



First Session- Thirty-Seventh Legislature

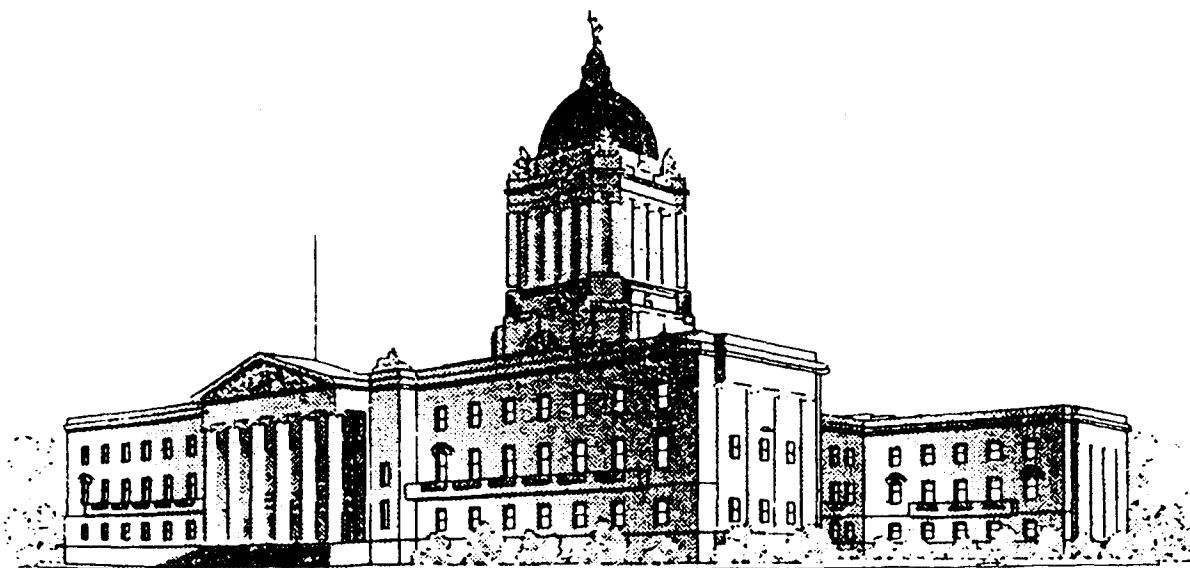
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 16, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I have a statement for the House, Mr. Speaker.

As Minister of Family Services and Housing and the lead minister for the Healthy Child Initiative, I am rising today to inform the Legislative Assembly about our 2000 Manitoba Prairie Northern Conference on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome held this past weekend, May 11 to 13. The Prairie Northern Partnership was launched initially in February of 1998 when the first conference was held in May of 1999 in Alberta.

The initial partnership was the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and we were very pleased in January of this year to extend an invitation to the territories to join in this initiative, which they all agreed to do. So the 2000 conference brought together over 750 people from the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta and the territories of Yukon, Nunavut and Northwest Territories.

I was very pleased also that the Secretary of State for Children and Youth, Ethel Blondin-Andrew, took the opportunity to announce the formation of a national FAS advisory committee to Health Canada and to stress that ministry's commitment to harmonizing federal, provincial and territorial strategies in regard to fetal alcohol syndrome prevention and awareness. Many of the appointees to that committee were very active in planning and co-ordinating the conference.

Fetal alcohol syndrome, as I think all members know, is a devastating tragedy that has

affected thousands of Manitoba families. The social and emotional costs of each child born who is affected by alcohol are incalculable, and we know that the cost of supporting one child with FAS is more than \$1.5 million over his or her lifetime.

I want to call on all of us here today, and to our partner assemblies in the Prairie Northern Partnership, to support action towards educating communities and individuals about the risks of drinking during pregnancy. However, awareness alone is not enough to address this problem. Women addicted to alcohol and drugs require compassionate support to heal themselves and to lead healthy lives with their children.

I am very pleased to inform the House that the conference was a great success and that, through the Prairie Northern FAS Partnership, a conference will continue to be held annually to continue to raise awareness amongst our community members and to profile effective FAS programs from the prairies and from the North.

I am asking each of our members today here to make prevention of fetal alcohol syndrome and the awareness of the strategies that are effective to do that a priority in all our constituencies and to join with us in this fight against this completely preventable birth defect. Thank you.

* (13:35)

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I would like to thank the Minister for his statement. Certainly the issue of fetal alcohol syndrome is one that when we were in government was of major concern to us as well, hence the involvement of our government in creating some of the initiatives to address this disease which is 100% preventable. The education and awareness around the issue is certainly one that requires our true commitment and focus. I am glad to see that another conference has been held and that there

are other partners now involved, because certainly the partnership will enhance the efforts of this program.

I am also pleased to see that the Secretary of State for Children and Youth also took the opportunity to announce the formation of a national committee to address this issue. I think this will lead to further good work in the area of fetal alcohol syndrome prevention and awareness. We certainly look forward to hearing more about the initiatives on this issue.

When I was still working as a registered nurse I can recall being in the nursery where there was a baby with fetal alcohol syndrome, and it is one of the saddest, saddest issues, because you have a crying baby and you cannot pick up this child because the child cannot bear to be touched. It is an absolutely excruciating feeling to be standing there when you are a mother yourself, and you are not able to pick up and nurture this crying child.

So, certainly, we are very interested in the promotion of any efforts that will deal with the issue of fetal alcohol syndrome. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask for leave to speak on the Minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member have leave?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Occupational Safety and Health Week

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, an annual co-operative effort by Canada, Mexico and the United States. The goal of North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, NAOSH, is to focus the attention of employers, employees, the general public and all

partners in occupational safety and health in the three countries on the importance of preventing injury and illness in the workplace.

This year's theme is Healthy Workers: Healthy Business. The objectives of North American Occupational Safety and Health Week are to increase employees, employers and public understanding of the benefits of investment in occupational safety and health, to raise the awareness of the role and contribution of safety and health professionals, and to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses by encouraging new safety and health activities.

In order to reach that goal, one has to think about occupational health and safety prevention. To achieve good results in occupational safety and health prevention, the following elements have been found to be critical: Corporate executives must exercise leadership and responsibility for safety matters; employers and employees must give their full commitment; occupational safety and health committees must demonstrate their effectiveness; and governments must exercise vigilance.

Partnerships in occupational safety and health are also a crucial element to success. The Workers Compensation Board and the Workplace Safety and Health Division of the Department of Labour have strengthened their alliance to work co-operatively to address safety and health issues. They are focussing on the high injury rates of our youth and also looking at ways to make prevention activities more effective. They have been using data to zero in on those workplaces most in need. Only 50 workplaces in Manitoba account for almost one quarter of all of our time-loss injuries. This year, the Workplace Safety and Health Division will audit these 50 companies and others in order to maximize their performance.

This is in addition to the division's traditional emphasis on high-hazard jobs in industry sectors such as mining, construction, manufacturing and newer activities like ergonomic interventions in enterprises with high soft-tissue injury rates. This year I have also asked my advisory council on Workplace Safety and Health to increase their level of work activity and look at several key areas, including ergonomics, an area where we are learning more about the issues and how best to address them;

violence, a growing area of concern; youth injuries—new workers have the highest level of injury rates; and farm safety, an area that continues to have high injury rates; and ways of making our enforcement more effective.

* (13:40)

Everyone plays a role in creating a safe and healthy work environment. Both employers and workers must join together to identify hazards, evaluate and assess the risks and identify and implement measures to protect workers from workplace injury and disease. This improved work environment creates more productive work places, having a significant economic benefit, as well as the benefit to society in general.

The Department of Labour is committed to reducing the incidence of workplace injuries and diseases. When we do this, everyone benefits.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I, too, wish to stand and recognize the North American Occupational Safety and Health Week or NAOSH, as it is so commonly referred to. In fact, NAOSH seems to be a by-product of the NAFTA agreement, the North American Free Trade Agreement, which I know was so roundly supported in this House, and we are glad to see that these initiatives now are not just based in one country but are in fact based all through North America. That is another one of the positive effects of NAFTA that we all support in this House.

I would like to point out to the House, Mr. Speaker, that yesterday I rose during Members' Statements and I addressed this Chamber and indicated that certainly we on this side of the House wanted to recognize this important NAOSH week. I am glad that the Minister took my advice and she had her department write up a statement and today got up, and I have to say it is a very impressive statement.

Once again, as I spoke when I addressed the House on the Budget, we on this side are more than willing to reach down and give the Government a hand up whenever they need it, and this was another one of those instances.

Insofar as NAOSH is concerned, in fact, yes, I think we all agree that the goal is to increase

employees', employers' and public understanding of the benefits of investing in occupational safety and health. For, Mr. Speaker, if I may refer you to Hansard from yesterday, I mentioned that each year more than 700 people die at work alone, that is just in Canada, and most of these accidents could have been prevented. So it is very important that you have this relationship between employees, employer and public understanding, and it certainly is important for a modern society such as we have.

We on this side in the Progressive Conservative Party also support the need to raise the awareness of the role in contribution of safety and health professionals. We also support to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses by encouraging new safety and health initiatives. Yes, we agree with the Minister, in order to reach that goal, one has to think about occupational safety and health prevention.

Again, the beauty of this is it will be a North American project, brought on by free trade, which I know the Government and certainly the Opposition on this side support greatly. Again, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister mentioned, to achieve good results in occupational safety and health prevention, the following elements have found to be critical. As the Minister mentioned, corporate executives must continue to exercise leadership and responsibility for safety matters, and in fact certainly we commend them on the kinds of things they have done. Employers and employees must give their full commitment, and we are pleased that they continue to do that. Occupational safety and health committees must demonstrate their effectiveness—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the Honourable Member, but *Beauchesne's* Citation 351 indicates the Speaker limits the Opposition reply to a period not to exceed the time taken by the Minister. I note the Honourable Member's comments are now considerably longer than those of the Minister and I would ask the Honourable Member to please conclude your remarks.

Mr. Schuler: In conclusion, as I said in my comments yesterday, we certainly are in support of this week, the NAOSH week, and we certainly appreciate the fact that this is a North

American event. I would like to thank the Minister for having taken the advice of the Opposition in having brought this to the attention of this Chamber.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask for leave to speak on the Minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following reports, copies of which have been previously distributed: The Collective Agreement Board, 1998-99 Annual Report and the Public Schools Finance Board Annual Report for the year ending June 30, 1999.

* (13:45)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Question Period I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have with us today 26 Grade 9 students from River West Park school under the direction of Ms. Tammy Rak. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Charleswood (Ms. Driedger).

Also, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my right where we have with us this afternoon Father Don Malinowski, former MLA for the constituencies of Point Douglas and St. Johns.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

First Time New Homebuyers Program Elimination

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the First Minister. In the Budget that was delivered last week by his government there was

a provision that was not mentioned, nor was it talked about by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), which was of course the scrapping of the new home-owners rebate. That particular rebate was seen as a significant advantage by the Manitoba Home Builders Association as well as the 1500 families who over recent years utilized that provision to buy their first houses. My question to the Premier is: Who was consulted before that decision was made?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I just received my City of Winnipeg property tax bill today. I, like every Manitoban, just got a major rebate in the sense we received a property tax reduction, with the property tax credits that were in the Budget, today.

That is a \$25-million property tax rebate to all citizens of Manitoba, those people interested in buying a new home, those people interested in buying a used home or a formerly owned home, or those people already living in their homes or apartment dwellers who can file on their income tax next year. That is \$25 million for all home-owners in Manitoba. We think that is a fairer way to go.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, of course, the First Minister did not answer the question about who was consulted. I will be more direct, so that he understands what I am getting at.

Why did the Government ignore the Manitoba Home Builders Association's requests for a meeting to discuss this very subject?

I have the City of Winnipeg's 2000 Home Renovation Tax Assistance Program, and I note that the City of Winnipeg has retained their home-owner assistance program. I wonder whether or not he consulted with the City of Winnipeg before they made this decision, and why he did not allow the Home Builders Association to meet and discuss this matter with him and his ministers.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite knows that this was a program that was extended to March 31, 2000. It was not extended beyond

that by the former government, nor was it extended by us beyond the date.

Mr. Filmon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we certainly know that they scrapped it. He does not have to tell us that. We found that out, and it has now become public knowledge.

First, the hardworking middle-income Manitobans become the highest paying personal income taxpayers in Canada, and second, he scraps the home-owner rebate so that these middle-income Manitobans cannot get the extra benefit that they were looking for in order to buy a house here.

Does the First Minister not realize that by doing all of this he has given the best promotion piece to Ontario and Saskatchewan they could ever want to have to attract these young mobile and hardworking middle-income Manitobans?

Mr. Doer: I am pleased that unlike last year, '99, the last year of the former government where growth was 2.2 percent, growth is now projected at 2.7 percent. Greater growth means greater activity in the housing—*[interjection]* Mr. Speaker, 2.2, 2.7. Greater growth in the economy, we believe, and indications so far to us have indicated greater economic growth, including greater growth in the housing sector, whether it is new housing, rental housing, existing housing stock that is being resold. We believe that \$25 million in rebates to all home-owners through a property tax credit is more a decrease in taxes than the \$900,000 that the members opposite failed to extend past April 1, 2000.

If my memory is correct, this is the first time in years I can remember where my property taxes have actually gone down not only because of the work of the municipality but also because of the property tax credits brought in by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) less than a week ago.

*(13:50)

Income Tax Provincial Comparisons

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance defends making

Manitoba the highest taxed province in all of Canada by sending forth his spin doctors to complain to the media. He charges that his critics are being selective in their examples. Because of the Minister's lack of a long-term plan, the gap continues to grow at almost every income level in Manitoba.

Can the Minister advise this House why a single senior earning \$20,000 will within the next two years be paying almost 20 percent more personal income tax in Manitoba, compared to Saskatchewan and Ontario?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in the pamphlet that will be going to all Manitobans, we can see that for a single senior at an income of \$20,000, they will in the year 2000 get a tax reduction of \$135, in the year 2001 will get an additional tax reduction of \$267, in the year 2002 will get an additional tax reduction of \$289, for a total reduction of \$691, far surpassing anything the previous government offered to senior citizens.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, let us look at another income level. Why does the Minister choose to penalize a single person this year earning \$35,000 by paying 5 percent more taxes than Saskatchewan and over 40 percent more than Ontario? Where is the incentive to stay right here in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: I am glad the Member opposite raises the example of a single person at \$35,000, because that is also one that we examined in our analysis. Before I give the concrete information there, I should point out that the 50-50 plan had no tax reductions for the year 2001. Now, with respect to that single person, their tax reduction for the year 2000 will be \$188. Their tax reduction for the year 2001 will be \$259, and their tax reduction for the year 2002 will be \$310, for a total reduction of \$757.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I think it is worth pointing out that our budget would have introduced the full, complete flow-through of the federal budget.

I want to ask a final question, because this shows the impact to Manitobans of them not doing that today. Where is the Minister of

Finance's balanced approach when a \$60,000 family of four will pay almost \$300 more in taxes today than they did on May 9 of this year when his government brought down their budget? Why is he penalizing this family by them paying more taxes today than they were just a few days ago on May 9?

Mr. Selinger: The \$60,000-income family was one that we paid particular attention to in redesigning our new tax system. If you take a look at previous experience, that particular family unit was one of the most highly taxed in Canada under the regime for which the former minister opposite takes credit.

Now, what we have done, we have introduced the new feature called the family tax reduction in Manitoba. The family tax reduction will give greater tax reductions for children. As a result, a family of \$60,000-two-income earners will save \$269 in the year 2000, it will save \$601 in the year 2001, and it will save \$680 in the year 2002, for a total savings over the three years of \$1,550, which far surpasses anything the previous government had planned.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Kirkfield Park, on a new question.

Budget Income Tax

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): New question. Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question. All Manitobans need to this question is a yes or a no.

Mr. Speaker, if this Minister of Finance had left the tax system the same for the year 2000 as it was proposed to be for the year 2000 and did not delink the system, would Manitobans today be paying fewer taxes than is the case as a result of his budget? Just answer that question, yes or no.

* (13:55)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): As a result of tax reductions we brought in this year, the property tax reduction in particular, Manitobans are \$7 million better off than they would have been under the regime of the former government.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, obviously, by not answering the question, the Minister of Finance is telling Manitobans they are paying more taxes today as a result of his budget than they were on May 9 in this province. Why can he not just stand up and answer that very simple question? Had he left the tax system the same in the year 2000, would Manitobans be paying lower taxes today than they are as a result of his budget? Yes or no. just a yes or a no. That is all we want.

Mr. Selinger: The total savings to Manitobans includes the \$10 million passed through on the basic rates and, in addition to that, the \$26 million on the property tax credit, to the net result that Manitobans are \$7 million better off in tax reductions this year under our system.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, this is not a very difficult question. Surely the Minister of Finance should know the answer to this question. One questions all aspects of his budget and the ability to answer questions here. The calculations have been done. They have been run at every income level. I just ask the Minister of Finance to tell the truth to Manitobans today. As a result of his budget, by delinking from the federal system one year earlier, Manitobans are paying more taxes today than they were paying on May 9, the day before he brought down his budget. Just answer that question, yes or no, to all Manitobans.

Mr. Selinger: I think the Member opposite has perhaps a problem hearing my answer. Unlike the previous government, we made a commitment in the election to deliver a property tax rebate. We went beyond that to reform the tax system and, as a result, Manitobans are \$7 million better off this year, and next year—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It is very difficult to hear the Honourable Minister's answer.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as a result of the reductions we have made in taxes, Manitobans are clearly better off this year. They will even be better off next year, to the tune of \$68 million, and they will be better off the year after that to the tune of an additional \$34 million, for a net

reduction of \$102 million, plus what we have done this year in Manitoba taxes paid by the citizens of Manitoba.

Justice System

Member for Rupertsland's Comments

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Last fall in a CBC television documentary, the Minister was quoted in a statement that he made for that documentary that indicated that the justice system—the documentary was in reference to the gang trial and the courthouse. The Minister made a statement on that documentary that the justice system was systemically racially discriminating against Aboriginal people and that the courthouse in question was a symbol of that systemic racial discrimination. I would ask the Minister today if he will stand by that statement.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Yes, I will.

* (14:00)

Mr. Praznik: My supplementary is to the Minister of Justice.

Given that the Minister of Northern Affairs has made that statement and was very strong and, I believe, very honourable in his belief about that statement, could the Minister of Justice then tell us why he has taken the opposite view in dealing with gangs, by his press announcement today and other steps, which do not seem in any way to be reconciled to the concerns expressed by his Cabinet colleague? Why are we getting two views of gangs and the justice system from two different members of the same Cabinet?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I know in the last number of years I have had to get glasses. My eyesight is not as good as it used to be. I know my hair colour is changing a bit. I have to have yogurt more often. But I think, just now, my ears are starting to fail me. I heard the word "gangs" cross the lips of an opposition

member outside of a pre-election period. I cannot believe it.

Mr. Praznik: A further supplementary to the Minister of Justice. This is a very serious issue. His Cabinet colleague has made an extremely serious accusation against our justice system, so much so that the Minister's own Crown attorney, while he was Minister of Justice, wrote to that minister threatening a lawsuit because of the statements he has made.

Now I would like to ask the Minister of Justice: Does he take seriously the comments, the very, I think, well-meaning and heartfelt comments of his colleague about racial discrimination in the justice system? Does he take them seriously? If he does, why then have Crown attorneys under his watch threatened the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs with a lawsuit?

Mr. Robinson: Just to be fair so that everyone understands, the interview occurred on October 1. It was broadcast on November 15 on CBC News Magazine. The comments I made were general in nature. They reiterated what the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and a royal commission on Aboriginal people and other reports have said about the justice system in general and how it relates to Aboriginal people and how it has failed Aboriginal people. Beyond that, I would not like to make any comments because of the matter being before the courts.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a new question.

Mr. Praznik: It is clear from the news reports that no suit has in fact been filed by that Crown attorney with respect to comments from the Member for Rupertsland. So this matter, his statements, in which a Crown attorney working for this minister on this end of the bench has threatened a minister on that end of the bench with a lawsuit for his comments, no suit has in fact been filed. But, for the public, for the aboriginal community wanting to know what the truth is, I ask the Minister of Justice again: Does he support the comments made by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs that the justice system that he administers, in which his Crown attorney has threatened a lawsuit, is that

system systemically racist against Aboriginal people?

Mr. Mackintosh: I find it alarming that the Honourable Member, who I know is full well aware not just of the sub judice convention but is aware that the matter of which he speaks is before the courts in Manitoba, it is a live issue before a judge, and I am sure that he does not want to jeopardize that trial.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): I would like some clarification, Mr. Speaker. Was the Honourable Member up on a point of order or was he just answering to a question, because I did not hear an answer to the question at all, and I do not believe the Member had a point of order because he was speaking about a matter that was before the courts? As far as we know, this matter is not before the courts today. If it is, let us know which level it is at.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the Honourable Member's point of order, it is not a point of order, it is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: I also add, Mr. Speaker, that I have full confidence in the prosecution team on that trial. I might just add a final note that, when I came into the office of Attorney General, in the place where they put aside the reports that were produced for the ministers, there was the AJI report. It was still encased in plastic. That speaks very loudly of the concern of the members opposite for Aboriginal justice in this province. We are committed.

Gang Trial

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary to the Minister of Justice. He says to this House how committed he is, yet a Crown attorney in his employ threatens his colleague with a lawsuit for saying exactly what is in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. How does the Minister of Justice reconcile that fact?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): You know, Mr. Speaker, three and a half years ago we got up in

this Chamber, and we asked Manitobans for support for our calls for a comprehensive, focussed approach to deal with the criminality of gangs in Manitoba. I was very proud today to be able to announce, three and a half years later, a criminal organization and high-risk offender unit in the Department of Justice and new partnerships with community and antigang education strategies, something that I only wish the former government had acted on.

We would not have been in the situation we are in today if they had taken some—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): *Beauchesne's* 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

We will leave it at that.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all ministers that, according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 417, "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." I would just like to pass that on to all honourable ministers.

*(14:10)

* * *

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, the Minister's answer is exactly why there is an issue, because his statement today cannot be reconciled with the statement of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Robinson) who said that the courthouse, the whole gang trial activity, was symbolic—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): You just indicated from the House Leader for the Opposition that on citing *Beauchesne's* with respect to the rules of this House, a supple-

mentary question does not require a preamble. There were at least four sentences in that preamble, and I ask you to call the Member to order in the same fashion that you acknowledged the rules in your last ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order?

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I do understand that there is a rule in *Beauchesne's* that says we should quote the rule that is being broken in *Beauchesne's* and at least quote the number. If the Member could tell us which area of *Beauchesne's* he was debating, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

On the point of order, I would also like to take this moment to remind all honourable members that *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Would the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet please put his question.

Mr. Praznik: My supplementary question to the Minister of Justice is: How can this minister reconcile the statement he just made to the House that he wants to strengthen the attack and fight on gangs, when his own colleague the Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs in this province publicly said that the courthouse and the process is symbolic of a racially discriminatory system?

How can the Minister, in all honesty, reconcile that and allow his Crown attorney to write to that minister to threaten the lawsuit?

Mr. Mackintosh: I am not sure if the Member is suggesting that the Government in Manitoba turn a blind eye or ease up on the prosecution of crimes in Manitoba committed by whomever, Mr. Speaker.

But what this side does understand, unlike members opposite when they were in government, is that we must deal not only with crime but with the causes of crime. We are committed to that, and today we announced an initiative to begin a movement in that direction. Thank you.

Child and Family Services Aboriginal and Métis Agencies

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Aboriginal Anglican minister Rosemary Forbes has stated publicly on two occasions in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Thompson Nickel Belt News* that she fears Aboriginal peoples are not ready to take control of Child and Family Services for Aboriginal peoples.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services if he has similar concerns, and if so, what his plans are to address them?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult not to be offended by the question itself, but let me try to respond. I have full confidence that First Nations, Aboriginal people and Métis people are completely capable of looking after the needs of their communities with the support of their own communities and the many groups that have worked to develop a high level of professionalism in agencies such as: Awasis, West Region, South East, DOCFS, Anishinabe, Peguis.

Child and Family Services agencies in First Nations communities look after over 1700 children on an in-care basis. They have developed some of the most advanced services in communities such as Nelson House, where I was privileged to attend the opening of their healing centre, along with the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton).

They have provided some exemplary practices which, quite frankly, could be applied with great success in the inner city of Winnipeg. I am looking forward not just to their assumption over a period of time of the mandate, but I am looking forward to their sharing with us some of the things that they do that frankly are more successful in child welfare and in maintaining families than we have been able to manage in

some of our jurisdictions. So the answer to the question is: I am confident that we are not only doing the right thing, but that First Nations and Métis people of this province are quite ready to accept that challenge.

Mrs. Driedger: From that response, I am assuming then that he does not support the concerns raised by Aboriginal Anglican minister Rosemary Forbes.

I would like to ask him: What time frame does the Minister of Family Services have in mind for the Aboriginal Child and Family Services to be delivering its services?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, I think that the simplest way to answer that question is to remind the Member of some history, that in 1981 the DOCFS agency began service, the first in Canada and I believe at that time the first in North America, although I may stand to be corrected on the second point. Certainly the first in Canada.

Over the next 19 years, the schools of social work at the universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba, Red River Community College. Assiniboine Community College have all taken a role in partnership with First Nations and Métis communities to train increasing numbers of people from the Aboriginal community to the point today where the vast majority of staff employed by First Nations, the nine mandated Aboriginal First Nations or other Child and Family Service agencies that currently exist, the vast majority of those staff are First Nations or Aboriginal staff.

I am completely confident that, over the next period of time, we will be able to increase that training—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, he did not answer the question but I am not going back to that one, because I do not think I will be successful this time around either.

Can the Minister, since he has promised that there would not be any staff reductions at Winnipeg Child and Family Services with the

introduction of the Métis and Aboriginal Child and Family Services Agencies, clarify what role the current CFS staff will play once those two new agencies are on-line?

Mr. Sale: First of all, I think it is really important to distinguish between the question of no change in resources versus the employment and the support for people who are currently the staff. Obviously if we move something in the order of 1000 or 1500 children from one jurisdictional mandate to another mandate then there will be changes in how those mandates are funded, and there will be shifts in terms of the staffing involved. The question of secure employment and working with the existing staff to manage that transition is obviously one to which we are deeply committed.

In terms of the time frame, I think it is important that the Member understand that the protocol which was signed and which she was also aware of provides for a planning process that is a partnership among the three parties, the Métis Nation, First Nations and the Government of Manitoba. In that planning partnership, we will identify time frames, staffing issues, training issues, fiscal issues, legal issues and all of the complexities that are involved.

Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Provincial Auditor's Report

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Provincial Auditor in his report revealed major problems and disgraceful circumstances in the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. Although the former Premier has indicated he was unaware of the problems, surely the publicly appointed Board of the Corporation should have known.

My question to the Premier is: Did the Board know and if not, why not?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, a former member of the Board apparently was on radio today saying that all reports and records were provided to the former government and to the former Treasury Board. Unfortunately, the chair of the Board was not able to be interviewed by the Provincial Auditor and, having said that, I think, even in this Chamber last year, we asked

questions in opposition on the cost overruns, I think in April and May of last year, to members opposite when they were in government.

I would say that the findings are extremely disturbing. The action we had to take yesterday and announced again today with the Minister and the chair of the Board is necessary to stabilize the Corporation and provide integrity to the public. I think that our job now is to move beyond the Auditor's report and restore integrity to this Corporation and make sure that there is a board and a CEO in place. We have appointed Mr. Winston Hodgins, who is a person well-known to both sides of the aisle here, who I think has the integrity to provide stability to the Corporation, to give straight answers to the public in this Legislature and to start to stabilize the organization.

* (14:20)

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Premier: Since it seems extraordinarily unusual for a former chair of the Board not to co-operate with the Provincial Auditor, is it not part of the normal duties and responsibility of publicly appointed chairs to be fully co-operative at all times with the Provincial Auditor?

Mr. Doer: Well, I believe it is, and I believe the Provincial Auditor has powers that the individual could utilize. This Legislature has powers that it could utilize. The Provincial Auditor chose not to use the powers in the report that I read, that he made the decision not to compel further evidence. I respect the Provincial Auditor's judgment here. I think it is important that publicly appointed chairs report to the Provincial Auditor, and I am certainly going to respect the judgments made by the Auditor on what further action he feels we should take in government on the matter raised by the Member opposite. I respect the judgment the Auditor himself used on the matter of his right to compel a person to testify.

Mr. Gerrard: My second supplementary to the Premier: Since the Government has only part of the story, what is the Government going to do to get the rest of the story and make sure that publicly appointed chairs will indeed be fully co-operative in the future?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I believe legislative committees have extreme powers granted to them, and I also believe that legislative committees are very careful to utilize those powers in a democracy. I also know that the Auditor, if I am recalling correctly, does have certain rights under the Act. I know that this Legislature could establish an inquiry under The Manitoba Evidence Act to compel witnesses to testify. But the bottom line is the cost overrun numbers are out.

The other allegations, some have been verified in the report; others require further work by us in government to deal with the corporation. We felt that the report was of such a sufficient and serious nature that action regrettably had to take place with the CEO, and we did that yesterday. We felt the real issue here is who do we replace the individual with. We believe the individual we have chosen on an acting basis is a person who has worked in the public service for over 30 years, a person who has respect from all members of this Legislature and I believe can bring respect back to the reporting to the public that is so very essential right now to restore integrity to the Lotteries Corporation.

Justice System Member for Rupertsland's Comments

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, earlier in Question Period, we witnessed what is a major division in policy within the Government offices. On one hand, we have the Minister of Northern and Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Robinson) making a public statement, very impassioned, in which one has no reason to believe he does not firmly believe, that the justice system of this province has racially discriminated against Aboriginal people. On the other hand, we have an Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh) who has brought in an even more severe regime in this particular area that involves even random urinalysis checks of the same people that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs says are being racially discriminated against. I ask the First Minister how he reconciles these two absolutely diametrically opposed positions within his Cabinet and how he can have two ministers with absolutely opposite viewpoints on this issue remain in his Cabinet?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs made a very straightforward comment about the respect he has for the court process. The Minister of Justice has talked about the integrity of the existing trial, and I would suggest to members in this Chamber, when there are issues that we are discussing that may be part of the trial, that we be very, very careful about the process. The comments made by the Member opposite were made prior to his being—*[interjection]* and I feel that the comments he made certainly cleared the record for my purposes.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I ask the First Minister how he could have such low standards for his Cabinet when he has a minister who clearly says that the courthouse is symbolic of a systemic racial discrimination in the justice system, and he has another minister whose Crown attorneys send a letter to the First Minister threatening with a lawsuit. How can he reconcile within his Cabinet two such strongly held different opinions? Which minister will he ask to resign?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, a letter that is given to any member in this Chamber—and I daresay there were letters last year dealing with the comments made by the former First Minister on the Cross Lake situation. There may be even lawsuits arising from that letter that we will be responsible to work with the former First Minister on. I have made comments before about an explosion in St. Boniface and had threats every day about lawsuits and letters and threats. That is part of the democratic system. In fact, I note today that we are being threatened with defamation suits given the fact that we are taking action on the Auditor's report. I need no lecture from the Member opposite on standards of Cabinet ministers, when we asked him directly questions last year on overspending on the casinos, and he failed to answer to this Chamber.

Mr. Praznik: I would remind the First Minister of the immunity of this House from defamation cases that both his ministers enjoy.

I ask the First Minister again, when he has a senior Cabinet minister who represents a large segment of this province who feels so strongly

about this issue, how can he allow his Attorney General to have a Crown attorney threaten a lawsuit against that minister for statements that he honestly believes? How can he allow that to happen and have his Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) bring in a program that will involve random urinalysis of those same people that his other minister is saying are being discriminated against? How can he reconcile that to the Aboriginal community of Manitoba?

Mr. Speaker: The question has been put.

Mr. Doer: The individual cases are before the court. We certainly respect the—

An Honourable Member: The policy is not before the court.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, there are cases before the court, and if members opposite do not understand that, then it is regrettable. I recall last year at this time there was an allegation made by the former premier about an individual lawyer who then in turn turned around and sued the individual. Lawyers are free to do what they want to do. We feel that the integrity of the Justice Department has been maintained by all of us in government since our swearing in on October 5, and we believe that is very, very crucial to us.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Citizenship Court

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): On April 4, I had the pleasure of attending the first-ever citizenship ceremony in Winkler, and it was indeed an auspicious occasion for all involved. Twenty-three new Canadians affirmed their allegiance before Judge Arthur Miki at a packed ceremony at the Winkler Civic Centre. They came from Mexico, China, Ghana, Paraguay and Bosnia Herzegovina.

Achieving citizenship is extremely important and brings with it many rights and privileges such as the right to vote, to hold office, to live

free from discrimination and persecution, to practise the religion of one's choice and the right to be treated with dignity. Our nation still remains one of the most desirable and attractive places in which to live. It is a magnet for people coming from all areas of the world, people who want to seek their opportunity for economic opportunity, for education, for freedom and for life in a democratic environment that is perhaps more egalitarian and more democratic than any other nation in the world.

I am so pleased that these individuals have chosen Manitoba, and the Pembina constituency in particular, as a place to pursue their dreams. Our province has grown and prospered with the contributions of immigrants, and we look forward to continuing that growth.

As these new citizens realize their aspirations, they help build a more promising future for all Manitobans. I would like to wish them all the best as they pursue their dreams.

Harold Harvey Kletke

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I stand before the House today to pay tribute to Harold Harvey Kletke, a member of the Manitoba Natural Products Marketing Council, who passed away suddenly on Friday, May 5, 2000. Harold was appointed to the Manitoba Council on August 3, 1988, and has served as a member since that time.

Harold grew up on the farm in the community of Rosenfeld, Manitoba, and lived and farmed in Teulon for the past 55 years. His agricultural accomplishments were many, and both he and his wife Shirley were recognized on a number of occasions. In 1979, they were awarded the Manitoba Seed Growers' Association Outstanding Service Award; in 1982, Red River Exhibition Farm Family of the Year, which was the first in the Interlake. In 1998, they received a Robertson Association Award for "conspicuous fidelity and success in a growers' contribution to community and years as a seed grower."

* (14:30)

Harold has been a seed grower since 1949 and has maintained both select status for cereals and foundation status for canola. He was also one of the first producers in the province to produce canary seed. More recently, in 1996, 1997 and 1998, Harold was presented with the Walter Borostik Royal Exhibitor Award at the Brandon Royal Winter Fair for having the highest total points.

Besides serving as a member of the Manitoba Marketing Council, Harold found the time to serve on a number of other organizations, such as the Manitoba Seed Growers' Association, Manitoba Farm Bureau, Rockwood Municipal Council, Teulon Agricultural Extension Advisory Committee, the Manitoba Pool Elevator Local, and the Red River Co-op.

I have had the pleasure to meet with Harold to discuss Manitoba's agricultural industry and to share ideas and thoughts on the industry's future direction. The seed-growing industry in our province has lost an outstanding individual and a spokesperson. To Harold's family, especially his wife Shirley, his sons, Jerry and his wife Lisa, Lynn and his wife Karen, and his grandchildren, Brett, Paige and Marshall, our prayers and our thoughts are with you at this time.

St. Claude Fire Hall

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Recently, I had the pleasure of participating in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new St. Claude Fire Hall. It was most fitting that this fine new facility was open on the final day of National Volunteer Week as the entire structure was paid for without any direct financial assistance from the federal or provincial governments.

I know that a lot of effort went into raising the money for this much needed facility. A variety of fundraising projects were undertaken, including students selling pizzas, amateur talent shows being held, and local farmers, businesses and individuals who gave financial donations. As well, many hundreds of hours of sweat equity were devoted to the construction of the building.

Seeing this project through to completion was not without its challenges. In addition to having to raise the needed funds, Mother Nature

tried to scuttle the project. Last year, in the initial stages of the construction process, a severe windstorm toppled the structure. However, local residents were not deterred and attacked the project with even greater intensity.

As I said at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, this project is a testament to the considerable talents of the volunteers who were involved with it. It is also fitting that this building houses dedicated local firefighters, all of whom are volunteers. When duty calls, they are happy to leave their offices, their tractors and their businesses to answer the call.

I want to also mention Mr. Georges Jobin who was instrumental in bringing the new facility about. Please join me in congratulating Mr. Jobin and all who were involved in the construction of the St. Claude Fire Hall. Thank you very much.

Interlake Natural Gas Pipeline

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to highlight this government's commitment of well over \$2 million in the 2000 Budget to the construction of the Interlake natural gas pipeline which will provide service to several communities in the Interlake, including Arborg and Riverton. The confirmation of funding for this construction project comes at a critical time for the people in the Interlake.

The discontinuance of the Crow freight subsidy and depressed prices for cereal crops have put many grain farmers in a difficult position. The railroads and grain companies, in an effort to streamline their operations and maximize their profits, have largely completed the process of dismantling the infrastructure in this region. It is expected that the last remaining rail line terminating in Arborg will be gone in less than two years.

Now modern Agricore and Paterson grain terminals have been built just outside of Winnipeg adjacent to the main east-west lines. Many farmers will now have to truck their grain over a hundred miles to reach the new elevators. This increased level of trucking in turn has put increased pressure on the provincial road infra-

structure, which has been left in a sad state of disrepair typical of the previous Filmon administration. Their message was always: Send a Conservative member to the Legislature or you get nothing.

The construction of this gas pipeline will facilitate the move towards diversification and value-added processing that this region is now in such dire need of. It is also a sure sign that this government is firmly committed to industrial development and diversification of agriculture in rural Manitoba. The people of the Interlake are grateful that their needs are now being addressed. Thank you.

Merv Anderson

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): I am pleased to rise and congratulate Merv Anderson, a teacher and leader of the Teens Against Drunk Driving group at Fort Richmond Collegiate. This past winter he was the recipient of a Manitoba Public Insurance RoadWise Community Individual Award. Mr. Anderson was recognized for his work in educating young people about the very serious consequences of drinking and driving. Mr. Anderson, who lost his sister to a drunk driver, has been speaking out on his own personal tragedy in order to educate others about the risks they take every time they become involved with alcohol in a motor vehicle.

* (14:40)

Fort Richmond Collegiate's Teens Against Drunk Driving group is one of the most active in Manitoba. Mr. Anderson has been the teacher-sponsor of the group since 1990. His receiving the RoadWise Award is a testament, not only to his own personal efforts to bring the drinking and driving message forward, but is also a testament to the hard work and dedication of groups such as Teens Against Drunk Driving.

Manitoba has some of the toughest drinking and driving legislation in North America, but legislation alone does not always provide the necessary human face needed to drive home the tough message about the perils of drinking and driving. We should all be grateful that individuals such as Merv Anderson are going the

extra mile to bring this important message forward. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET DEBATE (Fifth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Adjourned debate, fifth day of debate, on the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the proposed motion of the Honourable Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Burrows, who has eight minutes remaining.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, before I resume where I left off yesterday, I would like to acknowledge that in the public gallery today, during Question Period, was Mr. Mike Sotas, a long-time supporter of the CCF and the NDP and a supporter of Burrows NDP since 1988. If he is here observing Question Period today, then spring seeding must be over, because I know he goes to his son's farm to help with spring seeding every year. It is a pleasure to see him down here observing the proceedings today.

When I left off yesterday, I was saying that I visited an adult literacy program, a program that is in Shaughnessy School. We were talking about some of the barriers to employment, because most of the students are on social assistance. We also talked about some of the problems of living on social assistance.

I asked them about the National Child Benefit, and I said: Would it be helpful to you if you could keep, say, \$100 a month? They said yes. And I said: Would it be helpful if you could keep \$50 a month? And they said yes. I said: Would it be helpful if you could keep only \$25 a month? And they said yes. I said would it be helpful if you could keep only \$10 a month? And they said yes. So I asked them: Well, what would you use it for? And they said: We would buy milk for our children.

As I was going through my budget file, I came across a list of answers to the question: What is it like to be poor? I suspect that this list

was put together by one of my colleagues in conversation with people from the community at North End Community Ministry sometime in the 1980s, and I do not think that this has changed at all since then. In fact, it is probably gotten worse after 11 years of Conservative government.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So, here is how these women answered the question: What is it like to be poor? It is having to wear the same jeans all the time. It is having no food for your hungry two-year-old. It is having to live with men who do have money or food in exchange for sexual favours. It is sleeping on a mattress on the floor. It is having little or no good furniture. It is having people look down on you. It is going to court for theft, because you do not have the money to buy. It is having to take the bus or rely on the charity of others to take you. It is having little self-esteem or confidence, so little that making phone calls is difficult. It is letting others have control of your life, so much control that it is difficult making minor decisions. It is telling whoever asks about your personal life, not having a sense of self-privacy of what is appropriate to tell others.

It is relying on drugs or alcohol to forget about my hurt; hurt from not being able to provide my boy with the things he needs or wants; hurt from strained family relations; hurt from boyfriends not returning my love; hurt about my pregnancy; hurt about wanting things I will never have. It is feeling alone, rejected, useless, inferior. It is wanting to sleep life away at times. It is not having enough education to get a straight job. It is being nice to people because they have power over you. It is not being able to go on trips, not being able to go out of Winnipeg. It is not being able to afford a phone. It is having people prejudge you because of your colour or your clothes.

So what is the positive benefit of being able to keep the increase in the National Child Benefit starting July 1? Well, I think it is very positive for these people. They are going to use it to buy food for their children and clothes for their children. I would like to highlight some of the other things we have done to assist people who live in poverty. In addition to our building

independence strategy, we will provide parents on income assistance with greater work incentives and more direct links to employment and training. We know that families and children need to live in vibrant and healthy communities.

Our Neighbourhoods Alive! commitment will bring community development agencies together with government to rebuild city neighbourhoods. In this budget, we have committed funds to Neighbourhoods Alive! which will help communities to rebuild and revitalize declining housing stock, develop economic development initiatives, including employment and training for local people and implement community safety initiatives.

Our new Healthy Child Initiative will focus on prenatal nutrition, parent-child centres, adolescent pregnancy prevention and a greater role for public health services in our schools. A centrepiece of the Healthy Child Initiative will be the development of the prenatal benefit that will work in a similar way to the National Child Benefit. We know that prenatal nutrition is key to a healthy start for babies. Babies born at a normal birth weight have a better chance of healthy growth and development throughout their formative years. The prenatal benefit will be developed over the coming year and implemented in the years to follow. We were educated about some of these issues by Dr. Fraser Mustard who came and spoke to our caucus. I know that the former Minister of Family Services also invited him to Manitoba as a guest and talked to the Conservative caucus. I am told. We look forward to building on his recommendations.

Like many of our initiatives, Healthy Child will be implemented with a community development approach. Using parent-child centres as an example, our government will provide the tools needed to develop parent-child centres in a way that best suits individual communities. This grassroots approach ensures that programs reflect community needs, and values and considerable amount of research has already been done on this and we know that they are effective.

Our focus on early childhood is also demonstrated through our government's commit-

ment to quality child care. In order to stabilize the child care system, we are adding \$9.1 million to the child care budget. This addition to the Budget means that there will be more money for subsidized child care cases and licensed spaces and more money for children with disabilities in the child care system. We know that the quality of child care depends on the quality and education of the staff. We need to adequately compensate staff so that they will stay in centres and make early childhood education a profession. In addition, a new funding model will work to attract and maintain a well-trained workforce which is vital in providing quality care.

Another announcement that was made very recently was that of a long-standing commitment that we would restore funding to child care centres—sorry, we announced that. We also announced that we were going to restore funding to Aboriginal friendship centres. This is something that we had promised in 1993, I believe, when their funding was totally eliminated by the previous government. We are restoring funding to friendship centres throughout Manitoba, and I am very pleased that this is another promise that we are keeping. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): I must caution my own colleagues before they applaud me, because they will not applaud me for what I say. I want to, in the first instance, applaud the Government for bringing down a budget that I know many Manitobans can be very pleased with and proud of, and one that I quite frankly am pretty pleased with and proud of in certain aspects.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I have to recall, I understand that a lot of new members were here when the now-Premier and others violently fought us on the balanced budget legislation. It was terrible, it was wrong, not to be considered, and they stood in their places and voted against it.

The greatest form of flattery is when your opponent does what you did and what you recommended. We cannot deny that, when you cut through the bottom line after four or five or six months of really some silly politics about \$300-million, \$400-million deficits, they did, in

fact, Mr. Former Deputy Minister or Mr. Minister of Finance, bring in a balanced budget with a modest surplus. I take note of that; I acknowledge that. I applaud them for that because we did, in that horrendous balanced-budget legislation, leave a loophole for an incoming government. You could have, in the first instance, posted a significant deficit—\$200 million, \$300 million \$400 million—but you chose not to, and I acknowledge that. I think that is something to at least put on the record.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the fact of the matter that they chose—I will come to the fundamental differences between them and us, and why I will feel very comfortable in voting against this budget, and speaking against this budget, because of what I accept as being fundamental philosophical differences between our socialist friends on that side of the House and Conservative members on this side of the House.

* (14:50)

My only difficulty with it is that I have spent my time working on and for and on behalf of and have had the support of Conservative people. I will get to my friend, I forget now what seat he is now representing. *[interjection]* Wellington.

There are fundamental philosophical differences in the House, as there should be. At different times they come to the fore, and at different times they become clear enough for people, the general electorate, the general public, to take note of and to make their wishes known in this instance. I can recall—and the Honourable Member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) in her speech kind of lectured us a little bit about how she was proud to be a social democrat. She listed off the various European countries and others that followed in that vein and in that suit. Well, let me tell you that I am very proud to be a Conservative. I am very proud to be a Mulroney Conservative because Prime Minister Mulroney will be acknowledged and recognized as having done some very courageous things for his country, for the country that we all stand up and say that we do our best to preserve and to protect.

His efforts, clearly, regrettably, lost him so much popularity—his efforts to bring unity to this

country, his efforts that brought on a crisis situation in this Chamber when one member here refused Manitoba to go along with what could have been a settlement of the decades-old strife between French and English in Canada, the Meech Lake Accord. We were prevented by a New Democratic Party member, I might add, from dealing with the issue in this Legislative Assembly. Mr. Mulroney did not stop at that. We tried again two years later with the Charlottetown Accord, which virtually all organized governmental, non-governmental organizations in the country supported. I am not saying that the Charlottetown Accord was perfect or right.

I am simply saying that the prime minister who was so vilified in this country to the extent that it has brought about fundamental change to the founding political party of this country, the Progressive Conservative Party, that some of us are having to deal with, quite frankly, in the next weeks and months, but what he did, what he was being vilified for attempting to bring together what Prime Minister Trudeau could not do, what other prime ministers could not do, and, regrettably, in the final analysis, he could not do. But he ought not to be faulted for trying.

Let us speak about some of the other things that we vilify the former prime minister so much about. Free trade. That is where our socialist friends really like to climb on that bandwagon with others, well-meant but ill-thought-out positions trotted out by people who like to wave the Canada flag. Free trade has done more—I will speak about Manitoba—but it has done more for Canada as a whole, but certainly for Manitoba, than anything else in terms of any other economic measure taken in the last 50, 60, 70 years. That cannot be quarrelled with; that cannot be argued with. Again, those very opponents like the then-Liberal Party nationally who fought it, what has Prime Minister Chrétien and Paul Martin and company done? Are they fighting free trade? No, they have expanded it, and we want to continue to expand it, as we should.

If there ever was some really questionable, fuzzy thinking on the part of so-called leaders, it is in our socialist camp who cannot bring it into their concept that trading together, doing business together, is far better than fighting each

other. It is far better than having other frictions together. It is the best way of bringing about a higher level of universal labour laws, of universal concerns, of environment concerns.

We just had a statement in the House today about workplace health and safety, about the co-operative work between Mexico and the United States and Canada. That is as a result of these international trade agreements.

We were told over and over again that elect another government and free trade would be thrown out of the window. Has it been thrown out of the window? Not at all. Now, let me say one more thing, speaking about the Budget. I know that this never goes down easy. Who likes taxes? But the dreaded GST tax, we all remember that. We all remember the leader of the Liberal Party, John Turner, trying to tear that phone book apart. He said: This is what we will do to the GST—or was that free trade? I forget. I think that was free trade. I am sorry, it was free trade. But certainly pardon me, I am getting my facts a little—Alzheimer's is making its approaches on me.

It was, I am certain, in Prime Minister Chrétien's red book that the GST would vanish from the surface of the earth here as far as Canada was concerned. Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, why do we have a GST? The GST happens to be a pretty fair tax. We want to forget about the hidden manufacturer's tax that it replaced. That was there on every car. on every fridge, on every farm tractor and something like that. We want to forget that. What Prime Minister Mulroney did was honest. What Michael Wilson did was honest. He put it up front where we could see it, and most other western industrialized nations have an added-value tax. That is what it was all about. But we vilified Prime Minister Mulroney for that, and we elect governments who said: Boy, elect us and we will get rid of it.

Has anybody stopped paying the GST? Is there any sign of the GST disappearing? Not at all. Again, copying, doing the right thing is perhaps the greatest compliment that governments can receive. So in that respect, I think the New Democrats have paid the former administration, the former premier, the former

Filion government, a very significant compliment by ensuring that in this their first budget they recognized what we were trying to do, we were trying to bring fiscal responsibility to the Province of Manitoba, was right. Even given their druthers, and I am sure there were pressures on the Premier (Mr. Doer), on the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) to do otherwise, but in the final analysis, common sense prevailed, and you brought in a balanced budget.

I take note of that. I congratulate your group for that. I think it is a responsible first budget to bring in. I have made no attempt not to acknowledge that in this Chamber or for the record.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, what I cannot understand is why reasonably intelligent people, in some instances housed at our universities, other places, cannot understand and do not accept the cancer-like dreadfulness of huge debt and the carrying charges, the covering charges, that the public purse has to pay through taxation.

We as Canadians are paying some \$44 billion annually to cover our Canadian government's debt. Now, we send our Health Minister, we send our Minister of Family Services, we send our Justice Minister to Ottawa, Finance Minister to Ottawa, and we are talking about trying to get the federal government to reinstate the \$5 billion or \$6 billion or \$4 billion that they took out of health in '94 or '95. For \$5 billion I am talking about, but we spend \$44 billion to service the debt.

We look at our infrastructure, our highways, our bridges, our roads deteriorating at a time that modern transportation is putting more and more and heavier loads on those same roads. We badly need a \$5-10-billion infusion to ensure that we have a modern transportation system, but we balk at that, but pay to international money lenders 44 billions of dollars just to service our debt.

So why is it such a hard sell among our friends to the left to be concerned about? Why is it that it must have taken a great deal of courage on the part of this Minister of Finance to at least stay partially on track with the orderly retirement of debt provisions of the balanced budget legislation?

* (15:00)

I simply want to encourage you to continue doing that. The most important steps on a difficult journey are the first steps. We have taken them. We ask you to continue them. You will be respected if you do that, because we still are paying. In this province, I do not know the exact figures now, but we are paying very close to 480-500 millions of dollars that the Minister of Family Services could use, that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) could use, and that certainly the people of Manitoba could use in some meaningful tax reduction.

That kind of really brings me to my conclusion in this budget speech. Much to my regret, much to all our regrets, and I say as a partisan from a biased point of view to the rest of the people of Manitoba, in an uncharacteristic way of the Conservative Party of the Filmon government, the people of Manitoba could not grasp, could not understand the billion-dollar proposal that we put forward to them on election day. Honourable members opposite did a first-rate job in confusing the public on that issue.

However, Mr. Acting Speaker, on budget day their Minister of Finance stood up and presented their billion-plus-dollar program, not in five years, as we had suggested, but in four years. Now, all of a sudden, when it was suggested by the previous administration, it was pie in the sky. They pulled out these phony economists that used to run around and present alternative budgets to us. I forget the name of any of them, but they said these numbers cannot be right. They do not add up. That is what they said when we were putting together a billion dollars over five years, but they are right when you put them up and you create a budget with the same billion dollars in it.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, they outfoxed us, and the people fell for it. The people fell for it, so they are on that side of the Government. Now, the most serious and the most consequential difference between us and them is that in that billion-dollar plan we had, our Minister of Finance had a definite commitment to the taxpayers of Manitoba that half of that would go to tax reduction. The other half would go to the orderly support of those essential services—

health, education—that we all agree to are the top priorities of all our peoples throughout the province of Manitoba.

That is the fundamental difference between us and them on this budget. That makes it very easy for me to vote against this budget, because they will fall into their habit. They will fall into their habit partly because—and here, again, I have to choose my words very carefully. I do not want to call it fraud or I do not want to call it deception or misleading the House, but do you remember how they attempted to change their colours just prior to the election? You will remember they emphasized they were the New Democrats. Remember the lovely blue-coloured billboards of the Premier using our royal purple colour blue, you know, instead of their Halloween orange, which they normally run on. But they did try to represent themselves as the New Democrats.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, within 12 hours, certainly within 24 hours, all the old Democrats surfaced. Oh, there was the former Minister of Finance, one Gene Kostyra, now safely ensconced in high office at a very well-paid salary. There was the former Minister of Justice Vic Schroeder now safely ensconced as chairman of Manitoba Hydro. All the old Democrats kind of circled the wagons as bees to the honey pot. That should worry Manitobans. It certainly worries me, because that tells me that the old tax-and-spend policy, the old tax-and-spend philosophy that my friends opposite truly believe in will in the final analysis come to the fore.

I have acknowledged what they have done in this budget. We will see what they do in future ones. They had an opportunity in this budget to relieve the tax burden of Manitobans. It is not just a matter of relieving tax burdens, but it is a matter of making us competitive. They chose not to do that. We in Manitoba are starting to pay the price, and the price will become higher as we go on. Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is my pleasure to get up and speak in support of the first budget, the first of I

know many budgets of the current New Democratic Party Government here in Manitoba.

I will not be very long because many of my colleagues want to put a few remarks on the record, but I did want to respond to the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) yesterday. In his speech, he spoke about the fact that he felt that this budget had no plan for the future. I just could not let that comment go by, because it is so patently not the case.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I will only speak in a couple of areas for which I am responsible, and they are the Workplace Safety and Health portion of the Department of Labour and the Citizenship and Immigration portion of the Department of Labour, which has come over from the Department of Culture and Heritage. I think that these two areas show that we have a plan for the future, we have a vision, and we are working very hard toward implementing that vision.

First, in regard to Workplace Safety and Health. In the Budget it states very clearly—actually it is in the Health part, which I find interesting, and I think it is a very good placement for this announcement that the Workplace Safety and Health Division will be expanded by eight workplace safety and health officers. We hope to have those officers in place by the end of the summer. We are going to be focussing and dealing with, through the expansion of the workplace safety and health officers, working with the Aboriginal community to see if we cannot add some Aboriginal workplace safety and health officers to our ranks. We will be going to that end. We are going throughout the province talking to First Nations to tell them what the job entails and to see how we can work together to increase the Aboriginal presence in this division.

As members know, in the next few years, 25 percent of our workforce, particularly here in the city of Winnipeg, will be Aboriginal, and we feel it is very important that that community be represented not only in the workforce but also in the Workplace Safety and Health Division, which helps monitor the safety of those workplaces.

*(15:10)

Also, those eight new positions will be focussing on the high areas of workplace safety and health problems in our province. We know we never will have enough officers to do a complete job of auditing every single company on a regular basis, so we are taking advantage of our new computer access. We are targeting those companies and those industry sectors that have high workplace safety and health time loss to accident and injury. So we will be focussing the attention of those eight new officers—or the addition of those eight new officers will allow us to focus more attention on those areas that require it.

We are working very closely as well with the Workers Compensation Board who is providing us the support to enable the Workplace Safety and Health Division to be increased and have had very good relationships with the Workers Compensation Board in deciding and determining what areas need to be worked on and what we can do together in partnership to improve the safety of all of our workers. It is critically important that we act as a team and that we have a plan for the future. In this one area, we are doing that, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The other area that I am responsible for that I would like to speak about just briefly is the area of immigration. We are very pleased and proud of the record of our government in just seven short months, or getting on to eight now, I guess, in working to increase our immigration flows. We all know that Manitoba needs more people. The one way we are going to get that, most likely, is through an increased immigration to our province. The Provincial Nominee Program, which I must commend the former government for implementing in 1998, had, at the beginning, 200 families a year that would be allowed to come in through the program. In November of last year, shortly after taking off, we were fortunate and successful enough to be able to talk to the federal government to increase that number to 450 families per year.

After the results of the economic summit that was held in March of this year, very successfully attended by several hundred people,

and the Pioneer 2000 Conference that was held just a week or so ago, which dealt specifically with immigration issues, we are working with the federal government to expand that program even more. We are also working, as we said in the Budget, to increase our immigration through other areas, particularly through humanitarian and family reunification. We have a solid base in Manitoba. With the exception, as we all know, of the Aboriginal people, we are all immigrants or sons and daughters or grandsons and daughters of immigrants.

We as a province owe a great debt of gratitude to the waves of immigration that have come to our province over the decades. We continue to ask for and welcome people from all over the world and from walks of life to make Manitoba their home. We are very fortunate to be able to do that work. I think that in these two short areas, these two very important but not terribly big areas, we have shown that we do, unlike the Member yesterday saying we did not, have a plan for the future.

We have a plan for the future that will take into account all sections of this province, that will take into account all age groups in this province, that will take into account for the first time in 11 years all members of this province, no matter whether they are rich or poor, whether they live in the inner city, in the older suburbs, in the newer suburbs, outside the city, in rural and northern Manitoba as a whole.

For the first time in over a decade, all the people of Manitoba will be heard and will be listened to. Their needs and their desires and their goals are reflected in this budget, two portions of which I have outlined today.

Mr. Acting Speaker, with those few words, I am most pleased and proud to be supporting the Budget of the Province of Manitoba. Thank you very much.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure to be able to rise in this House, having the privilege, as a member of the Legislature, to participate in this debate on the Budget.

Let me say that, having spent now 12 years in this House and heard many Budget Debates in different forms of this Legislature, I remember my first session in a minority government where we had three parties well represented in this house, very close numbers. The New Democratic Party was then in third place. It was my first Budget Debate. You learn a lot in those and subsequent debates when you are in majority government, and now, from the vantage point of being in opposition, seeing again the Budget Debate from a little bit different angle.

The observation that I draw from that history in this Assembly is one that we all know there are many issues. Governments, when they have budget announcements, will want to spin, for lack of a better term, with a certain image to the public. Oppositions, of course, will want to put a little bit different spin on it. The media, I believe, at least from this vantage point now at this end desk here in opposition, if you sometimes just sit back and listen for a while, you realize that the media do figure it out when we are all trying to give them our particular spin on a policy or turn of events in budgets.

What concerns me, Mr. Acting Speaker, in that light, is that there are some very real, fundamental issues on which the parties in this Legislature diverge. We should not be afraid as legislators to very clearly enunciate to the public, to the people of Manitoba, that we have those differences. They are very significant differences of approach.

What has concerned me as I have listened through Question Period and I have listened through some of this debate is the amount of spin and sugar-coating that we sometimes hear being put on a variety of positions to make them appear to be what they are not. I think that is regrettable. It is regrettable for the people of this province, because they should know what their choices are in public policy. The one that concerns me the most, I have to say to the Minister of Finance, who has come into this House as a new member and been appointed to a very important position, that he must learn that, in the long run, the spin will only take him so far, that he has an obligation to come clean, to be honest on the policy choices that he made.

Mr. Acting Speaker, some members of this House may go back to the days of the Pawley administration. I remember as a young MLA and then-cabinet Minister after the 1990 election talking to my department officials in the Department of Labour. One of the comments they made to me about the Pawley administration that has stuck in the back of my mind is they said that that administration spent more time trying to spin a story than actually trying to deal with real issues, that everything was spin. We do one thing, but we want everybody to believe it is something else.

You know, Mr. Acting Speaker, we all know every government has a certain amount of it. I would be dishonest if I said we did not either. But I tell you this. On some very major policy issues, we are trying to see the New Democrats do one thing and try to make it appear to be another, and I am not quite sure why. Because it is not consistent with what they have said for years or what they even try to say out of one side of their mouth when they are talking to the public about these issues.

Let me get to that major example. In this particular budget, by the documents of the Minister of Finance, this administration, in this fiscal year, comes into some \$500 million of additional revenue, one-half billion dollars of new revenue. Now, for some of us who were here through the 1990s when the province was in recession, when we were struggling, I remember one particular budget where the Finance Minister, then Clayton Manness, drew a line in the sand to us as ministers, at a debt of \$400 million in the height of the recession. We could not go over that because of its effect on our credit rating.

* (15:20)

The struggles that we went through as ministers to reduce budgets, to live within the means of this province so that we could get us over that hump, that we could see brighter and more prosperous days return to public finance in this province, and after several years we did. By the way, through every one of those budgets, New Democrats, on this side of the House in those days, complained that we were not spending enough. Every issue, every group that

came and said, give us more money, they could find a willing voice in a New Democratic Party member who would come in here and say, spend more, spend more, spend more.

When the Province of Manitoba was literally a few million away from that debt spiral, when the interest costs would get up to 15 percent to 18 percent of budget and grow, as we saw happen in a number of other provinces, the New Democrats kept saying spend more. Every time we in government had to make a tough choice, and they were tough, difficult choices, to live within the means of this province, we were opposed by the New Democrats.

The reason why I make that observation is what a wonderful time to be in government when you have half a billion dollars of new revenue. As a person who spent nine years in Cabinet, I think we would have all felt we had died and gone to heaven to have been able to approach a budget year with \$500 million of new revenue. The new ministers, like the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), who joined this House after the last election, have never lived through those tough days. Many on that Treasury bench have never lived through them. Those who were here in the House at that time were certainly not supportive of the difficult decisions that had to be made.

They come into government now, and, yes, that is their right, they won the election. They come into government now with this huge amount of new revenue without one iota of appreciation in their own hearts and minds about how difficult it was to get the province to a point where we could achieve that kind of growth in our revenue. Why that concerns me a little, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that it is easy money to them. They win an election. They come into government, and it is easy money. It is there. They never have to sweat one day at a Treasury Board table to be able to achieve that kind of surplus.

The charade we saw last fall of this that we are going to have a deficit and we are going to do all these cutting costs, but they did nothing, nothing at all, just makes the point of how easy—*[interjection]* The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) points it out. They walk into government, and the first thing they do is they hire Mr. Ron

Hikel, who, I understand, is going to be the next Deputy Minister of Health. They hire Mr. Hikel. They bring him out, and he brings in Deloitte and Touche, and without even doing any normal questioning about what departments are asking for, give us the wish lists, they say. We know in some departments there were items put on those lists that could not physically be bought and paid for in that fiscal year, but they were put in. We know that.

So they go through this charade, Mr. Acting Speaker. They make a big thing about it. They really take no steps to control finance of any importance, and they have \$500 million in new revenue. The only reason I say that is that it proves the point of spin, because we saw the Budget was balanced. In fact, they had so much new revenue that I imagine it was a real struggle for them to spend it all.

Mr. Acting Speaker, well, the Minister of Industry (Ms. Mihychuk) laughs about that. I will tell you that on this side of the House to have had 500 million in new revenue, we could not even dream of it. So, to laugh, to say, well, it was not enough to meet all our spending—that is a phenomenal amount of money.

I say this, Mr. Acting Speaker, just to make the point that, if you do not know how hard it is to achieve that, and I look to the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) who sat on treasury boards in cabinet federally during the same recessionary period. He will know how difficult those decisions are. To fall into such growth in revenue without appreciating the efforts to get there and the efforts of having to deal with difficult times, I think it leaves a government who—the Member for St. James says slash records. We cut, but you know just in their spin—she forgets her own spin of last fall, when she was going to be a wrecker and a slasher to balance the budget. What does the Member for St. James really suppose, that the people of Manitoba could have got—*[interjection]*—or the Member for Minto (Ms. Mihychuk)—that she could have continued to borrow money and add to debt all through the '90s? Well, they would not have had \$500 million to spend. It would have all gone to their friends, the bankers in New York. The bankers in New York love New

Democratic governments. They are the best for business. *[interjection]*

Having just said that, Mr. Acting Speaker, I can tell by the comments by the Member for Minto, the Minister of Industry, that that Treasury bench—maybe the Premier (Mr. Doer), remembering some difficult days in the latter days in the Pawley administration, may have some inkling of how hard it is to deal with that. His Treasury bench, his cabinet, his caucus certainly does not. That has become very evident by the major policy decisions that they have made.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I come to that because here is a government who in one year has \$500 million of new revenue, \$1 billion. By the way, I was a Conservative who ran in the election, talking about having \$850 million of new spending over the next four years, of new revenue, and in one year they produced \$500 million of it. They all said that it is nonsense, it is crazy. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) insults the intelligence of Manitobans by saying: Well, their assumptions were wrong. We still have the \$500 million. Well, that is the point.

The real question is: When you have the money, what are you going to do with it? He can get up all he wants to the media and say: Well, their assumptions are wrong. But that is not the point. He has missed it. The point is what you do with it when you have it, because that is the major policy issue.

On this side of the House we had made a commitment to Manitobans, which, I believe, the majority of Manitobans ultimately believe in. That is, a large portion of that money—we proposed half of that new revenue—has to go into reducing the tax load of average Manitobans and working Manitobans. It has to go to reducing that tax load. *[interjection]*

The Minister of Industry (Ms. Mihychuk) talks about health care. Well, I will tell you, she will discover in her days in Cabinet that Health can consume every penny of that money, every penny of it. In fact, I would even suppose that she and some of her colleagues have already told the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) that he is spending more of his share than he should,

because they are recognizing fully that health care will continue to grow and consume dollars.

* (15:30)

When you have that kind of increased revenue, that is the time you have to make a major policy choice as to what you will do with it. The New Democratic Party has made a very clear choice that very little of that money—what is it, less than \$50 million of that \$500 million?—will actually go into tax reduction. They are saying that we will use all that money in increased spending. We will build it into the base of government, and we will only give a little bit back. Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, do not get me wrong. That is a legitimate position in public policy that they are taking. They are saying to Manitobans, the people of Manitoba: We believe that all of this additional money must go into spending. Very little will go into tax relief.

Now, if they would just say that honestly, we could debate the merits of that issue. Do they do that? No. They take those few crumbs, and they say we are on the tax reduction. We are acting responsibly, because they know that working Manitobans, the people they claim to represent—and I only say claim because we know they do not—those people want tax relief, need tax relief, must have tax relief. All they will get out of members opposite is the story that they are getting tax relief when they are not. They will get the words. They will get the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) saying: Oh, I tell you, we gave them \$75 back on their property tax, even though in most cases of the tax bills I have seen, people are now paying more than last year. Right? All they will give those Manitobans are words and a few crumbs, because they fundamentally want those dollars to go into expenditure.

I will make a prediction that, as we get into the Estimates process, we will find all kinds of things that they have added into the funding in their budget that took a decade to wean Manitobans off of. We will find grants to different organizations and groups and other things that have worked their way in, that are part of the secret political promises of the last election. We remember Gary Doer standing up

with the five promises, do we not? But, you know what, if you turn it around and you—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): Would the House come to order. Would you please allow the Member to speak. Thank you.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Speaker, we all remember that little pamphlet with the five promises, but what they did not tell you is when you turned it around and you went over a candle, in invisible ink were written the secret promises, the commitments made to a host of organizations: Vote and get us into power and we will take care of you—we will not tell the public, because we are going to pull the wool over their eyes. We know that already.

We have heard the Minister of Education talk about repealing provisions in the education act that will take out a simple little part of the arbitration process called ability to pay. What is it there for? To simply say that arbitrators have to take into account the ability of the population, the working men and women of this province who pay taxes, what tax load they can carry. This government says, we will take it out because we cut a secret deal with the Manitoba Teachers' Society for their support. That will happen.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I would bet you we will see some labour law changes brought in to get and secure the support of Bernie Christophe and United Food and Commercial Workers, who, by the way, I have noticed, on a personal note, I have yet to see them talking about the fact the New Democrats are still keeping the food system in the hospitals. It is funny how UFCW has forgotten that issue. So we will see that little secret promise worked in.

We will see other promises. You know, the Manitoba Nurses' Union. What do we see now? Our wonderful 25-year ads: Whatever the Government says, we do, and to Maureen Hancharyk, New Democrat I was born, New Democrat I will die. We have yet to see what

secret promises were made to Maureen Hancharyk, but I know they are there, and we will find them there.

Let us not forget the casino issue. Boy, did we hear the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) campaigning on the streets, on Edison, on Henderson Highway. Did we see the Member for Rossmere saying, vote for us and we will add five casinos? Never.

Madam Acting Speaker, I would love to ask the Member for Rossmere if the gurus of the New Democratic Party actually told him that that is what they were going to do. In fact, I would bet that ignorance is bliss. Do not tell him and then he cannot be a liar to his voters. But it was part of the agreement. It was part of the deal. I heard about it throughout my riding, about the secret promise made by Gary Doer to promise those casinos, not two casinos, like the Bostrom report said, not three, not four, but five casinos.

You know what is most interesting about it? What is most interesting about this secret promise is that they knew that if they actually went to the public to talk about it, even if they went to First Nations communities, there are concerns, legitimate concerns. So what did they do in this honeymoon period? We will set up a two-person committee. We will hide behind it. We will have no public consultation because, my goodness, we always live up to our secret promises, do we not.

Secret promise No. 4, the casinos—

An Honourable Member: How could it be secret if you knew about it?

Mr. Praznik: Well, I will tell you, because the New Democratic Party leaks. Because people they made the promise to were talking about it, and they told me very clearly in many of those First Nations communities, we are voting NDP because they promised us our casino. The only thing is, you know, it is going to be interesting, because they promised it in more than five places. That is the little problem now.

But you know what I am enjoying about this too is, how do ministers like the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale), how does that minister reconcile that vote? I mean, will he get

together with the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), who opposed casinos, but was picketing with casino workers? I guess they will reconcile those somehow.

So, we know about those four secret promises of the NDP. There will be more and they will come out, because they were there in invisible ink. You know what they will cost? Not only the people of Manitoba but they will cost the credibility of members opposite, because those were secret deals, secret commitments, secret promises. And you know who pays for them? The people of Manitoba will pay for them. They will pay the price many times over.

Madam Acting Speaker, I cannot resist this because the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) talked about MTS. By her own government's budget documents, MTS is still one of the lowest cost telephone systems in Canada in their own analysis. So, here we have a government who for the first time, and I look to the Member for Lakeside, in many a decade has had that luxury of \$500 million of increased revenue. They have chosen to use it only on expenditure. I suspect to fulfill many of their secret election promises, not the five they made public. But you know what is worse? And this is what I believe is the seeds of the destruction of that administration, and it is in their own documents, crafted as good as any spinner can to try to hide the truth. The truth will prevail and that is that Manitoba is quickly becoming one of the highest taxed jurisdictions in the country.

You can only say so long: Well, the year 2000, your tax rate—how the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) can with a straight face, and I notice when he is interviewed his eyes blink very rapidly which suggests to me he knows that he is not telling the truth to the public, because he knows that he had the opportunity. He could have used some of that \$500 million to reduce income tax rates in Manitoba this year. He chose not to, in fact, he and his leader have conspired to take the things that Manitobans have worked hard for to lower their costs of living, things like Manitoba Hydro, things like MPIC that are our advantages.

Instead of having them there as our advantages, instead of those being the things that

with competitive taxes make us a far more favourable place to live and do business, they have squandered them. They are using them, they are taxing them, in essence away from the people of Manitoba. You know, it is great to put MPIC in, we have lower than most provinces on automobile insurance. Well, the reason we do is because we had to change our automobile scheme to no-fault, so that people in Manitoba who are injured in accidents receive less benefits than other provinces. That was a decision to control automobile costs. Manitobans, with the support of virtually all members of the Legislature, I believe with the Liberal Party, brought in no-fault insurance to curb the costs of automobile insurance, to give us cheaper automobile rates, and we did it, but we accepted less benefits.

* (15:40)

Now, the First Minister and the Minister of Finance turn around and say: We will squander that saving to Manitobans by taxing it away. Manitoba Hydro, that is something we are all very proud of that I had the privilege of being minister of for two years, that is a great competitive advantage. The Minister of Finance and the Premier included in their numbers to say you could pay higher taxes because you pay less hydro than Ontario. We heard the First Minister say it. Did you see the rates in Ontario? Well, yes, they are higher. That is our advantage and he is taxing them away, squandering it away with that higher provincial income tax rate.

You know, if you look at every jurisdiction in the world that has had difficulty with its economy, that has struggled to become a prosperous economy, what have they done? What is the secret? This has been adopted by socialist governments, by labour governments, by Conservative governments. Every jurisdiction that has turned an economy around to be prosperous and growing has followed some simple rules, whatever their political philosophy. That is that taxation in areas that reduce the desire to earn, that take away competitiveness, whether they be payroll taxes, whether they be income taxes, that if you do not have competitive tax rates in those areas, if you do not lower them and increase the incentive for people to work and earn, your economy will stagnate.

What we are seeing now is the New Democrats in Saskatchewan, who, by the way, had very similar fiscal policies to the Filmon Conservative government, knew that they had to reduce their income tax rates if they were going to have any hope of surviving in the new economy, particularly being near a province like Alberta, and they did. Harris in Ontario has reduced his rates so significantly that, what is it, some almost \$3,000 difference, almost \$3,000 difference in income tax rates between Manitoba and Kenora to the border. That will continue to grow. But, the New Democrats, what do they say? Your hydro is cheaper in Manitoba. So, again, squandering that benefit. Your automobile insurance is cheaper. Squandering the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): Order, please. The din is getting rather high. Can we please, all sides of the House, give the courtesy to the speaker to pay attention and keep the noise down.

Mr. Praznik: So, Madam Acting Speaker, what we have seen is a conscious decision by this new administration to take all of the dollars, virtually all of the dollars of new revenue, this huge amount of new money, and put it into spending, build it into base spending, and have found virtually no tax relief or minimal tax relief.

I could accept it if they were honest about it, if they actually said to the people of Manitoba, on your behalf, we have agreed to take virtually all the new money and put it into spending and give you only a limited tax relief. If they were honest with their voters, I would agree that that is their policy. We take a different view. But, no, they have got to spin it, they have got to put the story on it that, oh, we are into the tax relief game too. We are giving you \$75 per household.

Well, Manitobans, when they get their property tax bills, are not going to be jumping for joy. I have already had calls from people who have got their bills. Some are a few dollars lower, many are a few dollars higher. The fact of the matter is it is not going to get them the spin and the kick that they expect it to be.

They will one day eventually have to stand before the people of Manitoba and answer for

the decisions that they made in this budget, which was to take \$500 million of hard-earned money by working Manitobans and put it into spending, when those same working Manitobans are looking for some greater degree of tax relief.

You know what, the real shame of this is every day young Manitobans make a choice about where they are going to go. They are not choosing to stay here. They are choosing to leave. That was a problem we would have had if we were re-elected, and they certainly have, but they are not competitive. Those people are slipping away, and you will not see them. They are just gone. They have gone to Calgary, they have gone to Ontario, they have gone to the United States.

Yes, they will have a few more good years. In fact, again it is interesting, in the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Selinger) own documents, he predicts over the next four years he will have an increase of, is it well over a billion dollars in increased revenue? My goodness, if there ever was a time in the last 35 or 40 years in Canada, in Manitoba, that a government had an opportunity to do some significant reduction of taxes on an overtaxed population, the time was now. But that is gone, wasted away, fretted away by members opposite as they deliver on their secret promises, their secret agendas that they promised in the last election.

The Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) said give us a number. We did in the election. We committed to half of our increased revenue going into tax reductions. We put that number down squarely to the people of Manitoba. We did not win the election, but that is our policy and our position. They can spin the story today; they can spin it out tomorrow; but I will tell you in a year, two years, three years from now, do you know where it will start? It will start in western Manitoba. It will start in eastern Manitoba, particularly, in the west. It will start in the Russell constituency, in the Swan River constituency as those people look at what people are paying across the border in Saskatchewan. They will know. They will see the difference. It will spread in from the west, and it will come out of Kenora as people go there and see the tax levels and make decisions to make that their residence. And it will spread in from the east,

and by the next general election in four years, it will be right here at this Legislative Building. Manitobans will realize that they are overtaxed, that we are not a competitive province, that we are starting to move into a period of decline, and they will hold members opposite responsible for the decisions, the seeds that they have planted in this budget.

All I ask them is at least to be honest with the people of Manitoba, to tell them that their choice was to take virtually every new dollar of money that working Manitobans have paid into the Treasury, that their choice was to take that money and put it into expenditure and throw back a few pennies to the workers in the streets. That is what they did. At least, be honest in what they say because the spinners at the end of the day will hang them out, and I look forward to that day.

I tell you it is with regret, Madam Acting Speaker, that I have to stand here today and say that I cannot support that budget, because it is a budget that is casting the die for the failure of our province, the failure for our young people, and it will hang on their heads.

* (15:50)

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Good afternoon, Madam Acting Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to stand today and voice my support for this budget that was based on five sound principles, five sound promises that were laid out very clearly to the people of Manitoba in the last election. There was no subterfuge whatsoever. We made five strict commitments to the people that are very accurately reflected in the Budget that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) tabled this past week.

Despite all this rhetoric that we hear from the members of the Opposition, speaker after speaker after speaker on tax cuts, they just do not seem to get that the bottom line is that the people of Manitoba voted and elected this New Democratic Government on this platform. Tax cuts were not part of our agenda. We promised to rebuild our society here, a process of rebuilding that is going to reverse 10 years of neglect and decline. The people of Manitoba were finally fed up with it, quite frankly, and

elected this Manitoba Government, this Manitoba Government, this New Democratic Government on these five basic principles.

Madam Acting Speaker, our No. 1 promise to the people, there was no subterfuge or nothing secret about it, was that we were going to deal with the decline in the health care system. That was our No. 1 priority. My experience of going door to door in the Interlake was this is what people wanted. On that front, I would like to just delve into what the neo-Conservative formula is as far as this tax cut agenda goes and how it applies to things like the health care system. It is quite obvious to me they have bought into this globalist mentality, this neo-Conservative mentality of privatization, sell off all your Crown corporations, and what do you do with the proceeds? You give a tax cut to your rich friends basically is what it boils down to.

Unfortunately, for them there are more poor people in Manitoba than there are rich people, and that is why we are sitting on the Government side today. Now, they might want to deny that they had no objective and no desire to dismantle the health care system, but the examples being set by their arch leader in Alberta, Mr. Klein, where he is in the process of privatizing the health care system in Alberta. Now, this was attempted in Manitoba not too many years ago when they made an attempt to privatize the health care system. I seem to recall the home care system, was it not? Yes, they were going to privatize the home care system.

Madam Acting Speaker, I would like one of them to stand up and explain to me how this was supposed to benefit the people of Manitoba. You privatize a home care system. How does that benefit the person that is receiving that care? A privatized company, their objective is to make money. They are only dealing with a limited amount of capital; therefore, they are going to make money by doing two things. They are either going to cut wages to the point where people are working for minimum wage or less, or they are going to reduce their services. The net result would have been substandard care for our seniors who have worked and paid taxes all of their lives, and that would have been their reward if they had stuck with this Conservative

government and this privatization agenda which they keep trumpeting to us day after day here.

The public health care system is something that came about as a result of the socialist horde that the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) was referring to yesterday, this socialist opium of tax and spend, this socialist disease he referred to it as such, the socialist fever, et cetera, ad nauseam. The health care system in this country was the result of socialist-minded people who concentrated first and foremost on the poor in this country.

The No. 1 proponent of this was the most Honourable Tommy Douglas who was the first leader of the New Democratic Party in Canada. Quite frankly, to listen to the Member for Springfield yesterday go on and on about the Albanian socialist bastion, terminology like that I thought was quite inappropriate. How they were going to reach down into that socialist pit and so on and so forth. I do not think that the Member for Springfield is worthy of touching the hand of as great a man as Mr. Tommy Douglas was. God rest his soul.

Now, I talked to a good supporter in the Interlake during the election. His name was Roger Lowe, and he came from Saskatchewan prior to that period when they had socialized medicine. He described to me what turned him into a New Democrat. It was the fact that back then if you did not have the money, Madam Acting Speaker, quite frankly, you could not afford to go to the hospital. That is exactly what happened with his mother. The end result was that she died, because she could not afford to have health care.

So if we promised to restore this system, and we did, that was our No.1 priority, which is what got us elected, that is what we are going to concentrate on. Taxation is a necessary component of that, and we will continue to tax responsibly. We have addressed tax reductions to some degree, but I will go into that just a little bit later.

Now, our second main commitment was something very similar. What are the two main components of a good, modern democratic society? A good health care system, so that you

do not have to worry about looking after yourself if you are sick and unable to care for yourself. The No. 2 thing is that the state subsidizes your education so that everybody in the country, in the province receives an adequate education.

Now, part of their privatization agenda, once again, became clear over the course of their last mandate here. It goes without saying that the cuts to the education system were ongoing and deplorable. This is something that our Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) is going to rectify now, but they might deny it. The example is there in the Youth News Network. This was an unconscionable attempt to infiltrate into the classrooms, to basically sell out to large, multinational corporations that thought they could buy into our classrooms. I applaud the Minister in that he took such a strong stand against this and that we are going to maintain public control over the education of our children. That was our second commitment. The people of Manitoba seemed to accept that as well.

We have committed to a number of initiatives, the Healthy Child Initiative, for example. We have reconstituted a bursary program. That has been out over the course of the previous administration's reign, so on and so forth. The friendship centres are finally receiving funding here. That is something that is long overdue as well. So, on all these fronts, this government is taking action. The people of Manitoba requested it, and they are going to get it under our administration.

Now, our third commitment was to hang on to our Crown corporations. Manitoba Hydro, we put it down on the table that we are going to keep this Crown corporation no matter what. The previous administration, they swore up and down, oh, no, Hydro is not on the table. Forget it.

But they told us the same story five years ago about MTS. Now here was another Crown corporation. The people of Manitoba had just invested \$600 million into this corporation to rejuvenate it and bring it up to the point where it was competitive internationally. They turned around and sold it for roughly \$700 million, a bargain, to say the least, Madam Acting Speaker.

I think the stocks have essentially doubled since then. So we can see that it was a fraud, quite frankly, orchestrated by those oriented towards privatizing everything in our society to their own benefit.

* (16:00)

I recall when the stocks were issued for sale. All my cousins were quite keen in scooping them up. I remember how it went. It went, you buy stocks now, a week later or two weeks later you will get a thousand dollars more back, right? *[interjection]* I did not say anything in that respect, but that is the way it worked, right? It was sold at a discount. Two weeks later, they were picked up again. This was a classic flip that put the chairs of this company into the hands of the upper class, quite frankly, that is squealing so hard now for tax cuts today.

Now, let us take Manitoba Hydro a step further since we are on this topic. You know, they talk about being such good fiscal managers and all that, but you can see how quickly the money that was gained from the sale of MTS, how quickly they disbursed it. At a time when our economy was in a growth phase, still they continued to spend it, essentially using it as a pre-election slush fund to the detriment of the people of Manitoba.

If they had remained in power, the proceeds from that sale would have been gone over the course of the next year. Then what were they going to do? Tell me that. How were they going to get the money then? Quite frankly, I will tell you. They were going to sell Manitoba Hydro. That was on their agenda. How else were they going to back up this \$1-billion promise that they made to the people of Manitoba? That is about the only promise that I recall they made, quite a bizarre promise, to be honest, \$1 billion, eh? Madam Acting Speaker, \$500 million in tax cuts, an increase in spending \$500 million. Totally unsubstantiated.

I think, and you do not have to take my word for it, I can quote in the newspaper here, the Honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) is here today. I see it in the paper. He commented on this a couple of days ago. "We did a number of things badly wrong," he said.

"Billion-dollar promises that weren't characteristic with the Filmon government. We were arrogant and we paid for it." I think that says it all, eh? That is what the billion-dollar promises amounted to.

Now let us look at one promise that they did make to the people of Manitoba. They promised that they were going to give the people workfare, that they were going to make those people on welfare work for their money, right? Of course, they were all sitting around there doing nothing. None of them wanted to work. Let us implement a program and make them work. Well, maybe that appeals to some people. I was curious about this, so I phoned the welfare department, and I asked them: What does a single male make in welfare over a month? They told me roughly in the \$400 range, of which approximately \$225 is clawed back for subsidized housing; so you are looking at an individual that is getting maybe \$175 a month welfare, and what do they want? What do they want him to do? They wanted him to work 30 hours a week to be entitled to that \$175 a month.

What does that work out to? Not a hell of a lot, I do not think. Meanwhile, this person, who may be trying to find a job, is suddenly locked into this system; basically, he is an indentured servant of the Government. He is locked into it. He will never escape from it. This is how the previous administration looked at running our society here. The poor people were designated as the enemies. They were to be cracked down upon, right? Classic example of neo-Conservative thought.

You listen to them day after day here, speaker after speaker going on about tax cuts this, tax cuts that, and you hear this number, anybody making over \$60,000 a year, the lowly middle-income people. Well, come on into the Interlake, Madam Acting Speaker. Somebody making \$60,000 a year would be considered in the upper-income bracket. To listen to them day after day strictly concerned about their own interests, quite frankly, they are all of the wealthy class. You can see 100 percent of their attention is focussed on tax cuts for themselves so that they can add to their pile of blue-chip stocks essentially, right? How rich do you have to be, quite frankly, you know? It is unconscion-

able, and the people of Manitoba, thankfully, finally saw through them and removed them from office and put a government in place that will take its responsibility seriously.

I have heard a lot of talk from the other side about agriculture, how rural Manitoba has been ignored for so long, and what a wonderful job they have done in maintaining the family farm and all that. Well, that is pure misinformation, as far as I am concerned. I can use an example. Their shining star, the hog industry, right? This is a very touchy subject, and I will not go into it too deeply, but I will make one point, that in areas like the Interlake in particular where the infrastructure was going, no rail lines, no elevators, people had to diversify into livestock. This is something that we support. The hog industry is a viable alternative, but how did they orchestrate it? How did they do it?

The first thing they did was they did away with the single desk which did allow small producers guaranteed access to the market. Once the single desk was removed, that opened the doors up to the large processors to go and pick and choose where they would buy their hogs. Three years later there basically are no small producers left anymore. It is all large barns, large, investor-financed barns, I might add. They still swear up and down that this has been a good thing, that the small farms are surviving, they are banding together. That is what the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) was going on and on about the other day there.

It boggles the mind though when you read what he had to say in the House the other day in regard to the small farmers in his immediate area. Listen to this: I have a young neighbour on a 600-acre farm. This spring they are leaving, we are leaving the farm. Another one: My next door says, Jack, do you want to buy my farm? A third farmer, Larry and Cheryl, 1100 acres they farm. They are going out of business. My young friends to the west of me have packed it in.

So this is the legacy of the Conservative administration. This is how they have benefited rural farmers, small farmers in rural Manitoba. They are all going broke. There is a prime example in the Member for Emerson's backyard. It is a big backyard now because he has just

managed to incorporate all of his surrounding neighbours into his operation.

The same thing goes on and plays out across this province. You just have to come into my home constituency, the Interlake, and the R.M. of Fisher to see what I am talking about. I have got at least four farmers there that own 50, 60, 100 quarters of land, where there used to be a vibrant society there. There used to be a growing town. We used to have a hockey team. We do not even have that anymore, because we do not have enough kids out there to man the teams anymore, because we only have four big farmers, one on each side of town. That is all it boils down to now. How that benefited rural society, I do not know.

An Honourable Member: So how are you going to change it?

* (16:10)

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, it is going to be a tough job. The first thing we are going to do, I will tell you one thing—the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) asked me how we are going to change it. Well, we have put together a program. It is called Program 2000, which is designed specifically to orchestrate the changeover from old, retiring farmers to young, new farmers. That is something we are going to do, Sir, to try and address this problem.

Now, we have inherited the hog industry from the previous administration, and we are going to take steps on that front as well, Sir. The hog industry came to this province for two reasons, cheap labour and lax environmental standards, quite frankly. We are going to deal with that. The first action of this government is we are going to orchestrate a livestock stewardship initiative here. We are going to send a panel across the province to listen to all people involved in this industry, and we will put our spin on it. Take my word for it.

We will try and avoid putting the spin that took place in other parts of the world, Sir. In Holland, for instance, where the entire country is polluted now, or a classic example down in North Carolina, it is an ecological disaster because this industry was allowed to function at

an uncontrolled rate. Government has a responsibility to make sure that agriculture is sustainable over the long term, and that applies to the environment.

I want to just go back to the tax cut side of it for a moment here. I was just talking to one of the reeves out in my constituency. I have six municipalities there. I was talking to one of the reeves, who is an acknowledged Conservative. He said so himself, and he campaigned for my opponent during the election. He was not denying it. We were discussing a development project. There is a large landlocked lake that requires drainage, and they are coming to the Government here for capital, of course. It costs \$350,000 to \$400,000 to do this drainage project. Well, this reeve had no problem coming to the Government to ask for this money, this capital to do this project. That is what governments do.

Government has a responsibility to build roads, to establish drainages, and so on and so forth. So after we had finished talking about this particular project, I sort of poked a little fun at him and said: I guess you guys would like a tax cut, too. He said: I never asked for any tax cuts. We have no desire for tax cuts whatsoever. We have enough work to do in the Interlake here with roads and drainages alone, a personal care home we need in Riverton, and so on and so forth. The last thing in the world, this arch-Conservative reeve had to say to me, he wanted was a tax cut. I put him on the spot and I asked him.

Roads, let us talk about roads just for a minute. I have been talking to the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) for months now, because I have lots of roads that need work. Not much has been done over the past 10 years, to be honest with you. I will give you an idea what the road budget is. Right now, it is roughly \$100 million, which is one seventeenth of the requests that come into the Department of Highways for roads. So what are you going to do? Are you going to privatize the road system too here? We need roads in this province and the Government needs money to build roads. Take a ride up to Pine Dock Road. You will see what I am talking about if you ever deign to step down into a poor area like the Interlake.

We have lost two out of three railroads already, and the third one is on the way out. In another two years, there will be no railroads running up into the Interlake. Well, no railroads, then you have no grain elevators. All we have are two grain elevators sitting on the edge of Winnipeg here on the main east-west lines, and the farmers have to haul their grain a hundred miles to get to these elevators now.

An Honourable Member: What are you going to do about it?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: What are we going to do about that? Well, I will tell you what we are going to do about that. We are going to build some roads. That is what we are going to do starting with No. 7 Highway to Arborg. That is our promise. Quote me on it, okay? *[interjection]* Well, that is where we are going to start, sir. We are going to start building some roads. We are going to start building some roads starting with No. 7 Highway. *[interjection]* Good. You better believe it.

Now drainages, we have lots of drainage work to do. It has been neglected for the last 20 years, or 10 years at least, I know that. How are farmers supposed to expand? How are they supposed to work into the hinterland unless the provincial drainage network is taken care of? What is the budget? The maintenance budget in drainage for the Interlake is \$400,000 for all of the Interlake, including your riding, sir, and also the constituency of Gimli. All of this land, the whole Interlake, half a million dollars to do all the drainage work there. It is unbelievable. But they want tax cuts. Let us cut some more tax. We do not need drainages. How is agriculture supposed to expand without roads? without drainages? Those are the basics that we have to address here.

Now, just in closing, I would like to discuss for a moment the crisis in southwestern Manitoba, which we have acted upon and we have kept front and centre on our agenda here. The people of Manitoba spent \$70 million in that area. They go on and on about, oh, it was our money, the Conservative government spent this money. That is not Conservative money. That was the taxpaying dollars of the people of

Manitoba that went into that. It is not your money that you gave to them.

Now, if things were in such a bad state down there, why did you people spend \$112 million to jazz up a couple of casinos. Why did you not spend that money in the southwest when you had the chance? If you had taken that money to the federal government with a 50-50 JERI program, you would have had a quarter of a billion dollars for the people down there but, no, now we have aquariums that boggle the mind in McPhillips Street Station and so on and so forth. It is ludicrous is what it is.

That is why the Conservative Party sits in the opposition benches today. That is why we are in government. We have made our commitments very clear to the people. We were elected on this front, and we are going to carry through with them. Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Madam Acting Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the NDP Budget, but I will preface my comments by saying how disappointed and concerned I am with it from a political perspective. From the perspective of the mother of two young sons, one of whom is 19 years old, I am very distressed. Why would our young, educated, mobile youth want to stay in a province where its government makes no commitment to them by lowering our personal income taxes? Why was there no vision in this budget to offer an incentive to them to entice them to remain in Manitoba?

Even in Saskatchewan, beginning in 2000 all post-secondary graduates who choose Saskatchewan will receive a one-time tax credit to help them establish careers in that province. Why did not Manitoba's NDP recognize the value of the energy, creativity and drive of young people as critical to Manitoba's future? Oh, we will educate them, all right. But it ended there with no longer term strategy to address keeping them in our province and contributing to shaping our future. Today's NDP failed to provide any incentive for our young people to stake their futures in Manitoba.

At this time I would like to acknowledge the vision and leadership of the former premier and former Finance Minister for their roles in providing strong financial planning for Manitobans. When we brought down our last budget, I was proud to be a member of a government with clear and logical priorities, a government deeply committed to all Manitobans. Our budget brought clear and tangible benefits to all sectors of our society and demonstrated that we value the contributions that every Manitoban makes to our province. Our goal was to foster an environment where the people of the province can continue to grow, develop, and succeed.

* (16:20)

I did not see this same vision or long-term strategy articulated in this first NDP budget. Instead, what we did see was paw prints from the past, in fact, paw prints from the '80s. That disturbs me greatly. Because of the fiscal irresponsibility of the '80s, my 19-year-old son will be paying off until he is 48 years old the debt the NDP tripled under the Pawley government. An incredible burden was placed on my two sons in the '80s. Yet the consequences of those spending and tax binges held no meaning for that government. As our Finance critic has so ably stated, that administration back in the 1980s never stopped to think about the incredible burden it was leaving to the future generations here in Manitoba.

This administration has not stopped to consider the incredible opportunities it is taking away from Manitobans, especially our young people. This budget has failed to provide a vision or a plan for Manitobans or for Manitoba's economy. We must work together to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Last Wednesday's budget failed to address this.

In today's rapidly changing economy, maintaining the status quo is the same as moving backwards. The Finance Minister had a chance to lay out a comprehensive plan to address the many challenges ahead of Manitobans. He failed. The Finance Minister did little to ensure the future economic success of our province. Instead, the 2000 NDP budget has set a course for Manitoba to slide backwards. Instead of courageously setting out on a new path for the

21st century, the NDP have decided to return to their ill-fated ways of the 1980s, a decade in which the Pawley-Doer NDP Government tripled Manitoba's debt. If expecting them to be leaders was too much to ask, they even failed to follow the example of every other jurisdiction in Canada by failing to offer meaningful tax relief to Manitobans and clawing back \$30 million in federal tax relief we should have enjoyed this year.

Madam Acting Speaker, there was no meaningful tax relief in the NDP Budget. In fact, the Government had to take credit for personal income tax and small business tax reductions introduced in the previous PC government's 1999 budget. The NDP will argue that they were not elected to cut taxes, but there is a clear expectation by Manitobans that this government should do what it takes to keep our economy strong and competitive.

It is unfortunate that this province has a Premier (Mr. Doer) and Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) who live in a vacuum and did not realize every other province provided real tax relief to their citizens this year. I remind the First Minister that Manitoba was the last province to bring down a budget. Manitobans watched every province in Canada, one by one, reduce personal income taxes in a real and meaningful way. As they did, our taxes, in relation to other parts of Canada, became higher and higher. When the Finance Minister finally came out with his government's budget, Manitobans found themselves stranded on an island of high taxes in a sea of tax cuts.

This is not an ideology issue. Regardless of political stripe, every other province, B.C. to Newfoundland, has provided their hardworking citizens with meaningful tax relief. Governments in all of those provinces were respectful of their citizens. Sadly, that was not the case in Manitoba. In Ontario, for example, a middle-income earner—someone living in Kenora just two hours east of Winnipeg—will pay 66 percent less in personal income taxes. A taxpayer earning \$50,000 in NDP Saskatchewan will pay \$1,250 less per year in personal income taxes when the full reductions take effect in 2003.

Reducing the tax burden for Manitobans is not unrealistic or unreasonable. In fact, it is quite

bothersome to have sat here and listened to the last speaker for the NDP talk about middle-income Manitobans "squealing" for tax relief. That is an insult to 70 percent of the population of this province, to make a reference to them "squealing." They had every right and need to be respected.

The 2000 NDP budget estimates, in its medium-term plan, that Manitoba will generate about a billion dollars in revenue over the next five years. I wonder where that billion dollars came from. I am sure we heard the First Minister (Mr. Doer) say, with overzealous, dramatic flare on a number of occasions, that he hunted high and low in the Legislative Building. I think any of us that had seen his grandstanding on the whole issue with his arms flaring, and he was adamant that that money was nowhere to be found. I wonder if it could be that he has misled Manitobans.

There is a significant opportunity if the NDP manages the province's budget wisely, our finances wisely, to provide a fair balance between spending on priority programs and meaningful tax reductions. Why does this NDP Government fail to understand that stimulating economic growth is in everyone's best interest? By generating more economic growth in Manitoba, we increase the revenues available to fund our social programs for the benefit of all Manitobans.

Madam Acting Speaker, taxpayers benefit, but so do the health, education and family services systems. My professional background as a nurse and my most important role as a mother form my priorities as a member of this caucus. I can think of few areas as important as health care, education and services for families and children. When in government, we made strategic investments in those areas that benefited Manitoba families the most. Those investments were part of a plan and vision held by us as a government. Manitobans repeatedly told us that health care is their foremost priority, and we upheld our commitment to this vital social program.

In our last budget our government allocated an additional \$194 million to health care spending for the last fiscal year. This was, and

still is, the largest single investment that any government in this province's history ever made to health care.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

It is interesting to note that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) have been fond of saying that funding for health care was out of control. Time and time again they complained about the former government's overspending on health care. Yet the 2000 NDP budget builds this so-called overexpenditure into the base for this year's health care budget and increases health care spending by 6 percent. Go figure.

The Minister of Health has stated that just throwing more money into a health care system will not solve problems. Yet with this budget that is exactly what this government is doing. They have returned to the 1980s NDP way of thinking that if you feed it more money maybe it will go away. To use the Premier's own words: You cannot have it both ways. Unfortunately, this government is constantly trying to have it both ways, but no one is buying it.

During the campaign, the NDP made a promise to end hallway medicine by opening a hundred new beds and spending only \$13 million. Well, they have not opened a hundred new beds, and they have increased health care spending substantially higher than \$13 million. Did they mislead Manitobans on both of these statements? I think so. I would caution the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) to be wary of the types of decisions and promises he makes if he hopes to have credibility, and it would certainly be to his advantage to give credit where credit is due. Let us look at what exactly relieved hallway medicine, or avenue medicine, as he now likes to call it, while he is trying to distance himself from a phrase he himself invented. By the way, we still have hallway medicine, and it might surprise the members opposite to know that we have had it for 25 years. It has seen some good relief, and why? Because of our flu immunization plan to vaccinate almost 200 000 high-risk individuals. The NDP had nothing to do with that decision. Why else is there relief in the system? Because of the opening of 600

personal care home beds, which the NDP had nothing to do with.

In their five-point plan, they said they would also fast-track admission and discharge procedures. Well, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority started that when we were in government. The NDP had nothing to do with that. In their five-point plan, they also said they were going to expand community-based services and the Home Care program, commitments we were already implementing when we were in government. So where is the NDP's comprehensive health care plan? Plagiarized from the previous government, I feel.

* (16:30)

The only new health care initiative put forward by this government is the reintroduction of a diploma nursing program, and all this is achieving right now is ripping open old wounds and dividing the nursing profession. I truly believe that this Minister of Health has absolutely no idea how much damage he is causing to the nursing profession. Had he consulted more rigorously and widely, he might have had a better understanding of the past history of this very painful situation. However, not only has he just opened old wounds and encouraged them to fester again, he has interfered with a profession's right to regulate itself.

Dr. Helen Glass, a highly recognized and respected Canadian nurse, respected also on the international scene and who has spent her whole career advancing the profession, is justifiably distressed. Glaringly missing from the health part of the Budget was any commitment to promotion of health, prevention of disease, and a strong commitment to Aboriginal health and to the Women's Health program which was launched by us last summer. Again, no comprehensive strategic plan or vision.

Let us have a look at some health care headlines seen in local papers: Experts warn of second-rate hospital care; Hospitals in crisis; Heart surgery wait worries doctors; Bed shortage cited in deaths of four patients; People going blind waiting for eye surgery, doctor says; Emergency wards wage uphill battle; Intensive

care beds short; Equipment breakdowns seen occurring virtually daily at hospital laboratories; Doctor shortage plagues rural areas; Hospital forced to limit admissions; Patient decries bed wait.

Along with nurses crying in the hallways, these headlines were rampant under the Pawley government of the '80s, a time I personally remember very well. The current Health Minister should take note because the chance of this happening again under his NDP Government is very real and likely sooner than later.

Another area of particular interest to me are children's and family issues. As a children's advocate for many years, I have a deep commitment to programming that improves the lives of children and youth. I know that initiatives for families and children do much to strengthen and enhance the quality of life for many Manitobans. In our last budget, in order to ensure that children have a healthy and stimulating start to their lives, we devoted \$25 million to preventative programs for families, giving parents the support they needed to raise strong, health and happy children.

We had strengthened our efforts to prevent FAS, which is a leading cause of preventable birth defects in Canada. We had strengthened our support for at-risk adolescent mothers and their children, as well as the BabyFirst and EarlyStart programs. I am glad to see that the NDP continue to make a financial commitment to children under their Healthy Child Initiative, most of which were programs and initiatives started under our government.

I had hoped to see a new announcement related to the opening of a safe house for child prostitutes, but that was not to be. That is a particular interest of mine and one that I had prior to even entering government. It has been something that I have worked on for a number of years with community organizations as well as government, and it is a very community-driven initiative. I was hoping that the work that this group had been working very diligently on would have been something recognized by this government and built into the Budget. It is certainly something that I am going to continue to pursue because I think that is something that

needs to be addressed in Manitoba, because right now there is almost nothing for child prostitutes in this province. I would like to see a commitment by this government to take the work—and a lot of good work has been done—and I would like to see this government take it and move forward with it.

What I did find questionable was the trashing of the Children and Youth Secretariat and a resurrection of the same program under a new name so that the NDP can pretend it was all their idea. The establishment of the Children and Youth Secretariat was something I was very pleased to see when I was working in the community as the executive director of Child Find Manitoba, a provincial crime prevention organization dedicated to addressing the issues of missing and exploited children.

As a community organization, many of us in the community were involved with working with various government departments over the years, and many of us had the same frustrations of having to deal with several different departments in government to try to get something done. Our community organizations were faced with a government where there was fragmentation, lack of co-ordination, duplication, lack of a holistic approach, and I would also say the public's failure to receive the best return on the investment of its revenues and resources. This all ended with the establishment of the Children and Youth Secretariat, a shift towards developing partnerships which brought various players together to improve service.

We in the community were relieved because now we became a player, a stakeholder with a strong voice. There was a commitment to the community by the government saying that the government was willing to believe in what the community was doing and to have value in what the community was doing and a willingness to be a partner in all of that. The Secretariat invoked systematic change which reflected government's reduced role and the community's increased part in addressing child, youth and family issues.

The Secretariat believed that government's role is not to solve community problems by pouring more resources into the situation. They

learned from the lessons of the past 30 years that expanding departments, spending or services is not always the most desirable way to address problems. The Children and Youth Secretariat recognized that government's role is to work with the community, all sectors of the community, to develop and implement new ideas and approaches to meet the needs of Manitoba's younger generations.

The commitment of our government towards the community having a voice was certainly there and it was strong. The commitment of this government, this current NDP Government towards the community having a voice is still unknown, as they trashed the Children and Youth Secretariat and fired Doris Mae Oulton, the dynamic, award-winning and highly respected CEO of the Children and Youth Secretariat, who was the driving force in getting a lot of the initiatives started in that Secretariat. So what did this government do? They renamed the Secretariat, relocated it away from a great location on Portage Avenue with its store-front office, and they brought it back under the control of the Department of Family Services and the Minister of Family Services. Its autonomy seems to have been reined in and what is happening to it remains unclear, even to those working within it.

While we were in government, we had seven Cabinet ministers overseeing the work of the Secretariat. Now, under the new NDP initiative, there are five only. It was interesting to see this government make a big to-do about setting up this five-member committee, almost as if it was something that they had invented, when in fact it was something that had already been in place with much wider input from ministers in our government. It is also really interesting to note that the group working on the child prostitution issue, the people in the community have raised some concern that there is no female Cabinet minister involved in this five-member committee. And it is interesting that that concern is arising from the community.

I was pleased to see an increase in funding for child care, as this was something we were also committed to over our last two budgets. With a booming economy, one can find the needed resources to address pressing needs.

While the funding provided to child daycare has promise, it should be acknowledged that Manitobans are still waiting for specific details on how that money will be distributed. It remains unclear what the NDP will specifically do with the National Child Benefit, because it has been left somewhat vague, indicating that only increases to the budget will flow through to families. I am sure that traditional NDP supporters will not be very happy about this part. It should be noted that the C. D. Howe Institute has stated that Manitoba's use of the National Child Benefit is the most effective in the country and a model for other provinces to emulate. As it is aimed at preventing child poverty in the long term, it goes on in their report to say that provinces such as Saskatchewan, which invested in increased cash supplements, have been far less successful than Manitoba.

* (16:40)

Sadly there were no further innovations announced in the Budget for children and families. This budget left a lot of questions in the Family Services Department unanswered, however, for instance, how would the Minister be able to continue funding Winnipeg Child and Family Services at the same level when he is creating two new Child and Family Services agencies, one for Aboriginal peoples and one for Métis peoples. What will he have the staff at Winnipeg Child and Family Services doing since he promised to retain them all? He indicated there would be no job loss. We are still waiting to hear where his initiative is going because certainly there is a high level of concern in the Winnipeg Child and Family Services in terms of what will happen to those jobs.

We already know that the NDP Government scrapped the fraud line and the \$2.5 million in savings it saw every year. Despite the fact that Manitoba taxpayers can use dedicated fraud lines for Crime Stoppers, poachers, telephone scams, income tax evasion and insurance fraud, this government did not feel that Manitoba taxpayers needed to be protected from the cost of welfare fraud. It should be noted that, as of January, 2000, because of this fraud line, \$13.5 million had been saved by the province.

This budget also did not address with any specifics the issue of how we can see able-

bodied welfare recipients become employed. In fact, funding for training programs under Building Independence has been decreased. Serious questions will be raised in Estimates regarding the NDP's beliefs and direction in addressing welfare issues.

If one is serious about moving people off of the welfare rolls—[interjection] Interesting how sensitive members opposite get when we talk about lack of accountability within the welfare system. If one is serious about moving people off of the welfare rolls, why would you cut funding to education and training in this area? It is also interesting to note that the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) has indicated that more people have left the social assistance system for work during their first six months in office than during the same period last year.

We have to chuckle a little bit about that, because the Minister is taking credit for those numbers when in fact his government had absolutely nothing to do with creating this decrease in the welfare rolls. These decreases are directly attributable to our initiatives, because the Minister of Family Services has not introduced any new initiatives that would have kicked in yet. So not only have they scrapped welfare legislation, workfare legislation, they have yet to offer any real incentives that will get people off of welfare and into jobs.

So not only is the Health Minister trying to take credit where it is not due him, but so is the Minister of Family Services, a shameful situation by both of these ministers. What of the social and economic impacts which we will see with five new casinos? The budget did not even touch on this. I wonder why.

What has this NDP Government done in this budget to motivate our young people to stay and work in Manitoba? How are they attracting new young people to come to our province?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our young people are tomorrow's doctors, nurses, teachers, computer engineers and entrepreneurs. They will make our province strong in the 21st century. This government is failing to provide our recent graduates and young entrepreneurs, the people who will create jobs and provide services for

Manitobans, with motivation to build a career in Manitoba. They have scrapped Manitoba's sales tax rebate for first-time homeowners while failing to keep Manitoba tax competitive with the rest of Canada.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Government does not continue to foster the proper environment for business and investment, we will not have the resources with which to invest in our citizens. The NDP are fond of touting themselves as the friends of social programs. If this government fails to retain and attract young people, people who will build this province's future, the social programs all Manitobans want, need and reserve will suffer.

Budgets are perhaps the most fundamental element of the operations of government, for they provide us with the means with which to carry out our endeavours. Mr. Deputy Speaker, without responsible stewardship of this province's financial resources, we will not be able to continually support important social programs and other ventures. This budget was an opportunity for the NDP Government to show leadership and offer Manitobans a plan for the future. Unfortunately, it was an opportunity this government missed, and I cannot support this budget. Thank you.

Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West): I stand today to speak on a budget that has been the best budget put forward in Manitoba in at least 11 years. People in the community are extremely happy about it.

It is interesting, the balanced and responsible budget that was put forth for families and children and people and communities in Manitoba has been recognized by many, many people certainly in my community in Brandon West, and speaking with other members, the amount of positive that this budget has injected into Manitoba after 11 years of squeezes and crushing by a government that did not recognize the cares, wants or needs in communities from families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is interesting to hear from members opposite some of the negatives that are in the Budget. I guess it is interesting some of the comments that have come across the

way. I guess I could only point out, in the words of Frederick Langbridge, and I guess the members opposite would probably recognize it and it would probably be extremely well recognized by the previous Tory government in Saskatchewan, the Devine government, they would recognize this statement: Two men look out through the same bars; one sees the mud and the other sees the stars.

Now many of the members who look out from behind those bars, it is just a matter of attitude. It is a matter of what is real and what is perceived. It is interesting that our member from the opposite way for Springfield yammered and babbled about Albania and a bunch of other things that, really, we have not quite figured out in reading the Hansard. It does not make a lot of sense, but one thing that does certainly make sense is his lack of understanding in what families and what communities wanted to see in a budget.

Our Finance Minister had probably the most well-rounded budget for families, as I mentioned before, that we have seen in 11 years and addressed issues that I am sure our member who spoke previously—from Charleswood is it—had mentioned she was in the health care profession. It is interesting. I myself, too, was in the health care profession for a number of years. She spoke about the loss of people within the health care profession. I notice there was no mention of the thousand nurses who were whacked out of Manitoba over a number of years, but I think we might have an opportunity here to pick up a couple of nurses into the province of Manitoba, considering the new government out east that we have. There is a government out east in Nova Scotia that has a new Tory government that just, as well, whacked out a bunch of nurses.

So I am here to say today that the opportunity is now present that we may be able to pick up some more of the Tories' vision and the Tories' vision that they have had in Nova Scotia in canning a bunch more nurses that we may be able to bring them into Manitoba with open arms and try to address the health care system that was so badly damaged by the previous government.

* (16:50)

The vision that the members opposite would like to disenfranchise in the way that they would like to have Manitobans—you know, with absolutely no credibility, I might add. When we look at what has happened over the last decade by members opposite here and their lack of business sense, their lack of leadership, their lack of vision for Manitobans has been such a disgrace that, I guess, when I hear comments, I should not take it so much to heart, but it is a little frustrating coming from people who have so little credibility to people that are in Manitoba.

That was obvious when they came out with—what was the plan? How much money were they going to have? Let me think. A billion dollars. It was a billion dollars that they were going to give to Manitobans. Now I, as well, remember—*[interjection]* The member opposite here is saying that there could have been \$2 billion. Well, we did not believe the \$1 billion, let alone talking of \$2 billion—*[interjection]* And now I hear the numbers increasing. The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou) seems to be saying a larger number. I cannot quite hear. But it is obvious to us and it is obvious to Manitobans that the same hollow promise of the billion dollars was reflected in the 1995 election of fixing health care.

Now, there were a lot of promises of bricks and mortar and things going back into physical structures and presence in communities and fixing health care, but it was interesting, right after that election, in fact, there was a lot of renegeing, \$600 million, as I recall, in broken promises.

The billion-dollar promise, I would suggest, would have followed along the same line as the 1995 election. Manitobans, quite frankly, had had enough of SmartHealth from the members opposite. They had had enough of following in the footsteps. I know the members opposite previously spoke highly about Brian Mulroney and the regime at that time. It is probably not something that I would brag about or many people in Canada tend to brag about, the Brian Mulroney years in government. We still have the old guard over here that are with their old ways. It is interesting to note, they are so involved in a

leadership campaign and fight right now, that they are not paying attention to detail.

When we see the old guard continually flogging what they like to call a new guard and an elitist group, as the Member mentioned, the person's name that has been thrown out, Stuart Murray, is being backed by the old guard that got them into the boondoggle that they were in, in fixing an election. It is interesting that they tried to turn themselves.

I know the Member opposite from Lac du Bonnet has his hands full. I know their party over there is split on many issues. I know their party is disagreeing on many things. They are fighting amongst themselves. They cannot get behind Reform or Alliance or Conservative. One is going one way; one is going the other.

They are faltering; they are falling apart. Yet they are coming out here with advice to our Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) who brought down a budget that Manitobans had been consulted on heavily by himself, consulted on in their views on what they thought was important to Manitobans in the economic summit of business and labour and community. Yet, in their in-house fighting across the way, they are coming across with comments that are, I must say, less than believable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the budget for families is well thought out. The numbers are indisputable. The savings to middle-class families, we have the tax reductions that exceeded commitments by us in the election campaign. Manitobans voted on health care that was destroyed by the members opposite. They voted on education and a chance for children and adults and families to increase and have a base and a future and an opportunity here in Manitoba.

The Member opposite from Charleswood, I have noticed, when she was mentioning cost of living and Manitobans and some of the other provinces, what she did not mention was that, when you compare a family of four with an average earning of some \$60,000, the overall expenses, when you take into account little things, she did not quite point them out, like retail sales tax in Ontario compared to Manitoba,

and purchases in that way—the gasoline tax, much heavier in Ontario than in Manitoba. She did not seem to mention the cost of housing and the mortgage payments that are almost double in Alberta and in Ontario. Suddenly that did not come into effect in her statements.

The car insurance, there was something brought in by the NDP Government that we have recognized to be an extreme benefit over these years, would save Manitobans and give Manitobans the ability to save a lot of dollars and have excellent insurance here in the province. When you compare auto insurance, in Manitoba, a car would cost \$939 on this particular model. In Alberta, suddenly it is \$1,065, but in Ontario it is \$1,389. Now, even though I do not have a calculator, I can quite quickly see the hundreds of dollars of savings in Manitoba that were not taken into account there.

The vision of the previous government started with Ralph Klein. I think that, when Ralph came up with an idea and he phoned here to the province, he got a straight line through to our previous Premier. He wanted him to do things like sell off telephone companies and sell off to private benefit Crown corporations that Manitoba had.

Now I am not sure if he ever talked about the selling off of a provincially owned benefit that we have in our auto insurance. But I am sure when you compare the numbers there and the numbers on telephone, when you take Manitoba, even now after the boondoggle and the sale from the previous government, the cost of \$444 on an average family for telephones is the lowest compared to the other two. Alberta is \$540, which is just slightly ahead on the sale of their corporation, and Ontario is \$522. Now the telephone system, now privatized in Manitoba, is applying left and right for increases. It is applying to have the CRTC overrule and change and make sure that they can get their grab out of the dollars, and it is interesting that that did not come up from the members opposite.

But the health care that Manitobans had spoken to us and spoken to the members opposite, which obviously was not listened to, said quite strongly that they want a balanced budget. They want a budget where they can see

hope for their families. They want to see decreases in taxation, which was listened to and expanded on by our province. Yet in health care, the previous government in their infinite wisdom thought that let us not budget the proper numbers into health care. Let us not actually look at the cost of health care and budget for that, because quite frankly I think that they thought they were open to selling another publicly owned company so they could replenish the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. The reason I believe that is because they were depleting it in such an incredibly fast way.

* (17:00)

In their efforts to do what we did in balancing a budget, they drew from that Fiscal Stabilization Fund previously, in their last budget, double what this budget now addresses. They drew over \$180 million to come out with what they called a balanced budget, pulling from reserves, and yet they thought depleting it at that quick amount, which if they had have had their hands on a budget again this year and done the same thing, there would have been very little money left in that Fiscal Stabilization Fund for the people of Manitoba. Now that was not balancing the Budget. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund that we drew out of the Budget this year went straight to reduction. The rest was balanced, and in fact a surplus of \$10 million.

The federal transfer payments that were quite stingy in 1994 reduced the Budget, or monies that we get into our budget by some \$230 million, and yet they did not budget more dollars into the health care budget. This year our minister, as previously given on budget day, budgeted a 6 % increase into health care funding, quite rightly. The report from Deloitte and Touche suggested that more dollars be budgeted into that amount, because it was quite obvious to this government when we took over in September that the Tories had overspent in health care by some \$190 million by early summer—

An Honourable Member: Missed it by that much.

Mr. Smith: Yes, and that is not just a little number. That is not just a little out. It is

interesting the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) would like to have us recognize the attributes of their vision and their budgeting and their business expertise. Yet here is a government of tired old Tories that had overbudgeted \$190 million just in one single department in health care. The underbudgeting in other areas was staggering, and our Finance Minister, as he addressed in the Budget and as many Manitobans have recognized that gives hope to families and communities, is the increase in spending for our education.

Families on the doorstep said health care and education were priorities in Manitoba. They have been given in a budget that is balanced for families, increases in the K to 12, and further to that in the secondary education the amount of increase in university funding and the promise for increases in spaces, as the business community has strongly recommended, has been crushed for the last decade, and no tradespeople coming into the system, which has impacted incredibly on the economics of Manitoba and the ability to increase and for different organizations to grow for Manitoba to be competitive. They have cut the spaces in community colleges.

The five commitments that we met in the Budget were balanced. It was health care, the education, not to sell off Hydro, as I am sure the members opposite had been considering, securing a budget that was for families, the tax reductions that Manitobans will see. Let me give you an example, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When you take a family of four with an income of \$40,000, although the members opposite would like to say there is no reduction, you have a family whose income falls in the first year \$153, next year \$421, and in the next year \$515, for a total savings in that period of \$1,089. Now, maybe they missed that page, but that is pretty obvious.

The three brackets that were created have been effective. They are recognized in numbers like this: A single senior with an income of \$20,000, taxes drop \$60 this year, \$192 next year, \$214 in 2002. Over the three years, the senior will save \$466 in provincial income tax. They will have a health care system that is going to be effective. We have had a health care minister completely rejuvenate and virtually do away with the previous government's terrible

boondoggle on health care and the hallway health care that was so prevalent prior to September of this year.

The education that families will see savings in is again, as I mentioned, a reduction for families. It is real dollars, real out-of-pocket expenses, real hope for those families, real hope for those students and develops in Manitoba what we believe is a vision, and many of the younger people believe is a vision, is a province that will have excellence in education. It will have an ability for Manitoba to compete against anybody in the world globally with maintaining and keeping students here.

The overall expenditures when you take bottom line, and the members opposite would like to dazzle us with the jargon of trying to compete with Alberta and the revenues that they have there, but it is interesting to look at the overall picture in Manitoba. There are many young professionals moving to Manitoba because of the quality of life, because of the vision that they have seen out of our Health Minister's (Mr. Chomiak) budget here in Manitoba. They can see the entire picture, the entire wraparound where they can come here with their families. They can take their families to an affordable location where their wages will buy way more here in Manitoba, where their sons and daughters will be able to attend a secondary institution here in Manitoba, the best in the world, and pay lower fees for that education.

The reducing of the small business tax. Now, this was never mentioned by the members opposite, but it is something I believe is quite interesting. It was in the Budget. It was one of those lines again that they suddenly slipped over. When our minister brought down the Budget, the Government is committed to seeing small businesses grow and prosper here in Manitoba. This has been obvious with the discussions we have had with business, the discussions we have had with labour and everyone in one room looking forward to competitive Manitoba. The small business tax decreased to 7 percent this year, saving small business over \$6 million. I am pleased that I can also confirm the Budget had a further reduction next year to 6 percent and the year after that to 5 percent. Now, suddenly it is

interesting how members opposite missed over that line again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in their forte here in the last couple of days.

Manitoba is one of the most affordable places in Canada to raise children. With what was in this budget, it makes it a lot more affordable. It makes it a lot more compatible for businesses to do their business out of here, to have an incredible quality of life, and to compete right here from Manitoba with some of the incentives we have got coming up that will be done in legislation and e-commerce in the next while. It was mentioned in the Budget by the Minister the impacts that this will have and the changes it will make to small businesses here in Manitoba.

Ralph Klein, the previous premier, and the members opposite, and, in fact, some of the members as they bail out this summer and this fall and are replaced by, we think, probably the right-of-right, old, tired Tory regime of Brian Mulroney and people that are leaving, it is interesting to see the backers and supporters that are supporting the people that are running. When you take how they lost contact with Manitobans, how the arrogance just [*interjection*] absolutely outstripped—the Member across wants me to expand on what arrogance means, and I will give him some examples, because I am glad he has asked the question. It is interesting, and an example of that we saw this morning from what I believe that they recognize as one of their best, the Member from Springfield (Mr. Schuler). He had mentioned today that, in fact, and I hope the Member is listening, he said: He would like to reach down and give the Government a hand up. This exemplifies absolutely the arrogance of the members opposite.

It is interesting how they feel they are on a platform, a plateau that they have to reach down to government, and I imagine they feel they need to reach down to the average citizen within the community. That probably had a lot to do with what happened in the election in '99. When you shine that arrogance and you speak that way, and the comments about Albania, and the blather that came out of the Member opposite, it is not hard to understand how they have lost track of real people, real families. There is the responsibility

that this government has to the well-rounded, balanced budget that was presented.

* (17:10)

It is interesting, in the last 10 years, the amount of time they have had to recognize this, the amount of time on statements they are making here over the last couple of days, that they feel were not included in the Budget. Now, the lowest tax rate in Manitoba is 10.9 percent on incomes from zero to 30, and Alberta, although higher on its tax rate, the members opposite would like, and, as I have mentioned, the worshipping of Ralph Klein's type of governance from members opposite, and Brian Mulroney, do not seem to recognize that 10.9 being lower than Alberta. They constantly talk about numbers that are higher and taxes that are higher, but they never seem to quite catch that piece.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the tax relief of the average Manitoban that has come in—Manitobans are not fooled. The average property tax reduction in rural Manitoba, which many of the members should recognize, is 4.8 percent on their tax bill. Here, in the city of Winnipeg, the tax reduction is approximately 2.7 percent, 2.8 percent. The average real reduction of 3 percent on property taxes in Manitoba is one of the first in a long, long time. I know in Brandon West, I can certainly speak of the underfunding that the previous government put into education drove up the property taxes in Brandon. There was no other way to do it. They were put in a terrible position by the previous government that they had to up the taxes. One year it was 13 percent, the next year it was 9 percent, until they got close to an election where members opposite all of a sudden seemed to find extra dollars for those things. It was a starve and binge, starve and binge that Manitobans, quite frankly, got frustrated with, tired with, no vision. Just trying to fool Manitobans just did not work for the members opposite. It was unfortunate, but it drove university costs in a decade to double. It was an average increase, over their regime, over the 10 years that they were in, the 11 years that they were in, some 110 percent for Brandon University, Assiniboine Community College in Brandon, 213 percent increases in tuition fees for students trying to attempt to go to school and

families and parents trying to pay for those young people to go and have a future.

But suddenly they have forgotten those very important issues in complaining and constantly talking about the inefficiency, and they want more tax reductions, more tax reductions, yet I suspect, and I feel that they would have binged on that a little bit coming into the election with their billion-dollar promises that, quite frankly, never would have materialized. Manitobans knew that it would have been just another broken promise by the previous government.

The facts on living in Manitoba and the overall costs are interesting. When you take the small percentage, the small group, the small lobby group that are pressuring—and the Ralph Kleins and the Brian Mulroneys of the world to actually get the dollars spent. Somehow the previous government does not quite remember how they were going to do these tax cuts, and yet the No. 1 priority in Manitoba, and in fact across Canada, has been with the health care. I am quite sure they would have underfunded that again. They would have run up a huge deficit, as they did last year in health care, as I mentioned before, to the tune of \$190 million overspent by early summer.

An Honourable Member: Got enough money now?

Mr. Smith: In fact, the Member opposite from Arthur-Virden mentions: Have you got enough money now? In fact, with the growth in the economy, there is enough money now, as the Minister quite justly did put the \$135 million over last year's budget into health care, for a total of \$2.4 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those true increases in the actual costs that we should be basing our budget on, yes, I do believe that there should be adequate money within the health care system to try to repair the destruction that was made by members opposite over the 10 years that they destroyed health care.

The interesting part of previous budgets by the members opposite was in their ability to recognize what is important to Manitobans. It is interesting the social services that took an incredible whack in dollars, the income tax cuts that very few, other than Ralph Klein and

members opposite, were pushing for as something that was very important in the Budget did not quite recognize that an income tax at 3 percent would impact revenue in Manitoba some \$81 million and would affect a family earning \$50,000, \$231. It was recognized on the doorstep and recognized certainly by myself and many members that it was important. It is interesting to note that that would be 1080 professors at a university.

As I mentioned before, the members opposite, one of their best just came into the room, the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler). You can hear him clapping for himself. He is definitely a master in his own mind. It is interesting to note that he rambles about Albania. I imagine he has probably been there a few times. He fully understands and abstracts from his widespread ability and knowledge of the system there, but I cannot comment on that. I am not sure what the structure in Albania is. The Member for Springfield mentions comrades quite often. I believe he mentions Communism as well. He is quite a well-read member. It is obvious in his comments, in some of his comments, just a master of his vision that we choose not to recognize. However, in a democratic society everyone in fact does have the right to express their view.

A 3% reduction, as I mentioned, with a revenue impact of \$81 million on that family for \$231, people said to me and they said to members on this side that health care is important, that that \$231, although they would like to see a decrease, they would like to see Manitoba work toward that vision of having less tax rates, which was brought into the Budget for those folks, but they also said, repair the destruction that has been made over the last decade by the previous government. Do something, put money into the health care system. Have a health care system and a vision that I will be able to take my family to. Do not get us into a system like members opposite want to with the Ralph Klein regime, where we have to pay extra for our health care, where an average family in Alberta has to pay some \$800 to \$1000 over and above for their health care system.

It is interesting, that \$231 on the tax relief to that family, and yet the members opposite would

like to get into the Ralph Klein regime and have \$800 taken away from them in extra costs in health care. Now, it does not take a rocket scientist to understand that that would cost Manitobans much more money. It would be detrimental to the average family in Manitoba to do that.

Now, maybe that 3 percent, the members opposite thought, and here is the impact that that \$81 million would have. Maybe they wanted to lay off, as they did with nurses, a thousand nurses. Maybe they wanted to lay off 1080 professors at the University of Manitoba. Or maybe their vision was to get rid of Misericordia Health Care Centre for \$48 million, or maybe their vision in doing just a tax reduction would have been for the Department of Education. All grants to all community colleges, maybe they wanted to get rid of that. Or maybe they are suggesting that the Child and Family Services, community living, the supports for adults with disabilities should be totally wiped out by that 3 percent tax decrease and nothing else.

* (17:20)

Now, that is not the vision of Manitobans. That is not the vision of this government. It was a balanced budget, it was a vision that was responsive to Manitobans in a way that supported health care, it supported education, it enhanced quality of living here for Manitoba, a 3.8% increase to community colleges and universities, funding increases to public school funding, reduced the pressure and provided stability to municipal budgets for education and local pressures on people that have been passed onto them by the previous government.

I know people from Brandon were very, very frustrated with the lack of vision and the binge-and-starve financing of the previous government. Now they have seen a budget that is balanced. It is responsive and honest. Quite frankly, the last attribute, the honesty of keeping to the budget after making it, I know in the 1995 budget they promised, and I could be corrected if I am wrong, some \$600 million to go into health care that did not quite materialize afterwards. I am not sure what happened there, but Manitobans recognize that. The Member over across for Springfield seems to be saying \$650

million. I cannot quite understand him, but it was a massive amount of promises that were broken. Incredible.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the future of Manitoba is based on a budget of vision, based on real incentives for business in Manitoba to be competitive, based on a well-rounded budget that addresses the incredible mishandling of funding that was done. "Deloitte and truth" made many recommendations on the inefficiencies to the previous government's budgeting. They are dragging money out of bank accounts to say that they had a balance, and we have addressed that. We have gone a long way to becoming really balanced on a budget.

Coming to the point and getting to the end, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know we could talk each of us for hours on the benefits of this budget to Manitobans, that have been told to us by Manitobans. It is positive. It is refreshing. Manitoba now has a vision, a future. It is incredible in the rural areas, the feeling that we are getting back on the budget, of the reflection of the help that this budget has done. As I mentioned previously, the reduction of approximately 4.8 percent on taxes within communities in the rural area is a real benefit. The benefits that we have had are positive. Manitobans appreciate a balanced vision of health care, education, not selling off corporations that have been paid for by Manitobans over a number of years, and an honest display of taking all of their suggestions and putting them into the budget, not impeding it as the previous government had done, open consultation process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to say Manitoba now has a vision and a future. Thank you very much.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to place upon the record a few comments in regard to the debate on the Budget that has been tabled by the New Democratic Government on May 10, 2000.

Before I start my address in regard to the Budget, I would like to challenge the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) to provide to the

House or to me personally, if he could, the premise to why he made the statement that, in fact, 1000 fewer nurses were active in the province of Manitoba and show us what time in history that, in fact, did take place? I am afraid I have yet to be able to validate that particular statement anywhere I have looked. So the challenge is there to the Member for Brandon West to provide documentation to myself or to this House in order to be able to provide when the employment of 1000 fewer nurses could be precisely shown.

Also, I would like to ask the Member, and I challenge him again on this point, to provide documentation as to where the promise, which he stated in this House just a moment ago, that the Progressive Conservative government had stated that they would not sell Manitoba Telecom Services. I would really like to see that, and if it is in Hansard, please, if one can point that out to me, I would be most appreciative.

I would like to also compliment the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), for making a point of the billion dollars and to thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) for the New Democratic Party, for supporting what the Progressive Conservative Party had stated last fall. There will be a billion dollars more in revenues garnered by the provincial government of which one can work to provide the services that government should provide, and also to allow the flexibility to provide vision to the province and hope to Manitobans that we do have a bright future here in Manitoba. So the challenges are there, and the accolades are there.

Now I would like to continue on that positive note because, as the Deputy Speaker knows, I am not one for political rhetoric. I would like to skip to the meat and the bones of the topic of discussion and to not expend a great deal of this House's valuable time on pointless political statements.

* (17:30)

So I would like to compliment and thank the Honourable Finance Minister of the New Democratic Party, and I quote: "In 1999, Manitoba's Health spending was the highest per capita in all the nation." He goes on to say:

"Despite five years of unparalleled growth in surpluses of the federal government, the health and social transfer payments remain below the 1994-95."

I really would like to thank the Minister for pointing that out because the previous members of the New Democratic Party when, in opposition, failed to recognize that point, but now he has, and it is in black and white in his own words. Then he finishes off his comments that I would like to make mention of: "That Manitoba has maintained its leadership in medicare." Manitoba has, in fact, remained a leader, and I am very proud that the Progressive Conservative government was in government to continue that leadership in health care.

I also would like to take this time to compliment the Government on continuing to support the many valued child-care initiatives that the previous government had established and, with the Healthy Child Initiative, continues to support those valued programs that indeed start out at a very early age. Prior to the birth of the child, the mother can receive the supports that she needs in order to have a healthy birth as well as to make certain that she is able to provide a household environment in which that child can flourish. So I compliment the Government for staying the course of the previous government.

On that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it begs to ask the question of all of these initiatives to support the family, yet the tax regime that is outlined in this particular budget is left wanting in support of the family. This government had the opportunity to really strike out on a new course that really put the family first. You wonder why the two parents have to be employed in order to provide the necessities of life for their family when one spouse should be able to stay home. So we want to ask the question why then for a household income of \$60,000, if it is garnered by one spouse, it is so significantly taxed higher than if \$60,000 was brought into that household by two individuals at the \$30,000 level. Why can not one individual go out and one individual stay home? I am certainly not saying that it should be male or female in any one of those positions, because in fact we know that in today's society the equal

opportunities are there. If they are not, this Member for Portage la Prairie would certainly do all that he can do to change that.

I really want to emphasize that the current budget does not strike out on that new family-oriented taxation regime.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I want to draw the Member's attention to the fact that this was documented and provided to them prior to the Budget deliberations and the formation of this budget by the Lower Tax Commission. In fact, it is clearly outlined here where recommendation 8 recommends the basic tax credit amount for each parent be \$7,700 and \$3,300 for each child as a supplemental tax credit, which would provide for monies not taxed for the absolute necessities of life that all of us recognize.

As well, recommendation No. 29. We recommend that the provincial government urge the federal government to allow families some extra contribution room in RRSPs to reflect the years when one spouse stays out of the labour force to look after the children or aging relatives. I do not see that anywhere within the Budget. I think it is definitely an initiative that requires significant study and ultimate implementation, because in fact we all recognize that there are important necessities of life that should not come after tax. We should recognize that families need certain items for that life that we all aspire to here in this province of Manitoba.

One thing that, while talking on taxation, I would like to recognize is that much is stated within the Budget documentation. It continues a tradition here that recognizes so many other considerations that one has living in one spot or another. But I will state emphatically that, regardless of what expenditures one is looking at, taxation is non-discretionary. The age-old statement that there are only two sureties in life, those are death and taxes. Taxes are non-discretionary spending.

So all of these other items within this document that are referred to as to less housing costs or less telephone or less insurance, all of those certainly are important, but they are

discretionary spending. One has that option. Taxes, they do not. All honourable members, regardless of what occupation one is you always look at your take-home pay after taxes.

In fact, I would like to ask any honourable members opposite as to how many, in fact, offered to pay more money to the Treasury of this province than was asked for on the bottom line of their tax form. I see no raised hands. I see no acknowledgment. So therefore I recognize that there were no members opposite that in fact voluntarily wanted to pay more tax. In fact, we are paying more tax.

Had this government not fiddled and changed the relationship between the federal government and the provincial government in the taxation form this year, we would in fact have paid less taxes. It is indisputable insofar as each and every one of us has opportunity to attend to our most favoured accountant. I trust, if they would ask that question, the ultimate answer would be that, if no change would have been made, more take-home pay would be in our pockets.

I would also, in all fairness and in balance, want to recognize some initiatives of government which are, indeed, needed, and that is the revisal for \$22 million towards affordable housing within the core of Winnipeg. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say, on behalf of persons in need, a big thank-you to the Government. However, I want to ask the question, though, when only half the population lives within Winnipeg, why, then, are they receiving \$22 million and the balance of the province is only receiving \$1 million?

I do not believe that there is anyone living outside of the Perimeter that would state that they are one twentieth less important than those person living in Winnipeg. In fact, I do believe that I will on this point be receiving support from the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), the Member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and the members for Brandon because, as was stated in November, when the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg came out and identified areas of need regarding poverty-stricken families trying to

provide a roof over the heads of their children, these areas were identified ahead of Winnipeg's need.

*(17:40)

I know the Member for Riel (Ms. Asper) brought this to the attention of the New Democratic Party Caucus because she stood here and made a private member's statement identifying Portage la Prairie in greater need than Winnipeg. She stated that in fact The Pas was in greater need than Winnipeg. She went on to further state that Swan River, Thompson and Selkirk were in greater need of attention than Winnipeg. So I am glad that I have members on the government side of the Chamber in support of identifying and realizing a greater expenditure towards this. I hope that those individual representatives will, in fact, support the amendment that has been put forward by the Official Opposition because they must represent their constituents, and it has been already recognized by these individuals. I will be very much looking forward to seeing how the Member for The Pas, the Member for Swan River, the Member for Thompson, and the Member for Selkirk, as well as the two members from Brandon, vote on this when in fact their constituencies are identified in this budget as significantly wanting yet left wanting by this budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to bring forward those points; as well, I would like to recognize, though, what the budget document—in balance again the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has gone on to extol the accomplishments of the previous government and where Manitoba sits as far as the economic outlook because the expenditures and announcements that have been made in the last six months were, in fact, in anyone's analysis, determined and planned for before the Government changed. It is recognized here of the accomplishments of New Flyer and Motor Coach Industries, the aerospace industry, the operations of the Hudson Bay Mining & Smelting, and it goes on to say how Inco's expansion here as well as Manitoba Hydro's planning—the list goes on and on. I really would like to thank the Minister of Finance for recognizing the accomplishments of the Filmon government over the past 11 years. Thank you.

I see now the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) is here, and I do want to just revert to the families in need. He recognized the decreasing value of his own property within Winnipeg. I also would like then to recognize his support in the efforts of our amendment, because Portage la Prairie and other areas—and may I just digress for a moment to tell of an example of reduced housing and the value of the marketplace.

I had an opportunity to visit just briefly with an elderly gentleman from Pilot Mound. This elderly gentleman had lived in his home the better part of his life, now looking for, unfortunately, assisted care and having to leave his home. The real estate agent had tried for many, many months to find a buyer for the home which was valued in the tax roll in excess of \$70,000 and could have, indeed, brought \$70,000 in many communities within Manitoba. However, the southwest of Manitoba is really hurting, has really been devastated by the excessive rainfall that they received last year, and money for purchases is scarce. This government has yet to grasp the full impact of the scarcity of dollars because of the impact and devastation that the producers, family farms in that area have experienced. Nevertheless, the bottom line of this story was that he had just sold his home. One could expect maybe \$60,000, \$50,000 perhaps, \$40,000, as the Member for Burrows received for his home. No, this gentleman, his life savings invested in his home, received a paltry \$31,100.

So, I would like to bring home to all members opposite that consideration must be shown to the rest of the province. When one looks in the Budget document and talks about housing initiatives and the need out there for homes, why should the rest of the province be one twentieth of value of those residents residing within the Perimeter? I am looking forward to support on this amendment by all members outside the Perimeter Highway, because if they were to go to their constituents and say that I stood in the House in support of the Budget that stated that my constituents were one-twentieth valued by this provincial government because they lived in rural Manitoba, I do not believe that they would be returning to this House.

I also want to go on. A balance is positive and a balance is constructive. I say that there is need to recognize and there is opportunity to recognize. I look to the members who are in the New Democratic Party for their support and their continued input.

Starting now, though, on the issue of education. I want to compliment the Government on placing more dollars in this very valued area of the Budget document and, in fact, believe that they are on the right road in placing more dollars in the hands of the educational system. However, I believe that they have made a strategic error in how they are placing those dollars into the hands of the educational system insofar as our universities are really in dire need of capital expenditures in order to be able to continue to function, as well as they are in dire need of support for their faculty staff to offer the more diverse programming that is necessary in this highly skilled and highly trained workforce that we are hoping to provide this province with.

The question has to be asked because the dollars, many of those expended in education, are going to the student. No one in any business situation would train someone, invest in someone, without requiring that individual to contribute to a business or charity or whatever. With this proviso to the tuition reduction and to the students attending post-secondary education, there is no requirement for the student upon graduation to return to the employment here offered in the province. There is no requirement whatsoever. As recognized by survey, as recognized by each and every individual here in this Chamber, there is no more mobile a person than that of a recent graduate. That individual, in this highly competitive employment atmosphere not only in this nation but around the world—many, many employment opportunities are offered to the graduates, and the graduates are without any ties to Manitoba. The Manitobans who have invested in this individual have no opportunity to say: Can you return some of that investment here at home?

So I implore this government to look at one of the proposals placed before the electorate in the last election by the provincial Progressive Conservative Party, and that was to recognize that we need the highly skilled, highly trained

individuals to work right here in Manitoba, we have those needs, and not to use the stick attitude but to use the carrot and to offer those individuals tax credits, so that they could pay down any debts that they might have garnered through their higher education endeavours. Through that encouragement, I am certain that those individuals would take up employs here in Manitoba. Within the two to three years of those employs in Manitoba, they would set down roots in Manitoba that could very well last a lifetime and provide to Manitoba the benefit of those skills garnered by the investment by Manitobans. It is vital that we provide that carrot, if you may, to those individuals who will be the future of Manitoba. Our children are that future, and without some type of incentive, those persons will look elsewhere for their employs. As I stated earlier, one looks first to the bottom line on one's paycheque as the determining factor as to where one resides.

* (17:50)

I also would like to compliment them on continuing to support the balanced budget legislation and, in fact, continue to recognize that the debt needs to be paid down by this province that will provide for a brighter future when one is not expending almost \$500 million to interest charges, where \$500 million could be more vitally placed within this province on roads and infrastructure, education, health care, whatever we as legislators determine is the best or, in fact, back in the pockets of Manitobans where they, I am certain, have the skills and abilities to earn that dollar, have the skills and abilities to determine how to spend that dollar. We must provide that opportunity to each and every Manitoban, as I believe in Manitobans.

Manitoba is, indeed, a great place to raise a family. I think that particular statement was really true. Unfortunately, I believe the weather and the attitude of Manitobans came together last Wednesday, May 10, when it was cool, dark, dismal because the weather reflected the mood of Manitobans when this particular budget was announced, and it correspondingly came to be. Perhaps their greater power reflected that particular mood of the province of the—
[interjection]

There is always a silver lining in every cloud. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has pointed that out to me and, yes, in fact, the producers, the family farms of Manitoba relished the rainfall to provide that much-needed moisture to germinate the crops just planted. Certainly, as I say, there is a silver lining in every cloud.

But, on the basis of agriculture, I would like to just bring home a couple of points. The Minister, the other day, pointed out to me upon questioning, that there is \$9 million still within the Agriculture Research and Development Initiative that was co-operatively put together by the previous administration, along with the federal government and third-party contributions from the private sector.

I would, though, like to pass on to the Minister the thoughts of those who are looking to diversify and value-add, that one has to ask the question: Why is so much money not being placed into the much-needed development and research areas? In fact, this is an item that must be corrected. As anyone within the research area recognizes, three years is a very short time frame in which to develop any new initiatives. There is need for projects, and length of time to develop these projects of five and seven years. I am certain that the placement of these dollars will be there for those individuals if the Government can change the criteria and broaden the scope so that value-added research can be included as well.

I also want to compliment the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) who mentioned, in regard to agriculture, the enhancement of the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation. In fact, I would like to compliment the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) for broadening the scope and providing the support for more producers. I want to ask the question then: Why is there \$2 million, almost \$3 million less in the budget allocated to the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation this year rather than last? I am looking forward to having the opportunity to ask the Minister that, at a relative not-too-distant Question Period, because it begs for the question to be asked: How does one enhance a program when one in fact slashes funding for that program?

Continuing with rural residents, I really, truly want to ask the question of the Minister of

Finance or any ministers across the way that can perhaps answer the question as to the \$75 tax credit. It is available to all persons of Manitoba, but where is the recognition that farming families in Manitoba are paying on average eight times more residential taxes than their urban counterparts as far as education goes? The farming families of Manitoba are under siege, and this \$75 tax credit does not, and I repeat, does not come to their assistance. In fact, it is a real slap in the face not to recognize the discrepancy between the farming families and the burden of taxation for education versus the urban resident of Manitoba and their level of support for the educational system. I am looking to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) to correct this inequity sometime within her term of office, because it is a recognized inequity throughout this province, regardless of political stripe.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment the Government on reducing the small business tax and following the lead of the previous government. They did do something, as well. I also want to compliment them on their reduction and elimination of the 2% net income tax, as well as, the 2% net income surtax. I would like to further that, though; I believe perhaps the full weight of this tax relief was not passed on to individuals throughout the province and is perhaps buried somewhere else within the income tax of this province.

I would like to conclude my remarks in the very short one minute and ask certain questions of this government. I have provided many opportunities as a hand up to your providing better government to Manitobans. I feel that you have missed the mark at the present time. I am looking forward to individuals of the NDP caucus as supporting our amendment to the Budget, because I have identified five members across the way that will be supporting this amendment, and I am very much looking forward to their support of the former Finance Minister's amendment to the Budget.

An Honourable Member: Try to do it with a straight face, eh.

Mr. Faurchou: Indeed a straight face is on in the making of that statement, because the dark days of Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Member will have five minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., the House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 16, 2000

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