

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Proposed PLA—Floodway

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Legislature sat for only 37 days in 2003.

Manitobans expect their Government to be accountable, and the number of sitting days has a direct impact on the issue of public accountability.

Manitobans expect their elected officials to be provided the opportunity to be able to hold the Government accountable.

The Legislative Assembly provides the best forum for all MLAs to debate and ask questions of the Government, and it is critical that all MLAs be provided the time needed in order for them to cover constituent and party duties.

Establishing a minimum number of sitting days could prevent the government of the day from limiting the rights of opposition members from being able to ask questions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider recognizing the need to sit for a minimum of 80 days in any given calendar year.

It is signed by Jim Budde, Tom Melnyk and Simone Budde.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Province of Manitoba has tabled legislation in the Legislature that may result in the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway by the summer of 2005.

The Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA).

The proposed PLA would force all employees on the project to belong to a union.

Approximately 95 percent of heavy construction companies in Manitoba are currently non-unionized.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association has indicated that the forced unionization of all employees may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

The chair of B.C.'s 2010 Construction Leaders Taskforce has stated, "Major industrial projects built under project labour agreements from the energy sector in Alberta to off-shore development on the East Coast have repeatedly incurred cost overruns, labour disruptions and delays."

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

Manitobans deserve an open and fair competition that protects taxpayers from unnecessary costs and respects workers' democratic choice.

Manitobans support the right of any company, both union and non-union, to participate in the expansion of the Red River Floodway.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his Government's forced unionization plan of companies involved with the Red River Floodway expansion.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider entering into discussions with business, construction and labour groups to ensure any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

This is signed by Donald Neufeld, Dale Hiebert, Edwin Ninaber and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

* (13:35)

Highway 227

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

It is unacceptable for the residents of Manitoba to travel the unsafe gravel roads of Highway 227 in the constituencies of Lakeside and Portage la Prairie.

Inclement weather can make Highway 227 treacherous to all drivers.

Allowing better access to Highway 227 would ease the flow of traffic on the Trans-Canada Highway.

Residences along Highway 227 are not as accessible to emergency services due to the nature of the current condition of the roadway.

The condition of these gravel roads can cause serious damage to all vehicles, which is unacceptable.

Residents of Manitoba deserve a better rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider having Highway 227 paved from the junction of highways 248 and 227 all the way to Highway 16, the Yellowhead route.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider supporting said initiatives to ensure for the safety of all Manitobans and all Canadians who travel along Manitoba highways.

Submitted on behalf of Marilyn St. Goddard, Les St. Goddard, Todd Turner and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132 (6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

Proposed PLA—Floodway

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, to present the following petition.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): These are the reasons for this petition:

The Province of Manitoba has tabled legislation in the Legislature that may result in the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway by the summer of 2005.

The Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA).

The proposed PLA would force all employees on the project to belong to a union.

Approximately 95 percent of heavy construction companies in Manitoba are currently non-unionized.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association has indicated that the forced unionization of all employees may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

The chair of B.C.'s 2010 Construction Leaders Taskforce has stated, "Major industrial projects built

under project labour agreements from the energy sector in Alberta to off-shore development on the East Coast have repeatedly incurred cost overruns, labour disruptions and delays."

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

Manitobans deserve an open and fair competition that protects taxpayers from unnecessary costs and respects workers' democratic choice.

Manitobans support the right of any company, both union and non-union, to participate in the expansion of the Red River Floodway.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his Government's forced unionization plan of companies involved with the Red River Floodway expansion.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider entering into discussions with business, construction and labour groups to ensure any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Submitted on behalf of Gary Friesen, Peter Funk, Robert Funk and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Province of Manitoba has tabled legislation in the Legislature that may result in the \$660-million

expansion of the Red River Floodway by the summer of 2005.

The Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA).

The proposed PLA would force all employees on the project to belong to a union.

Approximately 95 percent of heavy construction companies in Manitoba are currently non-unionized.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association has indicated that the forced unionization of all employees may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

The chair of B.C.'s 2010 Construction Leaders Taskforce has stated, "Major industrial projects built under project labour agreements from the energy sector in Alberta to off-shore development on the East Coast have repeatedly incurred cost overruns, labour disruptions and delays."

* (13:40)

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

Manitobans deserve an open and fair competition that protects taxpayers from unnecessary costs and respects workers' democratic choice.

Manitobans support the right of any company, both union and non-union, to participate in the expansion of the Red River Floodway.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his Government's forced unionization plan of companies involved with the Red River Floodway expansion.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider entering into discussions with business, construction and labour groups to ensure any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Signed Lauren Grey, Laurie Davidson, Denny Grey and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Red River College Language Training Centre 15 students under the direction of Ms. Karen Thorlakson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale).

Also in the public gallery we have visitors from Guyana Teachers' Union, the Bermuda Union of Teachers, the British Virgin Island Teachers' Union, the Dominica Association of Teachers and the Anguilla Teachers' Union. Their names are Avril Crawford, who is the general secretary of Guyana Teachers' Union; Anthony Wolffe, who is the president of the Bermuda Union of Teachers; Cecil Hodge, who is the President of the British Virgin Islands Teachers' Union; Jerry Coipel, who is assistant treasurer of the Dominica Association of Teachers; Vivian Sedney, who is the secretary-general of Bond van Leraren; and Celestine John, president of the Anguilla Teachers' Union. These are all guests of the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson).

Also in the loge to my left we have with us Mr. Harry Enns, who is the former Member for Lakeside.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Video Lottery Terminals New Equipment

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, seniors and the sick have

had their Pharmacare coverage slashed by this Premier (Mr. Doer). Rural families are having emergency and health care services cut. Schools and post-secondary institutions are underfunded. Cattle producers are being denied a much-needed cash advance, but the citizens of Manitoba, who under this Premier's watch, have become the highest gambling addicts in the country, are getting \$100 million of new Cadillac VLTs.

Mr. Speaker, how does the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) justify spending \$100 million on new Cadillac VLTs when her Government is cutting health care services, denying Manitobans the services and programs they truly need? How do they justify that?

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, the only concern Manitobans had is when the members opposite had estimated a \$50-million expenditure on the biggest expansion of gaming in the province of Manitoba and overspent by \$100 million. The former government, the one that first introduced VLTs into the province of Manitoba in 1991, that had the massive expansion of VLTs through their mandate up through '93 and '95, had no responsible gaming policy at that time. They overspent Manitobans' money. Did they think the machines were just going to continue themselves forever? That is the question.

*(13:45)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I think it is time somebody on the Doer government's side woke up and recognized that its new and improved machines that they talk about are clearly going to only add to the current problem that exists in Manitoba with gambling addictions.

Mr. Speaker, it is under this Government, under the Doer government, that they said they were not elected to raise taxes. What did they do in the last Budget? Increase taxes. This minister is quoted as saying that the \$100 million on new Cadillac VLTs is something, and this is a quote, "It is something that people find is newer and exciting." Those are the words of the minister. That is why we want to spend \$100 million on new Cadillac VLTs. Well, I am not a betting man, but my money is on the fact that Manitobans did not elect the Doer government to raise taxes or spend \$100 million on new Cadillac VLTs.

Why does the Doer government not do the right thing and get to work on a long-term economic strategy for Manitobans that makes sense, that creates jobs, rather than spending \$100 million on new Cadillac VLTs?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see hypocrisy hit new heights by the members opposite here. The member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, he likes to do quotes, so let us have one.

From the Leader of the Opposition, one of the issues on their radar screen is Assiniboia Downs. Would they like upgraded VLTs? "Certainly we would have no problem supporting that. That is an absolute no-brainer," he said. Mr. Speaker, he said, "We would be happy to do that prior to the election."

Mr. Speaker, when you look at responsible gaming in the province of Manitoba, part of his question, there was no responsible gaming policy under the members opposite. We have brought up the money for responsible gaming with AFM 77 percent since we have been elected and, members opposite know that.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I know that this is a little sensitive for members on the opposite side because what we see is under the Doer government's watch we have seen the gambling addiction problem in Manitoba become the highest in Canada. Under their watch.

What have they done about it? They cut the funding to the Addictions Foundation, Mr. Speaker. That is what this Government is capable of doing. They love to talk about quotes. When in opposition, the Premier (Mr. Doer) called VLT revenue the crack cocaine of gambling, but now we know that this Premier has a habit and this Government has a habit of their own. That is a spending habit. So they are desperate to try and find more cash, and what do they do? They spend \$100 million on new Cadillac VLTs because that is the only growth strategy that this

Government knows anything about. Tax Canadians through the Budget, increase VLT revenues. I say shame on them.

What Manitobans want is a long-term economic strategy that creates growth, that creates hope for Manitobans, not \$100 million on new Cadillac VLTs.

Mr. Smith: Again, members opposite confuse volume with fact. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, the numbers that he is lobbing around, the \$100 million, obviously was announced today. There was a renewal with VLTs in Manitoba. He may want to actually look at the numbers that are out there—

* (13:50)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite had absolutely no policy on responsible gaming is when we ran into unfettered problems in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. There have not been VLTs or gambling increased in the province of Manitoba. It was done under that government from 1990 to '99 with absolutely no policy on responsible gaming. When you look at the problem gaming prevalence rates in '95, under the Tories, 4.3 percent, now reduced because of the initiatives we have made to 3.4 percent. We are making headway.

Pharmacare Deductible Increase

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the Doer government has raised Pharmacare deductibles 15 percent over three years. This amounts to an increase of between \$36 and \$660 per family depending on their income level.

I would like to ask this Minister of Health: How can he possibly justify his Government spending \$100 million on new VLTs? Why is he burdening the most vulnerable with increasing Pharmacare deductibles? Where are his priorities?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I am glad the member corrected her error from yesterday when she said we were cutting Pharmacare and has realized that in fact we are putting more resources in

Pharmacare, that in fact we have added a thousand new drugs to the Pharmacare formulary.

The fact that we have increased by 20 000 families the number of people that receive Pharmacare benefits Mr. Speaker, and the fact that we provide 100% coverage on Pharmacare and the fact that for 85 percent of Manitobans who receive Pharmacare benefits, the increase would be \$1 to \$9 per month which is a cost that we reluctantly are having to do, but we want to preserve Pharmacare into the future.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health says his cuts are \$1 to \$9. Well, that amounts in total over three years from \$36 to \$660 per family. It is not just \$1 to \$9. Instead of keeping Pharmacare deductibles low, the Doer government chooses instead to fund VLTs.

This, Mr. Speaker, is an assault on the elderly. I would like to ask this Minister of Health how he can force seniors to choose between milk and medicine while he supports VLTs. Where are his priorities?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, we have expanded coverage under Pharmacare. We have provided drugs to palliative care and we have put in place the measures to have Pharmacare into the future because the growth rate, 15 percent to 20 percent per year, is the single largest growth area of our Budget.

We did not want to do what the Tories did in 1996 when they eliminated two thirds of the people off the Pharmacare roles, 100 percent eliminated. We wanted to bring in some manageable change and, yes, it was reluctant, but part of that, together with our generic purchasing and our generic prices and some of our other controls will see more drugs to more people which is the principle and the goal of Pharmacare, a goal we want to sustain now and into the future.

Mrs. Driedger: The Doer government has decided that spending \$100 million on new VLTs is more important than supporting seniors and the working poor, the ones that he is attacking by increasing the deductibles. How in good conscience can this Minister of Health stand with his Government and support this? He is supposed to stand up for patients, for the vulnerable. Where are his priorities?

Mr. Chomiak: When we looked at the range of options available to the Pharmacare program, we considered what the Tories had done in 1994, '95 and '96, and that is cut two thirds of the people off. We said, "No, we are not going to do that." We also said, "Should we cut benefits by \$20 million as they did?" We said, "No, we are not going to do that." Should we do co-payments like they are doing in other provinces? We said, "No, we are not going to do that." Should we have a health care premium like they have in Alberta, where a thousand dollars per family is paid? We said, "No, we are not going to do that." Should we look at a program that only targets just seniors and just chronic illnesses, like Ontario and the Maritimes? We said, "No, we are not going to do that."

* (13:55)

Mr. Speaker, we are going to maintain a universal program. We are going to expand coverage. We want a program that gets most drugs to as many people as possible to help them, Mr. Speaker. It is a universal program that provides 100% coverage once you achieve your deductible. We did not want to go the way of doing it the way the Tories did in the nineties when they cut off two thirds of the people from the program.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure the honourable Member for Tuxedo appreciated that ovation, but I still need to be able to hear the questions. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Vaccination Programs Funding

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the Government seems to have no problem finding \$100 million to spend on brand new VLTs, yet cannot seem to find \$10 million to offer vaccines against meningitis, pneumococcus and chickenpox for our Manitoba babies. These vaccines are recommended by the Canadian Pediatric Society and are covered by other provinces. Why has this Government chosen new VLTs as a priority over the health of Manitoba babies?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to correct the record here. The Lotteries Corporation returns to this

Government in this Budget \$232 million after the costs for interest and amortization on the new VLT machines. Members opposite are actually factually incorrect.

When they were in government, Mr. Speaker, we had a legal opinion that the Lotteries Corporation was borrowing money illegally off the books of the Province of Manitoba. They were hoarding profits that were due to the Government of Manitoba to pay off those VLT machines. What we did is put the borrowing authority into The Loan Act, but it is part of the business case for the Lotteries Corporation. There is actually no cost to the Government for the VLT replacement program. In fact, there is a \$232-million transfer for health care, education, and other public services.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before recognizing the honourable Member for Tuxedo, I am not seated very far from the honourable Minister of Finance, and when he was trying to give a response, I could hardly hear what he was saying.

We have visitors that have come down here to listen to question-and-answer period. We have the viewing public. I am sure that each and every member would want them to fully appreciate the workings of our Assembly. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members. Decorum is very important in this Chamber. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on a point of order.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, the minister referenced a document that suggested there were illegal dealings going on with the Manitoba Lotteries Commission. I would ask him to table that document, please.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows full well, a member can rise on a point of order in order to request the tabling of a letter. That is not a letter that is being referred to.

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

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, it was clear that the minister referenced a document. He made an accusation that in fact there were illegal dealings, according to the document. This is like quoting from a document. So it is appropriate for us to ask that that document be tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, our Manitoba Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings: "Tabling Letters 39 Where in a debate a Member quotes from a private letter, any other Member may require the Member who quoted from the letter to table the letter from which the Member quoted" a private letter, "but this rule does not alter any rule or practice of the House related to the tabling of documents other than private letters.

Now, must a minister table a document quoted from? We have three recent supply rulings as well as references from *Beauchesne* and Marleau and Montpetit which support the position that a minister does not have to table briefing notes—Order, please. Listen very carefully—or speaking notes. There is also support for the idea that a document must actually be cited by a member as opposed to merely referring to it.

Now I will ask the honourable Minister of Finance: Were you citing from an actual document?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is very serious.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was not citing a specific document, but I understand there is Supreme Court jurisprudence on that. I would be happy to make that available.

Mr. Speaker: I have to deal with one at a time. I will ask the honourable member were you quoting from a specific document, yes or no?

Mr. Selinger: No, I was not, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. As all honourable members and as the Speaker, I take the word of honourable

members. If he was quoting from an actual document, that document would have had to be tabled, but the member assured me as the Speaker that he was not. I take all honourable members, because you are all honourable members, at your word.

So the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain does not have a point order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a new point of order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, on a new point of order. It was clear from the minister's response in the House that he was quoting from a document, referencing a document where he said there was illegal activity by the Lotteries Corporation.

That is very specific and that is a very serious accusation, especially in this House, on the Lotteries Corporation of Manitoba. If the Lotteries Corporation in Manitoba is indeed conducting illegal activities and the minister has that information that he is quoting from a document, this House better see that document. That is all we are asking for. Other than that, the minister must withdraw his comment.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

* (14:00)

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I think we are revisiting the point of order on which you ruled, Mr. Speaker. The rule of the House is that where there is a personal letter that is quoted from, an opposition member can ask for the tabling of that letter. That is not the factual situation here.

There is just no point of order. The ministers of the Government are entitled to refer to briefing notes in the House and the honourable minister has agreed to provide the House with Supreme Court jurisprudence that is relevant to the point that he made.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on the same point of order.

Mr. Tweed: Yes, same point of order, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister of Finance can stand in this House

and slag a Crown corporation of this province and then stand on his feet and deny that he made those accusations, deny that he smeared everybody that works at the Lotteries Corporation today, hides behind jurisprudence when he has a document that he has quoted from and used it today to convince all Manitobans that he is speaking the truth, I ask him to present that document or withdraw his comments.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I did ask the honourable member if he was quoting from a document and what he had indicated to me was no.

As the Speaker, each and every one of you are honourable members and I take your statement as—
[interjection]

Order.

—and I take the words of members as facts. If the honourable minister wishes to table the document, he is entitled to, but he is not required to. So it is entirely up to the honourable Minister of Finance.

Order. I have already dealt with his matter on the previous point of order, and there is no other decision I can make. I asked the honourable member and he told me no, he was not quoting from it, and I accept all honourable members' words. So we should really move on to the next.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a new point of order?

Mr. Derkach: No, Mr. Speaker, this is such a serious matter that, with the greatest of respect, I have to challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of sustaining the ruling say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to sustaining the ruling of the Chair say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Derkach: Recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yeas and Nays requested. Call in the members.

Division

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained. All those in favour of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, please rise.

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Mihychuk, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Selinger, Smith, Struthers.

Nays

Cummings, Derkach, Driedger, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Loewen, Maguire, Mitchelson, Murray, Penner, Reimer, Rocan, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu, Tweed.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 30, Nays 21.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No?

* (14:40)

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I do want to give the minister the opportunity to clear the record and I

would offer him the opportunity either to table the document at this time that he was referring to or to perhaps withdraw, if he so chooses.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I recognized the honourable member on a point of order and I have to rule that it is not a point of order. The honourable member's request is entirely up to the member, what he chooses to do. So, on the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), he does not have a point of order.

The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on a new point of order?

Mr. Tweed: A matter of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on a matter of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House on a matter of privilege. I recognize that matters of privilege are understandably a situation that should happen infrequently and with a great deal of thought.

According to our rules, two conditions must be met before you can consider a matter of privilege. The first is that the issue be brought to the attention of the House at the first available opportunity. The comments made by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) upon which I am basing my matter of privilege were uttered by the minister earlier this afternoon. I have just had the opportunity to review the video recording of today's Question Period. I believe this fulfils the first condition.

The second condition which must be met is whether a prima facie case has been established. I would like to refer to Marleau, who has been referred to as the most respected Clerk in the Commonwealth, where he states, "Any document quoted by a minister in debate or in response to a question during Question Period must be tabled. Indeed, a minister is not at liberty to read or quote from a dispatch, an official written message or government affairs or other state paper without being prepared to table it."

Earlier today, under questioning, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) put on the record that he had a legal opinion suggesting that there were illegal

activities being undertaken by the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation in regard to financing of certain facilities in regard to Lotteries. Upon question, the minister refused to table the phantom document. He failed to offer supporting evidence, what he was quoting from or what he was stating.

In his comments, Mr. Speaker, this minister, I believe, besmirched all the employees and the management that work at the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. He has cast a pall upon those people, suggesting in this House and in suggesting to all Manitobans that illegal activities took place at the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, you made the ruling and you made the suggestion that, when we stand in this House and when we make comment in this House, we are considered all honourable people. Today I have great difficulty accepting that ruling because of the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Selinger) comments and then his refusal to offer up to the people of Manitoba any supporting documents which he referred to in his comments that would suggest his comments were correct.

It is very difficult for the people of Manitoba and very difficult for members of this Legislature to perform their jobs when ministers of the Crown, ministers of the Government are putting on record referrals to documents, referrals to opinions, referrals to suggestions that illegal activities took place at the Lotteries Commission and is unprepared or unable to document any of the allegation.

We on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, have asked this Government continuously over the past to present documents, to table documents to support their position. We are suggesting today that the minister has misled the people in the province of Manitoba. He has besmirched the people that are employed under the auspices of the Crown corporation, the Manitoba Lotteries Crown.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) did break the privileges of myself by quoting directly from a legal opinion, indicating that illegal activities were occurring at the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation and that this House find the Minister of Finance in contempt of this House for casting aspersions against employees of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation, and further that this

minister be directed to withdraw his comments and apologize or provide to this House the legal opinion as referenced by the minister and that this matter be referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections for the committee's consideration. I will table three documents with that, Mr. Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Legislative Affairs.

Mr. Tweed: Legislative Affairs.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing any other members, I would just like to remind the House that contributions at this time by honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity, and whether a prima facie case has been established. Any member that is speaking to this, I would just like to give a caution. I just made a ruling from the Chair, and I would ask members to be careful to choose their words. I do not think any member would want to reflect on the ruling of a Chair, so I would just throw that caution out to all members.

The honourable Government House Leader, on the privilege.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Well, Mr. Speaker, it has to be observed that there have been two rulings made by you, and the last one was appealed to the House and it was sustained by the majority of members in the House. It is my suggestion that the matter just raised by the member opposite, the Member for Turtle Mountain, is simply a way to get around that by calling a point of order or matter of privilege now to continue what really should be a matter of discourse in Question Period. So it is our position that there is certainly no point of order and certainly, and in this House, there is no matter of privilege.

The convention is well established in this House, Mr. Speaker, that where a Cabinet minister quotes from a private letter, there is a rule that requires, on the request of the Opposition, that the minister table that letter. That is so that ministers do not get up and start saying that there are private individuals writing congratulatory or denouncing correspondence without providing that for the members of the House.

Mr. Speaker, there is no convention, there is no rule, no point of order or matter of privilege, to my

knowledge, that relates to a statement, an assertion, made by a minister of the Crown in Question Period. The minister rose in his place and answered the questions and provided the House with information as to advice that he had. He referred to that advice and he said in this House, and his comments have to be taken at face value, that is the rule of this House, that is the custom. When he said that there was not a direct quote from a document, that matter must be accepted by members and not attacked by way of a matter of privilege then.

Finally, I will just say this: The allegations made by the minister, Mr. Speaker, are not about a particular individual. They are made about a collective government, a former government, and, as well, it is my understanding that the minister has risen in this House and was agreeable to tabling a decision of the courts that was related to the issue of the borrowing powers of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. I fail to see how the member can sustain a matter of privilege, let alone a point of order which you have ruled on twice.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): On the point of order raised by the member—

Mr. Speaker: On the privilege. We are dealing with the privilege. I have already dealt with the point of order, and now the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain has risen on privilege. I am dealing with the privilege at this time.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, just to the comments that have been made by the House Leader—

Mr. Speaker: Is the honourable member speaking to the privilege?

Mr. Derkach: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, very good. The honourable Member for Russell, on the privilege.

* (14:50)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the House Leader has just put on record that, in fact, the minister was not pointing to the Lotteries Corporation. Now we have an interpretation that the minister was actually talking about a collective group of ministers. This now casts an aspersion on a Treasury Board of a

former administration. Not only does the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) cast an aspersion on the Lotteries Corporation, but now we have the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) casting an aspersion on members of Cabinet and Privy Council.

Mr. Speaker, both ministers now are referring to a legal document, a legal opinion that they have received which means they have a legal document in their possession to have that legal opinion. Then they must share that with Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, we are to take members at their word in this House. When a minister of the Crown stands up and says that he has a legal opinion that illegal activities took place, then he has to be prepared to substantiate his claim in this House with a document. Where is that legal opinion that he is quoting from?

Mr. Speaker, this is an awful situation. I have never seen a minister stand up in this House, refer to a document and then renege on tabling that document for Manitobans and for the rest of the legislators in this House.

Mr. Speaker, how can the minister have any integrity on anything he says if, in fact, he can make a statement out of the blue and then expect Manitobans simply to believe him on his word when he cannot substantiate it?

There is no evidence. The minister has not been able to provide any evidence before this House, and he is obliged to do that. If he wants to salvage any integrity, he would do the honourable thing. He has two choices: One is to table the document, and if he cannot table that document, then No. 2, he must apologize to this House and withdraw his statements.

What kind of government do we have in this province when ministers of the Crown can stand up, make all kinds of statements without having any kind of evidence to back those statements up? If the term were allowed in this House we would call it a lie, but it is not allowed. The best we can do is say that the minister is really misleading Manitobans and misleading the general public with the kind of off-coloured statements that he makes in this House, the kind of irresponsible statements he makes in this House that he cannot substantiate.

So, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but condemn the actions that this minister has taken in this House

today, and I have never seen it in this House in the many years that I have been here as we have seen this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing any other members, I just want to remind all honourable members, that when you are raising a matter of privilege, it should be raised at the earliest opportunity and whether it is a prima facie case you should not be debating the issue. I know there is a fine line there and I will be listening carefully, but, when rising, it is to convince the Speaker that there is a prima facie case to carry it forward. If the Speaker rules it is, then there will be the opportunity to debate, but this is not the time to be debating the issue. It is a fine line and I have let a lot of leeway go at other times, so I will be listening very, very carefully.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, just regarding this matter of privilege, I would like to just say that the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) stood up and said, in response to this matter of privilege, that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) was simply getting up and answering a question that was asked.

I would like to just remind the House that I was asking a question on vaccinations for babies and this Minister of Finance took into question the integrity of employees at Manitoba Lotteries. That is why this matter of privilege has come about. Clearly, this is a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Ste. Rose. Before I recognize any more, I have heard sufficient argument, but if the honourable member is rising on something new to add, I will recognize the honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I do, indeed, rise on a different matter, for having listened to the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) and his comments about the fact that this was intended to reflect on previous governments.

As a member of Treasury Board of that previous government, I believe that he has now reflected on my ability to serve in this Chamber and to represent my constituents. Then, indeed, my privileges as a member are compromised when neither he nor the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), who is a senior member of current government, are willing to back

up their statements about whether or not there was illegal activity, and that is his word, not mine. Because he chose those words, as my House leader said. If I had jumped up and categorically said, and if it had been appropriate for me to put on the record, a term that referred to what was in my mind about the truthfulness of what he was saying, and obviously, in our opinion, there was absolutely no truthfulness, I would have been asked to withdraw or leave the Chamber and serve the consequences of not being able to serve in this Chamber. I, unfortunately, have had that experience, Mr. Speaker, and I do not intend to give up my privileges.

The fact is that we now have two ministers of the Crown who are prepared to stand up and allege illegal activity. If they would have said there were mistakes made, that is something different. They are saying "illegal activity" and they believe they have a document to back it up. Now, if they are unprepared to defend that statement, if they are unprepared to withdraw what I consider unacceptable and allegations that—first of all, the people from the Corporation are unable to defend themselves in this House, but I am.

By going to the extent they are now categorizing that as something that reflects on the previous administration that would be categorized as illegal, I would like their proof or I would like a withdrawal. If that is not going to happen, then it should indeed be, and I would move, seconded by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that this be referred to the Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) had moved a motion, and we are now dealing with the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain's motion whether it is a prima facie case. That is what we are dealing with right now and that is how I had recognized the honourable Member for Ste. Rose. I cannot deal with two matters of privilege at the same time or two points of order at the same time. If there is a new privilege, please wait until we have the opportunity to deal with the privilege that was moved by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain.

Point of Order

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I wondered about your ruling, but I did not say anything at the time. When

the member from Ste. Rose got up to speak, he said that this was on a new matter of privilege. He made that known before he was allowed to speak.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, if that is the case, that I did not hear, but just give me a second.

What I had made reference to, the honourable Member for Ste. Rose, because I had listened to a number of members, what I had referred to the member is if he was rising on new information to lead to the prima facie case. But if he is rising on a new privilege, then that is a whole separate matter. I have to deal with the privilege that was raised by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain first. Then, if a member wished to rise on a new privilege, that is entirely up to the individual member. So I will ask the member were you dealing with a privilege moved by the Member for Turtle Mountain or were you trying to rise on a new matter of privilege. Just for clarification, for my purpose.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I hear some derision from across the way, and this is a very serious matter. I apologize for any misunderstanding of communication between yourself and myself. I was indeed rising on a new matter of privilege and accept your ruling.

* (15:00)

Mr. Speaker: Then I will keep that in mind, but I will deal first with the initial matter of privilege raised by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

Now I look around; there are no other members who wish to make a contribution. A matter of privilege is a very serious concern, so I am going to take this matter under advisement, to consult the authorities, and I will return to the House with a ruling.

Before I conclude, the motion that was raised by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, in his text that he gave to us, it said in there "refer to the Committee on Privileges and Elections," but it had been tabled verbally, so I am just letting the House know that this matter is to be referred to the Committee on Legislative Affairs, not Privileges and Elections, for the committee's consideration. That is just a correction, okay?

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Speaker: Now, the honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Thank you, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order, or what is it?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, on the matter of privilege that I spoke to earlier—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Ste. Rose is rising on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Cummings: I am rising, and I have put forward a number of comments a moment ago, and I simply want to briefly emphasize that I was concerned that the Government House Leader has in fact breached my privilege as a member of this Chamber, and that in his exuberance to defend his Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) he repeated and in many ways compounded and extended what was, first of all, a blame against the corporation; now, a blame against members of the previous administration.

My comments regarding the motion of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I believe we have met the condition of bringing it to your attention as quickly as we can. The issue revolves around whether or not the Government House Leader's comments breached my privilege as a member of this House, and as a matter of, I think, some importance, there were a number of members of this House, mainly in the Government side of the benches, who were commenting that this was a waste of time. This is one of the basic tenets of the privilege of parliamentary democracy, where we fight with words and we clearly express ourselves with words when we object to where we believe our privilege has been breached.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Emerson, that this serious matter now be referred to the Committee on Legislative Affairs and then be reported to the House.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the same points were just made, and perhaps I will just reiterate some of my points again, but there is no requirement, to my knowledge, in this House for a minister to table a document, other than a personal letter which has been quoted from, on the request of an opposition

member or another member in the House. The minister also said that he would be prepared to provide a Supreme Court ruling that supported his statement in the House.

How is this a matter of privilege? I fail to understand, because the rulings in this House and in the Commonwealth have laid down that a matter of privilege is to be rarely raised. It is to be a matter that goes to the very ability of members to conduct their duties as members. Question Period is a time when we hear allegations from members opposite or, indeed, members from this side, on a regular basis. That is the subject of political discourse and debate, and that is where it properly should lie.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach), on the privilege?

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes. Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter of privilege, because the minister, the Finance Minister of this province, has just made an accusation of criminal activities being conducted by the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation or by previous members of government. That is a very serious allegation. Now, when you make that kind of an allegation, even if it is in this Chamber, one would expect that you should have some evidence to back up your accusation.

I cannot stand in this House and say that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has been lying to us over the course of time, because that is not allowed in this House. If I said that he was causing Manitobans to die, I would have to produce some evidence. Although I can produce some of that, I cannot stand in my place here and make that kind of an accusation without the minister standing up in his place and asking me to substantiate my claim. That is what I am doing today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I see the Minister of Health has just become offended, and he should. And he should. If I were making that accusation, he should. But if I were making that accusation, I would have to back it up. That is what we are asking the Minister of Finance to do here today. He has accused people who work in the Lotteries Corporation of conducting criminal activities. He has accused members of Treasury bench of conducting illegal and criminal activities. If he does that, then let him produce the evidence. Let him show what evidence he has in his

hands to substantiate his accusations of the Lotteries Corporation conducting criminal activities.

We are now living in the days of the mafia. We are now living in the days of criminal activities being conducted by a Lotteries Corporation that is being run by a Province, regardless of which government is in place. For the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) to stoop to that level is unconscionable. So, therefore, I think this minister and the Government House Leader owe this House either the evidence or a serious apology before we can carry on in this House.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Order. On a point of order, the honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

Mr. Cummings: Only a matter of a minor point of order, but I am assuming for the record that my comments regarding the matter of privilege, even though they were separated by your issue of whether or not it was a second matter of privilege, be considered as part of your reference and taken as a matter of privilege as they were intended.

Mr. Speaker: Well, it was really not a matter of privilege, but when I do consider, when making rulings all considerations are taken into account and all rules are checked out very, very carefully. No ruling of privilege or a point of order has ever, ever, ever come back to this House without a great deal of investigation, documentation and research. It will not be brought back until all that is covered, and we have excellent people that assist me in doing that. I assure all honourable members before any ruling is brought forward all those stages are covered, and covered very, very thoroughly. *[interjection]* I did not take it as a reflection.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Carman has new information to add to the privilege? Okay, the honourable Member for Carman.

* (15:10)

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I hesitate standing up here this afternoon having to participate in this type of a debate. This is the lowest of the low when we have to participate in a matter of privilege

where a particular member's rights of this Chamber have been infringed upon. You have just asked, Sir, if there would be new information to bring forward because this is the information that you, Sir, have to deal with.

The Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed)—I should not comment, and I will not comment—rose in his place on a matter of privilege because the accounts that were put on the record by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) say that there was illegal activity at the Lotteries Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, what I did happen to notice while I was present in this Chamber was that, at that particular moment, the Minister of Finance hesitated to put any documentation on the record. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), from her seat, knew that there was a problem. She took from her briefing book, Sir, the document that he was referring to. The minister gave it to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), she gave it to the Minister of Health, who reviewed the document, who then passed it on to the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh), who then had an opportunity to peruse it, gave it to the Minister of Finance, and I believe he was instructed to maybe table the said document, but he decided not to.

Mr. Speaker, I can do the same because I have in my possession a letter, and I can say I have a letter that says this Minister of Finance is participating in illegal activity with the Hells Angels, that he is getting some sort of a kickback. Now we will not know that that is not true, but I can stand here in my place and I can say I have a letter here that says such. I am awful brave if I do not have to table that letter and basically, Sir, that is where we are here today if it were not for the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) taking the time to pass that document down the line to say, "This is the information that they are requesting; I believe that you should table it." It is not her grocery list that she was passing down the line. I do not believe that for a minute, but I do believe the information that the Minister of Agriculture did have pertained to this matter of privilege that we are asking you to deal with today.

So, Sir, I would ask you, in your deliberation and in your fact-finding mission, that you would have the authority to ask the Deputy Premier if she indeed did have the documentation that you are

requesting that would help you base your ruling on this particular thing. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: A matter of privilege is a serious concern, so I am going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities, and I will return to the House with a ruling.

ORAL QUESTIONS

(Continued)

Vaccination Programs

Funding

(Continued)

Mr. Speaker: Now we will revert back to Question Period. The honourable minister had concluded his comments, and I had recognized the honourable Member for Tuxedo.

Mrs. Stefanson: I have to say I am absolutely outraged. I stood up here earlier and asked a very serious question of the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) about a very serious issue, vaccinations for our children in our province, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) got up and went off on some tangent questioning the integrity of people in the department of Lotteries.

Well, I have to say that I again ask a question of the Minister of Health regarding vaccinations: When will our Province cover the cost of vaccines for all babies in Manitoba?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister responsible for Healthy Living): I am very pleased that the member opposite has finally asked this very, very important question. In fact, it is the first time that I have had a question from the members across about this important issue. I would like to inform the House that the Minister of Health actually brought this onto the agenda for the federal minister. I actually wrote a letter to Minister Bennett about this important issue, and we have been championing the issue that we need a national vaccine strategy.

I am pleased to announce to the House that the federal government, in response to our initiatives, has put money on the table finally. It is one-time money. It is only one-time money over a three-year period, but they have finally agreed to put some money on the table to develop not only the plan but also the program.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I asked this question 30 minutes ago. I asked it three months ago. I asked it 15 months ago. When is this Premier (Mr. Doer), when is this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) going to cover vaccinations for babies in our province?

Mr. Rondeau: I am very pleased that the member opposite has finally asked the question. I am very pleased that we have been—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot hear a thing you are saying. Order. I cannot hear a thing.

Mr. Rondeau: Thank you. As I was mentioning, I am very pleased that we have been working on the program. The member opposite should know that in the last year we have expanded so all at-risk kids are able to get the vaccination program. That is an expansion.

We have been working with the federal government to expand it so that we have a national strategy. I think what we have done is worked with our partners to develop it. I would urge the members opposite to stay tuned because we are acting on this important file and we are moving quickly. I have contacted the federal minister and I think we are making good progress on the file. In 11 years the members opposite did not expand it. We are acting in a time-efficient manner and please stay tuned. I am sure that good things are happening very quickly.

Video Lottery Terminals New Equipment

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): In 2003, Manitoba farmers saw a historic drop of 40 percent in their net income. A situation like this would have been seen by most governments as a major disaster. Yet this NDP government in this province of Manitoba is spending \$100 million on Cadillac VLTs to feed the insatiable spending habits of the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province.

Mr. Speaker, when will this Government recognize the extreme, negative economic impact a 40% reduction in net income will have on the engine that drives much of our province's economy?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): In an earlier question, I explained that the profits we are

getting from the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation this year are estimated at \$232 million. That is inclusive of the capital borrowing program that we provide for through The Loan Act authority. So the costs of the VLTs will be net of the profits transferred to the Government which supports all programs including the \$50 million we have in the CAIS program, the Agricultural Income Support program, which is fully funded. We entered into that program last summer to ensure that there was a safety net program for agricultural producers in Manitoba.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, obviously the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture have not been on speaking terms for a while.

Does the Minister of Finance recognize the chaos his Government is creating with the wrong-headed priority of spending \$100 million on Cadillac VLTs, instead of directing the funding to an area that could generate far larger benefits to the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as I explained earlier, the \$232 million being transferred to the Government through the Lotteries Corporation will go to address all the priorities we identified in the Budget. One of those priorities was agricultural support programs. We have the full amount of money there. The members opposite know the money we put out and made available to producers during their time of crisis, with the BSE crisis. We have more money in the CAIS program than we had last year by at least \$7 million. That priority is being addressed. This Minister of Agriculture is out there working with producers to make sure they have the best support programs they can in partnership with the federal government.

CAIS Program Manitoba Contribution

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that this NDP government's priority is gambling. It was very obvious in the previous administration, the Conservative government, their direction in economic activity was fuelling the economic engine. Mr. Speaker, farmers only have until Friday to sign on to the CAIS program. Yet this Province has not yet told producers that they are committed to full participation or have even indicated that they will sign on to this program.

Mr. Speaker, rather than spending \$100 million on Cadillac VLTs, will the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) today announce the full 40% funding and commit fully to 40% funding of this program to Manitoba family farms through the CAIS program?

* (15:20)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Perhaps the member from Emerson did not hear my first couple of answers to his first two questions. The Lotteries Corporation is transferring \$232 million as projected in the Budget, net of the cost of financing new VLTs. That money will be available to support all programs, including the CAIS program, a program which is very important to the members of the agricultural community, a program that the Minister of Agriculture on behalf of this Government entered into last August at a time of crisis with cattle producers to ensure those resources were available.

Our Minister of Agriculture made a timely initiative on that on behalf of the CAIS program for producers, and I am sure this Government will continue to make timely interventions to ensure the rural economic development of this province through ethanol, through agriculture and through other forms of diversification.

Marijuana Grow Operations Police Resources

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): This Government is spending \$100 million for new Cadillac VLTs. In the meantime, marijuana grow operations are springing up in every corner of the province and in every residential neighbourhood of Winnipeg. The police have stated that, if they had more police resources, they could shut down more of these drug operations. The \$100 million could hire an additional 2000 police officers.

I ask the Minister of Justice: Why has the minister not convinced the Minister responsible for Lotteries (Mr. Smith) to use the money to hire more officers to shut down these growing drug operations?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it is a revelation that the Opposition is calling for the hiring of 2000 police officers, Mr. Speaker. It certainly does not compare to anything I have heard from

members opposite, but I remind the member opposite that the business decision by the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation is just that. They have made a business case for this investment and profits flow to the public of Manitoba, including to the public safety of Manitobans.

Gang Activity Reduction Strategy

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the Hells Angels are the most notorious criminal organization in the province. They were established in Manitoba in the year 2000 under the watch of this Justice Minister and, in fact, they have expanded to include a retail operation just down the street from the Justice Minister's own constituency office.

The \$100 million for VLTs could have hired extra police officers, up to 2000 police officers if necessary, to shut down those Hells Angels. Why does this Minister of Justice not ensure that this money is spent to drive the Hells Angels out of this province?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member opposite, I hope, will depart from his colleagues when it comes time for the Budget vote in this House, because in this Budget that we have presented to Manitobans there are significant new resources, not only for prosecutions and police which is of interest to the member opposite, but also specifically to support the new joint forces organized crime taskforce, a first in this province.

I ask: Where were members opposite, Mr. Speaker, particularly in the fall of '97 when the Hells Angels did come to Manitoba?

High-Risk Offenders Monitoring System

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): The Justice Minister promised to implement an ankle bracelet or a GPS system to monitor high-risk offenders, Mr. Speaker, and he promised that in 2002. Since that time, four innocent Manitobans were killed by high-risk offenders released on bail. Currently, police are trying to monitor the whereabouts of 20 high-risk offenders, including many high-risk sexual offenders.

To date, Mr. Speaker, the minister has not implemented his plan for a monitoring system even though he promised to do that two years ago. If the money is an issue, why does the minister not simply turn around in his seat and ask the Minister of Lotteries for the money before he spends it on new VLTs?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member opposite, I think, fully well knows that the former government made a decision, I believe, over two different ministers not to proceed with that technology, but we have not closed the door to that one. We have made a commitment to thoroughly analyze the usefulness of that one without providing a false sense of security, without actually endangering public safety. That review is underway.

I would urge members opposite to look at the Justice commitments in the Budget. There are significant enhancements, particularly with regard to the protection of child victims. We are going to continue not only to be tough on crime but tough on the causes of crime. Thank you.

Video Lottery Terminals New Equipment

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, the Government is supposed to look after the most needy of its citizenry, but this Premier (Mr. Doer) has decided that he is going to spend \$100 million on the crack cocaine of gambling, VLTs. While people are dying in emergency rooms, while seniors are being denied their medicines, while children are being denied vaccinations, while the farmers' plight goes unanswered, this Premier has decided to spend \$100 million on the crack cocaine of gambling, VLTs.

I want to ask the Minister of Health why, as a minister who is responsible for the well-being of Manitobans, he is allowing this kind of criminal activity to go on in his Government.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I think if the member would cast back perhaps less than a year ago when they were campaigning in a provincial campaign, I believe that his leader said their increase to Health in the Budget would be 1 percent, 1% increase in Health. This Budget which they are deriding every single day has

a 5.2% increase in Health. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot continue the hypocrisy of one day saying one thing, another day saying another thing. Your own leader said 1 percent, 1 percent, and now—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I want to take this opportunity to remind all honourable members, like I did last week, when using the words "hypocrite," "hypocritical," "hypocrisy," I heard the word "you," and I hope that was more in a general term than it was directed at a member because—order.

I cautioned all honourable members last week on that exact same thing. I am reminding all honourable members, pick your words carefully. Also, when referring to questions or answers, all honourable members, please do it through the Chair.

The honourable Minister of Health, you have about eight seconds.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I will take our 5.2% increase versus their 1% increase any time.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, this Government has just stuck Manitobans with a \$90-million increase in taxes. This is an increase to the people who are sick, people who are vulnerable, people who are poor. All Manitobans are going to pay the \$90 million, but at the same time, this Government chooses to spend \$100 million on the crack cocaine of gambling, VLTs.

I want to ask the Minister of Health who is responsible for the well-being of seniors, of children, of people who are in need of health services how he can justify this expenditure, given the needs that we have out there in Manitoba in our health care system.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the member continues to not hear the answers after he asks the questions. The Lotteries Corporation will transfer, according to this Budget, \$232 million to the general coffers of this Province. The Lotteries Corporation will make a transfer of \$232 million, as budgeted, net of the costs of the loan they are receiving for the new VLTs. So the misinformation that the members opposite are putting on the record consistently, without listening to the answer, really needs to be put in perspective, that it is \$232 million net transfers to the Province of Manitoba.

As to meeting the needs of Manitobans, 5.2 percent versus 1 percent; a Healthy Child Program that did not exist before when members opposite were in government; a 51% increase to day care; more money for public schools; more money for school capital; more money for highways; more money for Manitoba communities.

* (15:30)

Mr. Derkach: It is unfortunate that the Minister of Health could not answer the question that was posed to him directly because he is the minister who is responsible for the health and well-being of the province of Manitoba.

He is allowing his Government to spend \$100 million on VLT machines while people are in need, while people are dying in emergency services, while children cannot get vaccinations, while seniors cannot afford medication, and he is allowing his Cabinet to make a decision to spend \$100 million on VLTs. Why, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, since we came to office in 1999, there are 879 more nurses registered in Manitoba and triple the number training since the member opposite was on Treasury Board. Since we came to office in 1999, there are 156 more physicians in Manitoba than when the members opposite cut the training of physicians in Manitoba. Since we came to office, we have expanded and almost tripled the amount we pay to Pharmacare, to all those Manitobans. We did not cut off two thirds of Manitobans as members opposite did. We enhanced that. In fact with respect to vaccinations, not only did we expand the vaccinations but we are providing vaccinations to at-risk kids and, thanks to some of our representations, the federal government will be able to have some vaccination programs that will be universally continuing.

Provincial Sales Tax Professional Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The Minister of Finance says his Budget is revenue neutral, but the fact is if he has significantly underestimated the new revenue generated from his new retail sales tax on services provided by lawyers, accountants, engineers, architects and those providing security and private investigator services, then it would not be revenue neutral. I ask the Minister of Finance

whether he consulted with lawyers, accountants, engineers, architects and those providing security and private investigator services before he wrote the Budget in order to determine how much tax would be raised from his new increases in the retail sales tax, increases which will see the rate go up by 7 percent on a variety of professional services.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Our officials do Estimates of Revenue based on the best projections they could get, and let us not forget, Mr. Speaker, it was members opposite, when they ran for government federally, who said that they would eliminate the GST on the same types of services. After they got elected, they perpetuated the GST. They have kept that tax on all the services we are talking about here. The PST extension on these services is one that is projected to generate about \$17.2 million of additional revenue this year. This is revenue neutral in light of the reductions that we have made in the personal income tax, the small business tax, the corporate tax, the education support levy, as well as increasing the small business threshold. Overall, we have reduced the rates for all levels of taxation within this province.

Mr. Gerrard: It does not take much to tip it toward increased revenue.

Referendum

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): In conversation with Allan Fineblit of the Law Society and others, it appears very likely that the Finance Minister has substantially underestimated the revenue to be generated by his new retail sales tax increases and that the tax package in the Budget is not revenue neutral but rather will provide an overall increase in revenue.

Is the minister willing to have an independent analysis performed by the provincial auditor to determine whether his Budget is revenue neutral or not? Will the Premier (Mr. Doer) call a referendum if the Budget is found to provide an overall tax increase as we suspect?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, unlike previous governments, we produce a summary budget, and we produce Public Accounts every year which are reviewed and audited by the provincial auditor. That practice will continue.

As to the question about referendums, if any member thinks that the balanced budget legislation is not in any way being complied with they can raise that matter. I can assure you that was tested before we made our decisions. Balanced budget legislation is being complied with, and there is no need for a referendum.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): The Minister of Finance is wrong. This Government has raised taxes beyond the point of being revenue neutral, and Manitobans are indeed entitled to a referendum.

Here is what the actual law states, Mr. Speaker. If you want to avoid, underline the word "avoid," a referendum, it states, "A bill to increase the rate of tax if, in the opinion of the minister, the proposed change is designed to restructure the tax burden, and—" listen closely to this part, Mr. Minister, "—does not result in an increase in revenue."

This is very clear. Will the Government come clean with Manitobans and acknowledge the need for a referendum, or at the very least, do as the Leader of the Liberal Party is saying and allow the provincial auditor to look into the revenue estimates of this Government, which, we believe, are dead wrong?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, whether or not there has been a rate increase, the sales tax rate in this province is 7 percent, the second lowest in the country, the second lowest in the country, sales tax rate in this country. If the member would like to dispute that, he is fully welcome to do that. It is absolutely clear that is the case. Of course, all of our books are available for scrutiny by the provincial auditor. That has been a long-standing practice.

As a matter of fact, it was this Government that updated The Auditor General Act for this province, modernized that legislation which was more than 20 years old, and the Auditor General can pursue any government grants or government dollars he wishes to pursue.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Springfield. Oh, I am sorry. Order.

We had made an agreement, and it was my fault. I did not look. After No. 7, the agreement among all members was that it would go to a government member.

Turnabout Program Update

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, in October 2002 the federal and provincial governments launched Turnabout, a pilot program to provide assistance and consequences for children aged 12 and under who come into contact with the law.

Can the Minister of Justice provide the House and Manitobans an update on this program?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for that question, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to confirm today that Canada's first province-wide initiative to provide help and consequences for youth under age 12 who would otherwise have been charged under the laws of the land is becoming a full-time piece of the Manitoba justice system, following the pilot project over the last 18 months.

Mr. Speaker, that pilot project actually dealt with 361 children under age 12, connecting them to existing youth resources. What I am very pleased about is that this program can be instituted full time now with an investment of \$94,000. That is because this program is the hub in the wheel of many services serving children that already exist and provide excellent services in Manitoba.

River East Transcona School Division Capital Funding

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, the River East Transcona School Division asked this Premier (Mr. Doer) for relief from overcrowded high schools. The Premier's answer was, "There is no money for River East Transcona students."

The question is: How is it that this Government found \$100 million for VLTs but no money for the Premier's constituents? When will he invest in students and not in VLTs?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, once again, the transfer to the Government through the Lotteries Corporation is \$232 million, net of the borrowing requirements that they have for replacing the VLTs.

When it comes to school capital, the amount of money that this Government has put into school

capital is double the rate of what the members opposite invested throughout the nineties. We have doubled that rate and we have made significant improvements to public schools all across this province.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

West Interlake Trading Company

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, the Interlake region of our province is its hidden treasure, with many different tourist attractions, beautiful lakes and rivers. It can take years to experience all the Interlake has to offer.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share the great work of the community, the volunteers of the R.M. of Woodlands. For the last six years, the West Interlake Trading Company has involved countless volunteers from the area. They have had the opportunity to showcase what the community and the Trading Company have to offer.

* (15:40)

Some of the great features the West Interlake Trading Company has to offer are the free stage, the country market. The market, which is located just 20 minutes north of the city, has everything from fresh baking to T-shirts, soaps and quilts, all made and sold by local members of the community and region.

Every year, Mr. Speaker, the West Interlake Trading Company plays host to over 12 000 visitors from all over North America who want to take in their small-town charm and experience the great hospitality they have to offer. The West Interlake Trading Company will officially open their doors for their sixth year of operation in May of 2004 at the designated site, the Interlake North Tourist Centre, the former elevator site. I encourage all members to take the 20-minute trip out of the city and experience some great small town hospitality. Thank you.

Bernie Wolfe Community School

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I am very pleased to report on a unique function held at Bernie Wolfe

Community School, their second annual cultural diversity day celebration on Friday, April 23, 2004.

Cultural diversity is one of our greatest strengths as a multicultural society. This day reflected the social values, special values and rich heritage of our province, Manitoba. Students had the opportunity to learn about a number of cultures while participating in activities such as art, music and storytelling. This learning opportunity gives them the advantage of being more successful in their future endeavours. The day's events were centred on the four colours of the medicine wheel: white, black, yellow and red. I was delighted to see that many students from Sandy Bay First Nation were invited to participate along with their new friends from Bernie Wolfe School.

Cultural diversity day gave the students an opportunity to learn more about the contributions that various communities make to Canadian society and to celebrate our country's richness and diversity. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can maintain their individual identities, can take pride in their ancestry and yet have a full sense of belonging to this province. Acceptance gives Manitobans a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to an accepting of diverse cultures. This concept is a major economic advantage for Manitoba. Protecting this advantage means that the steps to eradicate racism are essential.

I was very pleased to speak to these Grade 5 students about cultural diversity in our province. We should be very proud of the enthusiasm and excitement which these young people displayed during this event. I would like to thank the staff, especially Principal Shapira, who so diligently organized the activities. I would like to recognize the students of Bernie Wolfe School who took part in the cultural diversity day.

Mr. Speaker, this was a great experience. Thank you.

Pipestone Hotel

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I rise today to mark the untimely loss of the Pipestone Hotel which was destroyed by fire on February 4. Just shy of a century old, the Pipestone Hotel has long been a popular stopping place, not only for Pipestone area residents but also for travellers from afar, many of whom used to get off the train and stay in the hotel.

Many locals are taking the loss of the hotel very hard, with one noting, "It was as if a friend died." Others shared tales of visiting the hotel after cattle sales and discussing the state of the farm economy, among other issues of the day. Long-time area resident Ken Champion stated and I quote, "It's been a cornerstone in this town. It's a great loss to the community. It's sure going to be missed."

I would like to take a moment to thank the fire crews from Pipestone and Elkhorn who worked some thirteen-and-a-half hours to bring the blaze under control. Thankfully, no one was injured in the blaze, but the community has suffered an immeasurable loss with the hotel's demise. Mr. Speaker, I believe that should be Pipestone, Oak Lake, Virden, Reston and Elkhorn fire crews.

I would also like to wish hotel owners Bruce and Helen Notley all the best as they pursue their goal of re-establishing the hotel. I know they are deeply committed to Pipestone as they had been making a number of improvements to the hotel prior to the fire.

Businesses such as the Pipestone Hotel are an integral part of the social and economic fabric of our rural communities. Lasting relationships are cultivated in facilities like the Pipestone Hotel, and I know many others join me in hoping for its speedy reconstruction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MTS Young Humanitarian Awards

Ms. Theresa Oswald (Seine River): There are so many exceptional young people in communities across the province who, by their generous works and big hearts, are striving to make the world a kinder and gentler place for all people. The Manitoba Teachers' Society recognizes the efforts of such people with their annual young humanitarian awards.

I am pleased to announce that this year, Anika Campeau from the constituency of Seine River was one of the recipients of this award. Since 1998, youth of any age that have undertaken humanitarian work have qualified for the award. This year the winners, such as Anika, attended a ceremony on April 19 at the Manitoba Theatre for Young People at The Forks where they were awarded a medal, a \$1,000 bursary, half of which Anika donated back to her cause.

Mr. Speaker, Anika is a Grade 4 student at L'École Christine-L'Esperance. She has been raising

funds for the Children's Wish Foundation, an organization which helps children with life-threatening diseases. She began making and marketing bracelets called "Bracelets with Heart," which she sold to friends and family at the St. Norbert Farmers' Market. With the money she raised, she helped to pay for a trip to Disneyland for a six-year-old boy who suffers from congenital heart disease and a cruise for a nine-year-old girl with cancer. By her hard work and determination, Anika has raised over \$5,000 for the foundation. Her work has not gone unnoticed as she has also been awarded the Manitoba Association of School Trustees Student Citizenship Award for the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine.

Monsieur le Président j'ai l'honneur de féliciter Anika de ses efforts émouvants. Elle nous inspire par tout ce qu'elle fait pour alléger la souffrance des autres enfants de son âge.

Je tiens aussi à remercier le personnel enseignant de l'École Christine-Lespérance du mentorat et de l'encouragement qu'il manifeste envers les élèves comme Anika; leur dévouement aux jeunes de la circonscription de la Rivière-Seine est une contribution importante à l'avenir et de la communauté et de la province.

Félicitations.

Merci, monsieur le Président

Translation

Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to congratulate Anika for her moving efforts. She inspires us by everything that she is doing to relieve the suffering of other children of her age.

I would also like to thank the teaching staff of Christine-Lespérance School for their mentorship and encouragement shown towards pupils such as Anika; their dedication to the young people of the Seine River constituency is an important contribution to the future of the community and of the province.

Congratulations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Early Childhood Educators

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to put on record

my remarks about the Week of the Early Childhood Educator which is being celebrated throughout the province this week. Early childhood educators play an important role in the care and education in many children throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work, commitment, patience, endurance and creativity it takes to be an early childhood educator. The many women and men who provide these services to families deserve our respect and heartfelt thanks for their investment of time, energy and love for the children of Manitoba.

Using the services of early childhood educators is a difficult decision for many families. As a mother of two children, I can honestly say that parenting can be a challenge, yet I have found it most rewarding. I have used the services of child care centres which provide me with the peace of mind knowing my children were cared for with quality staff in a safe, healthy and educational environment.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Minnedosa is actively working towards setting up its first day care in partnership with many local community service clubs such as the Minnedosa Rotary Club. This vision, to host a quality child care facility in partnership with a senior drop-in centre, is a success story ready to be realized.

* (15:50)

Souris, a community that I live in, Mr. Speaker, has operated quality child care for 30 years and in itself is something that we are very proud of. The centre's director, Deanna Wey, is a respected community leader, and in partnership with the Southwest Horizon School Division has gone another step in providing before and after school programs in the school which I am very proud that my children are participants.

Mr. Speaker, there are also challenges faced by the administrators and boards in providing early childhood education. As a board member for the child care centre, I appreciate the challenges they face and the operating dollars and staffing issues that they are presently experiencing.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Portage la Prairie, are you rising on a point of order?

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Just a query of the Chair. Insofar as that the microphone

went off line on the last comments that we gave leave to the honourable Member for Minnedosa, I wonder if Hansard got that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Just to assist members, when time had expired, I stood up. What happens is when the Speaker stands, all mikes are turned off. When the Speaker stands, the mikes are turned off.

Order. But I would have a suggestion. This is only advice. If the honourable member has some words that were excluded, she could, if she wants to, ask leave of the House to include them into the comments. It is entirely up to the honourable Member for Minnedosa if she wants to seek leave.

Mrs. Rowat: I am asking for leave.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to conclude her comments that she was making on her member's statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Minnedosa, to conclude.

Mrs. Rowat: Okay, consider them read then. I will submit to Hansard the document.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would ask the honourable member to put them on record, because that is what they had sought leave for, to conclude your member's statement. I would ask the honourable member to put the rest of it on—

Mrs. Rowat: Okay, I am going to start it.

I can appreciate the challenges that centres face in raising operating dollars, infrastructure dollars and to ensure that the centres can continue to provide quality staffing and programs in a safe and enjoyable environment.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I support the efforts of our ECE workers, and I commend their tireless commitment to providing quality child care to our children. Thank you.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of urgent public importance, and as

such, I would move, seconded by the member from River Heights, that under Rule 36(1) the regular business of the House be set aside to deal with the matter of urgent public importance, being the need to consider new information which suggests that the Budget which provides for an increase in retail sales tax is not revenue neutral and would therefore require that there be a referendum before the vote on the Budget is held.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I believe I should remind all members that under Rule 36(2) the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other parties in the House are allowed not more than five minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately. As stated in *Beauchesne's* Citation 390, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

Mr. Lamoureux: I could start off by saying, following the advice of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) to bring it forward, indeed we are bringing it forward because of the urgency. This afternoon, my colleague and I presented information which shows that the Government may have seriously underestimated income from the new increases in retail sales tax as it applies to certain legal, accounting, architectural, engineering, security and private investigation services.

On page D1 of the budget papers, Mr. Speaker, we were provided with the government estimate for '04-05 of \$17.2 million expected to be raised by the increases in \$23.9 million in a full year of '05-06. First I will make the case that this issue is being raised at the first possible time, in the sense that yesterday's announcement of the planned \$350-million redevelopment for Winnipeg's airport highlighted the fact that this new tax will cost the project millions. This triggered a lot of new information, which I will outline in a moment, in suggesting that the Government has very considerably underestimated the revenue generated by this tax to the point where it is unlikely to be revenue neutral.

Therefore, there should be a referendum on this tax before the Budget is passed.

Mr. Speaker, I will provide evidence that suggests that the Government has underestimated the amount to be raised by their new taxes and that, when the real amount is included, then the changes made by the Government are not revenue neutral. First, in conversations with the lawyers, including Allan Fineblit, chief executive officer of the Law Society, there is a general sense that the Government has underestimated the amount of taxes to be generated. It is quite possible that the new tax on legal services could, by itself, generate up to \$17 million in the '04-05 Budget. When the many millions of tax dollars collected from accountants, engineers, architects, security personnel and private investigators are also included, it becomes clear that the tax may raise as much as double what the Minister of Finance has listed on page D1 at \$17 million in 2004-2005, and \$23.9 million in a full year.

Interestingly, the Government's own budget documents provide evidence the Government's take from the new sales tax will be much larger than admitted on page D1.

On page B9 of the budget papers, Mr. Speaker, the Government estimates that there will be an increase in revenue from retail sales tax of \$92 million in '04-05. If we look at the average increase of the last three years, which is \$42 million, this suggests the increased revenue expected from the new increases in sales tax put on by this Government will be about \$50 million this year.

I now refer members back to page D2, Mr. Speaker, where it is clear that the Government's estimate of \$17 million new revenue, if correct, would only allow for a \$4-million margin, Mr. Speaker, before the tax becomes non-revenue neutral. At the point where the tax changes raise more money and are no longer revenue neutral, there must be a referendum. We argue that, with the expectation of the Government in raising \$50 million in new revenue from the sales tax increases, then this Budget is no longer revenue neutral, and there must be a referendum before the Budget can, in fact, be approved. This referendum must take place as per section 10 of The Balanced Budget Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Accountability Act.

Mr. Speaker, it is exceptionally time-sensitive because we are debating the Budget and the Budget will come to a vote later this week. Before we vote, there should be a referendum and, failing the referendum, as has been pointed out in Question Period, we need the Auditor to get involved before there is any vote on this Budget. That is why it is very, very clear that the Government has underestimated the revenue. Therefore, no longer is it revenue neutral and Manitobans are entitled to a referendum.

That is why we argue that there needs to be a matter of urgent public importance today and we would ask for your ruling on this issue, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the time.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I, at first, have to admit that in no way would I have expected a matter of urgent public importance being raised in this House because, during the Budget debate, it has been ruled by Speaker after Speaker after Speaker and accepted that wide-ranging issues, even those arguably outside of the Budget, can be raised during the Budget debate.

* (16:00)

We are in the Budget debate and he raises an issue related to the Budget. It is just amazing that he thinks that somehow he can sustain a matter of urgent public importance. I think the member already made his speech, which makes another point. I believe he was up before the House yesterday on the Budget making a speech, and now he went home or, I guess, on the way home he thought, I missed some points that I could have thought up, and so I have just got to get back into this debate. I will get up on a MUPI; that will be it. When my five minutes is up, because I know it is not a MUPI, then I will start yelling from my seat.

I cannot believe that the member thinks that somehow a matter of urgent public importance could ever be accepted when we are in the Budget debate. Not only that, we are in the Budget debate, which is a free, broad-ranging debate. But then we go into Estimates, and then there is going to be a debate on the Budget implementation legislation, and the member has ample opportunity. I just refer to former Speakers, Mr. Speaker, and going back to March of 1998, I will quote, "Manitoba precedent from past

rulings of Speakers shows that the scope of the Budget speech debate, which is underway today"—that was in the quote—"is wide enough to encompass the discussion of most subjects."

Mr. Speaker, under the rules set out in our rule book, Rule 36 and under *Beauchesne's* 389 and 390, the member just in no way meets any of the tests that are recognized in this House for an emergency debate. If the member has thoughts on the Budget, I expect that he will be raising them as we go through the debates that lie ahead.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, in normal circumstances I could accept the fact that we are in a budget debate and that all of these issues could be brought forward in a budget debate. However, having said that, if you look at what this Government is doing and the deceit that they are foisting on the Province of Manitoba and Manitobans, and when you realize that there are new taxes on such things as legal services and accounting services, there are new taxes on architectural and engineering services, these are taxes that I never had to pay before, so I look at that perhaps as a new tax. When I look at the legislation that we passed, it says that if a government is going to impose new taxes on the province of Manitoba, then we should go to referendum, but also in that same legislation it says that if you cannot run a balanced budget, then the ministers should suffer the consequences by taking a 20% reduction in their salaries.

The Auditor has spoken quite clearly on the fact that this Government has not balanced this Budget in the last three years. *[interjection]*

Now here is the smart one. Here is the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale) saying, "No, no, that is not what he said," but, Mr. Speaker, I am not paraphrasing. I am not misquoting the Auditor, am I? He said that you did not balance your books. *[interjection]*

Oh, now we are going to qualify it. We are going to balance it our way. Mr. Speaker, I do not have to talk about the credibility of the keno king over there who stands at a pulpit on Sunday and then says it is okay to have kenos in Laundromats. That is the kind of integrity that man has. I do not need it and neither does Manitoba, but this is a matter that has some urgency to it because we should be frank with

Manitobans and tell them how this Government is misleading this entire province, how it is boldly ploughing ahead with its agenda.

It is ignoring the law, Mr. Speaker. The law has to apply to everybody else except this Government. It is above the law: Do not tell me about the law; we are above it. That is their attitude. It is an awful attitude. Today we saw it from the Minister of Finance himself, who either misled this House, told an untruth in this House and then accused the Lotteries Corporation of doing something criminal. Can you imagine that coming from the Finance Minister of this House, Finance Minister of this Province?

Mr. Speaker, I have to agree that maybe we should stop the business of this House and have an urgent debate on how this Government is proceeding and how it is ignoring the law and how it is doing things that are going to cost Manitobans enormously without having the approval of Manitobans. It was the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this House who said, "I was not elected to raise taxes," but he turns around and he raises taxes. He is also the same one who said we could fix health care with \$15 million in six months. We do not know where his integrity is anymore. He cannot be trusted and neither can his Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and now the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has joined him as well.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I would tend to say that maybe we should stop the business of this House and have a debate on the urgency of why this Government is proceeding with its affairs and how it is mismanaging the affairs of this province.

Mr. Speaker: I thank honourable members for their advice to the Chair on whether the motion proposed by the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) should be debated today. The notice required by Rule 36(1) was provided. Rule 36 and *Beauchesne's Citations* 389 and 390 provide two tests for a matter of urgent public importance to meet an order for debate to proceed.

First, is a subject matter so pressing that the ordinary opportunities for debate will not allow it to be brought out early enough; and second, has it been shown that the public interest will suffer if this matter is not given immediate attention?

Manitoba precedent from past rulings of Speakers shows that the scope of the budget speech debate, which is underway today, is wide enough to encompass the discussion of most subjects including the one raised by the honourable member. In addition, there may be other opportunities, such as Question Period and Members' Statements, to raise the issue.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Respecting the second test for a matter of urgent public importance to proceed, that is, will the public interest suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention? Although this, undoubtedly, is a serious issue that that member has brought forward, I do not believe the public interest will be harmed if the business of the House is not set aside to debate the motion today. Therefore, I must rule that this matter does not meet the criteria set by our rules and precedents, and I rule the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, we would challenge the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster has risen to challenge the ruling of the Speaker, but I must inform the honourable member, and all honourable members, notwithstanding sub rule 9(1), the ruling of the Chair shall not be subject to appeal. So the ruling of the Chair cannot be challenged on a MUPI.

Now we will move on and resume debate on Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Seventh Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in amendment thereto standing in the name of the honourable Member for

Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), who has 14 minutes remaining.

* (16:10)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be back on track here once again, to deal with the 14 minutes that I have left in the budget allotment. I wanted to first take a look at the Liberal amendment and look at (j), the first one where the Liberal member mentions "failing to set priorities well and to manage fiscal resources well."

I cannot think of a better example of Liberal vagueness than that, Mr. Speaker, so I spent a couple of minutes and read over his speech from yesterday. In the beginning of his speech he talked about the lack of democratic principles and the democratic deficit. Meanwhile, you have a federal leader, his federal leader is appointing candidates in B.C. The leader before that, Chrétien, appointed candidates in Toronto; one of the most anti-democratic moves that a leader, and I would say stupid things, that a leader could do.

Now you have the current leader, Paul Martin, after making an issue of the democratic deficit in the Parliament of Canada, turning around and making these direct appointments. That is beyond the pale. I cannot see why he would do that but let us deal with the member from Inkster. You know the member is sort of the Al Gore of Manitoba politics. I can recall this member running for leader of the Liberal Party, not once, but two times, and you know something? He got more votes than the other candidate and he still lost. Now how do you explain that democratic deficit? The member should take up this issue with his own party. You know, the party sets up a leadership structure; the member runs. He gets more votes than the other guy. You would think he would win. Did he win? No, he did not win. They go through this process. A couple of years later they do it again and he runs a second time. For all I know he may have won that time too, but they did not let him take the leadership. So you should not be lecturing us about the democratic deficit in this Legislature before you clean up your own mess in your own party.

Mr. Speaker, the member was complaining about the number of sitting days. So we call a committee meeting a few months ago, and who does not show up at the committee meeting? I mean if a

member cannot get here for the existing 37 days, how does he expect to be here for 80?

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I like to think that my attendance inside the Chamber is fairly good. I do not believe I have missed more than one day in 12 years. Having said that, it is not proper to indicate whether or not a member is present inside the Chamber or not present inside the Chamber. I believe the same principle applies for the committee meeting that he is referring to. But I can assure the member I would have been there had I been told about the meeting.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Elmwood, on the same point of order.

Mr. Maloway: I would invite the member from Inkster to peruse Hansard tomorrow and he will see that I was very careful in not referencing what he is alleging, "him" specifically, I did not reference him, I said a member.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Inkster, he does not have a point of order. It is just a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Elmwood, to pick up on his debate.

Mr. Maloway: Now, the next issue he dealt with, and you know we are only on the second sentence of his speech yesterday. He wants to bring back company and union contributions, donations. You know that was something that the Premier promised in 1995, and of course we were not elected in 1995, so when we were elected in 1999 he was good to his word and brought in this legislation. It has been in Québec for a number of years. What it simply means is that elected officials have to get here and have to get there by going out knocking on doors and getting \$50, \$100 donations from people rather than getting them from companies and unions.

I do not know why he would be complaining because he benefits by the new system. I mean, he is

here. He is elected and he was successful in getting elected, so clearly he knows how to go out and knock on doors, and get contributions from people. I do not think he would be expecting a lot of union contributions anyway, and the corporate donations they were all going to his competition in his leadership campaigns. I do not know of any companies who were giving money to him. But I know Paul Edwards was certainly in line for a lot of company action. He has done well because he is a company lawyer and he deals with companies.

You know the member really is not well set up for receiving a lot of corporate donations, in my opinion, and certainly not union donations. So why he is wanting to go through the past darkly here and complain about this issue, I mean he is suggesting that somehow that we have hamstrung, that we have hampered the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party in trying to come back and win an election. *[interjection]* No, it is their fault that they have not gone out and raised the money. They just need a leader who can raise money.

They themselves, individually, are not being stopped from putting on social events in their constituencies, which I am sure they are doing. They are not being stopped by going door-to-door raising hundred dollar donations from individuals. It is just they are not doing it. They have a president, a former president now, who could not even get the financial statements filed on time. That is like one job that he has to do in a year and he cannot even get that straightened out. So you know there are other issues there, and, you know, the members know it. I am just dealing with the member's party at the moment, which should be a simpler sort of party to analyze.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with the Opposition's response to the Budget, and I am then trying to figure out why they are so glum. I mean, it is fairly easy. They really do not have a lot of traction on this issue. They are used to dealing with the old NDP, you know, the old tax-and-spend NDP. They would give them lots to shoot at. An opposition in an environment like that did not have to work very hard at all. Right? The government just gives them targets and they shoot at them.

This is a government that did not give them those automatic targets, Mr. Speaker. It adopted their own balanced budget legislation, which worked reasonably well. Well, how could they criticize that?

So they, well, you know, what we did was simply follow their legislation. As a matter of fact, we improved, they know that, their legislation. In fact, we went and recognized the liabilities, the pension liabilities, which they did not do. We were doing things that even they did not do and we knew they would support that.

So they have had a very rough time finding issues that they can chase around after. I mean, that is fair ball. We give them the odd opening, I guess, every once in a while. I am sure they will be looking at ways to take advantage of them. But, in the macro sense, in the overall sense, this is a budget that any good Liberal or Conservative government would bring in in other provinces. We are not Alberta. We do not have the revenues that Alberta has. But for what we have to work with, we have done pretty well.

Now, the PCs, when they were in power, at least in the last couple of years that we have been in power, we have had two upgrades by the bond raters. That is something that any government that gets a bond rating—I remember back in the seventies when we got a downgrade, well, it was a big issue. Right? We have not had downgrades. We have upgrades. We recognize that deficits and debts are not good and that we, because of higher interest rates, are going to have to reduce services to the public. We recognize all of that.

But the fact of the matter is that there is a demand. There is a demand for services. I also want to point out something else too. When we were in opposition those 11 years, we actually voted for two of their budgets, and we are still here.

You know, I mean, you would think voting for—now, mind you, I have to say that it was probably a bad idea for Sid Spivak back in '73 to vote for the Schreyer budget. That did not help him, I guess, on the eve of the election.

There were circumstances when we thought they were doing a decent job, we voted for their budget. So we were not totally negative about what they, how they conducted their affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I do not see how they can criticize our budgeting when we ran a surplus under their own legislation. We have improved their legislation. We have recognized the pension liabilities. I know we

like to attack them about spending before, but, if you take a look back to their final budgets, the last two or three budgets, you find they were no pikers on spending. They certainly spent a fair amount. But the public did not believe. It does not matter how much money they put into health care, the public would not believe it anyway. Right?

* (16:20)

They were making efforts. On that basis we really did not have a problem supporting them at times.

But I can tell you this: How many members opposite have ever heard of the Manitoba Advantage? How many members? Does the member from Inkster know about the Manitoba Advantage? Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson)?

The fact of the matter is that the Manitoba Advantage was concocted under the Tories, 1992. They developed it. The argument was they would bring it before the Legislature at budget time and they would say that Manitoba has an advantage over other provinces. We would not be attracting the industry that we have here and retaining the industry that we have here if we did not have this advantage. No one sector dominates over the other. We have bus manufacturing. We all know that Manitoba is a very big centre for bus manufacturing, food processing, aerospace, transportation.

We know that our hydro rates are certainly, if not the lowest in North America, among the lowest. That is a big cost input. I remember when the Conservatives, years ago, under Sterling Lyon were trying to set up the Alcan smelter. One of the reasons that it was attracted is because, to produce the aluminum, a smelter requires huge amounts of cheap power, and Manitoba provided it. So that is something that they should look at.

The auto insurance rates are among the lowest in Canada, if not the lowest, but they do not factor that into their speeches. You know, they are whining and complaining about our tax rate is 1 percent higher than this jurisdiction or that jurisdiction, but they do not factor into the fact that in Alberta there are health care premiums. They do not factor that in.

They do not factor into the fact that in the United States they have to pay their \$6,000 per employee for

medical coverages. So they have to look at all of these items, but to hear the Opposition talk, you would think people were fleeing. You would think this was a terrible place to live, that people were trying to escape, that we had to put guards on the border to keep people here.

You listen to them, that is the kind of impression you would get, and certainly that is not the way they should be. They should be giving the Government credit once in awhile, rather than just being totally negative, negative all the time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am running out of time again, but I do want to talk about the KPMG study. KPMG found that Winnipeg was one of the least expensive cities in Canada to do business, and I did want to say that—

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today 90 students who are participating in the National Debating Championship, so they will be listening very carefully to pick up pointers. So, honourable members, the pressure is on. On behalf of all honourable members I welcome you here today.

* * *

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I would like to welcome those that debate on a regular basis to our Chamber today and indicate that sometimes the calibre of debate in this Legislature is not quite the calibre that you would see on an ongoing basis, so forgive us if in fact you do not believe that we meet your standards.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to indicate at the outset that I welcome following the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) in debating the Budget, Budget 2004. You know, I always find the member from Elmwood very entertaining and he certainly, very often, has a very colourful way of expressing himself and we enjoy that kind of debate.

I do want to indicate to him and to all members of this Legislature that I will not be supporting

Budget 2004. I have several reasons for that, although, and I did listen intently to the Member for Elmwood when he indicated that, you know, from time to time opposition members should say some good things about what the Budget might include.

I will indicate and I will say to him that I did appreciate the announcement that the eight kilometres or so of the northeast Perimeter Highway that is not twinned will be twinned, albeit, Mr. Speaker, five years later than it should be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the budget document, it indicated that within three years the twinning of the northeast Perimeter Highway would be completed, but then when the minister of highways the next day went out and made the announcement, he indicated that it would be five years before it was completed. So I would rather see the project completed sooner than later. We have had some very tragic accidents on that stretch of the Perimeter Highway and it is long overdue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to indicate that I am somewhat disappointed with the Premier's (Mr. Doer) announcement not long before the Budget was tabled in this House. His announcement that, through the infrastructure agreement with all three levels of government, he was going to put \$17 million of hard-earned Manitobans' taxpayer dollars into a rapid transit system. Well, I take a look at that proposal and that agreement, and we look at all three levels of government putting in a total of \$51 million to a rapid transit system that has no cost-benefit analysis done or articulated, and I wonder how this Premier could stand up in good conscience and fund \$17 million which is only a down payment on the system. The total project will cost \$400 million to complete.

I question the Premier's priority setting when we look at the community in which he lives, the community which I represent, and I am pleased and proud to represent the Premier of the province in the Legislature of Manitoba. I know that since he moved into my community that he understands the infrastructure deficit that exists in northeast Winnipeg. He only had to watch and see our city councillor close a feeder route from Henderson Highway to Lagimodiere Boulevard because of excess traffic. What did that do, Mr. Deputy Speaker? That only moved the problem from one residential street to another.

We have very dangerous situations on our residential streets because we have the Chief Peguis Bridge that was built, and it was to be extended to take heavy traffic off our residential streets and put them on to a freeway system that would move traffic from east to west. That project was delayed, I think a very irresponsible and ill-thought-out approach to east-west traffic problems in northeast Winnipeg. That \$17 million could have gone a long way to fix the traffic on our residential streets. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the residents of my constituency where the Premier lives are asking for some action to deal with the issue.

I know the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) lives in my constituency, too. I would hope that he has recognized the problems that exist because he lives right next to where the heavy traffic exists. I would hope that he would talk to his Premier and say, "\$17 million in our community." I am not asking for more money to be spent. I am asking the Premier, the Member for Rossmere and his colleagues in government to say, "It is a priority to fix the infrastructure problems and the infrastructure deficits in northeast Winnipeg." I would hope that he would agree.

* (16:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are several unanswered questions on the rapid transit system and I have written to the Premier. I have not received a response back yet but I have written to the Premier and asked some direct and very specific questions. We all know that there have been major infrastructure initiatives announced and I do support the Kenaston underpass; it is needed. I do, and have supported, the completion of the Charleswood Bridge, the extension of Bishop Grandin Boulevard from Waverley to Kenaston, a new Main Street Bridge, a new Provencher Bridge.

All of those infrastructure projects were important and needed to happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the infrastructure deficit in northeast Winnipeg has not been addressed. We have not received our fair share of infrastructure dollars over the year. The last major project was the Chief Peguis Bridge, and I believe that was opened in 1988. So we have had a 12-, 13-, 14-year drought without any major infrastructure happening in northeast Winnipeg. It is time for governments to stand up and take a look at what needs to happen in our community.

The questions that have gone unanswered from this Premier (Mr. Doer) around putting \$17 million into a rapid transit system are: What feasibility studies have been conducted in regard to the rapid transit initiative? We have seen nothing announced publicly. What cost-benefit analysis has been done? We have nothing that would justify \$400 million in infrastructure investment. Another question is: What is the estimated ridership under the new rapid transit system? Who is the market group being targeted for ridership? What will be the ongoing maintenance and operating costs of a new system? Will there be an increase in provincial subsidization under the new system? Who will purchase the buses? The \$400 million does not include one bus to run on the rapid transit system. What is the total cost per bus? Has the Province committed to its full share of the estimated \$400 million that this project will take to complete?

One of the biggest questions is will all workers involved in the construction of the new transit system be required to be unionized or to pay union dues.

We know the hidebound ideology of the New Democratic government. We saw the Premier (Mr. Doer), who was a former union boss, put on his Tory blue suit and pretend in 1999 to be a conservative, but we all know that once a union boss, always a union boss.

We know that the likes of Rob Hilliard are sitting behind the Premier's desk, dictating to this Premier and to this Government what direction should be taken. It is payback time to the unions by this Government. This Premier is kowtowing to those union bosses.

I think it is shameful. I think all members on that side of the House should be somewhat upset and should be questioning the direction that they are going.

Well, when you look at the priorities in this Budget, there is an estimation by those in the construction industry that the cost of the floodway will increase by \$65 million if workers are forced to unionize and to pay union dues. I question whether that is good use of taxpayers' dollars.

We have had significant questions. We may see a significant flip-flop again from this Government. We have got the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr.

Ashton), who has stood up and said, "All those that work on the floodway will have to pay union dues. It is the law." We have heard the Premier kind of hedge on that and say, "Well, you know, Wally Fox-Decent will mediate or attempt to mediate a solution to all of this." I guess we believe that the Premier is looking for a way out. Maybe he will find one and maybe he will come to his senses and realize that he has got to back down and that he cannot stand beside his Minister of Water Stewardship and support the position that he has taken.

We just may see that, because of the arguments and the criticism that has been mounted, there is a flip-flop again by this Government. We may see, because of the pressure that has been put on by the construction industry and the pressure that has been put on by opposition parties in this House that the Government will back down. Quite frankly, we would be extremely happy to see that happen, because it would be to the benefit of Manitoba.

We all believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the floodway needs to proceed, needs to be completed, and, if we could find a resolution that did not force unionization and did not force union dues, we would think that we had had a positive impact as an opposition on influencing the Government to change its mind, to look at the wrong-headed decision that it had made, and come to its senses and get on with the project of building the floodway to protect the citizens of the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there are many that do want to speak on the Budget. I felt that it was really important to put my thoughts on the record around northeast Winnipeg. We have significant infrastructure problems and I would hope, and I will be asking the Premier (Mr. Doer) through the Estimates process, for answers to my questions that he has neglected to answer in writing. But, on behalf of my constituents, I want to indicate today that not only is it important for the northeast portion of the Perimeter Highway to be twinned, but we have significant bottleneck traffic at Springfield Road and Lagimodiere Boulevard that needs to be addressed. We have very heavy traffic on Gateway Road during rush hour. Henderson Highway from Gilmore to the Perimeter does not have a median and I am sure the Premier knows too, because he is only a few doors away from me. If he travels up to Henderson Highway to get onto Henderson Highway during rush hour traffic, you may sit five to ten minutes

waiting to get across the highway. It is important that that be looked at and looked at seriously.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have already talked about the east-west traffic flow and the danger on our residential streets, and there need to be some immediate solutions. When I look at \$400 million going to a rapid transit system with no feasibility studies and no cost benefit analysis, and when I look at the infrastructure deficit in our community, we would not need nearly that amount of money to address the issues in our community over a period of time.

I say to the Premier, "Let us join hands; let us look at our community that we live in." I would hope that he would support the residents that live next door to him and on the next street to him, and put his priority for funding something that is known and needed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to comment on one other thing and I just want to send a message to Government that we will be watching very carefully as they move forward in the amalgamation of Driver and Vehicle Licencing and the Manitoba Public Insurance corporation. I will have much more time to speak on other Crown corporations, such as Hydro, as times goes by. But I do want to indicate that we will be watching very carefully, because we know that this Government tried to raid the Manitoba Public Insurance corporation of \$30 million and because of significant public outcry they backed off. They did a flip-flop and we are pleased that they did, that they did back off. But we will be watching carefully to try to make sure that this Government is not trying, through the back door, to use the Manitoba Public Insurance corporation to fund the ongoing operating costs that presently exist within government. And, if in fact, they are trying to roll the licence and driver vehicle function of government into the Manitoba Public Insurance corporation and expect those insurance ratepayers to pick up the cost of government operations, we will be extremely critical.

*(16:40)

So we are supportive of amalgamation if it makes sense to reduce administrative costs and see Manitobans better served through driver licensing and vehicle licensing. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we

support that. But we have seen in the past the manipulation of Crown corporations by this Government. We want to ensure that this new initiative is not going to result in ratepayers, through MPI, having to pay higher rates to support ongoing government operation.

I cannot support this Budget. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$90 million more in taxation and user fees is something that Manitobans will not support. The Pharmacare increases for some of the most vulnerable, and those on fixed incomes in our community are not welcome. I am hearing on a daily basis concerns from my constituents and from my seniors.

You know, the member from Elmwood who just spoke has been around both in opposition and in government. I daresay he will probably be around for many years for come. He will be around to experience opposition again at some point in time, because that is what traditionally happens in Manitoba. Governments get two mandates and it seems that governments change. We are seeing some chinks in this Government's armour. I know that we are moving back towards the dark days of an NDP administration who did not see a tax that they did not like or did not hike. That is exactly what we see in this Budget this year, \$90-million backdoor taxation and up-front taxation.

But Manitobans will have to dig deeper into their pockets to pay the \$90 million that this Government has put forward in this Budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are only seeing the beginning of the downslide of this Government. It is our responsibility as members of the Opposition to make sure that Manitobans and taxpayers in Manitoba understand that we are back to the dark days of deficit financing and increased debt, deficit financing that will in fact lead to the defeat of this Government in the years to come.

So I am hoping that those that are new on the other side, as I have had the opportunity to sit in government and in opposition, will understand exactly what direction they are heading and hopefully they will come to their senses and look to trying to ensure that Manitobans, through their policies, have more money in their pockets, not less. We know that is what we are seeing and we know that that will lead to the defeat of this Government, I would say, in the next provincial election. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): I am very pleased today to rise in the House to support the Budget presented by my colleague the honourable Minister of Finance. This has been the toughest one yet that he has had to bring in, and he has done an admirable job. This comes as no surprise, however, as he has conscientiously met every challenge put before him thus far. I expect nothing less optimistic, after all, from a lad raised in sunny St. James. I applaud him on not only the ingenuity but the tremendous integrity reflected in this budget speech.

Balance is the key in life, balance among work, family and play and balance in the setting of the Budget for our Province, our Manitoba. This Budget achieves that balance between the important goals of sustaining the affordability of our public finances and investing in all of our citizens. The key here is that we are investing in all Manitobans.

As the Premier has put it on many occasions, this is a government for all Manitobans. As such, the Budget would have to do and does reflect the balancing of the interests of all of us. It is my privilege to represent in this House the people of St. James. This Budget addresses some of the issues that are important to my constituents.

Firstly, this Budget maintains our commitment to affordability. It sets out a balanced program for tax reduction and fiscal responsibility while at the same time meeting its responsibilities to maintain our investments in education, families and health. This was the message I heard consistently during the last election. The people of St. James are well informed and very clear on the need for this balance in the Budget.

One of the major changes in this Budget is its protection of the Pharmacare program. This is of particular interest to many citizens in St. James; \$5.6 million has been added to the budget of Pharmacare. Over the past five years we have doubled, almost tripled, the Pharmacare budget. Almost 1000 new drugs have been added to Pharmacare coverage. As well, we have implemented a palliative care drug program so that patients who choose to spend their last days at home can receive their drugs free. To be comfortable in our own surroundings with family and friends nearby to comfort us in our last days is what everyone should be able to appreciate. Our Government appreciates that need and right.

But as important is a plan that has been developed to protect the sustainability of the program. That is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are moving on a Pharmacare sustainability strategy through which the use of generic drugs is encouraged and best practices in other provinces are sought out to ensure the most effective, lowest-cost drug used whenever possible.

In seeking to distribute more fairly the cost of Pharmacare we have added two new deductible rates for higher income families. Yet for 85 percent of the families the changes will cost between \$1 and \$9 a month. Pharmacare will continue to pay 100 percent of the cost once the deductible threshold has been reached. This is a prime example of the balance that is apparent in the Budget presented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

I would also like to note a change made by our Government in the last term to enhance lives of users of Pharmacare. A regulation change now allows Manitobans to travel safely, particularly our snow-birds in winter months. A very punitive and prohibitive policy in place during the previous government's reign put people at risk by not allowing prescriptions to be filled and covered for more than 100 days—usually not long enough for the duration of their absence. Our Government recognized the value of contributing to keeping our citizens safe and well while away and not returning sick and costing our health system more in the end. We more than doubled this time to allow 200 days in enabling those who can to travel south. Psychological well-being is a factor not to be discounted either.

Another point I want to address which is important to Manitobans across the province, but perhaps significantly more in St. James, is the provision to exempt the taxation, up to limits on the employment income of military and police personnel deployed to high-risk assignments outside Canada. Manitoba is home to many of these men and women and their families.

In St. James, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have 17 Wing; many families of military personnel live in this area. In 1999 it was clear to me while canvassing that most of the families living in military housing were not interested much in provincial politics. Their lives are pretty much dictated by the federal government. Yet these are active members of the community and a tremendous asset to the economy.

We needed to help them feel more a part of this province while here, and recognized their contributions for them to take more of an interest. This is why our Government took a look at how we can make an impact on their lives here in Manitoba.

You should recall the legislation passed last term in regard to preserving driver's licence merits on moves and flexibility on renewal processes while serving abroad. Voting rights were also addressed and changes made to right an injustice while serving abroad and allow them to vote while abroad. It is incredible to think about how unfairly our peacekeepers have been treated while they serve their country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are still areas that are being worked on. This is why I was so pleased to see them considered once again in this Budget. Our Government recognizes the dedication and commitment of our military families and police families to providing peacekeeping and aid wherever they are asked to do so, whether it is in Afghanistan or Haiti or Cyprus, Bosnia or East Timor, they are there. This Manitoba government honours their dedication and commitment to their duty with this exemption for foreign service. I always say that it is not the mountains you have to climb that gets you, it is the grain of sand in your shoe. It is our job to keep their lives as free from as many aggravations in their daily living as we can.

*(16:50)

For families as well, this Budget illustrates our Government's commitment to child day care as part of an overall strategy to enhance early childhood development. This commitment is clear in the 51 percent in spending on child care over the past four years. Spending on child care in Manitoba has reached \$80 million, more than 3500 new spaces have been fully funded, including spaces in schools as part of the child care in schools initiative.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Stevenson-Britannia Adult Literacy Program at Jameswood School is part of this initiative. This program is designed to develop literacy skills of adults who are seeking to improve their opportunities and create a future for themselves and their children. This program has been allocated guaranteed spaces in the adjoining day-care program. This addresses a huge barrier to young mothers wanting to return to school. Although not nearly

enough yet, it is certainly a big step in the right direction and I am so proud to see it happened here in my community.

We also have in this Budget a new children's initiative to improve access to services for speech and language therapy, critical to early childhood development. Resources will be directed towards special needs education, which has increased almost 25 percent since 1999-2000. I see these needs at Strathmillan and Stevenson-Britannia schools and have heard the pleas of parents and teachers for more resources. This was certainly a welcome part of the budget speech.

I would just touch on a few other areas. This Budget continues to offer affordable, post-secondary tuition, new or expanded programs and increased education options. One of the tremendous strides made has been in apprenticeship training, which is up 18 percent. High-tech training in aerospace is evident in St. James. Stevenson Aviation and Aerospace Training Centre was transferred to the Red River College from the Province in 2002. There are currently two sites, one in Portage and one at the Winnipeg Airport, in my constituency.

The full-time programs are run out of the Winnipeg Airport site, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the Portage site runs the apprenticeship program. Through Advanced Education and Training, we currently fund the Winnipeg programs, aircraft maintenance engineer, gas turbine technician and aerospace manufacturing certificate, to the tune of about \$1.3 million and serve a total of 116 students per year. These apprentices can walk straight from training to work. I am pleased to support a budget that supports this valuable training.

Another long-term challenge is infrastructure. This Budget announces an additional \$10 million for construction this year and an additional \$10 million the following year. This is on top of the five-year \$600 million commitment announced three years ago. This added funding will allow the acceleration of the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway west of Virden to be accelerated by one year. It will allow for resurfacing of major portions of Highway 6, which is a critical transportation link to the North and the farming communities of the Interlake. I want you to know that this really warms my heart because I have travelled this highway many years. I have a daughter and grandsons in Ashern. I have a mother

and sister and her family in Lundar. I am quite thrilled to know that they will be travelling a lot more safely with the help of our Government.

This will also allow the Government to get started on the twinning of the northeast Perimeter Highway and Highway 59 south. This item represents the truth of what the Premier (Mr. Doer) has said consistently, "We are a government for all Manitobans."

This Budget seeks, and achieves throughout, a balance. It seeks and achieves the sustainability of our social education and health programs. It addresses the issue of fiscal responsibility. It continues to pay down our debt and, for the first time, has not had to draw on the rainy day fund to do so.

I would like to keep it short because, as my honourable colleague mentioned, there are people who still want to speak and some of my colleagues have admirably covered the highlights of this Budget. Given the magnitude of the endeavour to cover all the good work we are doing, I am quite happy to keep this short. I do just want to mention a few notes on health. I would like to share a few experiences reflecting on the good work of changes in health. I think a picture is worth a thousand words and a little feedback, and examples that I have been hearing, about how the changes we have made really are working.

One of the highlights of what we have done is the expansion of the family doctor connection line throughout the province, linking Manitobans to family doctors. We have had a lot of new people, particularly with the military with the constant turnover, and we have a new development. And I cannot tell you how often I have been happy to tell people that are looking for a new doctor about this link.

While speaking of lines and links, I had the opportunity of speaking at a women's institute, rural women celebrating their AGM. After the speech, there were at least a half dozen women who came up and insisted on my taking the message back to our Government of how much they appreciate, how much this stress line has helped, that our members opposite had cut. I could hear the fear in their voices, if they did not let us know how much they appreciate it, that it could happen again. It was very gratifying.

I would also like to mention the support for healthy living. I would like to congratulate and express my appreciation to the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) for passing the anti-smoking law. On a personal level, my husband, a 30-year smoker, is on one and a half years of quitting. I think those of you who have experienced that can appreciate the pain, the suffering. I can tell you when this bill was brought in it certainly served to reinforce his resolve. He now wears a big grin when he is able to tell people he no longer smokes.

The impact is also evident on the fitness in my constituency. At Deer Lodge Centre, the Minister for Healthy Living and I recently attended the opening of a fitness centre which not only offered the opportunity for staff to become fit, it replaced a smoking room. So it is nice to see that this law has allowed people to, I think, progress much quicker than they would have otherwise.

There are almost 900 more nurses working in Manitoba, in part due to the RN diploma program. We have almost tripled the number of MRIs performed and doubled the number of CT scans performed. When I was at the door of a nurse, she was very eager to tell me how she could not believe, for the first time in over a decade, that they were performing these services in the evening. It is easy to see why the numbers are doubling and tripling when the staff is willing to perform and not leave the diagnostic equipment sitting.

Most health care has moved closer to home, the CT scans in the rural and northern hospitals like Steinbach, Selkirk and The Pas. Actually one of my neighbours, the wife was bemoaning the fact that her husband was going to have to wait three months and he had already been in incredible pain with his back. He was going to have to wait three months for a CT scan. I suggested to her, "Do you realize there is a CT scan in Selkirk? It had just opened. Talk to your doctor." Within a week he was in and dealing with his problem. Anybody here who might remember, it was in the *Free Press*, a great big picture of him, so if you want to verify that, that was one of my constituents that benefited from just knowing.

The doctors do not know these things. That is why we have a Web—I should not say do not know. I am sorry. They do not always think that people are willing to travel. Not everybody is able or willing, but if they are there are alternatives, and they need to

know that. So they can just go on the Web, find out about it and suggest to their doctor, if they are willing, to get much quicker treatment.

Budget 2004 sticks to the growth plan that was put in place five years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It maintains our affordability advantage by ensuring tax changes are neutral. It provides key supports for economic growth such as accessible education and maintains and enhances the economic partnerships for future growth. It is a budget of balancing the divergent issues, concerns and desires of all Manitobans and, in the process, meeting the obligations of our Government. It is a budget that is the touchstone for prosperity in the Keystone Province. It is a budget for which I am honoured to stand in support.

* (17:00)

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to say a few words with respect to the Budget that was presented by the Finance Minister last week on behalf of all residents of the constituency of Lac du Bonnet. I want to make it very clear from the outset that I will not be supporting this Budget.

I will be voting against the Budget, and I will be voting instead for the motion that was presented last week by our leader, the Opposition Leader. I expect and I hope that the members opposite read that motion, because I think it is very important that they realize what is in there. I think if they realize what is in there, and they read that particular motion by the Opposition Leader that they will probably support our motion instead.

Just to give you some of the highlights of that motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Budget really fails to offer any vision or any plan for Manitobans. It also fails to provide a long-term economic plan. Their economic plan, it seems, is to spend another \$100 million on new Cadillac VLTs. That is their economic plan. That is their economic vision for Manitoba. That is, clearly, not acceptable to Manitobans and it is not acceptable to this side of the House and it should not be acceptable to government members. That is not an economic plan and a vision for Manitoba.

It is clear from the Budget, as well, that there is very little to curb the activities of the Hells Angels in

Manitoba. Again I refer, in previous debates, to the fact that the Justice Minister has done little to nothing to curb the activities of the Hells Angels in Manitoba, in fact, so much so that the Hells Angels have expanded their operations in Manitoba by establishing a retail outlet just down the street from his constituency office.

I do not know why the minister does not go after the Hells Angels. Could it be because they are his constituents or could it be because that is the only economic driver that this Government has presented over the last number of years? I am not sure what it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is clearly unacceptable to me and to this side of the House.

The Budget also fails to provide a long-term tax reduction strategy for Manitobans. I think that it is important to generate new economic activity for Manitoba, and new jobs for Manitoba, and it clearly fails in that respect.

It fails to provide a sustainable provincial spending plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Instead, all it is is tax and spend, tax and spend, tax and spend. That is the mantra of this Government, and it, certainly, does not look at the sustainability of spending in terms of trying to provide programs for Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it also fails to provide funding for public education on a sustainable level. I know the previous Minister of Education stood up in this House about two years ago and told us that the amalgamation of school divisions across the province would save the province \$10 million in administration. We have yet to see that. It will not happen.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We predicted it will not happen and it will not happen. In fact, in Sunrise School Division what happened a couple of years ago was the minister amalgamated the Agassiz School Division with the Springfield portion of the Transcona-Springfield School Division, Mr. Speaker. As a result of that, he expected that there would be savings, that there would be administrative savings, there would be savings in capital, and so on. This Education Minister that we have here today continues to think that is the case. Well, I have information for him.

In the last two years, the education taxes on our property in the former Agassiz School Division, now

Sunrise School Division, have gone up by 17 percent in the last two years, and the school division projects a double-digit tax increase, a double-digit school tax increase for next year. Where are the savings? I submit to you that there were no savings, and there will not be any savings.

Also, the Budget fails to address any challenges that we have in health care, including it does not provide a cardiac care system that meets the needs of Manitobans in a timely fashion. It does not end hallway medicine. In fact, in 1999 the Premier (Mr. Doer) stood up on a soapbox during the election and told Manitobans that he would end hallway medicine for \$15 million in six months. Well, it has been five years. He has spent millions upon millions of dollars and the situation is no different, if not worse, than it was in 1999. How can we trust this Premier?

The Budget also does not reduce the waiting list for diagnostic tests for services which include CT scans, MRIs and ultrasounds. The Budget fails to address the need to have bold, innovative and meaningful reform in health care that would reduce waiting lists and increase the quality of our health care services in Manitoba. It also fails to protect seniors and low-income Manitobans by increasing Pharmacare deductibles by another 5 percent. Three years, every year there has been an increase in the deductible of 5 percent for Manitobans. Who does it affect, Mr. Speaker? It affects low-income Manitobans. It affects seniors; that is shameful by the Health Minister.

Mr. Speaker, it also fails to protect Manitoba's agricultural sector. They are suffering, Mr. Speaker. They are suffering from low commodity prices, from the BSE crisis, from drought across the province and, certainly, they are deserving of our support, and they need our support. This Budget fails to address that.

It fails to set priorities well and to manage fiscal resources well. It also fails to reduce ministers' salaries by 20 percent, in recognition of the fact that this Budget actually produces a deficit. This is not a balanced budget. They try to pretend there is a balanced budget, but there is no balanced budget. It, in fact, produces a deficit, and that does not come directly from me; it comes from the Auditor General. The Auditor General has said that for the last three years this Government has, in fact, produced a deficit. While they will never admit to same, it does produce a deficit, and as a result the ministers'

salaries ought to be reduced in recognition of that fact.

It also fails to support improvements in water stewardship. It reduces the budget, in fact, for the new Ministry of Water. It fails to provide adequate attention to healthy living by providing adequate attention to sports funding in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

There is, in fact, a provincial deficit. Just to give you a comparison, in 1999, the overall provincial debt was \$16.866 billion. Now, in 2004 to 2005, it will be \$19.296 billion, that is an increase of \$800 million over the 1999 benchmark. The Premier knows those figures and the Finance Minister knows those figures, yet they will stand up in this House and say there is no deficit. Our provincial debt has gone up over \$800 million over those four years, and they will stand up and say that the Budget is balanced.

Under this Government, Manitoba's total debt has increased \$2.43 billion and, as a result, each Manitoban, and there are 1 162 000 Manitobans, is responsible for a share of that debt. Each individual is responsible for over \$16,000 of debt, currently, Mr. Speaker.

*(17:10)

I find it insulting that the Finance Minister did not consult with the taxpayers and residents of the constituency of Lac du Bonnet when he was asking for public input with respect to the 2004-2005 Budget. The taxpayers and residents of our constituency would have given the minister good advice, and would have told the minister that it is not good economics in trying to balance the Budget on the backs of ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro, that Manitoba Hydro is not the personal slush fund of Premier Doer nor the Finance Minister.

We are the highest-taxed jurisdiction west of New Brunswick. Middle-income Manitobans that earn between \$40,000 to \$60,000 a year are the highest taxed west of New Brunswick. The Premier promised many times, he stood on a soapbox in front of the media, that we would not be elected to raise taxes, and he did that in this Budget, Mr. Speaker.

Another reason why I will not support the Budget, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that it does not really address the concerns of my constituents. I will give

you a few examples. In Beausejour, Park Avenue is an extension of Provincial Trunk Highway 44 and Provincial Road 215. Park Avenue is the responsibility of the Province, and this spring, again, highlighted the need for the reconstruction of Park Avenue in Beausejour. It is the main business section and main thoroughfare of Beausejour, and this spring it was filled with potholes and soft spots. The local highways employees in the area try valiantly to maintain the road by patching the roadway, but when you patch, and patch, and then patch the road again, it affects the quality of the road. I have been asking the ministers of Transportation, now the third minister in the last two years, to reconstruct Park Avenue as the Province has done in other communities like Steinbach, Winkler and Carman. While the department and the minister appear sympathetic, I have yet to see any money invested by the Province into this project.

Mr. Speaker, I am advised that the Province will require the taxpayers of the town of Beausejour to pick up part of the cost of reconstruction. This is hardly fair to the property taxpayers, since Park Avenue is the full responsibility of the provincial government. This is just another example of the offloading of responsibility by the Province onto the backs of the property taxpayers of Beausejour.

The Province forced the amalgamation of the Agassiz School Division with the Springfield portion of the Transcona-Springfield School Division, thereby increasing the school taxes of all property owners in Beausejour. Mr. Speaker, when the full cost of the amalgamation is counted, I believe that the cost to the taxpayers of Beausejour for the forced amalgamation by the Province will be in the neighbourhood of increased school taxes in the neighbourhood of about 30 to 40 percent over a three-year period.

Mr. Speaker, this is all due to the Province's lack of planning and lack of commitment to the property taxpayers of Beausejour. Now the Province will not pay for the full cost of reconstruction of Park Avenue. I demand that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) fulfil his responsibility to the businesses, to the residents, and to the property taxpayers of Beausejour by ensuring that the reconstruction of Park Avenue is made a priority, and that the Province picks up the entire cost of reconstruction.

There is a drainage deficit in the constituency of Lac du Bonnet, Mr. Speaker. There is a drainage

infrastructure deficit, particularly as it affects the rural municipalities of Broken Head, Lac Du Bonnet and Alexander. Historically, before the construction of the power generating stations along the Winnipeg River, there was not a drainage problem. Almost all of the excess water drained directly into the Winnipeg River. After the power generating stations were constructed, the natural drainage patterns of the area were altered, because of the many miles of dikes that were constructed along the Winnipeg River. New drainages were constructed to take excess water, generally in a northerly direction in the Winnipeg River. These new drainages were built 40, 50, 60 years ago, and have largely been neglected. There are mature trees growing in them, and many of the drainage ditches are blocked by beaver dams and other debris. In addition, these ditches were not constructed to drain the additional farmland that was cleared after they were initially constructed.

As a result of all these factors, these drains which are a provincial responsibility, are woefully inadequate. Make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker, these drains are a provincial responsibility, and they are in need of maintenance and reconstruction. Farmers in our area are severely affected because of the inadequacy of these drains. Often, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars of crop are lost due to the inability of these drains to handle the excess water. Farmers are already reeling from the affects of the BSE crisis and the lack of effective government response to BSE, from low commodity prices and from increased input costs over which they have absolutely no control.

Now, Mr. Speaker, add to this mix a drainage system in our area that is inadequate, and ineffective, and which costs our farmers due to crop losses. It is a provincial responsibility to maintain its drains in the constituency of Lac du Bonnet. This Government is negligent by not properly maintaining its drains. It is the Province's responsibility to ensure that the provincial drains are adequate to protect farmer's crops in our area. The Province has neglected its duty.

This Government should take notice of the problem that our farmers in our municipalities are facing as a result of the inadequate drainage in the constituency of Lac du Bonnet, and should invest the funds that are required to immediately maintain, and where necessary, rebuild the provincial drains within our constituency.

Pinawa is a community in our constituency that really deserves the attention of this Government, particularly in this Budget and in budgets to come. Pinawa is reeling from federal cutbacks by the federal government to Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. At the outset, I must commend Mayor Simpson and the councillors of the LGD of Pinawa and the development officers of that community, for their efforts to bring more jobs and more economic activity to Pinawa. Their efforts are working, Mr. Speaker, to a certain extent, but they need help. They need assistance not only from the federal government, but they also need assistance from this provincial government and particularly the assistance in this Budget and other budgets. I am afraid to say that was not forthcoming, and I was very disappointed in the Budget. That is one of the reasons why I am voting against this Budget as well.

There needs to be a concerted effort by the Manitoba government, co-ordinated with the local council in Pinawa and co-ordinated with local entrepreneurs and residents, to ensure that there is a sustainable and a realistic plan put into place to guarantee the growth and prosperity of Pinawa. The provincial government needs to do its part, and part of the solution would be to transfer some of the current civil service positions from Winnipeg to Pinawa. Positions in appropriate government departments could include positions in Conservation and the environment among others. Pinawa offers an urban lifestyle within a rural setting, and, given the chance, civil servants in appropriate departments would likely jump at the chance to do their work and to live in Pinawa. I urge this Government to consider this proposal and to transfer appropriate positions out of Winnipeg and into Pinawa, which would certainly help that community.

Mr. Speaker, there is a transportation deficit, an infrastructure deficit within the constituency of Lac du Bonnet. I just want to mention a few roads that, in fact, really need the attention of this Government. While I applaud the Government in terms of their putting in money into Highway 59 south and the Perimeter Highway north around Winnipeg, putting more infrastructure in place for safety purposes. I applaud the Government in that respect. I am concerned about the fact that it will take till 2009 until we see that road constructed. I hope that the Government moves more quickly in terms of roads within our constituency because we, too, suffer from

an infrastructure deficit, particularly with respect to transportation and roads within our constituency.

* (17:20)

Highway 304, which I have mentioned many times in this Legislature and to this Transportation Minister and to others before him, is a very important road that connects Pine Falls, Powerview and St. George and the north with 59 highway to the south. It is a well-travelled road; it is a very dangerous road. It winds through swamps and granite outcroppings and, in fact, is narrow with very few shoulders. It is a very unsafe highway. It is travelled by many trucks, pulp trucks that deliver pulp and chips to the Tembec mill. It is a very dangerous highway and one that really needs attention. I hope that the minister takes notice at least this time, moves that process along, and replaces that highway because if he does not, when we are elected in three years, we will. That I promise.

Secondly, there are a number of other roads within our constituency that need attention. Mr. Speaker, No. 44 east of Whitemouth to Rennie needs attention; No. 12 north of 44 and No. 302 south of 44, those are roads that are important roads that connect Beausejour to the other communities within our constituency. They are important for trade. It is important in order to ensure that there is economic activity within Beausejour and industries do locate in Beausejour. We do need that proper infrastructure to guarantee that. Highway 317 is in desperate need of attention.

Provincial Road 520 is a gravel road that connects Provincial Road 313 to Pinawa and to the Pinawa Hospital. It is a very important road. It is a gravel road that quite often ambulance attendants do not want to travel because it is too dangerous when they are transporting people from the Lee River-Bird River area and Pointe du Bois area. When they are transporting people from that area to the Pinawa Hospital for medical attention, quite often they state that they do not like going along that road because they feel that, perhaps, an accident is about to happen. That road needs attention by this minister particularly because Pinawa Hospital is a regional hospital. It is one that does not just serve the needs of the residents in Pinawa. It serves the needs of residents of the entire region, Lac du Bonnet, the Lee River area, Bird River area. It also includes Whitemouth in the Whiteshell and the Pointe du Bois

area. So it is a very important connector road to Pinawa, and, certainly, because of that fact needs to be addressed. The safety issues on that road need to be addressed by ensuring that the road is in proper condition so that ambulance attendants are not afraid to transport people who are in a very desperate situation within the ambulance.

Provincial Trunk Highway 15 east of Vivian to Ste. Rita needs attention. Whiteshell Provincial Park roads 307 and 309 need attention. Whiteshell Provincial Park is the most heavily travelled park and visited park in the province, and the roads are in terrible condition. We need to look at some way of, in fact, dealing with that issue, and ensuring that those roads receive the attention that they deserve.

Provincial Road 304 from Manigotagan to Bissett is a fairly well travelled road. It is a gravel road, and it has many dangerous corners which need to be straightened out. We have an entrepreneur in Bissett who is Hugh Wynne, who owns San Gold Resources, who is going to be purchasing the Bissett mine, in fact, has done so, Mr. Speaker, and will be bringing that mine into full production. I am very proud to say that he is one of my constituents. He will be creating employment for the Bissett area, which is badly needed for that area. I commend him for all the work that he has done, and the commitment that he has made to his community by purchasing that mine and bringing it back into full production, which is really needed in that area.

I received a call, Mr. Speaker, from another constituent who lives in the beaches area. In fact, he was concerned about 59 north; it needs to be twinned as well. So I think it is important that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) takes that into regard when he sets his budget, and he should look at that road as well.

Mr. Speaker, there are many infrastructure deficits that are in the constituency of Lac du Bonnet and those are just a few. Others that are worthy of mention include shoreline protection which is needed along the Winnipeg River from the R.M. of Lac du Bonnet all the way to Lake Winnipeg. I think it is incumbent upon Manitoba Hydro and this Government to ensure that there is shoreline protection for our farmers and our residents along that area. I will continue to bring forward those concerns to this Legislature.

Just in conclusion, I would like to say that, again, I am not going to be supporting this Budget, but I will be supporting the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray). Thank you Mr. Speaker.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to table the Estimates order as agreed to by the House leaders.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Sequence of Estimates has been tabled.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, to resume debate.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to stand today in the House to put my comments on the record with regard to Budget 2004.

This Budget represents a first for Manitoba, as many of the initiatives here in Manitoba have been firsts under this Government. This is a Budget that is the first since the balanced budget law was introduced that does three things: balancing operating expenditures, paying down the debt and making no draw on the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, Mr. Speaker.

Budget 2004, in a very tough year, has again affirmed our commitments to Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, where in some jurisdictions when there are tough budget years we see freezes, in this jurisdiction of Manitoba we are committed to our priorities. That means increasing funding to health care; that means increasing funding to education; and that means providing the services that Manitobans demand and that we have promised to deliver.

I would first like to comment on comments that were made by members opposite to initiate this debate. First and foremost, we have the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) saying, "We value the tremendous contribution our teachers make, and we must do more to help them. Our teachers do not fail our children, and we do not want to fail our teachers. We want to support them."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that three things immediately came to mind after hearing those comments. First of all, as a father of young children the first thing I thought about was a very warm and fuzzy Teletubbies' group-hug image about the relationship that members opposite seem to think they had with teachers during the 1990s. The second thing that came to mind was the actual shock-and-awe campaign that we saw launched against teachers during the 1990s. The third thing, it became very evident to me why members opposite at one time did not want history to be a compulsory subject in school.

I would like to start by putting a few comments on record with respect to the treatment that I received as a professional in the province of Manitoba during the 1990s. They were echoed by my colleague from Seine River the other day, who referred to the horrible relationship and the adversarial relationship that there had been between the government of members opposite and the professionals of teachers in this province during the 1990s.

First and foremost, I could use the reference that members opposite have made with respect to taking money out of Manitobans' pockets. Well, Mr. Speaker, I personally was locked out of my school two years in a row for eight days, and for seven days

when members opposite passed a legislation that was extremely divisive that set school boards against teachers' associations and allowed the school boards to make those decisions to lock teachers out, deny them the professional development that they needed to upgrade their skills and bring those skills back to the classroom to the benefit of Manitoba students. I personally was locked out for 15 days over the course of two years, as were 108 members of the Evergreen Teachers' Association at the time.

That was just the start of it. Things got decidedly worse as days went on. We also had members opposite looking to evaluate teacher compensation and preparing statements around teacher compensation. They were actually even suggesting that we were supposed to roll back teachers' salaries by as much as one third, that teachers in this province were allegedly overpaid.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson) will have 27 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

April 27, 2004

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