

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

Vol. LX No. 24 – 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 16, 2008

ISSN 0542-5492

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Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 18—The Testing of Bodily Fluids and Disclosure Act

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), that Bill 18, The Testing of Bodily Fluids and Disclosure Act; Loi sur l'analyse de fluids corporels et la communication des résultats d'analyse, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Oswald: This legislation will offer paramedics, firefighters, police officers and other first-line responders additional information and peace of mind when responding to an incident. This act is designed to provide an expedited process for these brave individuals, as well as victims of crime and Good Samaritans, to determine if their health has been put at risk.

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

PETITIONS

Waverley West—New School Construction

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The government has taken upon itself to develop Waverley West, a suburb that will eventually be the size of Brandon, without any funding for new schools in this part of Winnipeg. This will ultimately put a strain on other schools in the Pembina Trails School Division.

With the realignment of catchment areas, caused by the lack of funding, families will be required to move their children from one school to another.

Disruption for children attending southwest Winnipeg schools could be harmful for their

education and present a difficult and unnecessary change for these children and their families.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider setting aside land and funds to construct new schools to accommodate the needs of the new provincial government development of Waverley West to allow kids attending schools in the southwest area of Winnipeg to remain in existing schools located closer to home.

Signed by F. Daneshfur, Vljako Srzic, Joanne Dyker and many, many others.

Dividing of Trans-Canada Highway

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider making

the completion of the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley in 2008 an urgent provincial government priority.

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

This is signed by Dayna Weiten, Charlie Keep, Ruth Keep and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

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

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 Scott Sitompul, Marie Bergen, Mary Ann Wiebe and many, many others.

Provincial Nominee Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

The current government needs to recognize that the backlog in processing PNP applications is causing additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families and friends here in Manitoba.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by E. Samual, P. Timbang, R. Timbang and many, many other fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Child-Care Centres

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

There is an ongoing critical shortage of child-care spaces throughout Manitoba, particularly in fast-growing regions such as south Winnipeg.

The provincial government has not adequately planned for the child-care needs of growing communities like Waverley West where the construction of thousands of homes will place immense pressure on the already overburdened child-care system.

The severe shortage of early childhood educators compounds the difficulty parents have finding licensed child care and has forced numerous centres to operate with licensing exemptions due to a lack of qualified staff.

Child-care centres are finding it increasingly difficult to operate within the funding constraints set by the provincial government to the point that they are unable to provide wages and benefits sufficient to retain child-care workers.

As a result of these deficiencies in Manitoba's child-care system, many families and parents are growing increasingly frustrated and desperate,

fearing that they will be unable to find licensed child care and may be forced to stop working as a result. In an economy where labour shortages are common, the provision of sustainable and accessible child care is critical.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) to consider addressing the shortage of early childhood educators by enabling child-care centres to provide competitive wages and benefits.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider adequately planning for the future child-care needs of growing communities and to consider making the development of a sustainable and accessible child-care system a priority.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider the development of a governance body that would provide direction and support to the volunteer boards of child-care centres and to consider the development of regionalized central wait lists for child care.

To encourage all members of the Legislative Assembly to consider becoming more closely involved with the operations of the licensed day-care facilities in their constituencies.

This petition is signed by Carol Jones, Barb Sousa, Tatyana Bulué and many, many others.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister charged with the administration of The Communities Economic Development Fund Act): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the Communities Economic Development Funds Third Quarter Financial Statement.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Child Day Care Lack of Spaces

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Throughout Manitoba in communities like Minnedosa, in communities such as St. Germain, St. Vital and all throughout Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, we hear from parents who are frustrated about their inability to get access to child-care spaces for their children. We hear the frustration of those, like some of the individuals in the gallery today, who work in the field of child care, provide a great service and do great work on behalf of Manitoba families.

It's been more than a year since the government promised their next plan. They've been saying stay tuned, and Manitobans have stayed tuned for long enough.

I want to ask the Premier if he is going to address the issue of red tape and outmoded funding models that his government has put in place that are contributing to the current shortage of child-care spaces here in Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I know last week he told the Chamber of Commerce that he had to pursue only negative news, in his view, because there was a lot of confidence in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we're certainly not participating in red tape nor are we participating in a red axe that was utilized by Conservatives of the past for child care.

Mr. Speaker, we were quite surprised when the member opposite was the chief of staff and the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) was working in the Cabinet offices, that, in fact—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer:—that we found documents that said that the Conservatives would put a number in for child care, intentionally directed by Mr. Benson in Treasury Board, where they had to lapse the \$10 million to appear to be doing more and actually doing less. That was the kind of Tory policy on child care.

Number 2, Mr. Speaker, since we've been in office, we have increased the number of training spots. We have increased the salaries. We have increased the spaces and, in fact, we have doubled the budget, doubled the budget—not cut the budget—doubled the budget since we were elected. We also had to backfill Conservative cutbacks from Ottawa and fully reinstate the money.

Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite promised \$3 million for spaces over his four-year campaign. We promised at minimum \$11 million. So, already, we're almost four times greater than the member opposite in terms of promises. Second, I guess he had more money for the Jets than he had for kids.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: We believe in investment in child care. We have said we will have, in the budget last week, a

new plan similar to the last plan we had and will include increased salaries. It will include increased salaries. It will include increased training, which is already contained within this budget. It will include increased spaces and will again include a multi-year plan for dealing with the legitimate problems and challenges of child care and not only the waiting list, but the fact that we recognize that early childhood development is good learning and good for our education and public education system in Manitoba. That's why we believe in it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, and somewhere in that long-winded response I think was some indication of the government's intent. The fact is they announced more than a year ago they'd be coming out with a plan; it hasn't arrived yet. We hear from parents and workers that there's red tape and outdated funding models that are getting in the way of expansion of child-care spaces in Manitoba put in place by the government.

So what I would say to the Premier is that those who are sitting in the gallery today who have an interest in this issue aren't interested in conspiracy theories about who was doing what in the 1990s. I know the Premier, every time he turns around, he spots Elvis. I know he thinks that there was a fourth shooter in the grassy knoll and he's got all of these wild theories, Mr. Speaker, about the 1990s and a whole bunch of other things.

I think what Manitobans are looking for is a premier who will stand up and candidly respond to the concerns that are coming forward, offer the plan looking to the future, and not spend all of his time wallowing in conspiracy theories about the 1990s, '80s, '60s, wherever it is that he happens to be reading his latest *National Enquirer* magazines from.

So I want to ask the Premier if he can provide a direct response to the question: What steps will they take to get rid of the red tape, the outmoded funding models and unveil the five-year plan that was promised more than a year ago so that Manitoba families can find adequate child care for their children?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the \$14-million cut by Conservatives was not a fantasy. It was a reality that we're working under.

The amount of money we announced in our campaign and pledged in our campaign, half of that is being fulfilled in this current budget of \$5 million; of the \$11 million, slightly less than half. That

compares to 2 percent promised over four years for staff salary increases by the member opposite. I know he had to pay for his reckless tax-cut promises. Our commitment is to greater salary increases than that. Thirdly, we have also promised beyond the \$5 million that we will have a multi-year plan on early childhood development. Our last plan doubled the funding for child care. We know that that is not a conspiracy. That is a reality.

We also said in the budget \$5 million more increased salaries for good child-care staff in Manitoba, increased spaces and within two weeks—and that was one week ago—or shortly thereafter there will be a new multi-year plan that will increase child-care investments well beyond the wildest dreams or wildest promises ever the Conservatives have ever made.

* (13:50)

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, what a typical NDP response. It's all spending, no discussion about results. Everything with the NDP—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's all a spending contest. There are lots of things that can be done in this area that have to do with funding models and red tape, Mr. Speaker, that will help address the problem in addition to putting money in.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier who talks tough against the federal Conservatives in this House, I wish the members of his caucus could have been there the other day when he was the first in line among the cheerleaders after the Prime Minister's auto theft announcement. I wish members of his caucus could have been there. Every time the Prime Minister of the country—and I know it's because he depends on him for 40 percent of his revenue, but every time the Prime Minister of the country says jump, the question coming from the Premier is how high.

I mean, this tough talk in the Legislature certainly wasn't the story when he was falling over himself to praise the Prime Minister the other day here in Winnipeg, and that's okay. The Prime Minister is doing a lot of good things. We're very supportive of a lot of the initiatives.

But for him to talk about a \$14-million reduction when he got a \$300-million addition to his budget from the federal government is unbelievable. The federal government is trying to put in place a system that will help avoid exactly what he's doing, clarify roles and responsibilities. Provinces are responsible for child care. The federal government is responsible for certain other things, Mr. Speaker. They're focussing on doing their jobs well.

Why is the Premier pointing fingers at the Prime Minister of the country when he needs only to look in the mirror to figure out who is responsible for the current shortage of spaces here in Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: I'd like to thank the Prime Minister for his kind words on our budget. We appreciate it.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing wrong, when agreeing with changes in legislation that we support, pushing for other changes, which the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) pushed for, but also having disagreements. We disagreed on child-care funding. We also disagree on the Wheat Board. We call them like we see them.

On child care—[*interjection*]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we have increased the salaries to staff. We believe child-care personnel. We actually believe they should go up. Yes, it will cost money. It's not sprinkle dust to increase salaries. It's real investments in salaries.

Spaces cost money in capital and cost money in operating because you need more staff. Yes, that is money. It's not sprinkle dust as the member opposite suggests. The increased number of spaces will cost money. We are prepared to make those investments, Mr. Speaker.

Any analysis of the child-care system in Manitoba in terms of the progressivity of the child-care system and the effectiveness of the child-care system in terms of dollars spent, it is one of the best in Canada by any independent evaluations of early childhood development and effective use of tax dollars. There are other systems that have a straight \$7 or \$8 cost with much longer lineups. Our system with the sliding scale, it is more affordable for low-income families. It is much more cost-effective. It does have a user fee for it but a progressive user fee.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that doubling the money in the last plan we had is progress and real

results doubling, 100 percent increase. We also believe the \$5-million amount in the budget is a down payment to the plan that we're going to announce shortly, and the plan will include higher salaries for child-care staff, more training for child-care staff and more spaces across Manitoba.

St. Germain Day Care Lack of Spaces

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago we heard about a serious problem facing the St. Germain Day Care centre in St. Vital. They have hundreds of children on their wait list, no room in their school-age program for the children of the day care who are entering grade 1 this fall.

Will the Minister of Family Services explain why parents and day cares have to hold community meetings and invite the media just to get this government's attention?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Just as a preamble, Mr. Speaker, we really have to note the irony of Conservatives asking questions on child care in this country, because following the pulling out of the federal government from robust investments in child care, members opposite said it's going to be good for nannies. That was their view.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about commitments to child care. I believe that any fair observer would conclude that over the last eight years that it is this government that has been strongest in enhancing child care for children of all the provinces.

Mr. Briese: This budget treats parents and their children like they're just another interest group. Families are getting desperate. They don't need a space in 2013; they need a space today. There are more than 400 children on the wait list at St. Germain Day Care. There is no room in the school-age program, but there are 10 kids at the day care moving up to grade 1. They need child-care spots. The Premier (Mr. Doer) refused to take responsibility.

Will the Minister of Family Services accept responsibility for his government's lack of planning and explain to the families at St. Germain Day Care what they are supposed to do come this September?

Mr. Mackintosh: It was only a few months ago that all three parties represented in this House went to the people of Manitoba with commitments on child care. Mr. Speaker, the commitments made by this party

were the strongest. We committed, as a party, over two years, the first two years of a re-elected NDP government, 2,500 more spaces. We're on track to delivering that.

Last year we brought in the biggest single-year increase ever to child care in the history of this province. They all voted against it. We will see you at the vote because this year we're bringing in a five-year commitment, a five-year, multi-year strategy to take Manitoba to the next level.

Mr. Briese: This is a very simple question. Since the minister didn't answer it, I'll ask him again. There are 10 pre-schoolers at St. Germain Day Care who are going into grade 1 this fall. There is no room for them in the school-age program. The families are getting desperate. The NDP government is forcing young families to pay the price for its total lack of planning and its total mismanagement.

What is the minister going to tell the families at St. Germain who will have to live without child care this fall?

Mr. Mackintosh: The member never heard the answer. Mr. Speaker, we'll see what they do on Monday with their vote. In this year's budget, there is \$5 million more in respect of moving ahead with 2,500 spaces, on top of doubling the investment in child care [*inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mackintosh: —come to office. I might just say in conclusion that in the course of the term of this government so far, we have funded over 7,000 more spaces. That's our record. We're going to build on it.

Emergency Rooms Physician Shortages

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, in June 2006 the then-Minister of Health, Tim Sale, stated that with 14 emergency room doctor vacancies, action was required in the way of doctor bonuses to ensure that positions, staff positions remained full. Dr. Postl indicated at the same time there were 14 vacancies. There are some close calls in keeping the ERs open and running.

Can the Minister of Health confirm for Manitobans that Winnipeg is currently again facing a shortage of 14 emergency room doctors?

* (14:00)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I can confirm for the House, of course, that last June, June

of 2007, we made a deal with the Manitoba Medical Association concerning emergency room doctors. We know that since that time we have seen in rural Manitoba double the numbers of doctors. We've certainly seen an increase of 20 physicians in the city of Winnipeg for emergency room doctors.

We know that we have to work diligently to build our complement of doctors. That's why we're funding spaces in medical school, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're funding more residencies and that's why we're making specialized residencies for emergency room doctors.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, according to a Freedom of Information request from earlier this month there are 14 vacant ER doctor positions in the city of Winnipeg right now. Two years, two ministers of Health, and the problem is still at a significant position.

Mr. Speaker, can this Minister of Health indicate that with 14 unfilled emergency room positions whether or not there are going to be ER doctor shifts that go unfilled and how many there will be.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, as I said to the member opposite, since the agreement of June of 2007, an unprecedented agreement, we have seen an increase of 23 percent in the number of doctors.

In fact, we have seen a cut to the vacancy rate by some 37 percent. We know that we have to do more work to provide help for those doctors that are working on the front line in very complex circumstances, and that's, of course, why we're aggressively recruiting and educating doctors.

Again, I may inquire to the co-campaign chair of the Tory election campaign: How many doctors did they promise? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is, in fact, zero.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, despite proclamations of unprecedented funding, despite proclamations of unprecedented announcements, the more this minister and the longer she's on the job, the worse the problem gets.

Mr. Speaker, as of earlier this month, there were 14 vacancies for emergency room doctors in the city of Winnipeg alone. That means that when residents from Winnipeg and surrounding areas go to those ERs, they won't know whether or not they're going to get the service that they need in a timely fashion.

Can this minister confirm for the House that just like two years ago there are 14 unfilled ER doctor positions in the city of Winnipeg?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm for the member opposite that we do have vacancies to fill. I can confirm for the member opposite that with the ER agreement signed last June we have been able to increase the number of doctors at an unprecedented rate.

I can confirm for the member opposite that last year when we announced 1.7 million to more than double the number of speciality seats for ER doctors, we've had terrific uptake on that.

And I can confirm for the House that this is once again opposition members fearmongering, telling tales, let's say about the Grace Hospital closing. The Grace Hospital didn't ever close and for the record, Mr. Speaker, the only party in Manitoba to ever close an emergency room in Winnipeg was the Tories.

Personal Care Home (Russell) Black Mould Problem

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, a couple of days ago I asked the Minister of Health about the presence of black mould in the Russell and District Personal Care Home. Black mould is something that we should not take lightly, and certainly residents and staff in that facility need to have some information as to the extent of this potential hazardous material.

I want to ask the Minister of Health whether she can confirm for us today the presence of black mould in the Russell and District Personal Care Home.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member again for the question. I can confirm for the member that at the time that there was suspicion of mould in the personal care home as a result of a problem with leaking in the roof that experts in mould and mitigation were sent in to evaluate. Those evaluations came through to declare that there was no danger of mould. That one room, as the member opposite declares, does remain closed because of a problem with the roof that has gone to tender to be fixed immediately.

I thank the member for the question. I have asked officials to double-check to ensure that that evaluation is accurate, but the evaluation says that, no, indeed, black mould is not a danger to those residents.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the room has been closed for a year. Residents have not been allowed in that room. The information that was given to families and individuals who have asked why the room is closed is that, in fact, there is mould in the building.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Health whether she can, in writing, confirm through the health and safety people that there is no mould in that facility.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are people who are laughing on the other side of the House. This is a very serious matter for residents and for staff in that facility. I want to ask the minister whether or not she is prepared to put in writing to the staff and to the residents within that personal care home that there is, in fact, no mould in that facility or in that room.

Ms. Oswald: I can assure the member that I know that all members of this House care deeply about the safety and security of their loved ones in any facility in Manitoba. I can also, once again, confirm for the individual that when questions were raised concerning the presence of black mould, an expert in that area and mitigation was sent in to investigate and confirmed that it was not indeed a black mould danger. I have asked for a double-check on that as a result of the member's questions, which I appreciate.

I can also assure the member that the room is closed not for that reason. It's closed as a result of a problem with the roof which shall be fixed imminently. I personally am not an expert in mould so I won't write it down, but certainly we'll have experts confirm that for the member.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems very strange that a room in the personal care home has been closed for a year simply because of a leaky roof. That shouldn't take very long to fix.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) laughed at this notion that there might be black mould. He is a representative of the government for the western side of the province.

I want to ask the minister one more time whether she can get officials from her department or from Workplace Safety and Health to confirm in writing that, in fact, there is no safety concern with regard to black mould in that facility or in that room, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Oswald: And, again, I know that the member opposite is concerned for his constituents as all of us would be. That's why he asked this question. That's

why we immediately investigated to ensure that an expert in black mould and other kinds of contaminants check this situation out thoroughly. I certainly have confidence in that report. I've asked them to double-check it, and certainly we will have the experts confirm that, in fact, there is no danger in that way.

As for things seeming strange, we kind of thought it was strange that they couldn't get the Brandon Hospital built for seven years, but there you go.

Crocus Plains Regional Secondary Mandatory Physical Education Curriculum

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, Crocus Plains high school has been forced to cut the award-winning EcoOdyssey program. The EcoOdyssey program found its way to the dustbin because the school does not have the resources to continue it.

The school was forced by this Minister of Education to implement a mandatory physical education program, mandatory physical education program, Mr. Speaker, and the EcoOdyssey program was sacrificed. The choice for the school was two. They could either cut a half-time librarian or they could cut the EcoOdyssey program.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Education: What choice would he make? Would it be the librarian or would it be the EcoOdyssey program?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): And, certainly, as a result of the all-party task force and the recommendations that we heard loud and clear from Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures task force that we needed to move forward and provide more opportunities for students to participate in mandatory phys ed, and that was our commitment with \$2.1 million in the budget this year in additional funds to support the implementation of the compulsory physical education program, Mr. Speaker.

I can assure you that an increase of \$53.5 million in funding has resulted in hardly any cuts, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. They promised to fund \$10 million to elite schools, \$10 million to elite schools, and that would have resulted in over 730 teachers being cut from the system.

* (14:10)

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, the blame for this cut does not lie with the Brandon School Division. This

cut, the blame does not lie with the principal of Crocus Plains high school.

Brandon residents must recognize that the blame lies directly at the feet of the Minister of Education. His mismanaged, mandatory physical education directive and his goofy, knee-jerk tax-incentive grant have caused this distress.

What is the minister planning on doing to get this particular program, this award-winning program—one-off in the province of Manitoba, something that we can be proud of—what is he going to do to get it reinstated in this particular school?

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Throne Speech, the policy of the members opposite towards public education is quite archaic and—pardon me, my budget speech. In my budget speech I referenced that, perhaps, the authors of Tory policy on education were Barney Rubble and Fred Flintstone because it's so outdated.

Now, we have certainly invested significantly in the public education system and we will continue to do so, and when the member opposite talks about the tax-incentive grant, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, there are 33 school divisions in the province of Manitoba through the tax-incentive grant and the property tax credit who will see a reduction in taxes for education.

We committed to 80-20; we're going to work towards 80-20, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, I repeat it. This goofy tax-incentive grant, if it had have been accepted by the Brandon School Division, would have meant a reduction of \$300,000 in their budget. They've since lost seven teachers in this particular school, the Crocus Plains high school, and I've got a number of letters: don't take our eco from us; what were they thinking; reconsider the decision; the program changed our lives.

Had they done what this minister wanted to do, they would have had to take numerous other programs away from the students in Brandon, Mr. Speaker.

What's the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) doing? Has he been in the minister's office? Has he fought to put this program back into place?

Mr. Bjornson: Certainly the member for Brandon has had this discussion with me and school divisions

do have to make decisions every year with respect to programming.

Mr. Speaker, the increase in funding this year has maintained most programs throughout the province of Manitoba and, quite frankly, throughout this budget decision-making process there are some programs that are supported and some that aren't. It's school divisions that make those decisions ultimately. Quite frankly, the increase in funding that we've provided for school divisions has maintained the quality of education that we come to expect here in the province of Manitoba, and we'll continue to increase funding, not like members opposite. As I said, their plan, even at the 2 percent growth, would have meant over 700 teachers being cut from the system.

How many programs would go if they had it their way?

Hog-Culling Program Food Bank Contribution

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, pork producers will be culling sows soon.

Weeks ago, we had asked this government to see that the meat is processed and sent to agencies like Winnipeg Harvest, yet in today's *Free Press* we learned the government still hasn't worked out the financial details.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture commit to help the pork get into the food banks today?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, when the federal government announced this program and Winnipeg Harvest came forward with the suggestion, I told Winnipeg Harvest that that was one of the issues that I felt had to be addressed, that we had to look at how we could get some of these culled sows into the food chain.

Mr. Speaker, the program was just finalized and the first applications became available on Monday. There are no animals that are signed up for the program yet, but my staff is working with Winnipeg Harvest and with processors to look at how we can get co-operation to ensure that some of the sows that go through this program will indeed end up in food-bank supply.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the minister has had lots of time to get ready for it. Shame on her. This really shouldn't be so difficult for the government.

Producers have made it abundantly clear that they want to see the meat get into the hands of people who need it.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture commit today to outlining the government's commitment to getting this pork processed in the hands of our food banks?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the member is reading the story in the *Free Press* today. He should read the story that was in the paper a couple of weeks ago where we indicated that, yes, this government will be part of the solution. We will be part of the solution and when animals are ready to be culled, we will be part of the solution.

The processors will also be part of the solution, and that's why a plan is being worked out with the processors as to which animals will go and how they can get into the food bank. My staff is working on it. When the animals are signed up, when there are animals to move, we will be there.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, we've seen this government waste a lot of money on projects like Spirited Energy, but putting protein product on the tables of Manitoba families in need would pay tremendous benefits. David Northcott from Winnipeg Harvest said the limiting factor is the Province.

Will the Minister of Agriculture take action immediately? Let's get this program rolling. Get something done. Get it done today.

Ms. Wowchuk: I will indicate to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that I spoke to David Northcott yesterday. David Northcott is working with us and with the processors to put in place a plan and to get the best possible price that we can get so that as much food as possible can go into the food banks.

We worked out a system during BSE and we involved the processors and tonnes of meat brought into food banks. Mr. Speaker, when the sows begin to be culled we will work with the processors to ensure that this protein product does get into food banks.

Child Booster Seat Legislation Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, Dr. Santschi reports in this week's *Paediatrics & Child Health* that 11 children under eight years of age who did not use booster seats had severe injuries

as a result of the use of regular seat belts. Injuries in such children included spinal fractures and paraplegia. The government today announced funding for increased ambulance service, but, surely, as well, there needs to be action to prevent these injuries and this can be done by making the use of booster seats mandatory.

With the additional information in this article which I table, I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) whether he will now support our efforts to bring in the mandatory use of booster seats in Manitoba.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We're certainly looking at other provinces and the actions that they've taken. We don't have all the great ideas in the province here and we look forward to all suggestions.

You know, Mr. Speaker, members opposite heckle with regard to comments like consultations with Manitobans, consulting with other provinces and citizens of Manitoba with regard to ideas. Shame on them. Maybe they should have done a little bit more of that in the 1990s with regard to some of the actions that they've taken.

You know, Mr. Speaker, just with regard to the question, the question being an important one with regard to safety on the roads in Manitoba, and we take those items and those questions very seriously.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for taking this seriously.

I will add, and I table additional articles which show that the injuries, especially those on our highways, are the No. 1 killer of Canadian youth and kids and that education alone is clearly not enough.

I am pleased that the government is taking this seriously, but I would ask the Minister of Highways if he will not heed this clarion call of Dr. Santschi and Dr. Yanchar to make sure that all kids in Canada, not just in the seven provinces which now have that legislation, have booster seats and that we make it mandatory in Manitoba.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, and again, this is a serious issue and I thank the member for the question and also his suggestion. We've looked at other provinces with regard to size and weight, for example, and height, with regard to booster seats and taking a look at this particular aspect of safety on our roads. We certainly care about the children and all people, quite frankly, on our roads in Manitoba.

So I thank the member for raising the question. It's something that we're in consultation with other provinces, and we're having staff looking at all the other jurisdictions that have such booster seats in place.

* (14:20)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I'm aware that the government did some consultation on this issue, but they failed to act. That is why we have acted in bringing in a bill which would make mandatory booster seat use here in our province of Manitoba.

This legislation is already present in the majority of provinces. It's time we act today to protect the safety of our children here in Manitoba. You know, the problems with this syndrome, seatbelt syndrome, where you don't have proper booster seats, is that not only do you have paraplegia and spinal injuries, you have major abdominal organ injuries. You have problems in a number of areas, so that I think it's time that the government stands up and supports the legislation which we've brought forward.

Will the government support this legislation? Enough has been done in terms of consultation. Let's act.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, Mr. Speaker, with the risk of repeating myself, I just want to tell the member opposite that we are in consultation and working closely with other provinces, and we'll be making decisions in the very near future with regard to a number of different aspects with regard to safety on the road.

So I just want to say to the member opposite, thank you for the question. It's a serious issue. Safety on the roads we take very, very seriously, Mr. Speaker. All suggestions are welcome, and we look forward to consulting with all Manitobans with regard to safety issues related to our highways.

Emergency Medical Services Government Initiatives

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Ambulances provide vital pre-hospital care for many Manitobans.

Could the Minister of Health update the House on recent investments made toward emergency medical services?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, what a well-crafted question. I'm very pleased to get up in the House today to announce that in addition to tabling legislation today that's going to

offer more information and peace of mind for our front-line workers, we're also investing in human resources and in infrastructure as well.

We announced \$4.4 million today, Mr. Speaker, in the emergency medical services system to hire additional front-line staff, to upgrade and purchase 34 ambulances, to build a new ambulance station in Grand Rapids—that's in the north—and also to increase funding to the province's inter-facility transport program, building on the program, of course, that we announced last year when we took the fees off the patients of Manitoba and ensured that they get those transport trips for free.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

J. Hugh McDonald

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago we lost a great Manitoban. J. Hugh McDonald had been a grandfather, father, husband, brother, uncle and a friend to many, many Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, Hugh McDonald was born in 1927, as a young man joined the Royal Canadian Naval College, and served our country with distinction. He went on to graduate from law school in 1952 and practised with a firm that is now known as Thompson Dorfman Sweatman, a firm that is known to many members of this House. After a time of practising law, he entered the family business, McDonald Grain Company, and was an energetic and successful developer of property in and around the city of Winnipeg. He was an avid squash and tennis player, a sailor and somebody who very much enjoyed every aspect of life.

Hugh McDonald, in particular, loved the lake. Many will know about the family camp on Lake of the Woods that was a gathering place for the extended family and for the many friends of Hugh McDonald and Diane McDonald, and the McDonald family.

Hugh McDonald was also an intensely proud Scot. There's a Scottish proverb that goes: He is the slave of all slaves who serves none but himself. These were words that were taken seriously by Hugh McDonald. In that regard, he participated in and gave back to our community in very many ways.

He was an avid supporter of our Progressive Conservative Party. He ran twice, once in 1977 in Fort Rouge and again in 1979 in the Fort Rouge

by-election against, firstly, Lloyd Axworthy and then June Westbury. He knew that these wouldn't be easy campaigns, but his willingness to throw himself into the public arena, Mr. Speaker, was a mark, both of his sunny optimism and his intense loyalty to the political process and to the Progressive Conservative Party.

Hugh McDonald was a member of St. George's Anglican Church, the St. Andrew's Society, served on the Health Sciences Centre Research Foundation and also the Children's Hospital Research Foundation, all of which activities allowed him to make his mark on our province and our community.

The esteem in which Hugh McDonald was held was fully evidenced at the funeral last Friday that was attended by members of this Legislature and was also attended by Stuart Murray, the previous Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, and former Manitoba premiers Gary Filmon, Sterling Lyon and Duff Roblin.

Mr. Speaker, there were moving and poignant and humorous tributes by Suzanne Lount, Bud Sherman and Hugh McDonald's son, the brother of the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), Donald McDonald.

I personally will remember Hugh and his wonderful wife, Diane, whom we lost eight years ago, as people who loved their kids, welcomed me and many others into their home and to their beloved camp at Lake of the Woods. One of my clearest memories, one that will always stay with me, is the great political discussions, one of which I had with Hugh two years ago at the St. Andrew's dinner. I'll also never forget the vision of Hugh McDonald at the lake in his McDonald tartan trousers and his crisp white shirt, a firm handshake, a sharp wit and a kind nature.

He'll be missed by all who knew him and I want to, at this moment, Mr. Speaker, extend my condolences to the Member for Tuxedo and to all members of the McDonald family. We hope that they will bear with them the memory of a life very well lived. Thank you.

International HOPE

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, International Health Overseas Project Education, or International HOPE, is a humanitarian-driven organization which seeks to redistribute surplus medical equipment and supplies to areas of need in developing nations. They help us answer the

questions like, where do we send our hospital beds that are replaced by new equipment or where do we send medical supplies that we no longer need? International HOPE is making sure that still-useful medical technology is given to people who need it.

I recently attended the Soroptimist International of Winnipeg awards luncheon where a Kirkfield Park constituent, Phyllis Reader, was recognized for her work as the founder of International HOPE. Soroptimist International is a group of women who strive to be leaders in helping others in their communities. They awarded Phyllis the Making a Difference for Women Award.

Mr. Speaker, International HOPE receives donated medical supplies and equipment from hospitals, suppliers, private donors, nursing homes and government agencies. These surplus goods are shipped to destinations where medical supplies are largely non-existent. International HOPE does all this while operating as a charitable, non-profit organization with a hundred percent volunteer support.

There is a role for all of us to play in helping people in need overseas. International HOPE needs a steady and dependable supply of quality, donated medical supplies and equipment. They rely heavily on dedicated volunteers and partnerships and are always looking for new people to help the effort. I would encourage any interested individuals to explore getting involved with International HOPE.

I would like to congratulate Phyllis Reader and International HOPE's volunteers for the important work they are doing to improve the quality of health for people living in developing nations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Child Day Care Providers

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, today I was very pleased to begin reading a petition on behalf of Manitoba families and day-care providers. Because of this NDP government's total mismanagement and lack of planning, many Manitoba families are left without adequate child care. These parents want to work and our economy needs them, but they are left desperate, facing endless waiting lists with little hope of finding a spot. They have no choice but to resort to unlicensed child care or stay at home.

For many families, staying at home simply is not an option they can afford. Child-care providers are increasingly frustrated with the situation. Many

child-care facilities are eager to expand, but they cannot open new spots without the child-care workers to staff them. Even more importantly, child-care providers struggle to maintain current staffing levels.

The government has no plan to return their early childhood educators that are being trained and, as a result, many leave the industry. Not only are we losing the early childhood educators we have, but attracting new professionals is becoming increasingly difficult. I know there are many people who would like to pursue a career in early childhood education, but the poor prospects and the mismanagement of the NDP government have made that career choice ill-advised.

The NDP cannot continue to pass the buck to the federal government. Child care is within the provincial jurisdiction, and this government is receiving unprecedented revenues from Ottawa. It's time for the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) to take some responsibility and show some leadership in this area. Rather than wasting \$1.5 billion on a west-side line, rather than wasting money on Spirited Energy, government advertising and a bloated bureaucracy, why not make our children the priority?

*(14:30)

I would like to thank Carol Jones and Christine Alongi from the St. Germain Day Care Centre for sharing their experiences and expertise with me. They've worked very hard to get this petition out in the public and signed. I'd also like to thank them for the work that they are doing every day, providing quality care to Manitoba children. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Lighthouses Program

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): I rise today to pay tribute to Manitoba's Lighthouse program. There are 50 Lighthouses across Manitoba, each of them serving kids and young people in their respective communities.

My constituency of Southdale is one of the communities benefiting from this program. The Winakwa Community Centre Lighthouse in Windsor Park is a popular destination for kids with an average of 50 dropping by each night during the school year and 70 participating daily during the summer.

Lighthouses give young people not just a place to hang out but an opportunity to grow. Young

people at Winakwa can play sports, learn valuable life skills such as cooking and baking and take part in a variety of social activities such as camping, crafts and movie nights. Through the dedication of people such as Tara Gilkies, the drop-in co-ordinator, along with staff and volunteers, young people can set goals and challenge themselves to learn new things.

The kids are having fun in a safe environment that helps nurture their potential. Channelling children into programs such as this means they are less vulnerable to influences from gangs and other unproductive activities. The program is free and available to anyone aged 10 to 15 who needs a place where they feel they can belong.

Lighthouses are a key component to this government's three-tiered approach to fighting crime: prevention, suppression and changing the behaviour of offenders, with prevention being the most important tool. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Child Booster Seat Legislation

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in this week's Journal of the Canadian Paediatric Society, there was report of a study on the seat-belt syndrome. This condition occurs when children under age eight are put in regular seat belts instead of the booster seats which are appropriate. The seatbelt syndrome is associated with severe spinal injuries and paraplegia and with severe injuries to the stomach, the intestines, the kidneys, the spleen and the liver.

In this week's *Paediatrics & Child Health*, Drs. Santschi, Lemoine and Cyr of the University of Sherbrooke, report on the study of seat-belt syndrome.

Eleven children under age eight in Canada, who were in seat belts instead of booster seats, suffered severe injuries. It is time to mandate the use of booster seats here in Manitoba, as has already been done in many, many other Canadian provinces.

As Dr. Yanchar, who comments on this in the journal, says, injuries, especially those on our highways are the No. 1 killer of Canadian children and youth. She emphasizes that education alone is simply not enough, and she talks about the fact that many states in the United States and the large majority of Canada's provinces already have legislation mandating booster seats to protect children.

We do not yet have that legislation here in Manitoba. The government has consulted, but they have taken their time and not acted. That is why, as Liberals, we have brought in a bill to mandate the use of booster seats in our province. It is time, Mr. Speaker, that we care for the most precious cargo that we carry on our roads, our children.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE (Fifth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina, who has 20 minutes remaining.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I want to continue on with some of the comments that I made yesterday, but just to recap the theme that I was on, I had made comments that a good mentor of mine, when I went into business, indicated that you always need to be careful and you need to be on guard as you spend dollars, but he said that very often the worst decisions are made in the best of times.

The comment that I made in that regard was specific to the fact of our equalization payments that we have within the province of Manitoba. These are literally a gift coming from Ottawa to the Province, and 40 percent of the dollars that we get are equalization payments. We have been warning this government continuously that there's no one that can indicate and say that these kinds of payments will continue. So there's a dependency that is created when you continue to depend on dollars that could be withdrawn and, consequently, then you need to make some of these decisions. We've had some very good years financially within the province of Manitoba. It is imperative that the government of the day continue to look at spending the dollars that they have in a wise fashion.

But, just to continue regarding the budget, as well. The comments, and I also indicated yesterday that third-party comments, very often, are the ones that, at least, the government seems to, hopefully, listen to. They don't like to listen to the opposition making comments, but these are third-party

comments. The point that was made was the headline here: "Debt ballooning." It says: "It's amazing how the Doer government has managed to plunge us further into debt when you consider all the transfer payments coming in from Ottawa and the massive amounts of tax revenue the Manitoba government draws."

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Then it goes on to say that future generations are going to have to repay it. These are the huge amounts of dollars that this government continues to spend and to borrow. To spend within our means and be frugal with taxpayers' money, that used to be the slogan that was out there, and it seems that this government has forgotten that. Governments such as the NDP in Manitoba have been quietly sinking us further into debt and telling us we shouldn't worry about it. It's that don't-worry-be-happy approach to governing. We found out yesterday's budget—it goes on to say that the provincial government will be going \$490 million further into debt this year. The province's net debt is projected to be \$10.9 billion this year, up from \$10.4 billion last year.

I hear the Minister of Highways (Mr. Lemieux) is chirping from his seat. I think he will have an opportunity to make some comments if he should so choose to. However, I think, at this point that—*[interjection]* Just in response to the comment that he made, certainly we're talking about spending money wisely. This government has been showing us, over the years, that they don't know how to do that.

Continuing on that vein, "Manitoba misses the (budget) boat," it says. This is another comment that came from the *Winnipeg Free Press*: "Wednesday's budget missed an opportunity for Manitoba to keep pace with the roaring economies in the West. Instead, Manitoba is letting spending run well over planned levels while keeping business taxes high." Then it goes on to say: "In fact, Manitoba has one of the worst track records in terms of keeping its budgeted spending promises. Over the last 10 years, the province had an average overrun of 3.2 percent. This may seem small, but the accumulative overruns for this period amounted to roughly \$2 billion."

So we see, Madam Acting Speaker, that the government of the day continues to spend, spend, spend and not spend wisely. Are we wanting them to spend dollars? Yes. But the other thing that this government seems to not understand is the fact, when you close down certain sectors of the economy that would be generating dollars, that this, in fact, is

something that hampers and discontinues the amount of dollars that will flow into the province.

I want to go on to just make a few comments regarding some of the other parts within the budget that were presented. I'd like to next move into agriculture. Certainly, we do have some real concerns when you talk about agriculture. I want to look at a headline that was out there. The headline came again from the *Winnipeg Free Press*. They seem to understand Manitobans better, at times, than the present government. But the caption here is: Hog, cattle producers are left empty handed. It goes on to say that the provincial budget did nothing to help alleviate an income crisis in the hog and cattle industries. This is what farm leaders said on Wednesday: The hog industry contributes more than a billion dollars to the Manitoba economy and the cattle industry also has a sizable presence. It is a crisis, and for those producers, I don't know what to say. They're going to be hugely disappointed.

Then, in February, the MCPA asked the Province to reward cash-squeezed cattle producers for their contributions to the environment, requesting payments of \$18 to \$25 per acre to maintain land in forage and pasture production. Madam Acting Speaker, what we see taking place now is that a lot of this land is going to be taken out of production, or rather put into a different kind of production, and we're going to see this happening on an increasing basis. So we need to be careful as we take grassland out of the production area that it is meant to be and, in fact, put it into other areas.

* (14:40)

So I want to go on regarding some of the concerns that we have in agriculture. First of all, there would be the bovine TB mustering fee. The minister was very proud to get up in this House the other day and talk about how this government has put in place a mustering fee. However, we don't think this government should be patting themselves on the back too hard as we have been requesting this mustering fee for many, many years. Shame on this government for taking so long to act on this very important issue.

The minister is also patting herself on the back for the extension on the BSE recovery loans. Again, we, along with the cattle industry, have been asking for this for a long time.

In the budget the government recycled a number of announcements such as the Community

Development Trust. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is quite pleased to claim this as her own, even though this is actually federal money.

Livestock producers were looking to the budget for some signal that this government is interested in acknowledging the important work that they do in managing our landscape for the future. Then it goes on to say, Madam Acting Speaker, to say that the regulatory environment around agriculture production in this province continues to grow and grow. If this government is going to move forward with new regulations, it should be showing affected industry that the rules are based on sound science. Evidence, not politics.

Again, as I indicated before, we have a government here who, without sound scientific data, goes and shuts down an industry and tries to blame it on the agricultural people when that is not case.

Last, our producers would like to see some strategies to deal with important issues such as wildlife predation. Again, the government likes to talk about their trapper program, but ask a lot of producers around this about how well this is working and they will soon tell you that the predators continue to win the war.

There are ongoing concerns related to the high cost of fertilizer and other inputs. The minister says producers can import fertilizers through the Port of Churchill. Surely there must be a better way to handle this issue. The minister has got to be more vocal on this issue. I know that, in fact, we had a resolution this last fall specifically regarding the importation of fertilizer. Those of us living close to the U.S. border find it interesting that the costs are quite different, although they still get the fertilizer from this province or from Canada itself.

Madam Acting Speaker, these are concerns that we continue to have regarding the issues out there in agriculture. I know that we have been asking the minister continuously to address these concerns but somehow they fall on deaf ears. If, in fact, we are going to continue to see the agriculture community continue to grow, we do need to support it.

I want to touch just briefly on education. I know that the minister of highways was indicating that we needed schools in southern Manitoba, and that is right. I see the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) sitting here, and I must say I'm looking forward to tomorrow.

I'm just hoping that somewhere down the road there will be some announcements which will be affecting the growing student population within the Garden Valley School Division. We do need to allow these students to have timely access to washrooms. To allow them to be able to participate, as has been mandated by this government, in the grade 11 and 12 high school phys ed programs, it is important that we give them the facilities that will accommodate these programs.

I continue to also want to put a few comments on record regarding the whole area of health. I see that the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) is here. I have a petition that I've been reading for the last several days regarding Tabor Home in Morden. I know that the minister was out there last summer, and, in fact, she saw the facility and knew that we needed to replace this facility. I hear the Minister of Health is chirping from her seat. Maybe she would like to get up and make an announcement. I would like that. I would encourage that. But, at this point in time, I have the opportunity to put comments on the record, and, yes, to date, it has not taken place. I know that the RHA is in favour of replacing this facility. I know that the community, as I've said, had thousands of signatures on petitions regarding this specific facility. Yes, it desperately needs to be replaced.

Madam Acting Speaker, I want to conclude by just putting, again, a few comments on the record regarding the budget as it specifically impacts the province of Manitoba, are the future generation, and that is, as I indicated at the outset, some of the decisions that we continue to make when the times are good will impact on us later on in life. The next generation is going to have to pay for the decisions that we make today. So I would encourage the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), the government of the day to make wise decisions that will impact our communities in a positive way so that we in the province of Manitoba can continue to grow and prosper.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Madam Acting Speaker, it is indeed an honour to speak in favour of budget 2008. I'd like to thank my previous speaker, the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) for indeed confirming on the record that these are good times in Manitoba. Thank you very much for telling us what we on this side already know.

It's a privilege to represent the people of Minto constituency, some of the most diverse neighbourhoods in all of Manitoba. Certainly, it's an honour to stand here as the new Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade. At the outset, I'd like to thank the staff in my department who've done a great job of bringing me along, getting me up to speed. We certainly have dedicated employees across the province who are doing a great job. I also appreciate the welcome I was given by the staff in my office by Lisa and by Alison and Cindy to set me on the right path as a new minister. Certainly, I'm very pleased to have experienced political staff that can also provide me with good advice.

You know, I could spend my allotted time just talking about the tremendous benefits for my constituency of Minto contained in budget 2008. I could talk about the tremendous investments in education; I'm very pleased that in Minto we have two community schools and we're seeing the benefit, the dividends from that investment. I could spend a lot of time talking about the investments in health care and how that's helping people in my area. I could talk about improvements to settlement services to assist new Canadians coming here in greater and greater numbers as our government supports them and helps them to truly become part of our economy. Certainly, I could spend a lot of time talking about our efforts for greater crime prevention in the west end of the city, how our investments, not just in police officers but in Lighthouses and prevention programs, are paying dividends.

But I'm going to do something a bit different, something I know the Conservatives can't do, and I'm going to make my comments extend to the entire province of Manitoba. I know that the members opposite are geographically challenged. Of course, we're the party that put all of Manitoba on the road map. I know the Tories have some even greater challenges than that that we'll discuss another day. But I'm very pleased to talk about this budget, building on Manitoba's success and moving forward to take advantage of all the things that we have going for us here in the province.

You know, it's interesting listening to the speeches. Yesterday, I listened with some interest to the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) as she gave her take on reality, such as it is. I listened to the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) and, of course, I just heard from my friend the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck). You know, I believe the Member for Pembina, wittingly or not, was actually

doing a bit of an Eeyore impersonation. Anyone in the Chamber that has young kids knows all about Winnie the Pooh. Everyone else is enjoying things in the Hundred Acre Wood and there's poor Eeyore with his umbrella with a little rain cloud trickling down on him. I don't know if that's what the Member for Pembina was intending to do, but he certainly gave a very good impersonation.

Some of the quotes that the members opposite suggested are, at best, misleading. I'm very glad my friend the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) stood up and put some correct quotes on the record in his excellent speech from yesterday. There are just two quotes that I want to focus on to start my comments. No. 1, of course, is, the Manitoba economy will continue to fire on all cylinders again this year.

Now, I know this got under the Member for Morris's skin. In her comments she complained that this is what the government was telling us. Well, it wasn't the government telling us that; it was the Conference Board of Canada which told us in March 2008 that, indeed, our economy is firing on all cylinders. Beyond that, they expect Manitoba's growth to be not just above average, not just in the top five, but the Conference Board of Canada predicts that, in 2008, the Manitoba economy will grow faster than any other province in the country.

* (14:50)

I know that they want to talk about third-party validators. Let's talk about that great socialist bastion, the Royal Bank of Canada. The Royal Bank of Canada told us just a couple of weeks ago that, quote: Manitoba is Canada's new "it" province, end quote.

So, certainly, I know that there's been a lot of talk. They bring in quotes from 1957; that's the new modern face of the Manitoba Progressive Conservatives. I would take quotes from the Conference Board of Canada and the Royal Bank of Canada from the last few weeks any time over anything they're bringing into this House.

What about Statistics Canada? I heard the Member for Morris yesterday talking about how businesses don't want to invest in Manitoba. Let's have a little reality check. Statistics Canada every year does a survey in each province, and they ask businesses about their intentions for capital investment. Indeed—[interjection] I'm glad the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) is paying such rapt attention. Of course, he can't cross the floor

and join our party under the legislation, but he can certainly sit as an independent when he thinks about it.

What did StatsCan say? Their survey of Manitoba private business led them to believe that in 2008 private capital investment in the province of Manitoba is going to increase by 22.4 percent. To put that in perspective, the national average is 3.7 percent. Manitoba companies are prepared to invest six times as much in this province in the year coming up than in the other provinces of Canada and, again, where does that put Manitoba? Above average, yes. Top five, yes. As a matter of fact, Manitoba is slated to be the No. 1 province in the country in their increase in private capital investment.

Of course, what do we know about construction work? Again, you will have members on the other side complaining about their perceived lack of opportunities in Manitoba, but indeed, when StatsCan did their survey for 2008, they believed that construction work in Manitoba will increase by 22.2 percent in 2008, four times the national average of 5.0 percent. Again, Manitoba is going to be No. 1 in 2008, something that I believe we should be celebrating.

What about other areas that Statistics Canada can tell us? You sometimes hear their great Conservative lie: The only increase in jobs in Manitoba is in the public sector. What does Stats Canada tell us about that? Indeed, when they did their survey or their latest numbers on private-sector employment, they found in their March 2008 report that private-sector employment in Manitoba increased by 2.6 percent. The average across Canada is 1.1 percent which, again, puts Manitoba at the front of the pack in first place.

So, again, you can act like Eeyore and you can walk around with your umbrella with your little rain cloud or you can be like the rest of Manitoba and see how positive our economy is doing and how well things are going.

Certainly, there's a lot of evidence that Manitoba's evidence is strong. You see it in Minto. I'm a guy who once in a while laces on his shoes, goes for a run not only in my own area, but across the river. You see in Minto, in Wolseley, in St. James; you see people renovating their homes; you see people fixing up their yards; you see roofing projects; you see people putting in high-efficiency furnaces. Indeed, even when I cross the river and I

run down Wellington Crescent through River Heights, through Tuxedo and, sometimes, Madam Acting Speaker, even into Charleswood, strangely enough I see the same thing. Things have become so bad in Manitoba that people on Wellington Crescent have to rip down each other's houses to build bigger and bigger mansions.

So you know that in Manitoba the success that's being enjoyed by average Manitobans is certainly being enjoyed by all Manitobans and, frankly, I think that's a good thing.

Now, to turn to the actual particulars of the budget, and I will highlight some page numbers because I know that members opposite haven't actually cracked the thing open, I'd like to talk about a few areas in the budget which I am very, very pleased to support as the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade.

Skill Strategy: It's at page 5 for those of you keeping track. We know that last year our growing economy created 9,500 new jobs. When I've had the chance as the new minister to meet with businesses across the province from large enterprises down to small firms, the main thing they want to talk about, despite what members opposite will tell you, is the shortage of labour in this province. We agree. We know that we have to do a better job of encouraging more people to take up skilled trades, other jobs and careers that will assist our economy to continue growing.

I'm very proud of the efforts our government has made since 1999 on attracting more young people into our universities. Manitoba's increase in enrolment is among the best in the country since 1999.

I'm very pleased in our support for our colleges. Red River College, Assiniboine Community College and University College of the North are all offering tremendously more opportunities for our young people. Now, too, is our government turning its sights on increasing the number of apprentices in the province of Manitoba.

Last year's Throne Speech committed to 4,000 new apprenticeship spaces in the province of Manitoba, and I'm very proud that budget 2008 makes a significant down payment on that commitment.

Just yesterday I had the chance to announce an investment of \$3.8 million to create a further 1,100 apprenticeship opportunities across Manitoba in

construction, in industry, in other fields, and I think it's a very good thing. As I've been learning more about apprenticeship and about the opportunities for Manitoba, there are a few vignettes I'd like to share with the House.

Last Friday I was out at Red River College with federal Minister Solberg, signing an agreement with the federal government which will provide Manitoba with \$18 million a year for training and employment. Now, I know the members opposite would have told Minister Solberg to get back on the plane. I'm sure that they believe that's a transfer payment and it's a bad thing. I see it, Madam Acting Speaker, as an investment in our work force here in Manitoba.

In the course of visiting Red River College, I had the chance to speak with a young carpentry apprentice, who, as a matter of fact, was from Russell. This apprentice works for a construction firm in the area. It's busy. There are all kinds of opportunities for a young person and she, she told me that she has every intention of returning to her community when she's completed her training.

I think everybody in this House needs to understand that training more apprentices, whether it's carpenters, electricians, other skilled trades, it's a tremendous opportunity for rural development, for people to be able to return to their home community to be productive and keep people living in every area of the province.

Another vignette, as I've been learning my role as minister, was a meeting I had with the Northern Sector Council. It's the newest sector council that has been created in Manitoba and the members are a number of very large employers in the north. They tell us very clearly there is a great need for employees now and an even greater need in the future. The sector council is looking to work with us. They're looking to work with our educational institutions, with UCN, with Assiniboine, with Red River, to make sure we can provide workers to continue to grow our economy.

It's very exciting to work with sector councils and that's why I was very pleased yesterday to be able to introduce a new act which is going to even enhance the role of sector councils and create a new advisory council that will help the minister and our government to continue to deal with the skill shortages and make sure that Manitobans receive the training that they need and our economy needs.

The third vignette, Madam Acting Speaker, is the time I've spent with the Apprenticeship Futures Commission. These are representatives from educational institutions, from industry, from labour, who've actually provided us with a consensus report on how we should move ahead to manage apprenticeship in the future. I think it was very important that that report was consensus. It was done by a group of people who put aside any partisan or other differences to tell us what our blueprint should be to increase the number of apprentices and to increase opportunities in this province. It's something I'm very excited about taking on.

I'm very proud, Madam Acting Speaker, that this government supports innovation, and for the Conservatives not paying attention, that's page 6, where they could learn a little bit more about what our government is doing.

I'd like to talk about the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, again a group of people derived from industry, from labour, from the academic fields. These are people who again are coming together and donating their time and their effort, not for any partisan reason, but because they share a belief in this province, and they want Manitoba to be as strong and as prosperous as possible.

We know from the comments of the members opposite, they hold those business leaders, those labour leaders, those academics in contempt. You hear it every day in their questions and their comments. Well, Madam Acting Speaker, I don't. I respect the time and the effort the members of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council give, and certainly they've got us on the right track.

I'm very pleased this government has increased its investment in research and development by 87 percent since 1999. I'm very pleased this government has been a strong supporter in developing commercialization centres.

*(15:00)

One in particular I'd like to talk about is the Composites Innovation Centre. We have a growing and strong aerospace industry in Manitoba. Some of the major players are Magellan, Standard Aero, Boeing and ACTS, which took over from Air Canada's maintenance wing. These are companies which are competing on the world stage. They are not only competing, but they are winning, and they tell me that they are very, very proud and very pleased that this is a province which has supported a

centre which is helping them to develop new technologies so they can build airplane parts which are lighter and safer and allow them to keep scoring victories on the world stage.

I'm very pleased, Madam Acting Speaker, that we are a partner with the federal government in the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative. I was very pleased, just two months ago, to be able to renew our agreement with the federal government. I know, again, the opposition would say, well, that's a transfer. That's bad. Don't partner with the federal government. I don't see it that way. I believe working with our federal partners and with industry is only a good thing for Manitoba. The AMI is helping Manitoba companies adopt innovative technologies to reduce waste and increase productivity. Thousands of employees in Manitoba have taken training, saving companies literally millions of dollars. It's better for companies. It's better for workers, and, indeed, we're very pleased there's been a great spirit of co-operation between employers and employees on moving Manitoba ahead.

I'm very pleased, Madam Acting Speaker, that we've supported industry in Manitoba through various tax measures. Certainly, right now, we know, with the American dollar falling the way it has been, it's a challenge, but it also represents an opportunity. Manitoba businesses have a tremendous opportunity to buy technology on sale, if you will, as the Canadian dollar continues to strengthen. I'm very pleased that we've extended the manufacturers' tax credit to make those investments in technology just that much more affordable. I'm very pleased at the steady reductions in capital tax, which this government has worked on for the last number of years, and I was very pleased that budget 2008 actually ends the corporate capital tax for manufacturing firms as of July 1, 2008. As of July 1, 2008, manufacturers in Manitoba will pay one less tax, and that's a good thing.

Certainly, our government has been involved in a host of other developments. We have the Manitoba Innovation Council. As I've indicated, we're going to set up the advisory council on work-force development, other ways that government can support industry to tell us their needs, particularly with developing our labour market.

Again, as I've mentioned, we are winning on the world stage. Maybe, I had some fun with my friend the MLA for Pembina. Indeed, it was last year that he and I stood together at the 3M plant in Morden

which won contracts, in fact, over every other 3M plant in the world, because they know Manitoba is a safe, cost-effective place to do business, with a solid work force, and I think we can all be pleased with that.

Certainly, we're investing in Manitoba's work force to ensure our economy continues to thrive. We've taken other steps to make things easier for business. BizPaL, a single business number, is a tremendously successful initiative to make it easier for businesses to get going, to expand. We're working with cities, with towns, with rural municipalities across Manitoba to make it easier for entrepreneurs and small businesses to get going in Manitoba.

I'd like to finish with just some comments. Perhaps the ultimate test of how a province is doing, you look at how people are voting with their feet. In Manitoba, we can be very pleased that our population growth in the past year has been stronger than it has been in many, many decades. Indeed, more people across the country and across the world are finding Manitoba to be a good place to live, and that's something that we should be very, very proud of.

I know the opposition members—I don't know if they have a two-tier system where they will count somebody who moves or comes here from Alberta or Ontario, and somehow they feel that person has somehow more intrinsic worth than somebody who comes from Germany or the Philippines or China.

Well, New Democrats believe that any new person who comes to Manitoba is a good thing for Manitoba, and our numbers are quite incredible. Since 1999, 17,164 more people have moved to Manitoba than have left. I know the members opposite don't want to talk about the '90s. I haven't mentioned the '90s yet, but I think there is a stat that's worth bearing out. In the 1990s, in the previous decade, 16,094 more people left Manitoba than came to Manitoba. You could not imagine a more complete turnaround than has occurred. People vote with their feet. They voted last year, certainly, in the election, but they are voting with their feet to come to Manitoba's growing, green, clean, innovative economy.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is allowing Manitobans to compete on the national and on the international stage. I'm proud that we're allowing Manitobans to pursue their training in their home communities if they choose, in a university if

they choose, in a college if they choose, to pursue their dreams right here.

So I will be standing up for Minto. I'll be standing up for Manitoba. I will stand up and I will vote, Madam Acting Speaker, for budget 2008.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Acting Speaker, I rise to speak on the budget. Sadly, the first thing that I must talk about is the Crocus Investment scandal and the fact that, in my view and our view as the Liberal Party, the MLA for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) should not have been the member presenting this budget in view of what has happened with the Crocus Investment scandal. This is sad, but I have to say this, we indicated this last year and provided the reasons for this and I will indicate it at the beginning of my talk again this year.

This is the budget of broken promises. For nine years and in the campaign last year, the NDP campaigned door-to-door, person-to-person, house-to-house to say that they were going to have a frozen tuition policy, that you could vote NDP and you would have a tuition freeze continue and continue and continue. That was on the literature. That was the message that was conveyed to person after person. What has happened is that the NDP have broken their promises just as they have broken many, many others.

Interestingly enough, as the NDP have lost credibility because they've broken promises, the Liberals have gained credibility because the NDP have decided to follow the leadership of the Liberals and to take up Liberal policy. That shows the extent to which Liberals have taken a leadership role in this province and are leading the way in many areas.

I will talk about another one now, that is Lake Winnipeg where there have been broken promises. The MLA for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) will remember very well in August of 2003 when the government was making statements that they would have Lake Winnipeg cleaned up in three years. Well, it hasn't happened. We all know that. Only after the Liberals introduced a bill to get rid of phosphorus in automatic dishwasher detergents did the NDP decide, oh, well—first of all, it was the Liberal dishwasher bill and, the next thing you know, the NDP has decided to introduce a modified version of the Liberal bill.

An Honourable Member: A watered-down version.

Mr. Gerrard: That's all right. We know where the NDP are going. They're following the Liberal lead.

It is three years later and there is still not enough done. The NDP, of course, have followed our lead on cosmetic fertilizers as well. They are starting in this budget to invest a little bit in the sewage treatment for Winnipeg but, in our view, this could be happening much quicker if, in fact, the focus was on reducing and eliminating the phosphorus in the sewage effluent from Winnipeg rather than trying to do both phosphorus and nitrogen.

The fact of the matter is that algae can get nitrogen from the air. We don't need to go to hundreds of millions of dollars of expense in order to eliminate the nitrogen because the algae can get the nitrogen from the air. What we do need to do is to reduce the phosphorus going into the Red River and into Lake Winnipeg as fast as possible, and that's what we should have been doing and doing it more economically as has been suggested and put forward by many scientists in Manitoba who recognize that there is a better way. That way is rapid reduction of phosphorus without the kind of additional expense and additional requirements to eliminate nitrogen as well.

* (15:10)

I have talked for quite a number of years now about the imperative of doing the intensive work on small watersheds like Killarney Lake, and making sure that we, in fact, know exactly what needs to be done to reduce the algae blooms and the phosphorus in Killarney Lake. Having done that, we can then apply that in the much broader Lake Winnipeg watershed. You can't do it just in one small watershed. We need a series of small watersheds, like the Seine River, Killarney Lake, the reservoir near Pilot Mound, lakes like Lake Irwin. There are a number of them that can be used and studied. Solving the problems in small lakes and small watersheds and doing it well, and knowing exactly what works from a science-based and a fact-based approach is really what we need to do so we can apply that broadly, in a cost-efficient way, and make sure that what we're doing really does reduce the phosphorus going into Lake Winnipeg.

Some of the policies that have been brought forward, the buffer-strip policies, there is not the kind of science base that there really needs to be if we're going to use those kinds of policies effectively. Indeed, a study done by Steve Sheppard and Jeff Long showed that there was really minimal reduction—I think it was like 4 percent—from such buffer strips in the phosphorus, and the main reason

for that is that the runoff from a farmer's field goes mostly through a little drainage channel, not through the buffer strips in flat Manitoba agricultural land in the Red River. So that we need to be smart—something that the NDP have not been very good at doing—if we're going to accomplish our objective, and that is to reduce the phosphorus and the algal blooms in Lake Winnipeg.

One of the sad problems is that, after almost nine years now, we still don't have clear targets for reduction of phosphorus and algal blooms, and those are things that we clearly need to have targets in terms of dates, in terms of amount of phosphorus retained in Lake Winnipeg, et cetera, et cetera. We're still waiting for those, although we're not going to hold our breath, particularly after the sort of targets that were set on climate change which were minimal reduction in the next several years.

The budget has talked about innovation. We are glad that after almost nine years, the NDP have decided to finally increase the funding for the Manitoba Health Research Council, something that we have been calling for for the last nine years. If we're going to reform the health-care system, if we're going to build a strong future for Manitoba in health-care products and services as well as quality of health care delivered, then we need to be making these kinds of investments.

However, the government has fallen far behind. We have called now for a Manitoba science, engineering, humanities research council. We have called this now for several years, but particularly this year, is nowhere in sight, and it's an area that we clearly need a significant investment in this province. We need it, as we've already talked publicly, partly because there should be an emphasis on the areas of the environment if we're going to, and in particular under such a council, if we're going to move this province forward in better environmental management, in better support and development of environmental industries, and so on.

Under the title of Innovation. One of the big obstacles to industrial innovation and research and development in Manitoba has been the payroll tax. The reason is that as companies go and they grow and they start to be big enough to be involved in research in a significant way, then they look at what's happening with the payroll tax, and right away it's apparent that it's much more cost-effective with Manitoba's payroll tax if you do the research and development and hire the people, because they're

people who have higher incomes very often doing the research and development, if you hire those people in another province instead of in Manitoba. It's one of the reasons we've called for many years for the reduction and elimination of the payroll tax because it's a tax which punishes those who invest in research in Manitoba instead of helping them, and that's, in fact, what we should be doing.

When it comes to climate change, and, specifically, what we would have expected and what we got were two vastly different things. As I've already commented, this budget was about a two out of ten when it comes to environmental stuff.

I noted that the Premier (Mr. Doer) was, earlier this year, I think he was in Vancouver talking about climate change with other premiers, and there was never a mention of one of the most important things that needs to be done and that is to have a major investment in rapid transit and move rapid transit forward in Winnipeg for the benefit of all Manitobans. There is in this budget just a token mention of transit, not the kind of investment that really needs to be made to move it forward in a major way. Winnipeg needs it. Manitoba needs it. It's one of the most important things for reducing greenhouse gases, moving people from their cars and onto public transit, but it has many, many other reasons why we should be investing in a major way in rapid transit in Winnipeg.

One of those is, quite frankly, for cities of Winnipeg size. Larger, rapid transit is, in fact, the backbone of how planning and development in cities like Winnipeg should be occurring. When you have rapid transit, you get high density development around transit stops. You get commercial development around transit stops, because they are good places for people to commute and get back and forth to easily. You get then more green space further away from rapid transit sites. It's very difficult to have a substantive Plan Winnipeg without a rapid transit plan first.

As many other people have pointed out, many other cities, smart growth is putting the transit in place first. Then you have the plan, the framework, the backbone for development. At this juncture, putting the rapid transit in place will follow and will lead in the way of having a lot of private-sector development. Quite frankly, under this government, even though they claim to have lots of increases in private-sector development, we were starting low. We need the rapid transit as a cornerstone for how

we are moving forward in this province. This NDP government has been very soft in this area and this budget was no exception. It missed the rapid transit in the way that it should have been there.

Unfortunately, this budget didn't look at the potential for certifying Manitoba companies in terms of providing carbon offsets to people around the world. Here is a major potential export for Manitoba farmers or others for the boreal forest, people in the boreal forest, to certify the sequestration of carbon dioxide, the reduction of greenhouse gases. We should be doing this.

Right now, I as a Leader of the Liberal Party travel carbon neutral. I purchase, from time to time, carbon offsets, but when I go on the Internet to get carbon offsets, I have to purchase them in British Columbia or Ontario or Australia or various other places around the world because they are not readily available in Manitoba.

Ms. Erna Braun, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

This government has been negligent in working with organizations like the Keystone Agriculture Producers to make sure we have in place a carbon-offset program, in working with Aboriginal people in northern Manitoba making sure that we have an appropriate and effective carbon-offset certification program so that we can get into the modern world and make sure that we take advantage of the economic advantages of reducing greenhouse gases.

We have also argued effectively that we should have a carbon-transfer approach like British Columbia, a broad carbon-transfer approach so that we can produce income taxes, in particular, in this province. That approach, as has happened in British Columbia, is dramatically different from this government's approach which is to single out only coal-producing operations in Manitoba and put a tax only on coal.

Instead of picking winners and losers, what this government should be doing is applying it equitably to carbon, and the efforts or activities which put carbon dioxide into the air, greenhouse gas into the air, instead of applying it selectively as they are doing to coal, and trying to get a spin that they are doing something when, in fact, they really should be having a broader based policy, which would be much more effective and much better.

* (15:20)

There are many other environmental areas which this government has been slow and weak on: the clean-up in orphan mine sites impeding economic development around Sherridon because you have a mine tailings site which has still not been cleaned up, a problem up in Lynn Lake, a problem in the exposure of children and others in Flin Flon to toxic metals. These should clearly be cleaned up much faster and much better than this government is doing.

Problems with environmental problems like Lake Winnipegosis, which has had a problem with the fishery for many, many years, and it has still not come back because this government has not paid the attention and made the effort that it should have.

Let's talk about children for a few minutes. The investment in early childhood education has not been of a substantive nature in the way that it needs to be in this budget. There was no five-year plan presented in this budget. There was plenty of time to produce it. This government should have provided the five-year plan and the vision for early childhood education and the support for early childhood education and those who provide the care and the learning and the development for our children in this province. It wasn't there. It should have been there in a much more substantive way.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Jordan's Principle. For two and a half years I have been calling for the implementation of Jordan's Principle in Manitoba, and for two and a half years the NDP government has been stalling. Tim Sale, first—sorry, the former MLA for Fort Rouge, I guess I can say, is Tim Sale because he's no longer an MLA. When he was in government and I asked this question in December of 2005, you know, why wasn't he implementing Jordan's Principle? He said, well, we do believe in the principle, but we're just not doing it. You know, that has been the answer all the time. We have verbal support but no action, and it doesn't cut it. We should have had better. We should have had a clear commitment to implementing Jordan's Principle in this budget. It's astonishing that it wasn't there, and it's astonishing that this government continues to stonewall and stonewall and stonewall when it comes to implementing Jordan's Principle, putting children first before government bickering.

It is a curious paradox that the MLA for Minto was up just a few minutes ago and the first bill he tabled as a minister of economic development in this province was a bill which would allow children

under 18 to drink in public establishments. This is the bill to develop a new vision for Manitoba. This is their approach to children.

Well, Liberals have a different approach. We believe that children are very special, and we've brought in bills to end the smoking in cars which have kids, to make booster seats mandatory, and to make bike helmets mandatory, all sensible pieces of legislation which are now in place in other provinces which help children and protect children and make sure that children are healthy and are not injured.

Let me talk for a few minutes on issues around poverty. Sadly, once again, in this budget there was no coherent plan to reduce poverty, and particularly child poverty, in Manitoba. We could have expected some clear outcomes, some clear targets, what sort of percentage reduction, what sort of extent of reduction of child poverty, but it's not there. This government doesn't believe in setting targets, and it doesn't believe in making sure that there are fewer children in poverty in this province. We should be helping children. We should be looking after children. We should be making sure that we are reducing poverty in an effective way. We should have a plan. That's what Liberals view.

In health care, what a disappointment this budget was. It came after a report on reforming RHAs. We suggested and commented at the time that that report wasn't good enough in terms of the extent of reforms that are needed, but we would have at least expected some extent of significant reform to the regional health authority system announced in this budget. Why wasn't it there? The reality is that we badly need it, that putting a lot more doctors and a lot more nurses into the system is not going to work unless you reform the system so it works better. Doctors and nurses need an environment that is good for them as health-care professionals, as well as having an environment which works in providing quick access to quality care for all Manitobans.

The people who continue to come forward, who are not getting access to care when they need it, is a testament to the failures of the NDP. The extent to which there are continuing problems in health care is reflective of the approach by this government to fail to reform and improve the workings of the regional health authorities, failure to address the needs to have province-wide specialist networks like we should have in bone and joint health and is present already in Alberta, providing a framework for making sure that we can move toward quick access

to quality care when it comes to all areas of orthopedics and bone and joint health in Manitoba.

Of course, prevention, prevention in terms of FASD and in terms of diabetes, these conditions continue, from what we know from the data that are available, which is, indeed, very sparse when it comes to FASD, that these conditions continue to increase, that there are not adequate province-wide approaches to reducing the incidence of these conditions. That is a real disappointment because this government has been here for almost nine years now, and they have failed to do the job that Manitobans need when it comes to health care, as indeed in many other areas as I've already talked.

With respect to the economy, this is a government which has been lucky enough to have major increase in transfers from the federal government and that the public-sector spending on a variety of projects has helped move the economy forward. But the private-sector investment, compared on a per capita basis with other provinces, is not where it needs to be. In spite of the fact that it is increasing percentage-wise—you can claim it's increasing percentage-wise, but when you start from a very low base, that's not very hard to do.

So the fact of the matter is that we are at risk from having the bubble burst if we are not careful in terms of how we manage the economy in Manitoba. For the moment, there are areas which are moving along reasonably well, but it's a mistake for the Finance Minister to put in the budget something about all the industries in Manitoba are successful. Well, certainly, right now that doesn't apply to the hog industry. You know, it's sort of a kind of a gaping hole. Does he not even know about the hog industry in this province being in a rather crisis-like situation because of the current state of prices for hogs? Certainly, it shows the lack of where the Finance Minister is compared with where certain industries are in this province. There are other industries which are also struggling, which are trying to do what they can in terms of making adjustments. It was a little bit too sweeping, a little bit too self-praiseworthy to suggest that all industries in this province are successful.

* (15:30)

Certainly, with the hog industry, calls that I am getting would suggest that there is a problem here, in that, you know, it is not just the hog producers but, in fact, it's the people who supply the feed, the people who do the trucking, the people who provide all sorts

of products and services to the industry, and that this may have a rather severe domino effect on small-town businesses and industries in some parts of Manitoba. We need to be aware and concerned about this. The measures taken provincially and federally look like they are probably not going to be adequate to address this and stabilize the situation. So that is why it should have had a little bit more attention than it did.

There are areas, as I have already talked about, that could and should have been addressed. We're the party which has been calling for a long time for addressing areas around the payroll tax. Quite frankly, there is one area which, even if they didn't reduce it, they should have addressed, because, when it comes to RHAs, hospitals, personal care homes, universities, all of these pay payroll tax. This really is just creating bureaucracy and recycling money when the money comes from the provincial government, and it makes it look as if more tax is coming in than is, and more money is being spent than is. It would be smart to stop this paper trail instead of a real trail. We should be doing things of substance instead of just trying to create paper transfers which really are not benefiting anybody, except they are creating the mirage that more money is collected in tax from the payroll tax and more money is spent in these areas than might otherwise be.

Let me talk for a minute or two on the hydro line before I complete my comments, the situation with Manitoba Hydro and their decision as to where to put the hydro line. It is interesting that the Conservative caucus is championing a line on the right side of the province and the NDP are championing a line on the left side of the province. Of course, Liberals are championing the shortest line of all, which is in the middle and under Lake Winnipeg, because we believe, in time, that the other parties will come to their senses and realize that the Liberals have the better optic, the better position and the better direction for the line.

So, Madam Acting Speaker, I will conclude, this will be known as the budget of the broken promise, the broken promise around the tuition freeze. That is the story of the NDP. I don't need to go into all their broken promises because there have been many, many of them, but it is enough to conclude on that point, the broken promises of the NDP, and the fact that the NDP are starting to realize that the Liberals are going in the right direction, and they have to start following the Liberals.

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Madam Acting Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to the budget. I'm pleased to be speaking to and supporting the budget as presented by our Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

Madam Acting Speaker, I don't envy the task and responsibility placed on the minister. It's a challenging balance to create a budget that encourages growth, supports those who need it, and keeps a watchful eye on an uncertain future. The budget is an exercise in choosing priorities and committing to projects that will make a difference. Although the budget is an exercise in numbers, I think much of what the budget promises is priceless. There are some who want to put a price on everything. Of course, government must be responsible to its citizens, and that means using good fiscal judgment. While the budget can put a price on things such as \$16.6 million more in housing through HOMEWorks!, no one can put a price on what it means to have a home.

We can put \$3.5 million toward extending the Manitoba Shelter Benefit to help single adults and couples on income assistance, and support a pilot project to help people with mental health challenges, but how does one measure the relief that people feel knowing that they can cover their rent. How do you measure what it means to feel safe, to have a home, and to know you won't be on the streets?

Politicians love numbers. We love to use them to measure our success as a province. When you see numbers like you have here in Manitoba, well, it's no wonder we're proud to talk about them. Manitoba is projecting a growth of 2.7 percent in 2008. Canada's growth's only expected to be 1.9 percent. Those are good numbers, and Manitoba should feel comfort in those numbers. Our population is growing, the most in 25 years. Average weekly earnings have gone up, retail sales are up and so are housing starts. All are excellent measures of Manitoba's success.

But how do we measure the success of programs such as Training for Tomorrow? Training for Tomorrow rewards women for studying in areas that we were traditionally left out of such as math, science and technology. I suppose we will measure the success of that program by how many women will graduate and find employment in these well-paying areas, but you cannot put a price on how a woman feels upon graduating from an area of study that has been so underrepresented by women.

I'm reading a book right now that has me thinking a lot about all those benefits that can't be measured, of how cost-benefit analyses don't show the whole picture, and how you can't put a price on everything. I've been in politics for almost a year now, and I am very grateful to people of Southdale for putting their faith in me. I know that all of us take our responsibilities to our constituents seriously, and that includes spending their tax dollars wisely. I got into politics with the belief that we must also speak loudly for those who cannot, and remember that not every success can be measured by numbers.

How do you put a price on a boreal forest, one of the largest remaining intact boreal forests on the planet? How do you put a price on the earth's lungs? If you want numbers, I guess you could say protecting the forest will cost \$400 million because that's how much more it will cost to run the pipeline down the west side rather than through the pristine wilderness of the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Or perhaps you can crunch some numbers on what it means to have a UNESCO World Heritage Site. You could calculate how much more money is generated by ecotourism as compared to two seasons worth of bush clearing to put a transmission line through a forest. It seems to me that ecotourism is going to win that number game.

I don't think we can put a price on preserving the natural land and beauty of Manitoba. I don't think you can put a price on what it means to live so close to an area that is virtually untouched and has been left, for the most part, to flourish on its own.

What price would you like to put on your grandchildren's ability to see a bear or a deer in a forest rather than a zoo? Or to breathe clean air filtered through a boreal forest? The children of Manitoba deserve this and so much more. Each of them deserves the chance to meet their full potential, and I'm proud to say this budget speaks to that as well.

This year's budget increases funding to the Children's Special Services to \$23.7 million, money that will go towards helping children with physical, speech, language, occupational therapies and services. Money that will go towards helping special children realize that children with special needs are very special, and self-esteem is also immeasurable.

I know that there would be some who would like to talk about the difficulties industry will face as we strive to protect the environment. Manitoba's the first

place in North America to commit to Kyoto legislation. Manitoba will be Kyoto-compliant by 2012. Try measuring the envy of my friends and activists in Québec who are urging their government to follow in our footsteps and take this government's bold lead.

A green economy is a sustainable economy. How can we even talk about sustainability without first ensuring that an environment is protected? Supporting the protection of wetlands means supporting our natural filtering system, and this government will also provide support to industries such as farming, trucking and transportation as they cut greenhouse gases and move towards a sustainable economy.

I've heard some critics across the way complain that this budget addresses too many issues and that we strive to help too many people. Well, I wonder who they would leave out. I'm glad this government recognizes the asset we have in our Aboriginal communities. Encouraging Aboriginal students to pursue medical studies through a new bursary program means we'll all benefit. We're proud to work with our First Nations people to help them develop new economic strategies and to learn from each other.

Would the members opposite like to leave northern Manitobans out of the budget? Expanding the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative to promote the production and availability of healthy, affordable foods for everyone in Manitoba seems like good value to me.

I've also heard members opposite say that this budget caters to special interest groups. Do they mean that powerful lobby group of children? Because, yes, this budget does support children and families. We don't call them lobbyists, though. On this side, we refer to families as voters, and as for children, we consider them the future.

*(15:40)

This budget adds \$23 million to better protect Manitoba's children, \$53.5 million for more public schools, the biggest increase in 25 years, and more than \$100 million in capital projects for Manitoba's post-secondary institutions

I won't apologize for making children and families a priority with this government. Not every child in Manitoba does get a fair start, and I wish we didn't need to put in more money to protect our children. They have a right to expect protection and

love from those around them, but when that fails, should we further punish the child? Should we write them off? Should we decide at birth, you, you're okay, you can go on to get an education, find a career and lead a fulfilling life, and then tell others, sorry, luck of the draw, we don't think there's much hope for you?

Well, if we don't support kids at risk, we will never have enough jails for all of them. Every child deserves the chance to reach their full potential. Some children may require more than one chance. This budget means more money to programs such as Lighthouses, safe places for children to go to. It introduces a new First Sports initiative for community centres and sports groups to buy equipment and supplies.

Imagine helping a child at risk find a sense of belonging on a soccer team rather than in a gang. Do you want to put a price on that? This budget does put a price on helping children find a positive way. Half a million dollars for recreational directors to help expand options in Winnipeg's inner-city neighbourhoods. What price do you put on a safe place where a child can find friendship, build self-esteem? What price do you put on a child who, instead of learning to steal cars, learns to steal second base?

This budget does have something in it for everyone, and that's something I'm proud of: \$14.7 million to support producers of cattle and other livestock, funding \$60 million in loan supports for hog producers, and investing in biofuels such as ethanol, biodiesel and biomass to provide new revenue streams for Manitoba producers.

Manitoba's urban centres are also included in the budget. I wonder if the opposition considers the entire city of Winnipeg a lobby group or a special interest group. Expect some detours this summer as you drive around the province because this budget provides for \$29 million more for road improvements and bike paths. We're increasing support for programs such as transit, 50 percent, I might add, as well as policing, mosquito larvaciding, and Dutch elm disease control.

We're also providing support to the City of Brandon to help them revitalize their downtown and, of course, \$60 million to support community centres around the project, including Southdale and Winakwa community centres.

Our Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) was widely applauded yesterday for her announcement to recruit, retain and retrain new medical professionals, just one example of how this budget will support all Manitobans with solid commitments and planning to increase our medical staffing. We continue to invest in doctors and nurses. Last year Manitoba gained 54 new doctors. Budget 2008 invests new resources to expand the U of M's medical school to 110 seats. We'll see the launching of a new graduate program to train 12 new physician assistants over the next two years. Manitobans will also see more nurse practitioners for emergency rooms and primary-care clinics.

Manitoba families, another one of those special interest groups the opposition accuses us of listening to—*[interjection]* Okay, you're right, we are listening to families, and this budget speaks to them, speaks to them by putting more funding into child care and nursery school spaces, establishing new training and recruitment funds and increasing salaries of those very important people that we trust with the well-being of our children. That is choice. Of course, the federal Tory plan has meant thousands less new day-care spaces since they took office.

True choice is deciding whether you will pursue a career and possible second income for your family or whether you will decide to stay home. True choice is having the option of child care. Manitoba has the most affordable day-care system outside of Québec, and we will continue to make improvements to our early childhood education program because having options is the only true choice.

Madam Acting Speaker, for all its new investments in Manitobans, our budget is balanced. Thank you. I proudly support this budget.

Mr. Gerrard: I ask leave to introduce the subamendment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Is there leave for the Member for River Heights to introduce the subamendment?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Hearing no one saying no, I would have to say that leave has been granted. Please introduce your motion.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux),

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

And further regrets that this budget fails to address the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (r) continuing to ignore the need to set targets for cleaning up Lake Winnipeg and other Manitoba lakes suffering from toxic alga blooms; and
- (s) failure to address climate change by running a carbon-neutral government or implementing a carbon-trading system in Manitoba; and
- (t) neglecting the obvious need for rapid transit to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- (u) failure to put patients first by continuing to base RHA spending on global budgets rather than services delivered; and
- (v) continuing to ignore the underprivileged in Manitoba by refusing to index the housing allowance portion of social assistance to inflation; and
- (w) failure to implement a plan to reduce child poverty rates in Manitoba; and
- (x) failing to create an adequate action plan and funding for early childhood education in Manitoba; and
- (y) failure to support the agricultural sector by refusing to fund eco-friendly farming practices such as a province-wide ALUS program, and;
- (z) failing to work with the hog industry to address environmental issues; and
- (aa) refusing to acknowledge the damage the payroll tax has on economic growth; and
- (bb) failure to act on economic development for First Nations and rural Manitobans; and
- (cc) refusing to consider the feasibility of an underwater hydro line under Lake Winnipeg.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): It has been moved by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), seconded by the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Dispense.

The amendment is in order and debate may continue.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the budget. There are a lot of descriptive words that come to mind in reference to this budget, and none of them are very complimentary. The budget was dull, boring and totally uninspired. When you see a government that has unprecedented revenues refusing or unable to show any imagination, revenues are not the problem, priorities are. This is a tax-and-spend government that has no business sense and no long-term plan to make Manitoba a better place to live and invest.

We have a government that believes they can raise user fees, licences, permit fees and no one will notice. This budget is no different than the previous NDP budgets in that regard. Ask average Manitobans if they feel better off now, if they have more money in their pockets, and the answer is no. Ask them if they think they have a better health-care system, and the answer is no. Ask them if they feel safer on the streets, and the answer is no. The NDP government has had unprecedented revenues. They have raised government spending in Manitoba by close to four billion, and Manitobans don't think they are getting their money's worth.

Madam Acting Speaker, we live in a forced economy, an economy that is driven by public dollars rather than private investment. The Hydro building, the floodway, Wuskwatim and a growing bureaucracy are all publicly funded. The only building cranes on the skyline in Winnipeg are publicly financed, and an economy that relies that heavily on public dollars and transferred revenues cannot survive.

We see very little in the budget, or any previous NDP budget, that attracts business development to Manitoba. We see no effort made toward creating a climate that attracts business. In Manitoba, 33 percent of every business dollar is taxed. This is not competitive, and we continue to fall behind other provinces in that respect.

* (15:50)

Capital tax, payroll tax, a continued assault on property tax by the Province are all disincentives to business. We see a spending increase that is double the rate of economic growth.

Madam Acting Speaker, no private business can survive and prosper if they use this approach that the NDP government is taking. When expenses exceed

income, debt grows and a private business would soon fail. Government only has to break even to balance the books. They don't have to show a profit, but this government can't even do that.

In a time of huge windfalls and revenue, the provincial debt continues to rise. In a time of unprecedented aid from the federal government, this government continues to look for new ways to pry money out of business and then take credit for the way they spend it. I am constantly approached by small-business owners in my riding about extra costs they are incurring because of government policies.

I have a bakery owner who comes to me and talks about the new holiday. Now, I have no problem with the new holiday. I do have a problem with it being on the backs of small-business owners in this province. In Saskatchewan, when they implemented the new holiday, they did a tax reduction to help offset it.

The bakery owner tells me, and she's a small bakery owner, she tells me there's \$500 in extra wages because of that holiday, plus she lost a day's business on top of that. So her losses and the cost of that holiday to that one business were around \$1,200.

I have a grocery store owner coming to me about minimum wage increases. When there's a minimum wage increase, there's an expectation at higher levels of salary to raise those wages besides. Their solution? They will hire one or two less students this summer, and they will work more hours themselves. The owners that work 12 hours a day now may be working 14. These are small businesses. They are the backbone of our economy, and they are struggling to survive and provide for their families.

In order for the Province to provide social programs and services, the small-business community must thrive and prosper. They shouldn't have to be constantly concerned about how the government is going to pry more of their hard-earned dollars out of their livelihoods. The NDP take credit for a new holiday in February, business pays. The NDP take credit for raising minimum wage, business pays. The NDP take credit for environmental programs, business pays.

A number of years ago, when I was with the AMM, the NDP removed property tax from universities, announced that they were making a commitment of \$20 million to universities. This shifted university property tax to other properties, and the public and business paid.

The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) yesterday went to great lengths to remind me that Neepawa is getting a new personal care home. I am very pleased to see that construction has started, but I do want to put some facts straight on the record.

That personal care home was first announced in 1999 and has been announced in eight successive budgets since. It was initially announced as a 125-bed facility at a cost of \$13.5 million. This is 2008. Construction has started. We're now down 25 beds to a 100-bed facility at a cost of \$29.5 million.

Community contributions, the 10 percent contribution, went from \$1.35 million to \$2.95 million at a time when municipalities are struggling with ever-increasing infrastructure costs due to the policies of this government.

At the present time, we have a growing baby-boomer segment getting older that are going to need these facilities in time to come. I think it was a terrible idea to consider lowering the number of beds from 125 to 100. We were told three years ago that they were going to provide more assisted living. So far, there's no sign of any more assisted living.

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) recently announced and took credit for a \$23.3 million waste-water upgrade in Neepawa. That includes waste disposal for the Springhill hog plant. She took a lot of credit for the \$23.3 million, and I would like to set that record straight too: \$1.5 million comes from the town of Neepawa, \$5.9 million comes from the federal government, \$10 million from high-tech, but, on the \$5.9 million that comes from the Province, 40 percent of the budget for this province comes from the federal government. So the 40 percent more of that \$5.9 paid by the feds, and the Province is actually only paying \$3.5 million.

Madam Acting Speaker, on the issue of BSE and the livestock industry in general, I heard very little positive in this budget. The government has woefully dropped the ball on BSE, firstly by saying it was temporary in spite of what the industry was saying, and second by doing nothing to prepare the industry for recovery and putting producers in a position to never be that vulnerable again.

What are the NDP responses? They said first that this was going to be a temporary thing, and we'd get over it real quick. They also said they were going to try to increase the slaughter capacity. That's a little over five years ago. We're seeing no signs of any

more slaughter capacity, although we do have \$4-million worth of slaughter equipment rusting in storage in Dauphin. They put a \$2 levy through the beef enhancement council on any cattle we sell. They hit the industry that was down, added another levy. It's produced nothing to this date. Nothing tangible has come out of that \$2 levy, except we have a board in place that has \$300,000 to \$400,000 a year administration costs that are coming out of our \$2 levy. We're not particularly happy about that as producers.

They've added debt to producers with loans when they put out the \$50,000 loans to producers. I've been dealing with two young couples in the Alonsa area that are going broke because their loans are overextended. All they did was amortize those \$50,000 loans, and they became \$83,000 loans. These young couples—the one couple have three young children. They were starting in the cattle business. They're still living at Alonsa. He spends all week in Winnipeg at a job now. The cattle are gone. They couldn't survive what was happening.

Older producers are leaving the industry in despair rather than with any dignity. The government goes to great extent to talk about their environmental concerns. They say they care but, when the cattle industry starts going down the tubes, the next thing we're going to see is permanent cover being torn up. Permanent cover. It's carbon sink, one of the best carbon sinks there are. Pasture, hay land, it's already started. I expect it will hit a million acres within a year. It takes years and years to reverse that trend. At a time when they pay lip service to the environment, they refuse to support policies that would allow permanent cover to be retained and develop a system in consultation with producers that would retain permanent cover.

The hog industry in this province is one of the most conscientious industries I've ever seen. They embrace technology. They even go beyond that, and they spend millions of dollars to develop new technologies. The hog industry was quick to say that they would work with government to implement the Clean Environment Commission recommendations. What was the government's response? We'll put a moratorium on hog barns with no scientific backing. What's next? Maybe they'll set up a pork enhancement council. Then the NDP will probably impose a levy on dead piglets. At a time when an industry this government supported needed a positive

message, they were kicked in the teeth by this provincial NDP government.

* (16:00)

A number of years ago, I was involved in the development of contaminated-site legislation. The legislation was developed to address a growing concern about many contaminated sites in this province. I was told in Estimates last fall that there are currently 139 orphan petroleum sites, another 48 various sites contaminated by all manners of other things and some 2,000 other sites that are being tracked. Would not the resources of government be better used if they made a concerted effort to clean up the contaminated sites than by issuing a moratorium on hog barn construction? The last time I checked, there was not a single well-water order in the province that was livestock related. Every single boil-water order in the province was human related. I believe the moratorium on hog barns construction is just the tip of this out-of-control iceberg. Where does the next shoe drop? Is it going to be the cattle industry? Is it going to be the grain farmers, the potato producers? Why not just outlaw agriculture? What is the next agriculture-related industry to feel the misguided, heavy hand of government?

Madam Acting Speaker, 60 percent of the Red River basin is in other jurisdictions that have no moratoriums. Saskatchewan has the headwaters of the Assiniboine River. Saskatchewan says they are open for business and they are trying to promote the livestock industry and especially, the hog industry. I ask, what do you think the message is that is being delivered by the government to our livestock industry? The tools were in place that could deal with anything around the hog barn construction. There was legislation, regulations, under the manure handling and mortalities act.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

On a local basis, the planning districts, their development plans, their zoning by-laws, all the tools were there. Those industries, those barns should be dealt with on an individual basis, not a blanket moratorium that covers close to half of the southern part of this province.

I ask you to take a look at history. Any country, any dynasty, any empire that lost touch with the agricultural roots has failed. I ask you to change direction, recognize the agriculture for its immense value to this province. There's a huge amount of agricultural expertise on this side of the House,

something that is sadly lacking on the government's side. Do the right thing. Convene the Standing Committee on Ag and make use of the expertise we offer.

As a critic for Family Services, I would like to put some comments on the record in relationship to budget '08. Mr. Acting Speaker, once again, we see typical NDP reactions. The NDP believe that throwing money at any issue fixes the problem. They have no idea how to assess results and to discover what works and what doesn't. With the exception of Health, no department of government has received more funding increases than Family Services. What are the results? Well, there's another expensive layer of bureaucracy. There are an ever-increasing number of children in CFS care. There's still a severe shortage of caseworkers. Caseworkers are still handling too many cases. Standards have not been developed. Risk assessments are not standardized. Jurisdictional inequities on reserves have not been corrected. Children such as Gage Guimond continue to fall through the cracks.

Early intervention, as evidenced by the growing caseloads, is obviously not working. CFS funding has literally doubled in the last few years and we still see a system that is in crisis. When will the NDP demand some returns, some improvement, something positive for the extra funding? Many of the issues surrounding CFS are related to allocation of funding, not amount of funding. The government needs to demand accountability, consider best practices, and get results that do in fact improve the system.

The NDP continues to fall further behind in child-care services. Over a year ago, the Minister of Family Services promised a new long-term plan. It's still missing in action. We have severe shortages of spaces, trained early childhood education staff and facilities for child care.

The minister continues to pat himself on the back, saying he has created 500 new spaces. That's not exactly true; there were 500 more spaces funded, not created. Many of them already existed as non-funded spaces. As Family Services critic, I see many, many cases that fall through the cracks, that are outside the system, that have exhausted their resources and, yet, have a desperate need for assistance. They are told they are beyond the system, exceptions to the rule, not eligible, and that any action taken on their cases would be precedent-setting.

These cases include a young pregnant couple living in their car unable to get social assistance, a man suffering with severe aftermaths of flesh-eating disease, a family trying to cope with the demands, and we heard about it last week, of dealing with a severely handicapped adult child. There are many, many others.

The government is aware of these cases, but it seems to have no idea how to deal with them. There are exceptions to every rule. The way they are dealt with is a test of the true metal of government. Mr. Acting Speaker, there is absolutely nothing in this budget to address the severe need of those Manitobans who so desperately need help.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the NDP government promotes the education property tax as helping the little guy. Well, once again that isn't exactly accurate. Many people in lower assessed housing in Manitoba are not even able to take full advantage of the credit. They're required to pay a minimum of \$250 property tax; therefore, if your property tax bill is less than \$850, the minimum plus the credit, they will see very little advantage from this latest budget announcement.

I see my time is coming to a close, and I want to thank this House for allowing me to make my comments on the budget. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today and address the budget amendment of the Conservatives and the budget subamendment of the Liberals. The Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) points out correctly the late subamendment from the Liberal Party, from the late Liberal Party.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I do look at the budget amendment motion here by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), and his first point is that the budget fails Manitobans by failing to move Manitoba forward toward achieving its true potential and becoming more competitive, both within Canada and internationally. To me, from what we've seen of the Leader of the Opposition in the last couple of years, what he's talking about here is the Jets and the theme park in Point Douglas because that's his idea of moving Manitoba forward and achieving our true potential.

He hasn't let us in on his other plans. As a matter of fact, he won't let his caucus know about the plans, too, because maybe he doesn't trust them keeping the

secrets. He then goes on in paragraph (b), to talk about Manitoba's increasing reliance on the taxpayers of other provinces through equalization payments. I don't recall over the last 22 years much talk of the Conservatives talking about or at least criticizing Manitoba's equalization payments. Clearly, they have very little to talk about when in fact now they are attacking one of the very important sources of revenue that Manitoba has historically had and certainly had while they were in government all these past years as well.

As a matter of fact, the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) pointed out quite correctly yesterday, when he was enumerating point by point their budgetary deficits over their 11 years in government, that, in fact, their equalization payments at that point as a percentage of their budgetary expenditures were, in fact, the same as it is now, at 39 percent to 40 percent. Where it was okay then, it was all right then for 11 or 12 years to accept money from Ottawa in equalization payments, but, all of a sudden, it's a bad idea now, and eight years after we've been in government. So, clearly, they've just run out of all options. They tried argument No. 1, didn't work, 2, 3. Now they are at argument (s) or (t), and this one isn't going to work either. So they may as well—*[interjection]* They're trying to have it both ways, as the Member for Thompson points out. So, you know, I can't understand why they would stoop to making an argument like that, that somehow Manitoba shouldn't be getting equalization payments, which we have for many, many years. Certainly, they accepted them when they were in government for those 11 years.

* (16:10)

Now, (c), they talk about continuing to channel billions into taxpayer-funded projects at the expense of private investment. Well, that's not at the expense of private investment. Private investment, if it's out there, it will invest. It's as simple as that. Just because the government's spending money on a building, you are saying that the private sector won't invest. I mean, that's absolute nonsense. I would like to ask the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), what would she like us not to build? Would she like us to stop building the hospital construction in Steinbach? Would she want to stop the road construction?

The member for—the deputy leader—*[interjection]* Virden, the Member for Arthur-Virden, over and over again last year was

asking my seatmate here, the minister of highways, to twin the No. 1 highway, which, in fact, we were doing. He was complaining that it wasn't done soon enough. We had to tell him to get his birdbath out of the way so those paving trucks could get through.

But, you know, there is more to this paragraph (c) than meets the eye, because what we are really talking about here, what they are really talking about here is P3s. That's what they are talking about. They want government to cease to invest in the public sector here in Manitoba, and they want the private sector to invest, but the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said last year, when he was talking about his hydro plans, that he was going to have private development of hydro projects. That's what I read into (c). I read into (c) that they want the government to stop investing in Manitoba so that their friends can start investing in Manitoba, and then they'll go and lease the hospitals back.

They'll set the toll roads that Albert Driedger was talking about. He wanted to set up a toll road. Well, the Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) says toll roads are a good idea. He wants to set up toll roads. Well, Albert Driedger wanted to set up toll roads until the Premier called him in, and that was the end of Albert's toll roads. But he was talking about the No. 1 highway; he wanted to toll road that. So this is where they are heading.

You can see the City is talking about P3s right now. They are pointing out that it worked so well with the Charleswood Bridge. They want to set up a P3 through my constituency through the Disraeli Freeway and have private entrepreneurs own the freeway and lease it back to the City. We know that the P3s have been tried in the United States, and they are very controversial. Some people will argue that they are successful and they are a good thing to develop in some cases. Other people would say they're not. On our side of the House we have always taken a position against them because we say that the public should be building the bridges and the roads and public infrastructure, and we should not be allowing the private sector to build public infrastructure and then we lease it back from them at high rates over 30 years and make these people, private sector, rich. So I'm surprised that the members opposite would even allow (c) to be put into their budget amendment.

Now they're criticizing us, too, for neglecting to reduce taxes and increasing our expenses at a higher rate than what they would like. To that I would say

that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) did announce business tax reductions. He announced a capital tax elimination for manufacturing, all of which the private sector have been happy with, and he announced spending in line with what Manitobans expect. In fact, the Conservatives came out on budget day and said, no, that the spending should be kept in line with the growth in the economy and that we are spending far too much.

The very next day, Mr. Acting Speaker, what did they do? They had the hog farmers in and they were demanding that the Agriculture Department, which has already been spending fairly big amounts of money, should be spending even more. So it's we're overspending one day and the very next day they want more spending out of the government. So it's just back and forth. In opposition, it's been noted in the past by one of their former MLAs that you can, in fact, have it both ways. They, of course, will try that. *[interjection]*

The Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) is chirping from somebody else's seat at the moment, but I can tell her that, if people were so upset with the government after eight years, they would be out demonstrating. You tell me one government that has lasted this long that hasn't had huge amounts of demonstrations. I remember—the Member for Emerson is smiling. He doesn't remember any history past a couple of years ago, but he doesn't remember all the demonstrations that were going on here at the Legislative Building every time there's a Tory government in this province. The Tories just have to get elected and the next day there's demonstrators out on the front steps. The nurses are demonstrating, other groups, health-care workers are demonstrating. Just the thought of a Conservative government pulls people out.

So you really are running out of options. You're down to 19 seats and one of my colleagues has pointed out that, through redistribution because of population changes, you might even lose another seat in your area. So you may be sitting at 18 before you even start the next election.

Clearly, I won't have enough to get through all of the—but I know that members do want me to focus, focus like a laser. The Member for Charleswood would want me to do precisely on the matter at hand here, which is their amendment to the budget speech.

They, of course, talk about Manitoba's staggering debt load and all the things that are going on in the good economic times and that we should be

reducing debt. Well, I have news for her. News flash for the Member for Charleswood. I don't know that communications go out that far, but I've got to inform her that, in fact, times are good in Manitoba.

As a matter of fact, the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) has photocopied some recent *Free Press* articles. These are not articles from the Tory years; these are just recent articles: "1,000 new jobs" from EDS. I don't recall the Tory government ever announcing a thousand new jobs. I recall them firing a thousand new nurses, but never, never announcing a thousand new jobs, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I see: Manitoba "Could exceed the national average for the first time in 14 years." Does anybody over there talk about these articles as great news? No, the Leader is talking about being a vulture. He says that it's very good for the opposition when things are bad. So the worse they are, the happier he is. No wonder they've been so depressed for the last eight years. They don't crack smiles over there. The Member for Charleswood is having an awful time.

When the minister introduced the budget the other day, he spoke for nearly an hour. Normally, the members opposite are writing notes, and they've got something hot they want to talk to the press about, right? I didn't see even a notepad over there; I didn't see a pen over there. They are dejected. They've just given up, Mr. Acting Speaker. It's pure and simple.

Another article from the *Free Press*: "Manitoba growth rate to lead country." Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, if Manitoba was in such tough straits, then why would we have no fewer than six upgrades by the credit-rating agencies? These are not Conservative agencies. No, they're not NDP. They're not Liberal agencies; they're independent business agencies who underwrite and give opinions and credit ratings for people who lend us money.

* (16:20)

I recall years ago the Schreyer government getting one Moody's upgrade, and they rode that one a long way, I think, through the election of 1973. The Conservatives, I think, they might have maybe had some downgrades. They didn't talk about that. But, you know, here you have a government that has gone through six upgrades. You should be cheering. Like, let's crack some smiles over there, guys. You know, this is exciting news. And this proves that we are running a very tight ship and a very good—we have very good development in this province. We are governing in a way that these bond-rating agencies

are approving of and giving us upgrades. And, you know, things could change. We could get downgrades, too, but that isn't what's happening. We're looking at six upgrades.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, (f): "ignoring the priorities of Manitobans by failing to provide adequate resources to combat crime and put an end to the revolving door justice system . . ." Well, you know, the story here is actually pretty good. It's been our ministers, the current Justice Minister and the past Justice Minister, who actually pushed the federal government into bringing in tougher legislation. Not the other way around.

The Conservatives continue to get public support for being tough on crime when, in fact, it's just the opposite. That, in fact, it's our Justice Minister and the former Justice Minister who got action out of the federal government. Then the Conservatives are talking today about, well, the Premier is being friendly to the Prime Minister. Well, what do they want him to do? If he wasn't friendly, they stepped on his toe, they would be complaining that we have bad relations, that we can't get along; that we can't get things from the federal government. I mean, when the federal government does something good, when the federal government does something that we want, that we are proposing, why shouldn't we be supporting?

In fact, in terms of expenditures on fighting crime, we've actually increased them. The Justice budget is nothing compared to how small it was when they were in government for those 11 years, and they want to talk about the Hells Angels. They conveniently say that the Hells Angels got into Manitoba in the year 2000, just, conveniently, after they left office. Well, we know that didn't happen. They just didn't arrive, you know, from outer space here, and arrive in Manitoba on 2000. They were here long before, and we've said it over and over again. They were well entrenched before we took office. But what has this government done to fight these people? The Tories built a big courtroom. They built a big courtroom for a mega-trial which didn't go anywhere.

But what have we done? We have, and albeit, I think, a little bit late, but we've got mandatory immobilizers now set up under Autopac in Manitoba to reduce the amount of car thefts. And, in fact, car thefts have gone down. As a matter of fact, car thefts have gone down—according to my notes here, vehicle theft in Winnipeg has declined—well, what do

you think it is, folks? How far did it go down? Did it go down 19 percent? Did it go down 20 percent? Or did it go down 27 percent? Do we have any takers?

An Honourable Member: Twenty-seven percent.

Mr. Maloway: Twenty-seven percent. The right answer comes, once again, from the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar). And this is just the beginning. This is just the beginning, because what you do when you set in the immobilizer program is you eliminate the possibilities that those cars will be stolen again and that people will be killed as a result of a theft.

Like I said, that whole issue, we dealt with that a number of years ago. We found that, for a mere \$40 per car, back about 15 years ago, the federal government could have mandated that the manufacturers install anti-theft devices in cars at the factory in those days. The car people said: Oh, no, \$40, that's too much for the public to bear. And they didn't do it. So now, once again, the public is stuck cleaning up the mess that could have been solved by a \$40 immobilizer put in with the car installed.

Finally, 10 years, 15 years later, they are now doing it. They are being forced under federal edict as of last October to, in fact, do that. All new cars have to have immobilizers in them from the factory, and now we are taking care of their problem that they left to us. After 11 years of doing absolutely nothing, we have now taken the bull by the horns. We have said that those cars that are prior-year cars, about 10, 15 years of cars now that are still on the road have to have immobilizers, and we will see this problem disappear. Over time, as these cars get older, in 10 or 15 years, and all the cars that are on the road at that time will be factory-installed immobilizers, this problem will disappear, but no thanks to the Conservatives who talk a great line about crime and punishment but, at the end of the day, don't produce very much.

So now where are we? Oh, we are on (f)—and I'm not sure how much time I'm actually supposed to take here—but, well, I'm going to skip and go to (h): failing to end hallway medicine, as promised, by nearly doubling the health care budget. . . Well, that is a great admission on their part that we doubled the health-care budget. I would suggest probably that most jurisdictions have doubled the health-care budget, but that's because of the expanding demands of the public requiring system. What we found is, putting expensive machinery, MRI machines and so on in hospitals—we put them in Brandon, we put

them in lots of places the Conservatives never did. We put these machines in and, of course, the demand was there. People want the tests, and people are now having the tests.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So, of course, the price of health care is going to go up. But, you know, people don't plan their heart attacks. When you set up a system, you don't want to have 20 doctors sitting there and only one person comes in. You have to plan for a lot of unexpected things to happen and that's the nature of health care. You can't streamline it that way. There can be an accident that will happen on the road and seven or eight people will be seriously injured. They all need attention. They are going to come into an emergency ward and people who have a broken foot, as I had recently, are just going to have to wait a little longer while the people who are bleeding to death are attended to. That is a function of the system.

Now, (j): "extending the tuition freeze for yet another year. . . ." Had we lifted the tuition freeze, I'm sure they would have been out there demonstrating with the students against the government. I can see the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou), the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) out there making their placards. You know, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), with his helmet, out there demonstrating along with the students. Now they're against us on this one.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on. I could deal with the debt, as the Member for Selkirk did, dealing with Tory debts. They talked about the NDP deficits, but did you know that, in 1992-93, Clayton Manness, when he was the Minister of Finance, brought in a record deficit of \$766 million? That was a record then. It's a record now. That was done under that great Tory business management that you see across the way, the management that the business community doesn't really trust.

Matter of fact, I've had business people tell me over the years they're happy when we are in government because we actually build things. This was during the Sterling Lyon government when they mothballed the Hydro project, Limestone. The construction went down to nothing, and we went around looking for support for the NDP. We had architects, we had engineers, we had construction people saying, thank God the NDP's back in power because those Conservatives were freezing us out.

We were going to have to close down, we were going to have to leave the province because of Conservative restraint. It was Sterling Lyon's acute, protracted restraint that he was practicing. They were losing their base as a result of that. And they want to go back, they want to go back to the good ol' days and—if you don't believe me, then read your own subamendment. Maybe they didn't show this to you before they put it in, but if you read (c), you're going to see that's exactly what you have in mind here.

Anyway, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you back. Thank you.

* (16:30)

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record on this budget. I think I'd like to start off putting the good words on that I have. There are some good things in the budget, and I think we need to address them. So it'll be just a little bit—if I can find them in the budget, I'll put the little good things on. There's no mention of Spirited Energy. I think that was a good thing. I'm also terribly pleased that they've made a commitment to the library. I just hope that they don't forget that and they do carry it out. I think it's very, very important. It was a good thing.

The other good thing, Mr. Speaker, that I think that they have—I not only think, I know they have done it—is they've take a suggestion from us when it came to the auto theft. They have finally got the ankle bracelets, even though they are with GPS and should be with radio frequency. We certainly commend them on that move forward.

An Honourable Member: They should be radioactive.

Mr. Graydon: They're not radioactive as our Liberal member would like us to have.

However, Mr. Speaker, basically, the budget was a salt-and-pepper budget and really had no meat and potatoes in it. I would like to maybe speak a little bit that the first budget after election, I would think, shouldn't be a disappointment to Manitobans. There should be some of the commitments that were made in the election. There should be a plan. I thought they had a plan at election time, but, apparently, it was a stay-tuned plan. Stay tuned on several critical areas. How critical are they? Well, they're not in this budget. Manitoba wanted to see a real plan laid out in front of them, not a photo-op and a re-announcement plan that we have seen today.

Perhaps there is something coming, but it certainly isn't in the budget.

The government says that their positioning—and I'm going to speak to agriculture, if you don't mind, Mr. Speaker. It's something I'm fairly familiar with. We've heard a lot of bull from the opposition today, or from members opposite. The government said that they were positioning the livestock sector for a future probability, but there's absolutely no mention in this budget that would show that they have a plan to do that.

The extension of the BSE loan that has been touted by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has just added another \$30 million to the outstanding loan that was initially put out into agriculture. The cows in this province cannot bear the load of the first \$50 million that they put out, and this added \$30 million has just made the Manitoba government one of the biggest landowners in the province. They have made people mortgage their homesteads. They have put a lot of hurts on a lot of young people that were to take over the industry in this province, and they sit there and say, hey, we're there; we're right beside you. You're so close to us, we can feel your hands in our pockets. NDP—the P stands for pickpocket; that's what that stands for, Mr. Speaker. In agriculture it is very, very evident today, with no plans to bring profitability back to us.

This great province had an opportunity to develop an industry, and what did we do with it? We started overregulating. We wanted to regulate; we'll overregulate. I see that the member opposite now is coming in. I hope that he pays attention to what I have to say because it's a lot of his overregulation that has caused a lot of hurt in the industry.

So, when the industry met, what he asked for and exceed what he asked for, and what did he do? We're going to shut you down. We're going to put you out of business. We'll put a constant and a long-lasting hurt on you. We'll give you a moratorium. This province, the farthest from any port that grows grain, the highest cost of shipping, the highest cost of elevation and an opportunity to value add in a sustainable way, in an environmentally sustainable way, and this minister steps up to the plate with zero knowledge and shuts down an industry, tries to shut down an industry. They will fight back and, in spite of you, in spite of your draconian actions, they will survive. It'll be tough. It'll be a lot leaner, meaner group out there, but they will not forget what you have done to them. I can tell you that. Producers

have exceeded everything that he has put on the plate, and they should be commended. Instead, he sits there and smiles like a Cheshire cat.

The budget trumpets the funding of livestock producers from the Community Development Trust. My goodness, they should be ashamed of themselves to be saying what they're doing for agriculture and using 50 percent federal money. Taking advantage of this situation is good because Vic brought it to town. The Conservatives brought the money here. Putting it into agriculture is fine, but don't just say it came out of your budget. It didn't come out of your budget. Less than one-third of that came out of there. One-third of your budget comes out of the federal government. Add on the 50 percent that Vic put in, and I'll tell you that the Madam Minister of Agriculture put \$2 into a cow. She actually put \$4 into the cow with her 3 percent announcement and takes two back. She steals two back through the enhancement program.—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's watch our words carefully. All members are honourable members. I don't think anybody would be stealing from anybody in this House.

Mr. Graydon: I apologize for that comment, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Agriculture takes back \$2 against the will of the producers in this province.

The government didn't commit to any program that would recognize the credit that agriculture actually has put into agriculture in a way of carbon credits. However, they impose a tax, a carbon tax, on the use of coal, which adds another hurt to the industry. When you look throughout the province, all of the large operations in the province, mainly our Hutterite brethren, heat their whole units with coal. So we'll add another tax to agriculture. It may be that they want to shut down a coal plant in Brandon. Do that, but don't add a tax to the rest of the province, not to the rest of the province but, more specifically, to agriculture.

The government has reinstated its commitment to develop the bio-based products and processes, and, unfortunately, that's really what it is. It's just reinstated it. There has been no commitment other than to the Husky ethanol plant, which was a federal commitment, but we heard in this House during the fall session that there were many, many projects on the table for biofuels, biodiesel. We're mandating biodiesel in this province, and we're not producing it.

We're going to import that, but where is it coming from? Where are these projects that were supposed to be on the table last fall—the announcements that were forthcoming? They're not there. We just reintroduce commitments. Really, nothing takes place from there.

The Province will be working towards funding environmental, earth, and resources at the U of M and other priority research areas, including phosphorus application levels and other recommendations of the CEC report. They have done a lot of work from the private industry, and the private sector has put a lot of money into that type of research. With the hurt that's been put on them by the minister opposite, does he expect them to continue to finance their research when they do not pay any attention to the scientific studies and the scientific facts that have been brought forward?

The University of Manitoba always got a huge grant from Manitoba Pork, and, apparently, that's not forthcoming. Would we expect from this current government to bring that—top that up to where it was initially? I doubt that that will happen, and it's not just because there's a crisis in the pork industry in the province. It's because of the attitude of this government. The phrase "rural development" is completely absent in the budget, and the reason is beyond us why that shouldn't be included. They need to learn that there is life beyond the Perimeter. Perimeteritis is certainly alive and well with the members opposite. Without a vibrant rural economy, the economy in the city will soon start to hurt, Mr. Speaker.

*(16:40)

I'll give you an example of the mismanagement that has taken place in rural Manitoba, not only in my constituency, but in all of rural Manitoba. In the MAFRI offices that are situated throughout our province, we had people who were called ag reps, and then they had some resource people, specialists in their field and in many different fields. Those ag reps, they were the main people. They were the people that went from the grassroots to the government. They were our conduit, and it went both ways, but they were part of us in rural Manitoba.

Today, we've replaced them with, instead of Ag offices they're called GO centres. Instead of having production-based people in these GO centres, what we have is value-added people that have no idea of what the production is in our province. They have no idea of what that area, that particular area is capable

of producing. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that in this situation that we're in today, in agriculture throughout Manitoba other than the grain industry, that there's really no money to value-add. When we do try to diversify, the minister opposite comes out with regulations and moratoriums to pour cold water on diversification, and an opportunity to value-add.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're terribly, terribly disappointed in this budget, that there's nothing to address the rural economy.

There's an increasing public interest in recycling programs, and our members opposite have taken full advantage of that. They have recycled old ideas and previous announcements. They've really never applied themselves to the problem that we have out there. When we have a member in this House raise an issue on plastic bags, they pay lip service to him, but, no, they'll recycle their old announcements. Hasn't done a whole bunch for anyone on this side of the House.

Once again, this year the minister bungled the education funding announcement. Goodness gracious, it was difficult to understand what he had in mind, Mr. Speaker, but he made an announcement. He said, you will do this. You will do this and, if you don't do this, we will punish you. We will punish you. You will not get any money from us. You will raise taxes at your peril, but we will punish you.

There was some push-back from different areas throughout, different school boards and school districts within Manitoba. As these push-backs came, the minister did damage control. Then he did individual agreements, and we're not sure at this point what any of those really are, and nor are any of the other school districts. When you mandate a grade 11 and grade 12 physical education, I believe that, if you're going to do that, then there should be funding available to hire the people to do that. Instead, there was no funding for that and you have to cut other important, very, very important teachers.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that put more hardship, especially on rural Manitoba, where we don't have the availability of different programs that you have in the city at our disposal without driving many, many miles. So the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) fumbled the ball. It was another example of the NDP wanting positive headlines but failing to do their homework to ensure effective implementation of the policy. They really did not

realize what the impact was of the policy that they were putting there.

I would have thought that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) would have taken the lead and introduced carbon credits. It was asked of her. It was presented to her by the cattle people of this province. It was a way that they could have some stability. I believe that they do a great job. They are stewards of the land. It's their land that is absorbing the pollution that many of our cities are putting into the air. Both she and the Premier (Mr. Doer) had a great opportunity to step forward and do the right thing. They could have reduced the emissions before the next election, and instead have chosen in concert to be Fibber McGee and Molly, a drama that never ends.

The Child and Family Services system is in a crisis and in chaos, and this budget contained very little that would have helped, anything new to help Manitobans in this vulnerable situation, nothing but re-announcements when the front-line workers were struggling, nothing for rural Manitoba. It's difficult in rural Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and there is really a sad situation in the educational part for the workers who want to work in that field. The qualified workers in rural Manitoba and, especially, I'm thinking of Steinbach where they have an extension of the Red River College, the tuition fees for child-care workers are over double what they are in Winnipeg. Surely that this, our members opposite, they're aware of it. They've been made aware of it and have never addressed it. I thought they would have addressed it when they had an opportunity in a budget that is being financed at least one third or better by the federal government. They had an opportunity to address this type of inequity. The money is there. The money was there from the federal government. They could have used this and could have alleviated some of the problem. They could have had trained staff on hand and not overworked staff, staff that complain that they are being bullied by management. That's an unfortunate situation that could have been rectified by just using a little bit of common sense.

Another situation that has arisen is the Pharmacare deductible, and we see that that has gone up again. Of course, in the past, the Honourable Mr. Chomiak condemned the Tory government for increasing Pharmacare—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Members are to be addressed, ministers by the titles they hold, or members by the constituency, not by name.

Mr. Graydon: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

The honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) condemned the Tory government for increasing Pharmacare deductibles, referring to it as a tax grab on Manitobans, a tax on all Manitobans, and a tax, most importantly, on the sick. Since that announcement that he made on October 2, 1996, they have raised the deductible by over 35 percent. Is that still a tax on the sick, or is that the sick taxing the poor?

So, Mr. Speaker, if I could just ask you, do I have two minutes, or do I have eight minutes?

Mr. Speaker: My understanding is there is agreement by the House leaders that members would keep their speeches to 20 minutes, and we have been instructed by the House leaders to press the warning light when there are two minutes remaining, when it's at 18 minutes. Every member in the House has 30 minutes to speak, but, by mutual agreement, we were told that the speeches would be 20 minutes.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had been told that I would probably have more, but thank you very much. I appreciate your ruling.

*(16:50)

So I'll just kind of wrap this up slowly. My general impressions of the 2008 budget provided little or no new initiative and items on health care or the delivery of the service. It was largely a re-announcement of capital projects. The re-announcement that really stands out, and I have to point it out, is that hospital in Brandon. The hospital in Brandon has been announced so many times now that people have moved to Steinbach to get service.

A plan to improve the quality of personal care home. There was nothing in the budget that would indicate that there was anything there for that either.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to put some few words on the record.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, just before I recognize the honourable minister, I just want to clarify for the House that I was just interpreting the understanding that the House had; I wasn't making a ruling on it. It was an agreement that both sides agreed to, that we would press the button for the warning light that, when it comes to 18 minutes, members would restrain themselves to speak to 20 minutes. That's only an agreement but, under our rules, members are entitled to speak for 30 minutes. But that's a deal they made together, so.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, thank you for your clarification in regard to how long I get to speak today. I definitely appreciate that.

I'd like to say this is the first opportunity I've had to speak to a budget since I got elected in St. Vital in 2007. It's our first budget 2008. I just want to say how delighted I am to be back in the Legislature. I want to thank the constituents and all of the community stakeholders that I get to work with in St. Vital. It is a terrific community, and it certainly is a privilege and an honour to be the member of the Legislature for such a great community.

I'd also like to congratulate all of my colleagues that are back here in the Legislature for this budget, budget 2008. I'd particularly like to mention, Mr. Speaker, that Manitoba has the highest number of women elected, percentage of women elected of any jurisdiction in Canada, almost 33 percent. I think that that this is an incredible accomplishment and achievement. It's certainly a benchmark for Commonwealth countries, and I hope that all politicians from all parties would, you know, take the whole issue of having women involved in their parties very seriously. We would hope that, you know, the Tory party would have a look at their representation and, certainly, the Liberals. They could do the same and encourage women to run for them. We'd like to see more women represented. We'd like to see 50 percent. So maybe the other two parties could help us out and do their job.

Budget 2008, Mr. Speaker, has been engineered. I know it'll be no surprise to my colleagues that I will be supporting the budget. I think this is a very important document for buffering what is going on, the uncertainty that's going on with our American neighbours. This is our ninth balanced budget that we have presented in a row. We've used summary budgeting and reporting to improve transparency and accountability. Of course, it reflects the generally accepted accounting principles.

I think it's important that we continue to pay down the debt and, particularly, the pension liability that we discovered when we got elected in 1999. We are making the largest payments in Manitoba history of \$924 million against the debt and those pension liabilities. That's incredibly important for those individuals that, when they retire, they have a pension. They've worked hard for that; they've paid into it, and it is their privilege and responsibility to have that for them when they do retire.

Our economic growth in 2008. We are looking at a 2.7 percent economic growth. We are pleased to say that Manitoba has outpaced some of the other jurisdictions in Canada. We have the second consecutive year in 2007, with a growth of almost 3 percent. I think that is really because of the hard work that is done by my colleagues, all of my colleagues in government in regard to really making sure that we are making steady progress in regard to our economic progress here in Manitoba.

Our population growth is always something that the Tories across the way are always interested in. I'm sure they were a little chagrined when they found out that our latest population figures that were released by Stats Canada showed that we have grown the most in 25 years. Our employment rate is up by 1.6 percent; our average weekly earnings have grown by 4.2 percent; and our housing starts were up by 14 percent. I think this basically says, Mr. Speaker, it's a testament to the hard work that is being done by this government. We take very seriously the province's economy and to make sure that it's on a sound financial footing.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to congratulate Minister Selinger for all the hard work that he does because—excuse me, the Minister of Finance. I want to congratulate him because we all as ministers think that there are lots of very important things that we could have funded in our portfolios, and we all make passionate pleas to him and his colleagues at Treasury Board about the things that we want to do. But it's the Minister of Finance's responsibility to meet with all of us and put together a budget that really makes the best sense for all of our community stakeholders and our employers and labour and everyone in the province. Once again, I believe he has done a great job. I would like to put on the public record that he has been doing this for nine budgets now. It's a difficult job and I really want to congratulate the Minister of Finance for the hard work that he does in putting these budgets together.

Now I know that the Tories don't really want to hear about all of the tax savings for Manitobans. But I think it's important we talk about some of the tax savings that are in this budget, particularly at the same time that we have done increases to the minimum wage here in Manitoba. Our leader was the only leader in the election campaign in 2007 that put his platform on minimum wage in the public domain. He said that we would increase the minimum wage. We have raised the minimum wage from \$8 to \$8.50, and that was effective April 1, Mr. Speaker. We have

restored the purchasing power of the minimum wage to low-income earners. I think that that's important because there weren't a lot of increases to the minimum wage by the previous government. I think it's important to be predictable and to make sure that we give the employers lots of notice in regard to those minimum wages and those increases.

What we have done, Mr. Speaker, at the same time, is we have also made serious decreases to the business tax here in Manitoba. When we got into government, the small-business tax for our business employers, which are a huge part of our Manitoba economy, was 8 percent. We have made huge, huge headway on reducing that tax. It will now be reduced by 1 percent. That is a huge saving to our business employers and we will do that at the same time as we are increasing the minimum wage, because we're trying to be fair and balanced.

I often get from the employer community that one of the things that we should be doing instead of that is raising the basic personal exemption. Well, we have done that as well. We've raised the basic personal exemption six times since we got into government. We've raised it by 57 percent. Budget 2008 raises that basic personal exemption, once again, by \$100. So we are making progress on that tax savings for Manitobans. *[interjection]* Absolutely.

Another area that we hear a lot about is the payroll tax. Well, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, but the Tories across the way were in government for 12 years and they never touched the payroll tax. They promised they were going to reduce the payroll tax. They made that pledge during an election campaign, but, once again, we saw when they got into power and after they'd made those promises, did they follow through on their promises? No. They did not make any changes to the payroll tax. We made changes to the payroll tax, and we took 600 employers off the payroll tax and changed the threshold. That is another thing that we have done for our employers in our community at the same time that we have raised—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) will have 20 minutes remaining.

Before I adjourn the House, could I ask the honourable members to help me welcome, in the Speaker's Gallery, my niece Sherry Hickes, who came all the way from Churchill for a quick visit. So welcome.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

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