiative. I would think that would probably be something that this government would want to expand and support and show a genuine interest in. What are they doing, zippo—zero. They are not increasing the budget by one penny, not one penny, not even recognizing inflation.

Let's take a look at what all the good work that goes on at the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Manitoba in research and support of agriculture in the future. What are they doing there? Eight hundred and sixty-eight thousand dollars. What was it last year? Eight hundred and sixty-eight thousand dollars. Again zero; not one penny more than last year.

The Prairie Agriculture Machinery Institute, that's where the research is done on future equipment

which the fields of Manitoba will see. What's happening there? Three hundred and thirty-two last year; this year, 332,000. Zero, a zero increase again. Are those persons out there that are working so diligently sun up to sun down, trying to improve the agricultural equipment that producers use in the future, they don't get a raise, they're not deserving of it, this government says.

Let's take a look at the agricultural stability initiative, one that this government crowed so long and hard about. What's happening there? One million, one hundred and eighteen thousand dollars last year. What is it this year? Exactly the same.

We're facing what could potentially be a drought here in the province of Manitoba. Wells are going dry all over southern Manitoba, and what does this government say about raising food through supplemental water? The Irrigation Development proposal by this government? Six hundred thousand last year, 600,000 this year. I don't think that this government is behind seeing irrigation expand here in the province of Manitoba. This is just exemplary of what this government truly is all about.

There is a line missing down in through here. There used to be a line for the Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre. That was a collaborative agreement between producers, Agriculture Canada and the Manitoba government to look at new varieties, new crops to be potentially grown here in Manitoba, to value-add here in the province of Manitoba. Ah, there isn't even it in the line. It's gone, history. This government has decided that new crops aren't a priority.

We don't want to look at anything potential for the province of Manitoba. No, no, we're going to stay right the course. It's just the same. It's really, really interesting to look through, line by line, after all the headlines and all the crowing has gone on, and this is what this government is really truly about.

* (15:40)

But, just to end the debate, end the debate on what happened in 1999, a reference year that all government members across the way have noted, let us just take a look at what took place in 1999 as it pertained to monies received from the federal government. What do you think happened? We want to make sure that we are accurate. I'm looking to the support that was received by the federal government in transfer payments that took place. What happened in 1999 here? Government of Canada's support to the

Province of Manitoba. In 1999, the Conservatives balanced the budget. They expanded programming. The equalization payment, that's the ability to stand on one's own two feet, received from the federal government was reduced from 1998's support of \$1.061 billion to \$970 million, a reduction of almost \$90 million. What is happening today in this province? Transfer payments, under the category of equalization, and this is the comparison between Manitoba and all of the other provinces. How are we doing? Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, we're not doing too well. We are looking to receive more than \$200 million more in equalization payments from Saskatchewan, and Ontario, and Alberta, and B.C., because we cannot afford in this province to stand on our own two feet. That is what this New Democratic Party is all about.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): It's an honour to put a few words on the record about the 2008 budget and the amendments appended thereunto, I guess.

I'm proud to support this budget, Mr. Acting Speaker. It's the ninth consecutive balanced budget.

It's a great budget for northern Manitoba. While we're on the topic of northern Manitoba, I want to thank the constituents of Flin Flon for having re-elected me again, a year ago, roughly. This particular budget fits in very well with our Northern Development Strategy which focusses on about five major areas: housing, health, transportation, education, and economic development.

First of all, with regard to housing, let me just highlight a few things: \$16.6 million more through the HOMEWorks!; under Health, we're expanding the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative.

I was in Brochet, Tadoule Lake and Lac Brochet not too long ago, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I was very heartened to see that, together with KTC, we're engaged in a freezer program. So some of the people in those isolated communities can buy freezers at very cheap rates, \$20 a month for, let's say, 10, 12 months. We'll deliver those freezers at very cheap rates, so that the people, when they do hunt caribou, they can freeze that and that meat is available for them in the summer.

We're also involved with a central purchasing system using computers so that people on social assistance can purchase food centrally, out of Winnipeg, or Thompson, or The Pas, or Flin Flon, and have it flown north. Again, that will make the

cost of living a little bit more palatable up there. We wish that the federal government would get onside a little bit more with the food mail program, which would really help some of my isolated northern communities.

With regard to transportation, one of the other focus areas under the Northern Development Strategy, this government is putting in \$4 billion over the next 10 years in transportation. That is \$400 million a year, Mr. Acting Speaker. Let's compare that to when the Tories were in power, when they would spend, say, roughly, \$100 million a year on capital programs and another \$100 million, perhaps, on operation and maintenance. So say, roughly, \$200 million, and the north would get 5 percent, 6 percent, 8 percent out of that, let's say, on average, 6 percent. So we would get \$12 million out of that annual budget. Now we get \$100 million, and you can see the difference, the difference that that would make to northern Manitoba, the difference to winter roads, whose budgets have tripled since we've been in power, or regular roads, or realigning of roads in the far north. We are doing an awful lot with that new money in northern Manitoba. I'm very happy that we're generous with that transportation budget.

With regard to education, northerners finally have the University College of the North, a degree-granting institution. We should have had it a long time ago. The former leader of this opposition party was against it. I believe that this leader, I hope, supports it.

Economic development. I don't need to tell you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that there is an explosion of economic development in northern Manitoba, particularly in mining, all kinds of exploration taking place around Lynn Lake and Snow Lake. It has been a very profitable year for mining companies in northern Manitoba last year, and this year continues on the same trend.

We know that we are developing hydro potential in northern Manitoba. Wuskwatim is well on the way. We hope that some day there will be Keeyask as well, and, certainly, there will be Conawapa, a huge 1,250 megawatt dam.

We are working together with Aboriginal people, Mr. Acting Speaker. We are not ignoring them as the previous government did.

Under this government, Mr. Acting Speaker, there is a dynamism for our people, whether it is a

Neighbourhoods Alive! initiative in Flin Flon coupled with increased grants to the public transit system, or the 50-50 funding in Flin Flon, or a new airport terminal in Lac Brochet, or a new community hall in Brochet, or a new road to South Indian Lake, or a state-of-the-art water treatment plant for Snow Lake, or tens and tens of millions of dollars for mine tailing remediation in Sherridon, Cold Lake and Lynn Lake and other places, or supporting the Aboriginal arts community and the citizens of Cranberry Portage with construction of the world's largest canvas teepee. I could go on and on and on.

The skyline has changed in northern Manitoba since this government was elected in 1999 and this budget continues that progressive trend despite the carping and the criticism, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Now, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in typical sour grapes fashion says, yeah, but you guys are just special interest groups. This is a special interest budget. Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I suggest that you look over to this side. I suggest that any objective observer from the gallery would notice that, yeah, there's a lot of special interest people on this side. I see a lot more women than there used to be; I see Aboriginal people; I see immigrants. Six of us were not born in this country. I see teachers, labourers, lawyers, social workers, ministers, farmers, people from the north, people from the south, people from the cities. Yes, we represent all of Manitoba if you want to call that a special interest group. I guess we are a special interest group.

What do we see over here? Well, I know I'm very partial to older white males, and I'm very glad that we're well represented in this Chamber, Mr. Acting Speaker, particularly on this side. So they're representing my interests very well but, if I can use a sporting analogy, I think there has to be a little bit of depth to your bench, a little bit of depth to your bench. How about some women, maybe an Aboriginal person or two, perhaps Métis? How about an immigrant? You know us older white guys, that's pretty good, but we like a little wider, a little more variety.

Did you notice the younger women we elected in Winnipeg? Isn't that wonderful? Maybe we should have a lot more of that, and maybe there should be some of that on this side of the House as well.

Mr. Acting Speaker, what I notice particularly when the members of the opposition comment on this budget, I hear the whimpers about we're not green enough and the moaning about the debt and the

whining about the transfer payments. We should be ashamed to take transfer payments apparently, although they took bigger ones. We hear the shrieks about that we're being soft on crime. We hear the sniffles that we're hard on farmers; we're hard on farmers apparently. They're bent out of shape because we don't have a vision or pizzazz, because we don't have home runs, to use the sports analogy.

What do they want? Do they want beaches again in Point Douglas? Do they want the Jets back all of a sudden? Do they want the doubling of population in a couple of years? Is that what they want?

Mr. Acting Speaker, this government is a step-by-step government. This is a step-by-step budget. It's positive instrumentalism; things get better bit by bit. There are no home runs; that's the junior Republican method. Do something with a lot of pizzazz that gets you good PR and then you win elections. That's what you've been trying. It's not working, I hate to disillusion you. It's not working. Our system is better.

Though you say our budget is a little dull, well, it should be dull because we are doing the day-to-day stuff. We are making things better day by day, bit by bit, the sure-footed solid way of doing things, the steadfast way of doing things. None of this stuff about the magic bullet, junior Republican theory where everything happens because you come up with this great dream that's going to work for you all of a sudden. That's not the way to do it.

Of course, you swing back and forth. The other part of that approach is the wild swing to acute protracted restraint where you do nothing. No, thank you very much, we are on a solid course step by step, bit by bit. You find it boring? Well, that may be so. The people in northern Manitoba think it's a pretty good, steadfast, direct, head-on, right-on kind of a budget.

* (15:50)

Mr. Acting Speaker, I hear a lot of criticism over there about deficits and debts. I want to point out, as others have pointed out, certainly the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), that, right now, we're only spending 6.5 cents on the dollar servicing the debt. We used to spend 13.2. That's twice as much. In 1999, you guys were spending 13.2 cents to service the debt. We're spending less than half of that.

When we're talking about deficits, let's take a look at the history. Now, I know they don't like me to

teach them history, although the leader tries to teach us geography, the leader of their party. Mr. Acting Speaker, let's take a look at the history, let's take a look at the statistics from 1990 to 1995, five years. The deficits in 1991, \$358.9 million; '92, \$304.3 million; '93, \$766 million—three quarters of a billion dollars deficit by the Tories. In '93-94, \$460.5 billion, in '94-95, \$196 billion—don't want to acknowledge that this existed, but it did exist.

Then there is quite a bit of whining about the federal transfer payments as if this was some kind of crime. Mr. Acting Speaker, let me point out to you, first of all, the statistics, which are again, if I can use that same five-year period: in 1991, 36.2 percent of your total revenue; in the following year, 36.7 percent; in the following year, 38.7 percent; in '93-94, 33.4 percent; in '94-95, 36.4 percent, for a total, I believe, it's 36.1 percent. Now, that's a fair percentage coming from the federal government. In fact, it's much higher than for us. For us, I think it's only 31.7 percent, so, in other words, 4.5 percent lower.

So what's all this whining and being ashamed of taking transfer payments? That's the Canadian way. It's not a handout. In Canada, there are regions that are disadvantaged, and the purpose for it is to try to address these inequalities across this country.

There was a time when Newfoundland was a have-not province. They discovered oil. There was a time when Alberta was a have-not province. They discovered oil. They have \$7-billion worth of oil revenue every year, and you know what? They need that money because that's the only way you can keep a Conservative government in power. You can't afford anything else, Mr. Acting Speaker; that's the way that goes.

Now, we're not ashamed of taking transfer payments from the government. Why should we be? That does not mean that we shouldn't strive hard to be No. 1, but I hate to disillusion you that in any list there can only be one No. 1 and it isn't Manitoba and it isn't Saskatchewan. It so happens that, because of geographical accident or history, there are different disadvantaged parts of our country, and we have to address that centrally. The golden triangle is in Ontario. The manufacturing takes place there, not here.

That doesn't mean we don't do well. We have a well-diversified economy. We work hard. We have an industrious people. We're doing very well, thank you, so I don't know where the shame comes from,

or the shame they want to heap upon themselves that we're taking transfer payments, because that is the Canadian way. That is the way we address inequalities so we can have a similar style of life. I'm sure you would want to have it that way, and, yes, not everybody can be No. 1. Nunavut will likely not be No. 1 for a long, long time. I mean, that's just the reality of it. Does that mean that the people in Nunavut should hang their heads? I don't think so. We're all Canadians. We work together.

Let us deal with another one of their whining points, Mr. Acting Speaker: that we're not green enough. I don't want to belabour this, but no province has done more on the green initiatives than this province as far as I know. No province has been as supportive of the Kyoto Protocol, no province. Whether it's biofuels or the special department for water stewardship, it doesn't matter, we've done a wonderful amount of stuff in the green economy.

Don't take my word for it. Let me quote a few other people. Let me quote California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who says: "I applaud Manitoba for taking an important step forward in our fight against global warming. Neither California nor Manitoba can solve this problem alone, but together with our other partners from around the world, we can have a tremendous effect in building a greener world."

Or would you like to listen to David Suzuki? I had the pleasure of flying with David Suzuki to South Indian Lake a few years ago. I really admire this man. Here's what David Suzuki has to say: "I congratulate Manitoba for taking a leadership role in climate change. Not only will Manitoba's efforts help reduce harmful emissions, but it sets a positive example for other provinces and territories to follow."

How about Arizona government, Janet Napolitano. She says: "I want to congratulate Manitoba on its continued leadership. The impacts of climate change are being felt well beyond our individual borders and it is important that like-minded provinces and states work together. By building regional coalitions and showing leadership, we can protect the environment and build greener economies." That's what the government says.

Now, I could quote John Marinucci, the president of New Flyer Industries. I could quote president David Runnalls, International Institute for Sustainable Development, CEO, but I'll quote just one more. That is Keystone Agricultural Producers

president, Ian Wishart, who says, *Free Press*, April 12 of this year: "Those in agriculture welcome the proposals, many which are also in practice. 'We can make it work.'" So they're on side.

So those are accolades for our green efforts. Certainly, when the opposition charges that, their shrill charges that we're not green enough, we're not fast enough with the green economy, are absolutely wrong.

Let's go to crime, Mr. Acting Speaker, because that seems to be a new-found direction that they seem to be heading and they keep repeating it quite a bit. Let's point out that, since 1999, there are 155 more police officers on the streets. Hundred more are promised, 20 this year. That means that after this mandate is finished in three years or so, there should be 250 more police officers on the streets of Manitoba.

The first three months of 2008, auto theft was down a whopping 46 percent. We've implemented electronic monitoring for 20 high-risk repeat auto offenders. So that's a positive direction.

There are two additional Crown prosecutors. We've closed over 300 crack houses and houses of prostitution. Mr. Acting Speaker, we are very active on the prevention of crime and we are making our communities safer.

But that's not what we necessarily get from the opposition. In fact, let me quote what I think is a rather bizarre part of a question from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) April 15, 2008, *Hansard*, page 626. As part of his first question, he says, "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."

Later, he goes on to say, "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."

Now, isn't that interesting, Mr. Acting Speaker? But it seems to me that if you have more seats, then the probability of the crime happening in an NDP riding would rise. I foresee the day when we will own—or own, I shouldn't use the word—but we will represent, we'll have NDPs representing every riding in the city; that every single crime that happens in

Winnipeg will happen in an NDP riding. They're absolutely correct, that trend will continue.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, it's a bizarre question. It's almost as if they're trying to link a New Democratic Party riding with crime, or even further, that somehow we're responsible for this crime, which I think is a very dangerous trend, a very dangerous direction of questioning. I think it's somewhat silly, if not somewhat ghoulish.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that's the other problem. The members on this side, when they attempt to attack the government on crime, seem to take this onto a personal level, something I do not remember us doing when we were in opposition. I'm sure we could be less than gentle at times as well, but I don't remember that every time there was a violent incident or an accident or a murder or a rape or a stabbing or a shooting, we would blame the minister or blame an NDP member as if it was their personal responsibility.

Using that silly kind of logic, that means that that gentleman apprehended in B.C. in Merritt, Mr. Schoenborn, I think his name was, who allegedly murdered three of his children, we should then, according to that logic, be blaming the Attorney General of B.C. I'm sure the Attorney General of B.C. had nothing to do with those murders, and yet you try to personalize that. That smacks a little bit of ambulance chasing and can be quite ghoulish at times and I wish we would stop that silly practice because the reality is that none of us like crime, not one of us.

The reality also is that accidents will happen and you don't blame it on the Minister of Transportation if there's a car crash, which sometimes some of these members want to do. Accidents will happen. Violent acts will happen. Random acts will happen. And there's nothing you can do about it. A hundred years from now there will still be murders in Winnipeg and it doesn't matter if it's an NDP riding or a Green riding at that time. Who knows? It doesn't matter because you cannot control random acts of violence. That's the whole point about random; you can't predict them. If you could predict them, the violence wouldn't exist because you would stop it.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

* (16:00)

So, linking those kinds of incidents, some tragic incident which some young child under Child and

Family Services' mandate is murdered or killed or gets hurt and then blame that on the minister directly or a member of the Legislature, I think is not only silly, I think it's demeaning.

It's really demeaning because it's true we all collectively have to build a better world, but you don't have to tag an individual with something over which they have no control. Particularly random violence; you have no control over it. You don't know what could happen tonight in Winnipeg or, for that matter, in New York or Paris. If somebody gets shot, they get shot. You can build the securest system in the world, somebody'll find a way around it. That's why these things happen. That's why they're random. Blaming individual people, I think, is a cheap shot and I wish you wouldn't do that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Another theme that seems to recur is that we're too hard on farmers, and I think nothing could be farther from the truth, Madam Deputy Speaker. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Since we formed government, we put \$450 million more into agricultural stabilization programs. We did something that the Tories never did. We equalized hydro rates, and that may sound simple, but it saves farmers \$13 million a year. You never hear a word from the opposition about that. We did that.

Our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) fought hard for the Canadian Wheat Board. I can't say that for members opposite. She fought hard for the Canadian Wheat Board. We know that there is a crisis in the livestock industry, particularly in the pork industry. We understand that, but at the same time we do know that the grain industry is doing well, that oil seeds are doing well, that biofuels are going to be a progressive direction which we're going, that there is some positive news in the farming sector.

In fact, that the farm cash receipts in 2007 grew faster in Manitoba than any other jurisdiction. You can't deny that. That happened, Madam Deputy Speaker. Now, only the Tories can find the dark lining in the silver cloud, apparently, but the reality is that all the news from the farming sector is not bad news. We do know there is a crisis and we're certainly trying to address it. I'll tell you, this Minister of Agriculture we have in Manitoba I believe to be the best, the finest agricultural minister in all of Canada.

Now, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) tried, a little while ago, to give us a

lesson in geography. He was trying to point out to us where Wisconsin was. Members opposite are very keen on the south and the American dream, although I don't hear them mentioning it so much anymore since things are going wrong in the United States economically. Nonetheless, he's giving us a geography lesson.

Let me give him a geography lesson as well. Northern Manitoba exists. I can point him there, the Golden Boy points there. I wish they'd show up once in a while. We don't see too many Tories there. We see lots of Liberals there, the Liberal leader's there all the time, creating major annoyances. In fact, he was scheduling public meetings in restaurants that burned down a year ago but, you know, we won't—and getting his candidate to put up signs on the Saskatchewan side. Things like that. We will forgive him.

Anyway, I'd be very happy to point the Leader of the Opposition north, if he wants that geography lesson, and let me tell you, I come from northern Manitoba and I can tell you how the Tory party is doing if you want to use this as a bellwether, as a warning or an omen or whatever. When I ran for public office in 1995, the Tories received an impressive 38 percent of the vote in Flin Flon, and they did very well. And the next election it was down to 25. The next election it was down—that was in 1999, down to 25 from 38. In 2003, they went down to 8 percent. Last year they went down to zero percent.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Jennissen: Now, the zero percent has to be explained, Madam Deputy Speaker. They couldn't find a candidate. Now, I'm not naive enough or arrogant enough to say that's because of meanness. It's because our party is popular in northern Manitoba and the Tory party is not. Why is the Tory party not popular in Manitoba? Because they don't do anything for northern Manitoba. That's the reason why people in the Flin Flon riding and in northern riding vote for the New Democratic Party. They are very happy with this budget. I'm very happy with this budget. I hope you support it. It'll be a smart thing to do.

We supported your budget in 1999. I'll give you a little lesson, and we won the next election.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Madam Deputy Speaker, it's my privilege to speak to this budget that I will not be able to support from the

New Democratic side of the House, the budget for 2008 as well.

This is not a sound budget for the province of Manitoba's future, for future development. I'd like to get to that in a few minutes in regard to some of the issues that I take great exception with in this budget, but first of all I'd like to start out by commending the people of the constituency of Arthur-Virden for the sound work that they do on a daily basis to make sure that their family lives, their individual lives, their family lives, their communities, succeed because they know what it's like to have to work hard to make a living in those areas with virtually no help from the government on many of the issues that they need help on such as health care, education, infrastructure, commitment to making sure that industry stays in Manitoba and taxation policy.

In spite of those negatives, these people have used their dexterity to succeed in most cases in our region, and I'd just like to point out a number of those. The things that are happening that are great are the expansion of the International Peace Gardens and the great plans that Mr. Hebner has for that area. Expansions of both provincial, federal and U.S. funds in there have been appreciated, but it's certainly an opportunity to expand on a vision of an individual and a board, I might say, that has put forth a great plan for the future.

Other events such as the waterfication of some of those communities, they sought and felt that there needed to be changes in their regions to be able to expand and, of course, they've used the normal routes to be able to provide better futures for their communities. I would also say that the expansion of the cancer care clinic in Deloraine, the diagnostics facilities and works in the hospital in Melita are sound as well, and much needed by the citizens in that region. In spite of what the census in '06 will show as the numbers of the region being down, the population growth in that area in the last few years, the population in Arthur-Virden, I believe, has stabilized, stabilized not only because of the oil industry and the expansion of it and the higher grain prices of the last year but due to the dexterity of the individual people and citizens in that region.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if I could also say that there has been great vision by those in communities, basically newly expanding communities like the expansion at two of the lakes that I represent in Arthur-Virden and that one being Lake Metigoshe. We need to look at the infrastructure needs of the

people in that area along the American border with our American neighbours.

There are some 50 people living there year round now as well, and the same can be said for the new community basically that's being developed out at Oak Lake Beach, since private entrepreneurs made major changes in that beach area, allowing people to purchase their properties, to expand that wonderful park, to open it up and clean it up, somewhat, and then provide a vision for development.

The people that have expanded the Oak Lake Beach are to be commended for the work that they've done in that area—now to the point where they will be opening a new 18-hole golf course this spring designed by well-known Canadian golf architect, Les Furber. In spite of the government not even being able to help with a little bit of work through the traffic board to get the okay to move golf carts from one side of the road to the other without going under a flat road, the citizens there have gone ahead with their own funds, not come to government for any development funds in that operation. It will open this spring and it looks like a great opportunity to expand.

Madam Deputy Speaker, of course, there are things that have been very negative in our region as well, and I would say that two of them have been caused by this government, one of them particularly being the facilities in the Westman Nursing Home in Virden that I've been reading petitions about in this House for over a year where the government promised that they would fix the nursing problem and shortage in that region.

I'm not sure it was just all a nursing shortage, but the retention committee that was put together in the summer and fall of '06 promised that the situation would be fixed that fall. That's a year and a half ago, Madam Deputy Speaker, almost two years ago and it's still an ongoing problem and situation for that community. In fact it's actually grown.

Instead of having 10 or 15 empty beds now we've got over 15, and it's actually closer to a third of the beds in that nursing home that are empty as we speak in spite of the fact that all the nursing homes in the region are virtually full in that area, with many people having to go at least an hour's drive, many more than that, away from their home communities to be placed in a personal care home, which is great concern for the families and the individuals that are being placed in those facilities, Madam Deputy Speaker.

* (16:10)

I would also say that there was a group in our area that is still working, diligently, I might add, in order to try to expand an ethanol industry in southwest Manitoba, but due to grain prices and the price of corn in the U.S.—the grain prices are much higher, the ethanol prices are lower given where we're at today—although we just had an opportunity to tour the ethanol plant in Minnedosa and a wonderful opportunity there. That plant in itself provides enough ethanol fuel for all of the province of Manitoba and our needs to go to the 8 percent ethanol in all of our gasoline this year.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, once again, in an entrepreneurial fashion, the people from the southwest area, wanting to locate a facility in the Hartney region, were told that they couldn't use the energy source that they wanted to first start out with two years ago. They did all their water testing and had it lined up to go. The government said, well, no, you can't use that particular energy source, and they said, well, that's fine. We'll change our energy source, and we'll use Manitoba Hydro. We don't have a problem. We'll master that into our budget, and it will be much more expensive than our energy source, but we'll go with it. I had felt that it's a cleaner source of energy than where they were, as well, but the government, in their wisdom, said no, you can't use Manitoba Hydro; you can't use hydro-electric power for your development in the constituency of Arthur-Virden in Manitoba. That's because we want to use all of it to export and gain more revenue for Manitoba Hydro.

Of course, Manitoba Hydro has a bigger debt under this government, Madam Deputy Speaker. They've been told to build a facility and a new office complex in downtown Winnipeg at much over budget in regard to its initial cost. Of course, I'll get into later the \$1.5 billion that Hydro would be forced to force onto the future ratepayers of Manitobans, if the government actually follows through with this daffy detour on the west side of Manitoba versus bringing the Bipole III down the east side of Lake Winnipeg. So we'll get into that a little bit in a few minutes as well.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to just say that I hope that these individuals aren't completely discouraged by this government's attempt to keep them out of business in Manitoba, as many others are in the wind energy sources. There are many, many—there's hundreds of millions of dollars worth of

energy money that would come into this province, some of it in my constituency, some of it in neighbouring constituencies all through Manitoba—not all in Progressive Conservative ridings—some of those even in the government ridings. Yet the government, in its wisdom, is keeping all of those funds out of Manitoba.

I hear from the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) that it would be a great thing. Well, he should fight harder within his Cabinet. He should fight harder within his Cabinet for a whole number of things that I'll get into in a few minutes, Madam Deputy Speaker. But, you know, I don't think that the Member for Dauphin or the Member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) have any power in that Cabinet anymore. I think that they're being run over by their Premier (Mr. Doer) and basically forced to put programs in place that they don't even believe in. So I think that that's an atrocious situation, purely political reasoning, and, as the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) indicated last week in his speech here, it will hurt some of these members in the long run because rural Manitobans and urban Manitobans can see through the pure politics, crass politics, of trying to put certain sectors out of business when they haven't got any scientific background to back up the statements that are being made.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say that, as well, there's a situation I guess that I wanted to talk to around roads, and I'll get to that in my constituency when I come to the infrastructure part of my presentation.

But I want to talk, firstly, in my role as Competitiveness, Training and Trade critic, as well as Infrastructure and Transportation and government services today. I feel extremely privileged to have the opportunity to be asked by our leader to represent Manitobans in both of those areas as the critic responsible for new ideas in those areas and hold the government to task in regard to some of what we feel are restricting regulations and rules and more red tape that they're bringing in in those areas with lack of vision.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, first of all, I want to say that we are today talking about the budget in '08, and, of course, that in itself leads to excitement about vision, about the government really putting the dollars and cents to what was supposed to be a vision in their Throne Speech last fall.

I'm going to digress for a minute because, of course, last fall was the first Throne Speech after the

election. It should have been a wonderful opportunity for the government to put forward its view of where the world goes, and all it was was a rehash of many of the old ideas that they have already run over in the last eight years. We are seeing an extremely diluted budget, I guess, if you will, placid almost in this budget that has just come out last week, April 9, by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) for Manitoba, and really a re-announcement of many, many old announcements with no new vision for where they want Manitoba to be. Certainly, it shows that the government is tired, that it has run out of ideas, that it hasn't got any new refreshing vision, and it's time for a change in that area. Manitobans, I believe, will become led to that conclusion as we move closer to the next election as well.

There are three areas I want to report on today particularly. One is the budget. The other one is for the finance of the province. One is to deal with the crisis in agriculture that we are faced with in the livestock sector today. Of course, another is to deal with some of the infrastructure shortfalls that we have in this province, never mind health and education issues.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the situation that we are faced with today is that the budget of Manitoba is some \$9.8 billion, and virtually 40 percent, nearly 40 percent of that budget—the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) can talk about his percentages all he likes. The fact of the matter is that this government has just received the biggest transfer in equalization payments combined any time in this province's history. It's up over \$313 million. They've got an increase in spending of \$563 million, some 6.2 percent, versus the 3 that they talked about. It's virtually triple what the rate of inflation was in their spending. It's \$9 of spending to \$1 of new tax revenues, or of savings in tax cuts in those areas. That's just not a very sound plan to work with in times when dollars are falling into your pocket that you had nothing to do with managing and earning. I will say that, even if the Member for Flin Flon—I could give him some benefit of the doubt, if he still wants to work in percentages.

I just have to say and put on the record again that this is also the same government that has increased the PST in this province by broadening it out over homebuilding supplies, all of the things that you would need if you were building a home, and a number of other areas, back some five, six years ago, Madam Deputy Speaker. They've had the extra

benefit of gathering those tax dollars by broadening the PST over other areas. That wasn't enough. After the '03 election, they came in and broadened the PST to be collected now on accountants, lawyers and architects fees in regard to the development of Manitoba. Think of the extra PST alone just on the Hydro building itself, which, of course, they didn't bring in until after they'd increased that PST and broadened it out, 7 percent on the plans to build that building, tens of thousands of dollars, hundreds of thousands of dollars would be more like it. So these are the kind of shifty, sneaky taxes that the NDP have placidly put on, told Manitobans to accept, at the same time as they try to give you more dollars back.

Well, the Member for Flin Flon talked about how the personal exemptions have gone up. They are talking about BPEs, basic personal exemptions. I am sure he thought it was BSE, and he's still lost back in the days of cattle because his New Democrat friends in Ontario, particularly wacky Jack, the leader of the federal New Democratic Party, didn't know what BSE was. He thought it was SARS, Madam Deputy Speaker. But it's really basic personal exemptions. When they go up \$100, from \$7,864 to \$7,964 next year in Manitoba, they'll still be about \$1,800 or \$1,600, \$1,700—well, they'll be further than that, because that would be behind where the federal government's basic personal exemption was today of \$9,600 for each Manitoban. It still leaves them about \$1,200 behind our neighbours to the west in Saskatchewan, and far behind other provinces in Canada as well. But the member said, well, that's not a tax. The basic personal exemption only going up \$100 is a tax on Manitobans because it doesn't meet inflation. He basically is taxing them to the tune of \$60 in their incomes because it should be \$160. They don't get the benefit of that extra \$60.

*(16:20)

Now the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), I know that's a little deep for him to try and figure out in regard to the taxation policy because, of course, he's never going to make the Finance critic in this world. Well, he might be the Finance critic; he'll never be the Finance Minister. I want to say that this is not wacky math, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is just the fact. The government also increased registrations on vehicles by \$20 a vehicle in this province this year, another tax as well. Now, you raised the personal exemption by \$100 and the average family in Manitoba has two vehicles, so you

just clawed back 40 bucks. They don't get the benefit of it.

The Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) talked about a whole host of other areas of increased fees and that sort of thing, \$9 a month on—now \$72 in Pharmacare need. Seniors are already behind the eight ball. They've already lost their whole personal exemption, and I won't go into the whole plethora of other areas, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm sure that that will become much more aware to Manitobans with all of the clawbacks that this government has taken out of them, out of their pockets, from the budget that's just been put before the House in Manitoba, and they wonder why we won't support it.

Well, there are many, many reasons. In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, the manufacturers and exporters had a conference here about a month ago in Manitoba, and I had the opportunity of attending that and I know that the Premier (Mr. Doer) was there and gave his opening remarks. The Member for Minto, the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan) was there. After the opening remarks, a lady by the name of Andrea Mandel-Campbell spoke on her book. She was asked to speak to them about the book, *Why Mexicans Don't Drink Molson*. That might be a kind of a funny title to put before the world like that, but it was all about how the rest of the world looks at Manitoba companies and why we don't own any companies that are in the top hundred in the rest of the world. We don't own any of them. None of them are owned by Manitobans.

That's a shame; that's a real shame. It shows that they've been squelched by the government in Manitoba, that the tax regime of this province sends those companies into other jurisdictions. They don't stay here, Madam Deputy Speaker. New people investing in Manitoba have a choice.

Why would a large company—and we always talk about, well, we don't want large companies because they're too big. They squash the little guy, never mind that they put him to work or they give him an opportunity to work, but we got a payroll tax in Manitoba, Madam Deputy Speaker, and we're the only province in western Canada that has a payroll tax. It taxes companies that have large employment. You don't even have to be that large. I've got two fairly small family-run operations in my constituency that are awfully close to Saskatchewan. In fact, they already have offices in Saskatchewan, and they're looking at moving their head offices over there.

They're not all oil companies either, and I'm going to get into that one in a minute, but they are leaving because of the payroll tax. They don't pay anything until they've reached that certain level. When they reach it, they go back and pay it right back to the first dollar, and it's ridiculous that this government doesn't recognize that eliminating the payroll tax over time would be a plus for the province of Manitoba in maintaining and keeping jobs.

What would they do if the financial institutions on Portage and Main decided they were going to locate somewhere else in western Canada? They're always worried about whether we're going to lose 400 jobs in the Wheat Board. We lost 500 out of the United Grain Growers and Manitoba Pool because they dissolved into Viterra and went to Regina. They're worried about losing them to Calgary. I'm worried about losing them to Regina and Saskatoon and other places in the Prairies, never mind Calgary, Madam Deputy Speaker. They're taking jobs from Toronto, but to keep up we should be able to do that with Regina for heaven's sake in regard to where we're going to go and this government isn't doing it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to say that Manitoba depends on 62 percent of its gross domestic product from trade. Now, I don't think there are too many in the government side of the House that trade enough to know that 62 percent of our gross domestic product is dependent upon trade.

Now, we've got a Premier (Mr. Doer) that, if I was to really go back and say the things that he said when he was in opposition about trade, man, you'd wonder why we're not moving very far forward with this gentleman in the seat of power in Manitoba today, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's simply because, if that's the vision of the world, then you can hardly expect them to portray that out to the rest of the population. A budget like this certainly shows that there's no imagination left in this government in regard to its future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the situation on our budget is—also the payroll tax I just want to say as well—that the corporate capital tax while being reduced is a detriment to keeping companies in Manitoba as well.

I just want to close on this whole issue of the budget by saying, just on this area, if you were to look at what the transfer and equalization payments were in 1999 as a percentage of today's budget—as a percentage of what the budget was in those days, pardon me—the equalization and transfer payments

today are virtually \$3.8 billion, somewhere in that area, versus what the budget was when I first stepped into this House. The budget of Manitoba was \$5.9 billion.

Well, when you're getting 4 billion, almost, in transfer payments, you're getting, in equivalent dollars today, 70 percent of the 1999 budget coming from the federal government. Now I know eight years have passed, but 70 percent of the 1999 budget today comes into the hands of all these ministers across the way, and the Premier (Mr. Doer), from Ottawa. It's still the biggest amount in Manitoba's history.

Madam Deputy Speaker, before I get into the issue, I just want to touch briefly on the Wuskwatim development, the Conawapa future plans. We'll wait and see for that. There's a 200-megawatt announcement today to begin sometime in a couple of decades down the road to Wisconsin. Good announcements to sell power. We have no problem with developing power, selling power around North America. In fact, I've spoken to governors in other states who wish that they could get their hands on it as well. I think I alluded to that in my last comments in this House in regard to a Throne Speech.

But we have a situation now where the government wants to build a power line all the way around by Saskatchewan to get to the east of Winnipeg, to sell that power east, whether it's into Minnesota, Wisconsin or Ontario is irrelevant. But they want to take that 400 extra kilometres. They want to bulldoze down 60 more kilometres of trees. That's not environmentally friendly, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The government says they can't go up the east side. In fact, they've told Hydro not to go up the east side of Lake Winnipeg where Hydro wanted to develop this. They spent 20 years trying to develop it up the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Madam Deputy Speaker, 15 of the 16 bands on the east side of Lake Winnipeg are in favour of it, so there's no problem with that. There's a sharing program to be put in place, as has been done and developed by the Sterling Lyon government years ago in regard to other regions. From the extra 400 kilometres of line, never mind the security risks, there are 40 megawatts of power being lost every year that costs them about \$700 million over the course of the line; \$1.1 billion converter stations needed when you go that extra length to bring it back to the east side before you can reship that out. We need to have that power end up

here in southern Manitoba, around the city of Winnipeg, for a security program, for security reasons, for reliability reasons in this city and in southern Manitoba as well. If you bring it down between the lakes, you have all three of them in one place. Going west is just a daffy idea to waste another a billion and a half dollars of taxpayers' money. Actually, some of it will be taxpayers' money; the rest would be coming out of ratepayers' funds in those areas.

I know full well that Manitobans don't want to go that route. If they have the opportunity of knowing that it will cost them at least \$4,000 per family over that period of time, they wouldn't be in favour of that line going that route either. I look forward to the government changing its mind on that area as well.

I just, lastly, want to say that it's contradictory, hypocritical at best, that the government says it can't put a road down the east side, or a hydro line down the east side, 75 metres wide, east side of Lake Winnipeg, when they have already committed to building a road up to Berens Rivers, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) stands up in the House and takes great pride that he's going to build that road at the same time that his environment minister says, no, we can't go that route, and the Hydro minister says, no, we can't go that route, and the Premier says, no, we can't go that route, but the highways minister is saying we're going to build a road. I know he's probably being told that's what they're going to do because, like so many others, particularly in agriculture, the Premier has run over their backs with these announcements and they have no say left.

So I just wanted to put that on the record, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it's contradictory to say that, while we've also increased the numbers of kilometres of bulldozed-down roads for winter roads on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, up to 2,200 from 1,600—we've increased it 600 kilometres—it's a great thing. We'll get more access to the citizens on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. So that's a good opportunity to expand Manitoba, to actually get access to some of those citizens on the east side of Lake Winnipeg so that they can have a better life as well.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

* (16:30)

Agriculture, before I close, just in closing, I want to say that the moratorium on agriculture in the hog industry is not good for the province of Manitoba. I've spent a lifetime trying to reduce trade barriers across Canada in agriculture, particularly, in my former life as a farm leader in the prairies. Now, I'm sad to say that I have to sit in opposition and watch a government divide our province down the middle, instead of coming up with ideas of how to actually deal with this. They put scare tactics in everybody's home in Manitoba, rural and urban, in regard to the divide that they've got in this industry, particularly in the hog industry. Dairy farmers are very worried about what could be next. Feedlots are worried in this province as well. Never mind the country-of-origin labelling in the United States, the high dollar values and the high feed-grain prices, this government is stabbing farmers when they're down and bleeding already. They're on their knees and the Ag Minister is putting them out of business. This isn't just about we don't care about rural Manitoba anymore, Mr. Speaker. It's an attack on rural Manitoba development. The government should be ashamed of it.

That's what I mean about—I don't even believe that the Member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) could have dreamt this up on her own without having the government and her backbenchers run over her for the plan that she's been putting in place in this province. I really hope that there are some of her Cabinet colleagues that have got the gumption to sit in Cabinet and fight for her and fight for those areas of rural Manitoba, for the future as well. It's certainly not competitive, and I don't suppose the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan), being the competitive minister that he is talking about, Competitiveness, Training and Trade, understands that, coming from the region that he does and how important trade is to Manitoba in those areas. Mr. Speaker, it's an attack and that's the bottom line.

Mr. Speaker, I just have to say that, in closing, the situation with bridges in Manitoba, with the infrastructure that's there, this government, and we'll get into it later, hasn't made a greater commitment to a percentage of budget-wise in regard to its funding of the budget in Manitoba for infrastructure, roads and bridges. I'll get into that more, perhaps, either in question period or in Estimates with the minister.

We need to look at the overage of the floodway budget, the fact that they were \$135 million over in the first year. It's been two more years since. They've cancelled six bridges. They just cut the program

down in order to try to come in on budget, and they haven't even done that. There are a great many bridges—not to mention my colleague from River East, the ones she's been speaking of—and the south Perimeter and the Bishop Grandin area and Fort Garry in the last while, the reconstruction of some of those, knocking them down to one-lane bridges, creating huge congestion in traffic flows in that whole major part of the major city in Manitoba. There is no planning in regard to this government's role in that whole area, just costly programming for those citizens and huge inconveniences.

Another hypocritical situation out in my area, in fact, the government went on about, Mr. Speaker, is that of the situation in Arthur-Virden. The government likes to go on about how they finished that wonderful road No. 1, twinned it. Well, they've got it open, but now they haven't negotiated with the companies that need to finish paving it this spring. Maybe some of the Minister of Infrastructure's (Mr. Lemieux) colleagues didn't know that it's not paved yet. It's not finished. There is another layer to go on this spring. They have to negotiate, and I'm sure they'll do it successfully, with the company that has to go out and put down the pavement. Of course, they thought it was going to be all done last spring, or last fall, which it wasn't, so there are extra costs of flagmen and everything else in regard to the three strips of pavement that will have to be laid there.

I want to say in closing, that road 255—hypocritical; it was in the *Brandon Sun* last Saturday morning. The situation there, Mr. Speaker, is that for years and years and years the oil industry—they talk about how great the oil industry is. They're gaining \$13.7 million this year, \$17 million last year on the oil and natural gas tax for Manitoba, but there are six miles of road in the Cromer region that this government can't look at from year to year to year to year to year. I've been raising it every year since I was an MLA. They can't fix it, so they're forcing heavy oil trucks to go 80 kilometres out of the road, 30 of those down gravel, creating dust and an untenable situation for the safety on farms along that road. They need to fix that chunk of 256. I've asked the minister to look at that as well. I'm sure he has, but there again, I hope that his colleagues back him to make some of those changes because we've really got to put that in place if we're going to support industry in Manitoba. The oil industry is booming. It is growing, and it will continue to grow in southwest Manitoba. I'm most appreciative of that, but we've got to have 255—

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

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to put my thoughts on the record in regard to the budget. It's always very entertaining, this particular debate, because listening to members opposite speak, on the one hand, about the need to slash spending and cut taxes and so forth, and then, in the very next breath, to demand all types of expenditures on highways and so forth, that's the absolute height of irony. I won't use the word "hypocrisy." I don't think it's parliamentary to do so, but it's very ironic to listen to members opposite on this.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I would like to begin my remarks by complimenting the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) on, once again, putting forth a very good budget. It's balanced, and it's done so in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

It's something that sticks in the craw of members opposite, I know, because they like to think of themselves as the great fiscal managers and to paint NDP governments as the opposite. But I look to one of the greatest New Democrats in the history of our party, the Honourable Tommy Douglas, who was premier of Saskatchewan for 14 years, I believe. He had 14 consecutive balanced budgets, which really set the course, I think. We're well on our way to matching that record, I think, and that's what really galls members opposite more than anything else.

When I look to their record of the '90s, and I think the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) was very articulate in pointing out how poor a job that they themselves did. I think the Filmon government in—when was it, 1993?—actually set the record in this province running a deficit of close to \$0.75 billion. You know, for them to put themselves forward as the great fiscal managers, I think their time in office, the previous premier, Mr. Filmon, set the bar by establishing that record for us. They would like us to forget that, but I don't think we will. I don't think the people of Manitoba have, and that's why, for three consecutive terms now, they've elected the NDP government.

The Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) likes to keep pointing to the \$500 million in debt that was part of this, but he likes to ignore, conveniently ignore, the fact that this is an investment in capital infrastructure. Everybody knows that, when you build your house, for instance, or when you buy a

new vehicle for \$40,000 or \$50,000, you don't, as a rule, pay for it in cash up front, now, do you? *[interjection]* Well, maybe some of the wealthier Conservatives across the way may be able to do that, but for average Manitobans, they have to deficit finance for that. They have to go to the bank and borrow some money, and that's in essence what was done here.

We are a building government. We've always been builders. That's why the people of Manitoba continue to elect us because they know the need for investment, for infrastructure, and that's precisely what we're doing. The former minister of highways is with us, and I thank him for his efforts when he was in that portfolio for what he's done in my constituency. It's been continued on. The former Member for Brandon West, the Honourable Scott Smith, did his part in that portfolio. The current minister, as well, is carrying on in that vein and, in fact, is setting new records himself. We've gone to \$400 million a year in investment in transportation infrastructure.

* (16:40)

That's what's needed because, when we did an analysis of our highways infrastructure, we learned that probably 70 percent of our highways were in the last five years of a 25-year lifespan and we were facing a systemic collapse of our transportation network. Mr. Speaker, the previous government didn't acknowledge that. I know they certainly didn't do so in my constituency, the Interlake, that never saw a highways project for the entire time that they were in office. We have reversed that in our time, but they chose to conveniently ignore that. They focus on tax cuts to the point where you look at the federal level, where we've cut taxes to the point where we're facing serious problems of going into deficit, especially if the economy goes into a downturn, but that's their mantra, to destabilize the government's ability to build and to feather their own nests by cutting taxes in the process.

I'm very proud to be a member of this government that recognizes the need, not only from a highways perspective, but you look at education, which is fundamental. If you're going to grow and build your economy, you have to train people and that costs money.

I remember that, when they were in office school divisions were having to increase their levies in the 15 to 20 percent range on an annual basis to make up

the lack in capital funding, they were getting from members opposite, and we've reversed that.

We've also looked at all of our schools, and I look to my constituency again where virtually every school in the Lakeshore School Division has seen a capital upgrade under our time in office here. You know, we had our crowning achievement just last year when the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) and I had the honour of cutting the ribbon on a brand-new school in the community of Inwood. So we've certainly stepped up to the plate from our public schools perspective and from our universities as well.

I'm very happy to see in this budget a commitment to expand the Red River College and creating a campus in the north Interlake. This is something that is needed and has been a long time coming. Previous governments have basically ignored our First Nations people, but this particular initiative, recognizing the high unemployment rates on First Nations communities, for us to make the commitment to establish an Interlake campus that will serve the needs of the people of Peguis and Fisher River as well as the surrounding area because it's not just there for First Nations people. It's for all of the people of the Interlake who don't have the luxury of living inside the Perimeter.

If they have to come for higher education, they have to incur additional costs for housing, for transportation and so forth, so this government recognizes that need and is taking the institutions out to them, not just in the Interlake but, of course, the University College of the North, another huge investment which will make education much more accessible to that area of the province that was completely ignored by members opposite.

I think they've proved that once again today when the Leader of the Opposition was whipping out some kind of map of the province that didn't have the northern half of the province on it. So they haven't learned their lesson yet. Eight long years, almost nine in opposition, they still haven't grasped the point that they have to represent all people of the province.

Again, I want to compliment the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) for his good analysis on equalization payments. This is something that all Canadians pay for, Mr. Speaker. It's not Alberta or Ontario that are making the payments. It's us as individual Canadians. This is the covenant that we agreed to. It's a constitutional right. We all pay the same rate of federal income tax, and that's where that

money comes from. It comes from individual taxpayers, and the idea is to level off the playing field across the country. That's what makes Canada the country that it is. These people opposite would destabilize that and move away from it if they could.

Health and social transfer payments, of course, are a part of that, and that's based on a per capita basis. All provinces receive that. Even the super-rich province of Alberta gets health and social transfer payments. In fact, they get three times the transfer payments that we do here in Manitoba, three times.

An Honourable Member: They've got three times the population.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, exactly. They have three times the population. So this whole argument of equalization and transfer payments is facetious to say the least, and outright deceptive to be quite honest with you, Mr. Speaker.

I look to some of the bold promises made by the Leader of the Opposition, and I really have to shake my head in disbelief sometimes. I believe he said he was going to double our population over the next 20 years, and how he's going to do that—50,000 people a year is what it amounts to. But, when I look to the federal government again and see some of their plans, how they prefer that—I think they want the women to stay home and have babies is what it amounts to with some of—well, cutting day care, for instance. Taking it completely off the table is going to make it much more difficult for families and for single mothers. I guess that's probably their objective, to take the women out of the workforce and put them back in the kitchen and have more children, I guess, is what the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) envisions, which is a pretty parochial approach, and I don't think the public is going to buy that one iota.

We saw some of his other objectives here, bringing back the Jets, for instance, which I think he's now acknowledged was a foolish promise, and not to mention converting the constituency of Point Douglas over to a trendy, upscale area up to an including Lake McFadyen right in the middle of it. Obviously, this man has no grasp on reality whatsoever and deservedly sits in the opposition benches.

There's been a lot of talk about the ag sector. It has been tough times for our producers with the strong Canadian dollar, which is largely a result of a Republican president who is running completely

amok on the international arena—invading countries, killing millions of people. He has put his own economy in jeopardy and is jeopardizing the entire world, as a matter of fact. Now, we're feeling the brunt of that.

But we have done what we could to help our farming community, and I know that the moratorium is out there. But, when I see how the hog industry was built by the previous government, well, first of all, they had to knock the family farm out of the loop, which they did by ending the single desk and pushing toward the corporatization of this industry.

I see how they allowed the hog industry to grow in my particular area. I can look within my family, as a matter of fact, how my Uncle Cubby—well, all the crooked land deals that were pulled off there and Crown lands given to him by his good friends, Harry Enns and Mr. Filmon, was bordering on the criminal, I have to say, something that we've put a stop to. But his propensity to build hog barns in big swamps and on ridges in what should be wildlife management area just proves how unsustainable their approach to building this industry was.

*(16:50)

It continues. I look to the man who ran against me, Garry Wasyłowski, who was reeve of the R.M. of Armstrong at the time, and the barn that he was advocating for out in the Silver area, which was built. We had to make an amendment to The Planning Act to prevent a travesty like that from occurring again. But, when I look to that particular location with artesian wells flowing within sight of the barn, the fact that they managed to avoid the technical review and the public hearing process, now they're paying the price because the water is literally lapping up against the side of the lagoon. That's not how we want to see this industry grow forward.

We do need a livestock sector. We do need a hog industry. I want to see that, but I want it done properly. I want these barns sited correctly, not built in swamps, not built on limestone ridges on top of, probably, the best aquifer in the country, in the Interlake. That's why the moratorium has been put in place and will remain in place until such time that industry realizes that it's got to do so in a sustainable, environmentally conscious manner.

The Red River Valley has been supersaturated with hog barns. You go into the Hanover or La Broquerie areas where they've got barns in practically every quarter section to the point where

they have probably one-quarter of the spread fields that they need. That's the reason why that area has been included as well in the moratorium.

I look to the Marble Ridge Hutterite Colony. They've done a pretty good job themselves. They have a mixed-farming operation where they have a genuine need and use for the manure that they generate. That's how this industry should proceed, not the way the Conservatives structured it.

On the cattle front, we have done all that we can up to and including deferring their loans for a three-year period to help them out. I think back to 2003 when BSE hit us. I was actually running against the president of the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association at the time. It's quite ironic, I ran against her twice, actually, in '99 and again in '03, and it's very interesting that her vote fell to a half of what it was from '99 to '03 in the midst of the BSE crisis. So I think that the producers themselves must have realized that that wasn't the leadership they needed.

The topic of Ranchers Choice comes up. This is where the irony, again to use that word, really becomes evident with members opposite because they did everything in their power to cripple this enterprise right from the very beginning. I know because I went across the province with the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). I remember when we were in Brandon they had all of their troops out there. There was close to 1,000 people, I believe, in the arena. I can still remember the sight of Mr. Cummings and Mrs. Green fighting for the microphone to get up and criticize this proposal, this project. You know, granted a lot of ranchers are in their camp politically, that goes without saying. They discouraged them from getting involved in this. I remember when there was a glitch with the Corporations Branch and the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) leaped on that, writing letters and going on the radio, telling the ranchers that this was their opportunity to get their money out of this plant. So, for them to preach to us today about the need for it and so forth, is very ironical to say the least.

I remember the former Member for Emerson was on the record at the beginning of the debate—*[interjection]*—exactly—saying that we didn't need any more slaughter capacity, that our friends in Alberta would take care of us, that we had access to slaughter capacity there. We learned a hard lesson at the end of the day that that was not the case, and we were only able to access maybe a million dollars of that first

BSE recovery program that the feds rolled out. We didn't take our money off the table, Mr. Speaker. We put it into other programs. We put \$100 million on the table for low-interest loans in conjunction with the freight assistance program that literally saved the cattle industry in the Interlake. That's not just me saying that, but I have had many ranchers come up to me and thank me for those two programs that kept them in business, and they are still in business today. Some that leveraged themselves too highly, I think, are having difficulties, but the traditional ranchers, I know, and I live in ranching country in Poplarfield, they're weathering this storm, and we will do what we can to see them through to the end of the day.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see my time is almost up here. I'm going to take my seat. Thank you for the opportunity for putting my thoughts on the record, and I relinquish the floor to the Member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I do have quite a bit that I would like to share with members in regard to this budget. Some of it's good. Most of it's bad, but some of it is good. I'd like to start off on some of the good stuff, but one of the things that somewhat irritates me is the continuation of this illusion that this government has had surplus budgets ever since it's been in government, since 1999. People should know that, in fact, in '03-04 they had the second-highest deficit. No matter what you do to try to erase that deficit, the record will show that you had a deficit in 2003 and 2004. The budget document is giving misinformation. The members stand in their place and intentionally give misinformation about what actually took place in 2003-2004.

What I would suggest the members opposite do, all 35 of you, is read the provincial Auditor's report. In that year you did not have a \$13-million surplus. You had a \$600-plus-million deficit. That is the reality. You cannot say that you had a surplus every year that you were in government, unless, of course, you are prepared to say, in the one year we cooked the books and that allowed us. So put that asterisk on 2003-2004, or be honest and tell Manitobans that you did have a deficit.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, what I would like to spend my time on, at least for the first part of my

speech, is about ideas, some good Liberal ideas. Some of these Liberal ideas, I must say, come from some good individuals. One of them is, I believe, even a self-proclaimed New Democrat. The biggest issue facing Manitoba today, or one of the biggest issues facing our province today is Manitoba Hydro. It is, where are we going to be putting our transmission lines?

We have the New Democrats who have been very clear. They want to go down the west side of our province. I'm going to suggest as I go through a number of different ideas that it's very important that this Premier (Mr. Doer) start looking at how pride could destroy opportunities for the province of Manitoba. It's time that the government start swallowing some pride, opening its mind, and being fair to good ideas.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the west side is the worst place to put the transmission line. From all indications, it is the most expensive, and it is the most damaging to our environment. I would suggest to you, you know, we have now taken a position within the Liberal Party, based on presentations from an individual who I know has been in contact with the government, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that being Professor—and I believe he's retired—John Ryan. He talks about how Manitoba Hydro should be going down the lake, under the lake. I believe that is an idea that has a great deal of merit. This government has not been able to demonstrate one iota that the idea is not practical, that it's not feasible.

In fact, if I quote directly from Mr. Ryan's presentation that he made at our party's annual general meeting, he talked in terms about some of the cost factor. In summary, and I quote: The cost of the Lake Winnipeg underwater route could be \$1.1 billion for two converters, \$500 million for the underwater cable, \$341 million for the land route portion, for a total—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) will have 25 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 17, 2008

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