

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-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.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
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, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	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	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.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
VACANT	Kirkfield Park	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 16, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 23—The Forest Health Protection Act

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 23, The Forest Health Protection Act; Loi sur la protection de la santé des forêts, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker and honourable members, Bill 23 is a proactive approach to deal with potentially devastating threats to our forests such as mountain pine beetle and the emerald ash borer.

The Forest Health Protection Act will give us the tools to protect the health of all trees and forests in Manitoba by enabling the Province to monitor and respond quickly with effective preventative measures to control forest pests in the event of an outbreak.

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

PETITIONS

Removal of Agriculture Positions from Minnedosa

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Nine positions with the Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, Crown Lands Branch, are being moved out of Minnedosa.

Removal of these positions will severely impact the local economy.

Removal of these positions will be detrimental to revitalizing this rural agriculture community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider stopping the removal of these positions from our community, and to consider utilizing current technology in order to maintain these positions in their existing location.

This petition signed by Charlotte Crawley, Laura J. Crawley, Kristen Cook and many, many others.

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

Grace General Hospital ER

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government has not ensured that the Grace Hospital emergency room is staffed with a full complement of ER doctors. The ER has been short several doctors for more than two years.

Because of this shortage, only one ER doctor is working on many shifts, forcing long patient waits for emergency care.

Residents of the community fear that the Grace Hospital ER will be forced to close if this ER doctor shortage is not fixed immediately.

The provincial government has not come forward with a clear, immediate plan to address the ER doctor shortage.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), to consider developing a clear, immediate plan to address the ER doctor shortage.

To request the Minister of Health to consider taking all necessary steps to ensure the Grace Hospital emergency room does not close.

Signed by Don Bruce, G. Paige, Ken Paige and many others.

Crocus Investment Fund

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

Manitobans need to know why the government ignored the many warnings that could have saved the Crocus Investment Fund.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

That is signed by L. Gambalon, T. Balacua, V. Martinez and many, many others.

Headingley Foods

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The owners of Headingley Foods, a small business based in Headingley, would like to sell alcohol at their store. The distance from their location to the nearest Liquor Mart, via the Trans-Canada Highway, is 9.3 kilometres. The distance to the same Liquor Mart via Roblin Boulevard is 10.8 kilometres. Their application has been rejected because their store needs to be 10 kilometres away from the Liquor Mart. It is 700 metres short of this requirement using one route but is 10.8 kilometres using the other.

The majority of Headingley's population lives off Roblin Boulevard and uses Roblin Boulevard to get to and from Winnipeg rather than the Trans-Canada Highway. Additionally, the highway route is often closed or too dangerous to travel in severe weather conditions. The majority of Headingley

residents therefore travel to the Liquor Mart via Roblin Boulevard, a distance of 10.8 kilometres.

Small businesses outside Winnipeg's perimeter are vital to the prosperity of Manitoba's communities and should be supported. It is difficult for small businesses like Headingley Foods to compete with larger stores in Winnipeg, and they require added services to remain viable. Residents should be able to purchase alcohol locally rather than drive to the next municipality.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act (Mr. Smith) to consider allowing the owners of Headingley Foods to sell alcohol at their store, thereby supporting small business and the prosperity of rural communities in Manitoba.

This is signed by G. Beaudin, L. Simonson, A. Broten and many, many others.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Yom Hashoah Holocaust Memorial Day

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I have a ministerial statement for the House. Mr. Speaker, today on Monday, April 16, 2007, we join with people all over the world to observe Yom Hashoah or Holocaust Memorial Day.

I am proud to say that on May 1, 2000 Manitoba's Legislative Assembly unanimously passed Bill 19, The Holocaust Memorial Day Act. This day is dedicated to the memory of the six million Jews and the millions of other victims who were murdered in the Nazi death camps of World War II.

Though the Holocaust took place decades ago on another continent, the names that appear on the monument here on the Legislative grounds are evidence of the direct vital connection that all Manitobans have to this atrocity. There are Holocaust survivors living in our province. Thousands of Manitobans are relatives of Holocaust victims. Today, on Yom Hashoah, we remember them and renew our commitment to vigilance against this kind of cruelty.

Over the last few weeks we have held observances of many important human rights issues and milestones. In March we observed

International Women's Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade. These internationally recognized events keep us aware of the past inhumanity and injustices that the world has witnessed and also gives us the opportunity to discuss the progress we have made in the human rights arena, as well as the challenges that lie before us. We must work together as colleagues and as a community to ensure that this tragedy is never repeated.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that following statements by my colleagues, all members observe a moment of silence in memory of those who suffered and died in the Holocaust.

* (13:40)

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the statement and also rise on behalf of my colleagues to put on the record our view that this is an event that can never be forgotten, the terrible events from 1933 to 1945, the end of the Second World War. There were six million people, men, women and children, were executed for no reason other than for being Jewish.

It's difficult to comprehend the evil of the thinking that went into the so-called "final solution," which was the move on the part of the Nazis at that time to extinguish so many innocent lives. It's incumbent on all of us to do what we can in our own ways to ensure that it cannot happen again. We know from more recent events in history, in Rwanda, the Balkans, Darfur and others, other places that we're still not there in terms of eradicating the type of horror that we saw during that terrible period in the last century.

We heard today at the memorial service on the grounds of the Legislature from Christian Butera, who spoke very articulately about the experiences more recently in Rwanda, as a survivor of that horror.

So we have the opportunity and the obligation to take our own small steps, Mr. Speaker, and we do so in the hope that those statements and actions will ripple outwards to have a positive impact on our wider world.

I want to acknowledge and thank the Premier (Mr. Doer) for the proclamation that he announced today on behalf of all members of this Legislature outlining our horror and our commitment to ensure

that we do not repeat the events of the Holocaust, and thank him also for the prior statements that he has made in support of the state of Israel.

Members of our caucus, as well as members of the other caucuses, have participated in the reading of names today of those who were not fortunate enough to survive the Holocaust. We reaffirm our steadfast support for a secure, free, stable and prosperous state of Israel, and we reaffirm our vigilance to stop extremism in whatever form it may appear.

So, Mr. Speaker, for those reasons we support the minister's call for a moment of silence. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I add my voice to those of others here in memory of Yom Hashoah, the Holocaust Memorial Day, to remember what has happened in the past, but to dedicate ourselves to prevent such problems in the future.

In the last year and a half, I have had the occasion to visit the museum dealing with the Holocaust in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, and the Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C. Both are built in honour of the memory of those who died in the Holocaust and to remind us about the incredible atrocities, the unfathomable atrocities, that occurred during the Holocaust.

It is fitting that we also remember the indefatigable spirit of those who survived, the Holocaust survivors, and certainly their contribution, their dedication and continued work to make sure that people are aware and to prevent such problems in the future is clear. It is appropriate that we remember not only the Holocaust today, but other times when there have been large numbers of people who suffered completely inappropriately: in the Ukraine in the 1930s; in Rwanda in the 1990s; and currently, in Darfur, in Sudan.

It's also appropriate that we take this opportunity to dedicate ourselves to combat racism and inappropriate acts here at home. As Christian Butera so well put it: Silence and neutrality help only the

oppressor. We need to remember that always we need to be there ready to stand up and be counted when needed.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

We will now rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction Of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Dr. Anotoli Mikhailov who is the president of the European Humanities University in Vilnius, Lithuania. This visitor is the guest of the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. McGifford).

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

I'd also like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Kildonan East Collegiate 31 grade 9 students under the direction of Desiree Lemieux and Mr. John Thompson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

"Spirited Energy" Campaign Additional Spending

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): At a time when we face so many pressing needs within our province: we've got stories of ER doctors quitting in Brandon, we've got challenges in post-secondary education and so many other areas; we've learned today that the government is pressing on with a new phase in their taxpayer-funded advertising campaign above and beyond the \$2.4 million already spent of taxpayers' dollars on advertising.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the Premier: Given that the "Spirited Energy" program is now the subject of an investigation by the Auditor General, how can the Premier justify spending additional tax dollars at a time when there are so many other pressing needs in our province?

* (13:50)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we certainly supported the idea of the Auditor General reviewing the issue of "Spirited Energy." The Auditor General, under legislation we passed, has the authority to go into private accounts and private companies. I was just looking at some of the inserts that were provided by the *National Post* to all Canadians dealing with "Spirited Energy." I want to thank the parent company for that investment in the promotion of Manitoba.

The government is not expending any more money on a campaign. We are listening to the business community that initiated this campaign. Their advice was to start with the local community first, the province, and then, secondly, go outside of Manitoba. We look forward to their advice.

When you talk about universities, Mr. Speaker, I recall when the member opposite was on the board of directors of the University of Manitoba, appointed by the Filmon government. He was the government representative. The funds were cut: minus 10 and minus 10 to the university, and the tuition fees went up over 52 percent while he was putting up his hand to raise tuition. The result of that was 7,000 students in the 1990s dropped out of enrolment at the universities. Our increase to the universities and post-secondary education is more in one year than it was in 11 years. It's 7 percent this year. We need no lecture from the member opposite.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier for the history lesson. We're always interested in what he has to say about the 1990s, but we have today a remarkable situation where, even in spite of record increases in transfer payments from Ottawa, even in spite of the global expansion of the economy that has raised Manitoba's economy, even notwithstanding the heavy taxes and regulations imposed by this government, in spite of the massive inflow of revenues, we still have problems where we can't recruit and retain the professors that are required in our universities.

We're losing ER doctors in Brandon, two just last week. At the same time as those things are happening, we've got an audit going on into the "Spirited Energy" campaign. We've got comments from the provincial Auditor indicating it's a historic event that the Public Accounts Committee unanimously recommended. Even the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) wanted an audit into the "Spirited Energy" campaign, and yet, they carry on with spending in this area. It would be like the

federal government carrying on with the sponsorship program even while the audit was going on.

How can they justify it?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the minister said he's getting advice from the business community. That's not spending money. Getting advice is not spending money. I would suggest to the member opposite that we obviously support the idea of the Auditor General going in. I think it's good the Public Accounts Committee, that gathered cobwebs when the member opposite was the chief of staff, is looking at this. I'm really pleased the Minister of Finance has increased the power of the Auditor General to allow them to go into private companies and verify the investments and contributions made by private companies.

I would like to thank hundreds of volunteers in the business community that have participated in this program, initiated, participated in this program and donated. As I say, the *National Post* had, I think it's that and some of the television promotions that were donated, gifts in kind under our Elections Act, would be very, very appropriate. I think it touched over five million people outside of Manitoba.

There's no question that when you look at the ads of Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, and other provinces, Supernatural from B.C., there's lots of provinces dealing with this. Unlike other provinces though, we want the business community who are initiating this and leading it. There won't be a dollar on any campaign advertising for this project. Until the Auditor General reports, I have no difficulty with that.

Private Sector Contributions

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the problem we have with that response is the last time we asked questions about "Spirited Energy," the government characterized Crown corporation contributions as private sector contributions. They attributed \$200 an hour to the volunteer time that was being contributed. It's a phony NDP mischaracterization of private sector contributions.

How do we know that's not happening again this time?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would refer the member opposite to the November 28 supplement in the *National Post*: Manitoba delivers jobs and opportunities: come home with a great job;

stay to make a difference; entrepreneurs will find a great environment; success in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this *National Post* insert is not phony, and I think he should apologize to the owners of the *National Post*.

"Spirited Energy" Campaign Focus Group Data

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): On November 23, 2006, our party made what we thought was a very simple Freedom of Information request for our focus group data on the "Spirited Energy" campaign. Little did we know that it would take more than 145 days and still waiting. We have not received access to this information and this government has delayed and hidden this information for nearly five months.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister responsible for the "Spirited Energy" campaign: Why won't he release the focus group data? Is it because it shows that the campaign would be a failure right from the beginning?

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): I would like to thank the member for the question. Today we saw a lot of spirited energy in Brandon when Shape Foods opened up their new plant today with assistance from the government. We, as well, saw spirited energy when our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) was announcing eight jobs in agriculture in Minnedosa this morning.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, and members opposite: Common practice is to have spirited energy within the province of Manitoba and a local jurisdiction. That's why the professionals would suggest that. However, it went way past that. It went to the *National Post*, the *Calgary Herald*, and right across Canada, hitting some six million people. There is spirited energy in Manitoba, and we are going to continue it.

Mrs. Rowat: I'm sure the 11 women who are out of the Crown Lands job in Minnedosa are really pleased with that member's response. Thank you very much.

All Manitobans agree that we need to promote our province, but most of the public money spent on this campaign has been spent to polish this NDP government's image as opposed to advertising to other provinces to encourage to visit and move to this province.

Mr. Speaker, since the minister won't give up anything through Freedom of Information, will he provide details today about the focus groups, including whether any of the focus groups consisted of people outside of the province of Manitoba, the people who this campaign should really be focussing on and targeting?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, it's odd. The member opposite from Minnedosa says that as a party, we believe that we need to promote our province and entice people to visit and move to Manitoba, but it appears that the "Spirited Energy" campaign is misdirected.

We'll take the advice of some of the best business minds in Manitoba who are making suggestions and bringing information to us. We'll take common practice from the advice of local firms and companies that are professionals in this on how to market and do it. Quite frankly, when you have inserts in the *National Post*, *CanWest* publications including *The Vancouver Sun*, *Calgary Herald*, *Montréal Gazette*, *Ottawa Citizen*, right across the country, I would say that's going quite national. We'll take their advice, not the Member for Minnedosa's.

Mrs. Rowat: If this minister is speaking so highly of the advice that he is receiving, then why won't he share it?

Mr. Speaker, delays and charges of public information have plagued this campaign, but this delay is a new record; 145 days since the request was made and still no response to the data request. We wrote the minister to try to get the information in a more expedient manner, and do you know what he told us? He says: Go to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will be able to work with you on this.

Mr. Speaker, he doesn't care about sharing information or the information that these so-called experts whom he's referencing will provide. We all know that if the focus group data for "Spirited Energy" has been positive, the government won't hesitate to share it.

I ask the minister: What is his government hiding in the focus group information?

Mr. Smith: The Member for Minnedosa constantly puts nonsense on the record. As she drove in from Minnedosa, she might have driven by a massive expansion in her community where the cranes are up on the ethanol plant and would have driven by Brandon where a 70,000 square foot plant is being constructed and built right now.

Mr. Speaker, as she got closer, she would have listened to some of the best business minds in Manitoba making suggestions to David Angus, to Graham Starmer and them saying: It's about time, it's been decades coming. The government is making an initiative that is going to help Manitoba. They should get behind it. As the *Brandon Sun* says, like everyone else in Manitoba, let's have some spirited energy.

"Spirited Energy" Campaign Focus Group Data

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): That could probably be best labelled as a spirited diversion, Mr. Speaker.

We know this is a government where there's bad news that they find, they try to hide it from the public and not let it come forward. We saw it with the maternal care report just a few weeks ago. Now we have a situation where 145 days have gone by, more than four months, and this government refuses to release the focus group data. "Spirited Energy" has not been immune to criticism. Many Manitobans have said they like the current slogan of "Friendly Manitoba." Others had other suggestions.

If he's so confident that it was the right way to go and it was based on the focus group testing, why wouldn't he release it so that all Manitobans can have the same confidence?

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question because Manitobans do have confidence in our province. They've seen our province grow in jobs year over year over year over the last seven years, in fact, triple the record that the members opposite had. They've seen the provincial debt reduce and come down. As well, they've seen their farm taxation that the members opposite like to swagger into the coffee shops, tell Manitoba business and their producers how they're going to lower rates, not do it and, in fact, increase it. We've got an environment in Manitoba right now that is getting large companies, large investment and the lowest small business taxation rate now in Canada. We're going to continue that work.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that the previous government never had job creation numbers below Newfoundland and Saskatchewan. He should be ashamed for talking about that on the record.

We want to see the focus group test information because we know sometimes strange and unusual things can happen in focus groups. In fact, I happened to come across a complaint of discrimination under the human rights act that was made, and it was dated March 1 of this year. In fact, there's an individual who was participating in a focus group test that was being done by Viewpoints Research on October 19, 2006. In there, the individual was asked to participate. He said he was asked to write down some words or phrases that would sum up his perceptions of Gary Doer or Hugh McFadyen. In there, then an individual—the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Premier—he said that he then put some extremely negative assessments toward the NDP government on the record and was asked to leave the focus group and not to participate.

So, Mr. Speaker, strange things can happen in a focus group. That's why we need to see the information. Why don't you come clean and table it for the House?

* (14:00)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we'll fully release the results of our last focus group. It was called the 2003 election campaign.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, certainly we look forward to that sort of arrogance from the Premier on the campaign trail in the weeks ahead, but again, this just goes to show that odd things can happen.

It certainly goes to show that odd things can happen in focus groups. The individual says: I was the first one called upon and I offered an extremely negative assessment of the current NDP government, characterizing it as unaccountable, arrogant and saying that I could not see myself voting for the incumbent party. Shortly after, I could no longer participate in the focus group and I was asked to leave. So we know that results can be very strange from focus groups. It's not your money. It's taxpayers' money.

I want to ask the minister: Will he let taxpayers know what they got for their money and put forward the focus groups?

Mr. Doer: I guess the members opposite are going to release all their focus groups and all their polling. I actually have some interesting material from Mr. Lyle to Mr. McFadyen in the past that was left in the desk.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When making reference to members in this Chamber, please do it by constituencies or members by their portfolios. I heard both sides of the House making reference to individual names. Just a kindly reminder to use constituencies or the portfolios that ministers hold.

Emergency Room Physician Shortage Brandon Regional Health Centre

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, at the end of June, not only will the Grace Hospital in Winnipeg have a critical shortage of doctors, so will the ER in Brandon. Two doctors are quitting the ER in Brandon at the end of June, leaving Brandon with only one full-time doctor when their complement should be seven.

Because this Minister of Health has been dodging questions about what her short-term plan is to keep the ERs open, I'd like to ask the minister or the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) to tell us what his plans are to keep the Brandon ER open and safely operating.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. We have reiterated that several days in a row, but again, perhaps I'll put it in different terms today so the member opposite can fully understand.

Our plan, of course, to continue to keep the Brandon ER and other ERs open begins, of course, with incentive programs to pay our physicians more money. Incidentally, the people of Brandon and of Charleswood and otherwise might be interested to know that the Member for Charleswood actually opposes those incentives. Maybe members of the physician community would like to know that.

Furthermore, we're expanding our academic program. The members opposite cut spaces to the academic program. We are offering, in the shorter term, a refresher course for family doctors so they can work in the ER if they so choose. Members opposite cut training—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, doctors have told me that the Minister of Health promised St. B that if the doctors from there would help to keep the Grace ER open until the end of June, after an election, she would give them two more ER doctors. That deal was made even though Brandon's ER is critically short. So now to pay off this deal, any new doctors

are going to have to go to St. B, who are already fully staffed.

Because the Minister of Health has made a mess of this ER crisis, can the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) tell us how he plans to keep the Brandon ER open safely and fully functioning?

Ms. Oswald: Again, Mr. Speaker, we offer incentives; members opposite oppose them. We increase an academic program; they cut spaces to medical school. We offer refresher courses in the short term for family docs; they cut opportunities for training. We work with the regions to ensure that recruitment and retention is at the forefront, and I can tell you that in Brandon, in the last year alone, they have been successful in recruiting five internal medicine specialists, three general practitioners, two obstetricians, a gynecologist, an anesthetist, a surgeon, a pediatrician, a child and adolescent psychiatrist. The hits keep on coming. I'm concerned for the Brandon ER. The recruitment will continue. We're going to keep working with the region.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Health fails to tell everybody is that Winnipeg alone is short almost a hundred specialists and almost 1,100 doctors have left Manitoba under their watch.

This ER crisis has been escalating for the last three to four years. This summer, the dam is going to burst because this government has mismanaged the whole ER situation. The majority of our new grads don't want to stay here from the ER programs, and no ER doctor from anywhere else in Canada wants to come here and work here.

So I'd like to ask the minister again: What is her immediate, short-term plan to keep our ERs open in Manitoba, particularly the ones that are in a real mess and in a meltdown, the Grace and now Brandon?

Ms. Oswald: I've repeated for her twice, I'll add further on that plan. Again with our Grace ER, we know that, in partnership with the WRHA, the Grace is going to be a teaching site for our ER docs. That's what we're doing. They closed Misericordia and had plans to close Seven Oaks.

Budget 2007 funds 12 more nurse practitioners for the region. We lost 1,500 nurses under their watch. We need to have no lectures from members opposite about short-, medium-, long-term plans.

We do know that fearmongering is a particular specialty. We know that last year the member opposite said we're headed for disaster. No ERs closed in Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, not last year, not this year, not next year.

Physician Shortage Steinbach

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, the Bethesda Hospital in Steinbach is the largest health facility in southeastern Manitoba serving the fastest growing part of Manitoba, yet its emergency room has been left without doctors several times, and it has been closed to doctor care a number of times.

In a letter to the Premier dated April 9, 2007, Dr. Gordon Dyck of Steinbach states: As the Premier leading the government of Manitoba, it is your responsibility to provide medical staff for Manitobans that Manitobans require. Mr. Dyck goes on to outline the challenges and has some solutions for foreign-trained doctors.

I wonder if the minister or the Premier can tell us what the response to Mr. Dyck has been. Will we ensure that we get those doctors in Steinbach as needed?

* (14:10)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The member opposite will probably know that there's been a number of expansions to the Steinbach hospital. Mr. Speaker, members of that community used to come to Winnipeg for their CAT scans when the Conservatives were in office. They now have a CAT scan in their own community, and I find it passing strange—[interjection]

Members opposite know that when the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) was the chief of staff, they held back a secret report for closing 21 rural hospitals. The members opposite will know that there's been 200 additional doctors in Manitoba since 1999—not enough. We had to deal with the fact that it takes seven years to graduate a specialist. The former legislative assistant of the Minister of Health cut the medical spots, fired the nurses, and then stands up feigning indignation in this House. We're still working on getting more doctors, 60 more in rural Manitoba—not enough. The only way to have more doctors is vote NDP.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that racket was heard back in Steinbach where they don't have the doctors, where the ER is being closed because they don't have the doctors. We'll certainly be willing to campaign on that.

The Premier also failed to give any credit to the Bethesda Foundation who's actually put the money into the majority of those expansions. I think shame on the Premier, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a doctor who's written, and said: It is, in fact, the Premier who is responsible for assuring that there's proper medical care. It's not a politician. It's not somebody else in a third party. It's a doctor who is working in the system who is saying, and yet he gets an arrogant answer like this. They have serious concerns, and he has serious solutions in terms of how to get high-quality qualified foreign-trained doctors here practising in Manitoba.

I want to ask the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), since the Premier just wants to go on rhetoric and talk about rhetoric. I want to ask the Minister of Health what she is going to do to ensure that this doctor has the solution, and we can have people in the *[inaudible]*

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, talking about racket, this is a person who goes around Manitoba with his hand on the horn in perpetuity.

We take the issue of doctor recruitment and retention seriously. Doctors' salaries were second-lowest in Canada when we came in; they're now in the middle of the pack, so to speak, Mr. Speaker. So we were only above P.E.I. when we came into office. The members opposite reduced the medical class; we've increased it by 40 percent. Residencies are up. We were the first province in Canada to have a foreign-doctors' accreditation program.

I will take a look at Mr. Dyck's, or is it Dr. Dyck's letter. We've got great ideas from Steinbach. That's why we have so many patients going to Steinbach to reduce the waiting list with the surgeries that we've increased and authorized in that Steinbach hospital, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the letter from the good doctor starts off by saying: I apologize for writing back so soon after my last letter, which clearly he didn't get a response to, and now the Premier says he's going to finally take it seriously. There are doctors who are leaving Brandon. We can't get the doctors in one of the largest facilities in southern Manitoba, and the government, the Premier, just

simply stands up and puts campaign rhetoric on the record.

I'm going to ask the Minister of Health: Will she listen to the doctor, a doctor who's working in the system, whether or not they're actually going to address the concerns that he raises, or is the message to the medical profession and Manitobans: If you want change, you have to vote for change?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Interestingly, one of the most important groups that we listened to was doctors when they advised us to ensure that we undo the damage done under the Tories and increase the spaces in medical school. That was a good idea. One of the groups that we listened to most carefully was the nurses when we increased the spaces and increased the training for nurses.

Certainly, we know that we have more work to do in recruitment and retention of doctors. We know that since we've been in government, the net gain of doctors is a hundred. The net gain of nurses, well, that's a whole other answer, isn't it? We know we have a lot of work to do. Retention, as well, Mr. Speaker, we know that our family docs, we've got 90 percent retention. In 1999, that retention rate: 54.

Little Scholar Kollege Day Care Closure

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, last week we asked the Minister of Family Services and Housing a number of questions about the closure of Little Scholar Kollege Day Care in south Winnipeg which was recently forced to close its doors.

We received no answers, but today I'd like to ask the Member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), in whose constituency the day care is located, if she recently held a meeting with parents of children in this day care and the surrounding day-care directors and, if so, why the director of Little Scholar Kollege was not invited to this meeting.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, just like our budget which is moving forward on child care, when it comes to the challenges that, unfortunately, some parents come across when child-care spaces close—and by the way, in the context of hundreds of more spaces coming on-line—likewise, we're moving ahead.

I'm pleased to confirm with the House that the Member for Riel had a meeting. She's been taking a

very active approach, working with the local child-care co-ordinator and the parents who have been affected and had a meeting with the parents to move ahead and make sure there were spaces for the children so they could continue, as parents, the work plans they had in place.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, this day care has operated in the area for 25 years at no cost to the taxpayer, providing a service to families who need quality day care, and yet this government wants to force Little Scholar Kollege out of business. Why would this NDP government not work with the day care to find a solution to keep the centre open?

Can the Minister of Family Services and Housing indicate whether a day-care co-ordinator employed by his department was instructed to visit Little Scholar Kollege and obtain personal information about the families using the day care and whether this information was then used to contact the families for the meeting?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I understand that actually within several days, 12 parents found alternative care, and my understanding is that at least 30 new spaces are now being made available for these parents. I think that now we've got about 19 parents who have found spaces on their own, up from 12 just a few days ago.

So there's been some positive movement forward, Mr. Speaker. I want to, at this time, commend not only the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for leadership and caring for the parents in the area, but the child-care co-ordinators and the child-care office that's there, not only to administer but to proactively help parents with child care.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, this government is intent on shutting down an independent child-care facility which costs the taxpayers nothing and provides a valuable service to people in the area. So intent are they that they would go into a private office and take personal information about this centre's clients.

Will the Minister of Family Services and Housing tell Heather Callaghan, the director of Little Scholar Kollege, who's in the gallery today, if it is the intent of this government to shut down her privately owned facility and then reopen a government taxpayer-funded day care in the same place? Will he be using her client family list to do it?

Mr. Mackintosh: I remind the member opposite, it's my understanding that this particular place was a private business, Mr. Speaker, and there was a unilateral decision, presumably because they did not find it profitable, to shut it down.

Our job is to work with parents, make sure there are other options available for their children, and that is all in the context not only of ensuring that programs that were begun with federal dollars continue. I know the member opposite was singing the praises of the federal program, that \$100 a month, which is fine, Mr. Speaker. But she was saying, isn't that wonderful, that will allow Manitoba parents to hire nannies. I don't know how that could hire more than a babysitter for a little while. We're going way beyond nannies and babysitters.

*(14:20)

Health Care

Task Force Recommendations

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, for eight years now this NDP government has poured buckets and buckets of money into an ailing health care system and getting less and less in the way of results. The NDP have had eight years to fix all those Tory health care mistakes, and last week they admitted defeat. They admit they've got no answers, no plan, no idea what to do next, and now they're going to call a review of RHAs.

There are plenty of official reports. Take the 2004 Emergency Care Task Force report, which talked about what needed to be done; which, for example, indicated that the emergency room crisis is partly due to patients unable to access health care services elsewhere in the system.

Why has the minister done such a poor job in implementing the huge number of recommendations that have already been made?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as I said to the member on Friday, I believe it was, in reference to his general question about ER task force recommendations, and a specific question of a letter that I've now had an opportunity to read, those recommendations are being implemented. Indeed, the ones in the letter he cited on Friday, nine of 10 have been implemented. We're working very diligently on the 10th recommendation.

Mr. Gerrard: Then why are emergency rooms having so much trouble at the moment?

In my office last week, I had a woman who is experienced working in emergency rooms. She herself knew of two people who had so little post-operative follow-up after surgery that these two individuals had to come back to the emergency room seven times and have two additional extra hospital stays.

Mr. Speaker, seven extra ER visits, two repeat hospital stays because there wasn't good post-operative follow-up. That's a system in crisis using extra resources unnecessarily because the appropriate things aren't being done.

I ask the minister: Why is it that recommendations aren't being followed? Why is it there continues to be these huge problems in the emergency room and elsewhere in the health care system? What on earth is she doing that the system continues to function as badly as it is?

Ms. Oswald: Once again, as I've said before, we have listened carefully to the recommendations either of the ER task force, of specific recommendations that are made by doctors or by patients, and we're implementing those changes to be sure. We're recruiting more doctors. We're ensuring that we have more people on the front line. We're recruiting more nurses.

I regret that the member opposite had a conversation about someone who had a difficult time. If he has some specific information to share with me so that we can continue to work, I would very happily meet with him.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Delay of Rebates

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier (Mr. Doer). Manitoba Public Insurance is sitting on tens of millions of dollars. There are thousands of Autopac owners, drivers—I should say—who are out there that are waiting for rebate cheques. Millions of dollars are owed to those drivers. In fact, you can go to an Autopac outlet and you can find out how much money you're going to be receiving. No one knows why. Why are the cheques not going out? Well, it's just one of the things that the Premier has instructed or the government has informed that not to send out the cheques until an election is called. This government is sitting on millions of dollars that is entitled to Autopac owners.

Why is the Premier not issuing these cheques weeks ago, Mr. Speaker? What is the political motivation behind this?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, first off, it would be inappropriate for that kind of direction to be given.

I have been told that 350,000 were printed, all 450,000 won't be printed until April 26, maybe May 6 as its *[inaudible]* date. We couldn't start doing the preparation work for the printing until March 1 so MPI had a record of each ratepayer for 2006. MPI put together a project team and had a number of people working on this so there were a lot of resources and amount of time. The printing system has been running 24 hours a day during regular business during the daytime and printing the cheques at night.

Soil Survey Program Creation of Positions

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is a lead partner in the successful Alternate Land Use initiative and the Minister of Agriculture has recently made such announcements to continue its viability.

The government has committed its efforts to soil, water and landscape management resources for Manitoba farmers. Today the minister announced that she will expand on this initiative by expanding its soil survey program by creating eight new soil survey positions in Minnedosa.

Can the minister please explain the significance and importance of these positions to the Town of Minnedosa?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, indeed, soil—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, soil and water and landscape management resources are very important for our producers in this province.

Unfortunately, during the '90s there was tremendous cutback in the soil survey crews in this province. We have begun reinstating them, Mr. Speaker. In fact, in 2005 we put five positions into

the Shoal Lake office, and today I was in Minnedosa and announced that we are putting in place eight new soil survey positions supported by two technical people, lab positions, in Winnipeg. There will also be three summer students working.

I am very pleased that this government recognizes the importance of soil surveys and detailed mapping.

Child Care Government Strategy

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): The NDP, on one hand, closed private day cares by squeezing them out of business so they can announce new spaces. Then, Mr. Speaker, they raid the business so they can get the client list. Is this the plan for child-care spaces; shut down some day-care spaces so you can reannounce opening them in another place under government?

When are they going to have a real plan for day care in this province, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, we know what their plan was. They made cuts.

I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, to be part of a government that has more than doubled the investment, and it is an investment, by any definition, on child care.

I want to, just for the record—I misspoke myself earlier. The Member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) was the member I was referring to in terms of helping the parents.

That's what we're about, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to child care, parents know that we're on their side. Our job one is to work with the parents, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

* (14:30)

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

Prior to Routine Proceedings on April 4, 2007, the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) raised an alleged matter of privilege regarding statements made by the honourable Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines on the subject of the Crocus Investment Fund. At the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable Member for River Heights moved that this matter be

referred to a committee of this Legislature. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities. I thank all honourable members for their advice to the Chair.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity, and, second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached in order to warrant putting the matter to the House.

The honourable Member for River Heights asserted that he was raising the issue at the earliest opportunity, and I accept the word of the honourable member.

Regarding the second issue of whether a prima facie case of privilege has been established, it has been ruled on numerous times in this House that a member raising the matter of privilege must provide specific proof of intent to mislead the House on the part of the member in question. I should note for the House that providing information that may show the facts are at variance is not the same as providing proof of intent to mislead. As ruled by Speaker Dacquay, without a member admitting in the House that he or she had the stated goal of misleading the House when putting remarks on the record, it is impossible to prove that a member had deliberately intended to mislead the House.

The procedural authorities also offer commentary on the issue of misleading the House. Joseph Maingot states on page 241 of the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* that allegations that a member has misled the House are in fact matters of order and not matters of privilege. He also states on page 223 of the same edition that disputes between two members about questions of facts said in debate does not constitute a valid question of privilege because it is a matter of debate. In addition, when Manitoba Speakers have been asked to rule on whether matters of privilege involving the alleged misstatements by members or the provision of misinformation or inaccurate facts by ministers, Speakers Phillips, Rocan, and Dacquay have ruled that such situations appeared to be disputes over facts, which according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 31(1) does not fulfil the criteria of a prima facie case of privilege.

I would therefore rule with the greatest of respect that the matter raised is not in order as a prima facie case of privilege.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, with respect, we challenge the ruling of the Chair.

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

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in support of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, 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. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would request Yeas and Nays, if possible.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the honourable member has support.

The ruling of the Chair has been challenged. Call in the members.

Order. The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Division

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

Yeas

Aglugub, Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Selinger, Smith, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Nays

Cullen, Cummings, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurshou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Hawranik, Lamoureux, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Penner, Reimer, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 32, Nays 19.

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

* (15:00)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

60th Anniversary of Canadian Citizenship

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Canadian citizenship.

Our country remains one of the most desirable places to live. Last year over 250,000 new Canadian citizens were added to our numbers. Canadian citizenship was legally and officially created on January 1, 1947, when the first citizenship act came into effect. Prior to then, people living in Canada were considered British subjects living in Canada.

Last week 50 people from 22 different countries gathered at the Maples Collegiate to take the oath of Canadian citizenship. The event was organized by teacher Murray Goldenberg and his English as a Second Language class along with the help of other students at this school. Three girls from the EAL class sang after the oath was recited, as well as members of the Maples choral group, Maple Sugar. A reception was held afterward with refreshments prepared by the school's culinary arts students.

The ceremony, presided by Judge Arthur Miki, was an excellent opportunity for staff and students to improve their understanding and appreciation of citizenship.

I would like to congratulate the Maples Collegiate for preparing and participating in such an important event. I and so many others here in Manitoba are originally from other countries. Last year, another 10,000 immigrants came to our province, and immigration continues to be an important part of our success.

This 60th anniversary of Canadian citizenship is certainly something to recognize. We must celebrate and appreciate our common future as citizens of Canada and residents of this province and to look to the future with anticipation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend a warm welcome and good wishes to all the new citizens of the province and to welcome them to their new home in Manitoba. Thank you.

Golden West Broadcasting

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): At 8:01 p.m. on March 13, 1957, a very special event took place. CFEM, a small AM radio station operating in a small studio in Altona and broadcasting at 100 watts, signed on for the first time. The Premier of Manitoba, at that time D.L. Campbell, had the honour of throwing the switch and turning on the station.

Through the second half of the century, CFEM grew and expanded. In the mid-seventies, it was renamed Golden West Broadcasting. While the company has shown an amazing ability to adapt to modern circumstances, it is still based on local service, agricultural programming, and music. Today, Golden West, under the leadership of President Elmer Hildebrand, is still expanding to areas across western Canada to provide locally focussed programming. It recently received approval to purchase an FM station in Lethbridge, Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Golden West Broadcasting on its 50th anniversary. This is a tremendous achievement, given the massive changes in the communication technology over the last 50 years. It has done this by sticking to traditional core values of local community service.

Golden West Broadcasting has received numerous awards throughout its history. It was recently recognized in 2005 and '06 by Deloitte, the *National Post*, CIBC and Queen's University as one of Canada's 50 best managed companies.

Mr. Speaker, Golden West Broadcasting is truly a unique Manitoba business that we can all be proud of. On its 50th anniversary, I would like to congratulate President Elmer Hildebrand, management and staff and wish them all the best in the future.

E.M. Crowe Memorial Hospital

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to share the good news that has come to Eriksdale and, indeed, the whole Interlake region. This morning, I had the privilege of attending an announcement at the E.M. Crowe Memorial Hospital for a capital upgrade of more than half a million dollars.

I'm proud to say that our provincial NDP government is investing in a mobile ultrasound program based in Eriksdale that will allow communities throughout the Interlake to have access to this important diagnostic tool. We are also funding

renovations to the E.M. Crowe Memorial Hospital to help increase efficiency and patient flow.

Today's announcement is part of a comprehensive, province-wide investment in health care. Recently, our government committed to purchasing a state-of-the-art, non-invasive cancer knife, the next-generation cancer-killing machine, and invested \$150 million in the budget for a province-wide, electronic health records system to help make health care delivery the safest and most efficient it can be.

We have succeeded in cutting the wait list for cardiac bypass surgery to the point that it is now the shortest list in the country. The wait for radiation treatment for cancer has plummeted from six weeks to one week, among the best in the country, and, as announced in the budget, we are more than doubling the training seats in emergency medicine at the U of M and offering continuing education courses in emergency medicine for family physicians.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be a part of a government that provides for the people of the Interlake and is making important and concrete improvements in their lives, as in the lives of all Manitobans. I look forward to the completion of these projects and to the many benefits they will bring to the Interlake region. Thank you.

Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Memorial Day

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join colleagues on both sides of this House and people all over the world to observe Yom Hashoah, or the Holocaust Memorial Day.

Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to attend the reading of the proclamation of Yom Hashoah held today on the grounds of the Legislature, in front of the Holocaust memorial. Each year, the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada organizes this event to honour the memory of the six million Jewish victims who lost their lives for no other reason than the fact they were Jewish.

Their names are recited in public in a moving ceremony entitled "Unto Every Person There is a Name," comprised of many Holocaust survivors as well, Mr. Speaker. This act reminds us of the tremendous loss of human life during those troubling times, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to read a poem entitled "*Unto Every Person There is a Name*":

"Unto Every Person There is a Name / bestowed upon him by God / and given him by his

father and mother / Unto Every Person There is a Name / accorded him by his stature / and the manner of his smile / and given him by his style of dress. / Unto Every Person There is a Name / conferred on him by the mountains / and given him by his neighbours. / Unto Every Person There is a Name / assigned him by his sins / and given him by his yearnings / Unto Every Person There is a Name / given him by his enemies / and given him by his love / Unto Every Person There is a Name / derived from his festivals / and given him by his labour. / Unto Every Person There is a Name / presented him by the seasons / and given him by his blindness. / Unto Every Person There is a Name / bestowed on him by the sea."

Mr. Speaker, today we remember, as do those across the world, and may we never forget. Thank you very much.

Volunteers in the Community

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about a very important part of our community, our volunteers. They enrich our society by donating their time and efforts to helping others. According to a Statistics Canada study, 69 percent of Manitobans volunteer their time. I feel it is important to recognize their generosity.

This year, National Volunteer Week is from April 15 through 21. The theme for this year's week is "Volunteers Grow Community." I find it very appropriate, given the incredible impact volunteers have on a community. In my constituency of Radisson, it is inspiring to see so many volunteers organizing and working to make community events affordable and accessible for families in this area.

Mr. Speaker, I would like particularly to recognize the efforts of a very committed and dedicated group of volunteers from Windsor Park who have been striving to promote sports and recreational activities, social and cultural events, and participation by youth and families in various community activities through their work with the Winakwa Community Centre board. In short, working to improve the opportunities for healthy living in the area by promoting such facilities as an indoor soccer complex and gymnasium. Individuals such as Ben Lee and Rob Gobeil along with other board members exemplify the kind of contributions volunteers make to our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all volunteers in Manitoba and especially those in the constituency

of Radisson who seek to enhance the quality of our life by their commitments. Without their contributions, we would be much the poorer for it. I would like to invite all the members of this Assembly to join me in honouring the volunteers in their communities as we celebrate National Volunteer Week. Thank you.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): On government House business.

Mr. Speaker: On government House business.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I request that you perhaps canvass the House to see if there's consent for you not to see the clock until 6 p.m. Is that the appropriate way of putting it?

Mr. Speaker: Is there will of the House to sit until 6 p.m. tonight? *[Agreed]*

Okay, it's been agreed to. So tonight we will sit an extra hour until 6 p.m. That's been agreed to by all members.

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) that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for the Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), who has eight minutes remaining.

* (15:10)

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Out of respect for my colleagues, I'm going to conclude my remarks, but before I do, I want to make one final point, Mr. Speaker. The theme of our budget is: we are the builders. Of course, the Conservatives are the antithesis of that, the destroyers. We only have to look at their record on the environment to see this is painfully obvious.

We need go no further than the R.M. of Armstrong where the erstwhile reeve is running against me now for the provincial Conservatives in

the next election. Here's a man, Mr. Speaker, who is the rural vice-president of the AMM, who is a member of the East Interlake Conservation District Board, who sat on the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board, and yet he did all in his power to fast-track an intensive livestock operation for a proponent who was deliberately going out of his way to bypass regulations by building contiguous hog barns just under the 300-animal unit threshold. That his methods were well known to one and all is proven by the fact that the neighbouring municipality passed a by-law lowering the AU threshold to 250, specifically to address the tactics of this individual.

Bearing in mind that Bifrost can hardly be characterized as anti-livestock, this goes to show how blatant this proponent was in his disdain for sustainable environmental objectives. The Tory candidate in the Interlake is firmly in his camp, which just goes to show that the PC Party in general at heart has little regard for the environment. I thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I would like to thank the Member for Interlake for that wonderful farewell speech that he gave. It was touching; it was moving. I'm sure that his opponent, Garry Wasylowski, will stand up for the next budget speech and will tell us about the wonderful things that he has done in his community.

I would like to point out to the Member for Interlake that it was his government that bought a big, black Lincoln for a big Liberal, and the decision was made by the Doer government, Mr. Speaker. Then he gets up and starts talking about the environment. The environment only goes as far as when it comes to their cushy, big, black Lincoln. In fact, when the car was being described the other day, the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) remarked that it was actually a Hummer. It's a Hummer cloaked as a big, black Lincoln. So, anyway, we thank the Member for Interlake for that wonderful farewell speech.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my speech by thanking the good citizens of Springfield and East St. Paul for the confidence that they have shown me in the last years. I enjoy travelling my community. I tell my members of my community each and every time, when I get up to give a speech, how blessed I feel to represent the kinds of communities that I do in East St. Paul and Springfield. When I travelled the communities of Oakbank, of Dugald, of Anola, of Nourse, Vivian, Glass, Cooks Creek, Hazelridge and

all points in between, the warmth that is shown to myself and my family—I drive home and I say to my wife, I can't imagine, I can't imagine representing a more wonderful group of people. I am blessed. I'm absolutely blessed to be representing the people of Springfield and East St. Paul.

One of the reasons that my job is so pleasant is because of some of the people that work for me, and I always like to give credit where credit is due. They do a wonderful job. I would like to mention Gayle Dowler, who has worked for me from day one. In fact, she worked for my predecessor, Glen Findlay and stayed on, continued to work for me and continues to work in the Oakbank office. She is an outstanding individual, very, very respected and known throughout Springfield, works hard, and I have just, over the years, come to appreciate and respect and love the work that she does. I again want to thank her. I'd like to make a little note, and I'd like to thank her husband, Big John, who is just wonderful, very supportive, and I appreciate his advice and his words at all times.

I also would like to mention Matthew Pruse, who many have come into contact with in this Legislature. In the spring he left for greener pastures. I would like to report to this Legislature he is now an employee of Westjet. He is flying the friendly skies and doing a wonderful job. Actually, I just found out, while he was doing all his testing, he actually taught the Member for Tuxedo's (Mrs. Stefanson) son how to swim. Matthew, we are very proud that you have gone on and are working for Westjet. We know that you will work for them as you did for us, always giving your best.

I'd also like to thank Kelly McCrae, who used to be in my office. He left a couple of weeks ago and, Mr. Speaker, he moved up in life. He moved to the Leader of the Opposition's (Mr. McFadyen) office. We know he's doing a tremendous job there. I'm very, very happy for the work that Kelly McCrae did in my office, and I'd like to thank him very much for the hours that he put in and wish him all the best working in the next premier's office of Manitoba, the current Leader of the Opposition.

I have a new employee in Oakbank working for me in Springfield. Her name is Ardith Cook. She is a lifetime resident, born and grew up in Oakbank, and is doing a tremendous job. Ardith, I would like to thank you also for the work that you do on behalf of myself and on behalf of all citizens of East St. Paul and Springfield. You are well respected. The

community loves you greatly, and I appreciate the fact that you have come to work in the office in Oakbank.

As all legislators, all 57 of us, we rely on individuals who work in our offices to make sure that things run smoothly. I have, over the years, been incredibly blessed to have outstanding individuals who are prepared to step forward and work for me.

I would also like to thank the Springfield PC Association for their efforts over the years and, in particular, my former president, Thor Fjeldsted, who made the very unwise, unfortunate decision to move to Alberta. I still can't understand why, other than the fact that it's got the lowest taxes in Canada and so on and so forth, but I do miss him. He was an outstanding president.

I would like to thank Lucas Golebiowski, who's taken on the role of president and is doing wonderfully with the association, and to the rest of the association. Thank you to all the volunteers. Again, all 57 members of this House have volunteers around us. We depend on them, and we certainly appreciate and respect the work that they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, insofar as the budget is concerned, I do want to highlight a few points in the time that I have remaining. The first issue I would like to talk about is the long, long overdue issue of an ambulance for East and West St. Paul, an issue that I've been fighting for, for years. For those in this House who don't remember, I've stood up in this House, in the spring sitting of 2005, I read the petition in regard to that: in May of 2004, 46-year-old Peter Krahn suffered a heart attack while exercising in East St. Paul. He was pronounced dead just under an hour later after being transported to the Concordia Hospital in Winnipeg.

It showed that it took over 18 minutes for an ambulance to arrive for Mr. Krahn. The Interlake Regional Health Authority claims that 21 minutes is an acceptable emergency response time, whereas the City of Winnipeg has a benchmark of four minutes. Ambulance coverage for those in the House who may not know was provided to East and West St. Paul from Selkirk, almost 25 kilometres away. The municipalities of East and West St. Paul have well over 12,000 residents.

* (15:20)

Mr. Speaker, this event happened in 2004, and finally, after petition after petition, after pushing this government—in fact, I can remember getting up and

asking a question, and the former Minister of Health, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), got up and he said, the people of East St. Paul should be happy with 20 minutes or longer for ambulance cover. They should be pleased with that kind of coverage. Well, they weren't. I guess the only saving grace is that West St. Paul happens to fall in the constituency of Gimli, and the honourable Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) was starting to feel an awful lot of political heat on him and pushed his Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), pushed his Premier (Mr. Doer) to get something done. We should have had that ambulance a lot sooner. It should have been provided when it was proven there was need, and the need was there.

Mr. Speaker, we know that politics trumps everything else when it comes to the Doer government, when it comes to the NDP and, unfortunately, it took this long. But, as I said to the media when the announcement came, we'll take it because it's much needed. It's something that is long overdue. I would like state to all of those thousands and thousands of Manitobans who signed the petitions that I read in this House, day in, day out, all of those Manitobans who got involved in the issue and fought for ambulance coverage for East and West St. Paul, I would like to thank each and every one of them. You know who you are. You know how much you committed to this.

I had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to speak to the family of Peter Krahn. Of course, he left behind a widow and teenage children, and I explained to them that finally, after all that, we got the ambulance. I spoke with his wife and she was quite pleased to hear that it had finally taken place. I would like to, once again, extend to her my condolences, the fact that it had to come to this, but, finally, after too many years, after far too many years of pressure, finally we have the ambulance.

Mr. Speaker, this government has been a government of many promises, very little completed. I would like to speak about the twinning of the Perimeter Highway, something I have been fighting for since 1999. It's been committed to and promised and promised and budgeted and spoken to and press-released to death, and more of the Amazon disappears on press releases from this NDP government than anywhere else. Yet the Perimeter Highway is not completely twinned. I know that there have been all kinds of commitments made, commitments that, again, we can't count on, but I would like to encourage this government to keep up

twinning the Perimeter. A lot of young people going to university have lost their lives on that stretch of highway, and it is very unfortunate that that is the case, that that has taken place.

The other great, great disappointment is the Dugald PTH 15 bridge. It is wrought with just unbelievable irony. I would like to reference for this House a Manitoba government news release, November 13, 1997, entitled "New Lanes and Bridge Open on Highway 59." Mr. Speaker, \$8.2 million project first stage of extended twin lanes, says Findlay. This was PTH Highway 59 south. A brand-new bridge was opened in 1997 crossing the floodway. Lo and behold, this Doer government, the NDP government, had a brain wave that they were going to replace that bridge, PTH 59 south, with a brand-new bridge. So they replaced a brand-new bridge built in '97, opened in '97, ripped it down and rebuilt it.

In fact, I have a document here titled Manitoba Floodway Authority, March 2006, which talks about demolition of southbound crossing of PTH 59 south bridge nears completion. Built in 1997, ripped down by the Doer government, 2006.

But the news gets even worse. The story keeps getting worse, Mr. Speaker, because a bridge on PTH 15, called the Dugald bridge, going across the floodway, one of the original bridges, has been deemed to be unsafe. It is single lane. That means ongoing traffic, one lane each way. It should be twinned. It is a disaster in the making, and somehow, because of forced unionization, money for the Premier's buddies trumped safety for the residents of Springfield. That's exactly how the residents of Springfield view it. It is, de facto, our only real entry into the city of Winnipeg. It's our only entrance and exit into the city. The only other alternative routes are, you have to take Garven Road, drive out of Springfield, get onto Highway 59, and you drive into the city, or you go far south, you drive down to No. 1 highway, and you cross that way.

PTH 15, the Dugald bridge, is actually the only entry-exit point into Springfield. And what does the Doer government do? They cancel its replacement. It was a commitment that was made to Springfield. There was a commitment made, and once again the Doer government used paying off their union friends with forced unionization, the Premier's fishing buddies, over the safety of the people of Springfield, and that is so shameful that that derelict, run-down old bridge stands. They ripped down PTH 59 south

that was rebuilt in 1997. They tear it down completely, rebuild it with a brand-new bridge, and PTH 15 stands as derelict as ever. It is so run-down, and the Doer government feels no compulsion to deal with that issue.

When I have the opportunity to go door-to-door, and I have the opportunity to speak again one-on-one with all the residents of Springfield, I will remind them about the Doer government and what they have done to Springfield. In fact, I will challenge the New Democratic Party candidate to step forward. I'll challenge him or her to debate whoever they might be. And let's debate this issue. Let's talk about the fact that PTH should have been replaced before ripping down a brand-new bridge on Highway 59 south, a brand-new bridge built in 1997. Instead, what do they do? They hung Springfield out to dry, which they continuously do.

Mr. Speaker, on a closing note on that issue, where was PTH 59 south? And whose constituency is it? I'll allow members to go have a look and check it out for themselves, and they'll figure it out: a new bridge for a new bridge in one seat and an old bridge that needs replacing that the department has talked about for years keeps standing there and is not replaced. It's shameful at best.

I would also like to, in closing, talk about the fact that Manitoba, which has received money largesse from the federal government almost unparalleled in the history of this province, and yet we see so little relief as far as tax relief, so little relief in so far as competitiveness is concerned. I watched this budget, as I've sat and watched eight other budgets, and I remember the first budget. There was enthusiasm in this House and the cheering and stomping and clapping. This time around I was quite surprised at the lack of enthusiasm even from members opposite for their own budget.

I know we are heading into an election. Our four years has basically run out. In fact, I would encourage all members of this House to look at set election dates. I believe they are far more democratic than what we currently have, but we know an election is coming nonetheless. When we go door-to-door, I am convinced members opposite know they are going to face questions about how we are going to keep our young people, because the budget never addressed that properly. How are we going to deal with competitiveness to keep people in Manitoba? The budget never dealt with that.

Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on. I, however, want to say that I will continue to represent the issues that affect the good people of the R.M. of Springfield and East St. Paul, those that make up the constituency of Springfield. I look forward to going door-to-door and speaking to them, and I'm sure when this disastrous budget comes up, I certainly will be talking to them about the budget as I'm sure so will my NDP and Liberal opponents. I have to say I feel sorry for whoever will be the NDP opponent of mine because they are going to have to carry that albatross around, called this provincial budget, which had a lot of opportunity, which could have held out so much hope, and the Doer government, the NDP government, decided not to go down that path.

With those few comments, I would like to thank this House once again, and I look forward to the next opportunity to address the Legislature.

* (15:30)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): It's a privilege, once again, to get up today to put some comments on the record about this blockbuster budget, budget 2007. It's indeed an honour, Mr. Speaker, and I want to extend my thanks to the constituents of Seine River who have entrusted me to play this role. I take it very seriously, of course, and I am very pleased to, in a few moments, put some comments on the record that really are reflective of the conversations that I have with my constituents about their priorities and about the things that are important to them and important as we go forward in building Manitoba.

I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to pay my sincere gratitude to members of staff here at the Manitoba Legislature. The staff in my office, led by Jennifer Faulder, are, certainly, really excellent individuals that care deeply about the health of Manitobans and about concerns that Manitobans have. They work very diligently to help the citizens of Manitoba with their concerns and take their suggestions very seriously, and I really do applaud their tireless efforts and want them to know, if they don't already, that they indeed are making a profound difference in the lives of many Manitobans.

I also want to express my sincere thanks to the staff in the civil service, led by Deputy Minister Arlene Wilgosh who is, as all members of the House know, a jewel of a human being and a caring individual, former nurse, a visionary when it comes to issues concerning health. It is my privilege to work with her advice and her guidance, and I know

that the people of Manitoba are well served with her at the helm.

I also want to extend my gratitude to staff in the constituency of Seine River, to Sarah Zaharia, my executive assistant, who works so thoughtfully with the constituents of Seine River to help them with their challenges and to help them with their many celebrations. She's a very hard worker, and I'm very, very delighted that she continues to work for the people of Seine River.

I also want to extend my gratitude and, sadly, my farewell to my constituency assistant, Mr. Ross Murray. Ross has worked in the Seine River constituency office since June of 2003 and has been a real support for the people of the community and indeed to me. When he regrettably lost his wife almost a year ago now very unexpectedly, it was a crossroads for him, as one can expect, and he chose to continue to stay to work in the constituency of Seine River and to work for those people, but now has made the decision to move on into this new chapter of his life. He is not just an employee. He's a dear friend. I will miss him terribly, and I certainly do wish him well as he pursues his other many interests. He tells me it's golf, but I know it's so much more.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my gratitude and love to my husband, Sam, and of course to my son, Jack. I encounter people who from time to time ask a very fair question: How do you do it? How do you play the role of a mother of a young child and play the role of an MLA representing your constituents and play the role of Minister of Health? I can say with absolute certainty that, with the great support of all these other people that I've mentioned, it would be truly impossible without the love, support, guidance, and vision, really, of my husband, Sam, and so I extend to him today, tomorrow, and forever how much I love him and appreciate him in my life.

It's with all of those people, of course, that I have important conversations that are supported by budget 2007. I feel very excited about the fact that I can have conversations with my family, with people with whom I work, and with the constituents of Seine River about things like education, and how important building our province through education is to the citizens of Seine River. I'm really delighted that budget 2007 addresses one of the issues that constituents want to speak about very often, and that is the issue of funding to public schools.

Budget 2007, of course, commits to a new multiyear plan to increase provincial funding to 80 percent of total public schools education expenditures. Mr. Speaker, we know that in my alternate professional life as a teacher that I can speak from experience of what it was like to live through those dark days in the '90s when investments in education were so paltry and times were very bleak. We see a new attitude here in Manitoba when it comes to education.

Budget 2007 will also reduce by \$125 the education tax paid on residential property with an immediate increase of the education property tax credit to \$525. These are issues that are important to the families of Seine River. Yes, families speak about an interest in tax relief, but more to the point they speak about an interest in investment in education and an investment in their children and in their futures.

Continuing with budget 2007, we'll see a \$30.3-million increase for public schools, the largest increase in almost 20 years, Mr. Speaker. We're also very delighted, of course, that the implementation of the 60 percent tax rebate for tuition fees for all post-secondary graduates who live and work in Manitoba will be a boon to the families who are feeling very supportive of our government and our investments in public education and in post-secondary education as well. They are very happy that maintaining the 10 percent tuition reduction for the eighth year in a row will stand, and they know that they'll be able to continue with their pursuits for their children here in Manitoba.

Other conversations that I have with my constituents, Mr. Speaker, centre around the importance of ensuring that we have a fair and just society and that we have efforts in place to not only address crime when it occurs but, in fact, to prevent it in the first place. My constituents will be very pleased to know that budget 2007 adds funding for 30 more police officers. We provided resources for 125 new officer positions over the past five years and this budget will continue that. Funding for the City of Winnipeg to support 14 new officer positions including five constables dedicated to the stolen auto unit will be met with enthusiasm.

I'm also delighted that budget 2007 will expand the successful Lighthouse program to 50 sites, Mr. Speaker. We know that these Lighthouses offer alternatives for young people who want to engage in positive activities. We know that the Lighthouses to date have had nearly half a million visits. We believe

that this is a very good investment in our young people and that's why we're expanding it with budget 2007.

We will also, with this budget, see the expansion of the Turnabout program, the first of its kind in Canada, which, of course, focusses on children under the age of 12 who are in conflict with the law. We're very pleased about that, Mr. Speaker.

Also, this budget will provide funding to create a specialized unit to handle child exploitation cases, including a new dedicated Crown attorney. This budget will also commit new funding to our strategy to combat crystal meth, including resources to support the implementation of The Youth Drug Stabilization (Support for Parents) Act. We're very pleased that taking into account that prevention has to be part of any strategy on crime reduction that we continue to put an emphasis on the early years, ensuring that our young people don't have to turn to that sort of an unfortunate life in the first place.

Other conversations that I have with my constituents, Mr. Speaker, involve investments in infrastructure. My constituents care deeply about the roads on which they drive. This budget will increase the investment in highways by 50 percent, or increasing our investment in highways by 50 percent, bringing the annual investment close to \$40 million as outlined in the five-year, \$2-billion provincial plan. Also, we will see investing \$33 million for infrastructure through cost-shared agreements with municipalities and the federal government for projects such as Winnipeg's waste water and treatment upgrade and, of course, the upgrade and development of the YM-YWCA in south Winnipeg.

* (15:40)

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I hear very often when speaking with the constituents of Seine River is how much they value our efforts to build communities in as healthy a way possible. This budget will provide a new Manitoba child benefit for low-income working families with children. It's going to provide more than \$48 million in new resources for child protection services. We're going to see an expansion of the very successful Healthy Baby program, and we're going to continue to work with our families by enhancing positive parenting programs and supporting parent-child coalitions throughout Manitoba. This initiative, through Healthy Child Manitoba, has to be one of the greatest investments made to date. The return on the

parent-child coalition investment is phenomenal, and that's why we want to enhance our funding to that.

Mr. Speaker, another important discussion that I have with my constituents, of course, concerns the environment. People in my constituency are deeply concerned about our earth, our planet and maintaining it, in fact, preserving it, in fact, improving it for their children and for their children's children. We know that initiatives included in budget 2007 include the introduction of a new 10 percent green energy manufacturing tax credit to encourage manufacturing of machinery and equipment used to produce renewable energy.

We also know that we'll see more than \$10 million for water protection initiatives, improving water management and flood protection and supporting the implementation of the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board. These issues are very important to my constituents. That's why I'm very delighted that this budget is going to work very hard to meet the expectations of the people of Seine River.

Mr. Speaker, of course, I speak with a bias when it comes to issues concerning health and healthy living that appear in this budget and that are achievements of this government. I'm very pleased to be part of a government that understands the fundamental difference between adding human resources to our health care system and slashing human resources from our system. We know that this budget is going to continue to invest in ensuring that more health care professionals are going to be trained. We will continue to see expansion of the Faculty of Medicine class. We'll continue to see expansion for the licensing program for international medical graduates. We'll continue to see expansion for the training of new technologists and continue to see expansion in the training of nurses.

We also see in this budget, Mr. Speaker, that Manitoba will be investing in new, leading-edge technology, the non-invasive cancer knife, which indeed will be a first in Canada to treat cancers in all parts of the body. We know when Manitoba was the first to invest in the Gamma Knife that recruitment efforts became much easier. We know that two doctors immediately came to Manitoba because of this investment. We know that we have others looking very closely at the installation of the non-invasive cancer knife and that by making these investments in technology, in infrastructure, we can, indeed, make investments in our human resources as well.

We're going to continue to work on investing even more to reduce wait times for quality-of-life procedures, such as hip and knee surgeries and diagnostic tests. Again, it's innovation that's going to bring our health care professionals to Manitoba. We know that the example that we see at Concordia Hospital with the orthopedic program, with the use of clinical assists and our ability to use these individuals in the process to go from three surgeries a day to eight surgeries a day, to be able to take our combined orthopedic surgeries from 44 weeks one year ago down to 22 weeks. We think this is a great achievement. We're not finished yet, but we know that continuing to invest in the reduction of wait times is a very important part of our strategy.

Funding the new state-of-the-art cardiac centre at St. Boniface General Hospital will continue to be a jewel here in Manitoba. Providing \$3 million in new funding for physician specialist training for key medical positions like ER doctors, like oncologists and pediatricians, is an important part of the strategy. Supporting the new Manitoba Firefighters Burn Unit at the Health Sciences Centre is going to not—oh, well, it already has attracted a doctor from Alberta who is arguably the best in the country, but is going to continue to support Manitobans who find themselves in dire situations to have the best possible care that they can get for burns. Continuing to put new resources in issues around suicide prevention and continuing to put resources, \$2.5 million in new funding to address sexually-transmitted infections and HIV-AIDS through a provincial strategy, will be very, very important for the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, there truly are so many things in this budget that address the questions and address the passions of the people of Seine River, the people who care about their families, who care about their mothers and their fathers and their grandmas and their grandpas and their aunts and their uncles. This budget addresses those issues, and I am very proud to be standing in the House as an enthusiastic supporter of budget 2007.

I can only wonder why there would be people who would not support additional police officers. I can't understand why there would be people who would not support additional infrastructure investments to make our roads safe and smooth. I can't understand why there would be people who wouldn't support the education of more doctors, grow them at home, keep them at home. I don't understand why there would be people who wouldn't support investments in preserving our planet.

I suppose they're out there. Mercifully, they aren't the kinds of people who I talk to too often in Seine River. I don't honestly recognize them. I recognize people who care about their planet, who care about their families, who care about the education of their children, who care about their health, their No. 1 priority. I'm proud to stand with the government that's put this budget forward, and it's indeed my honour to speak to it on behalf of the people of Seine River.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'm very pleased to stand before this House on behalf of the people of Charleswood and put some comments on the record on the seventh budget of the NDP.

I'm very committed to the people of Charleswood. It's a wonderful community to represent, and I'm very committed to doing my best for the people of Charleswood in representing their views and also for the people of Manitoba in the other job that I have as a member of the shadow Cabinet. So, Mr. Speaker, with the short time that I have before me, I am going to just touch on some of the issues. My colleagues have, certainly, well addressed many of the other issues in the budget, and I will focus on some.

I would first like to just start out by congratulating Team Canada, the women's hockey team, for the incredible win they had, and to Polly Craik and her volunteers of the World Women's Hockey Championship for putting on a remarkable tournament here in Winnipeg and to show what Winnipeg and Manitoba are capable of doing. They were absolutely remarkable and amazing in what they were able to achieve here, and they should be very, very proud of what they were successful in achieving. We just want to say congratulations to them and thank them very, very much for making Winnipeg and Manitoba shine on the world stage. They did a remarkable job.

The other thing I would like to add, too, is I guess an observation lately in terms of the negativity by the NDP in terms of their speeches, in terms of their advertising. I don't recall ever when we were in government to hear this kind of negativity coming out of a government that had a proud record to stand on and had met challenges without the kind of negativity that this government right now is spewing forth. The negativity is certainly an overwhelming tone of this NDP government. It's too bad that they don't feel they have a strong record to stand on.

Instead, their record right now is based on yelling; it is based on overwhelming negativity. It is based on something Manitoba has never, ever seen in its political history, and that is the type of negative American-type ads that we have never, ever in Manitoba experienced before.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Never before has a sitting Premier (Mr. Doer) ever taken swipes at a past premier and denigrated the name of a past premier in this province, ever, ever, ever. To hear this current Premier denigrate Premier Gary Filmon for the kind of effort he made in public life is pretty shameful. That has never happened before, and I have to say I never expected American-style negative ads to come to Manitoba the way this government is so slickly doing it. They sound like they are experts in terms of what they're putting out there. But to go after a former premier who has given so many years of public life, and for them to denigrate the premier like that, is unknown of, I don't believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this province.

* (15:50)

It is very, very shameful, but when you have a government that doesn't have a solid track record to go on, I guess, what else would they go on. They've become a one-man show. They're incapable of working as a team. They're working in their own little silos, and the one-man show just basically shows how tired and out of steam this particular government is. They're out of ideas. They're scrambling. They have to steal ideas from everybody around them because they've run out of them themselves.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do see a tired government. We saw, probably, a pretty predictable budget from a tired government and one that has run out of steam and run out of ideas. So we shouldn't be too surprised at what we're seeing right now.

In fact, it's interesting to see what some of the comments were by third parties out there in relationship to this budget. University of Manitoba political science professor Paul Thomas said: A goody-laden plan lacks overriding vision. Certainly, Paul Thomas is a very, very respected professor and is indicating, as many others have been, that there is a lack of an overriding vision.

I was at the wonderful launch the other night of *The Hermetic Code*, which is about this building. It was a *Free Press* launch of the book that they put out

there, which is remarkable, and I do urge everybody to get a copy of that book because this is a pretty amazing building that we work in.

The number of people that came up to me there, and said: What we don't see from this government is something that drives it other than the rhetoric and ideals of very, very strong left-leaning views. There isn't an overriding, an overarching vision that actually drives the government to make things better for Manitobans, and a number of people actually came up to me. So, as one title of a newspaper article said: A little for everyone, but difficult to pitch. They went on to say that the NDP tossed out crumbs all over the place. They have a lot of crumbs to toss out, a \$425-million increase in spending. It would be one thing if we were getting a bang for our buck from all of this spending; unfortunately, that's not what we see.

Somebody else said: Mediocre is not good enough. Darn right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, mediocre is not good enough. Manitoba has so much potential to do more, to be more, to keep our young people here, and mediocre is not good enough.

NDP wastes opportunity with budget. Another one, again, taking a shot at this budget and this government for their lack of a vision, again, in terms of what could be done to make Manitoba a place where there is a thriving economy, because a thriving economy is what creates jobs; jobs are what keep our young people here. When we have a thriving economy and we have our young people staying here, we then are in a better position to have the money to then fund our cherished social programs.

I don't know where this government thinks they're going to get the money from down the road when some of the federal dollars start to dry up, when we are looking at so much federal money propping up this province, and this government is so willing to accept that. No effort here in trying to make us a have province. We were almost there in the late '90s, and this government has taken us absolutely in the opposite direction. So now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have almost 40,000 young people leaving here. Those are people that are not going to be here to raise their families, to contribute to the economy so that, in fact, their parents and their grandparents will have a health care system that can properly take care of them. We're not seeing that.

Another headline: "Election stinkaroo, NDP bombs with big-yawn budget." Again, that's coming from third parties out there that also have this view.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other stinkaroo right now that's out there—and it's too bad that this government didn't have the courage to deal with it—is the Crocus scandal because we even now see ENSIS struggling to come out in the black because of the black cloud that is hanging over this province in terms of venture capital. The Crocus scandal is, incredibly, just that. It is a scandal, nothing less than that. It is something that should have been dealt with by this government because it is keeping back a lot of progress in Manitoba, a lot of opportunities that could have helped to build the economy in Manitoba, and that's not happening.

Another headline: "A timid blueprint—NDP is expert at thinking inside the box." Maybe that says a lot about this particular government and this particular budget. They can never be accused of big thinking. In fact, they have been pretty timid at doing most things. That timidity is what is holding Manitoba back, because this government hasn't had the courage to be bold with its vision. The only way we are going to move Manitoba forward and keep up with where other provinces are is to have a bolder blueprint and a bolder vision.

There are instances where thinking outside the box would have been good for Manitoba. It would have provided some excitement here, but, again, this government doesn't seem to know what that means or even how to do it. Jim Carr, the president of the Business Council of Manitoba, probably said it best: The major story is the 10.1 percent increase in transfers from Ottawa. So we should all stand up, look east, salute the Canadian flag and sing "O Canada!".

It certainly makes one wonder without the federal dollars what this government would have done with their budget, because it is the federal transfers. It is what every other province is contributing to Manitoba that is allowing some things to happen in this province, but it certainly shouldn't be anything that this government is proud of, that they are so reliant on handouts from the federal government. Then we hear them talking more, more; it's not enough; we need more. That is not going to hold us in good stead in the future when the economy—and economies don't always go on a positive upswing. There could be some challenges coming down the road and then what happens. The NDP don't seem to think about things like that, though, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They kind of live for the day. They very much believe in spending everything that they possibly can, go out and put

money everywhere and hope it's going to translate into some votes.

One place where this government should have put money is certainly in the area of justice. The other day, when I opened the paper and read an article about a granny that was brutalized, where thugs beat a woman 77 years old during a home invasion in the middle of the day, I think just says it all. This government has had almost eight years to address these issues. They don't like to think about that. They don't like to think that they've been around for that long, and yet it is only at the end of seven years, seven-and-three-quarter years, where they start to throw a little bit more money into this or into that. Where have they been all this time allowing so many problems to escalate?

When I read about this elderly woman, who on Easter morning for the first time could open her eyes after being brutalized in her home, it was pretty sickening to think that this is where Winnipeg and Manitoba are going in this day and age after eight years of an NDP government, that a senior citizen cannot feel comfortable in the daytime in their own home. There is something very, very wrong with this picture. This government should be ashamed that their lack of justice issues is more symbolic of a lot of the problems. They're more about rhetoric and more about talk than action. I think that particular story really showed it all.

* (16:00)

This particular budget, before I get into specifically talking about health care, I just want to indicate should have been more about Manitoba running instead of limping along. Instead, we have Manitoba limping along when it should be running. We haven't seen results. This is now the seventh budget of the NDP. They have had so much money to make good things happen in this province, but we haven't seen the results that Manitobans deserve to see after eight years of dramatically increased spending without significant results. It's just not there. It just tells you that you can throw money at a lot of things, but if you don't know how to manage, and you don't know how to evaluate, and you don't know how to get results, all you're going to do is have a province that is limping along instead of running along. Now we're into sputtering because there are not a lot of initiatives that are going on in Manitoba, especially driven by the private sector. A lot of what is happening here is government-driven, and while parts of that can be useful and beneficial, it

is not what's going to make Manitoba a have province.

This budget neglected many of the current and future needs of Manitobans. The first one was certainly the failure to set out a coherent plan to stem the flow of people out of Manitoba, especially after the loss of between 35,000 and 40,000 Manitobans to other provinces since 1999. I had a group of young people at my home this morning, and we were talking about this. They were shocked and very disappointed to know that this is the province that they are living in, and this is the province that they are going to inherit.

This budget failed to make Manitoba a have province, reduce debt, and decrease the NDP government's reliance on federal transfer payments. Manitoba and Prince Edward Island are the two biggest provinces that rely on federal transfer payments in health care, and that cannot go on forever, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This budget failed to implement taxation measures to make Manitoba competitive. If we're not competitive, we are not going to be able to make Manitoba a thriving province and a province that has a lot to offer our young people and even others that we want to entice to come here to live or even keeping others here instead of moving away. The budget failed to entice businesses to come here or spur economic and job growth while we now rank seventh in job creation as it falls even further behind other jurisdictions. It's embarrassing to say we're No. 7. We want to say we're No. 1 in job growth. We want to say we're No. 1 in creating opportunity for young people; we're No. 1 because we've got this vision for Manitoba that will make it a better province. But all we can say right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is we're No. 7. That doesn't have a particularly good ring to it.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) has indicated that water trumps everything. So it sounds like with this particular budget and with this particular government, the NDP has now gone on to saying that water trumps everything. Well, I guess if the Premier is saying that, he must mean also health care, and we certainly see it from what is happening right now in our health care system and the many challenges that are out there. Certainly, we've seen the most broken promise probably in all-time Manitoba history is to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. That still hasn't happened. If the Premier still feels he cannot call an election until he's got his

to-do list finished, we're never going to have an election because that's the biggest No. 1 to-do he has yet to accomplish. He has not accomplished it. So, if we're going to take him at his word and he says, I can't call an election till I've got everything accomplished, I suppose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're here for a long time because he's never going to be able to go to the polls because he will never have kept that election promise.

The Conference Board of Canada ranked the overall performance of Manitoba's health care system as dead last amongst the provinces. We're now spending \$4 billion on health care in Manitoba. Yet we've got waiting lists, for instance, in sleep apnea, that are almost nine years long for some people. We have got pain clinic where people are living in horrible chronic pain, and we've got about a three-year wait for that. How in the world is that achieving quality care for patients in a timely fashion? It is not. It's no wonder that we have our system here rated dead last.

The Burntwood Regional Health Authority scandal where we saw a general disregard for policies, where there was misappropriation of funds, where there was \$100,000 spent for cigarettes, parties, interest-free loans and salary top-ups. How did the government miss this? How do we have a government that can sit here and talk about a review of regionalization and not review itself and where this government has failed Manitobans or where this government dropped the ball?

How did this government miss what was going on in the Burntwood Regional Health Authority? They're supposed to be looking at the quarterly financial statements that come from all the regional health authorities. How is it that this government missed what was happening in the Burntwood Regional Health Authority? So why don't they shine the review light on themselves when they are looking at regional health review? I don't think they have the courage to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We have called for the review of regionalization for almost eight years. In the year 2000 we started. The Minister of Health said it would cause too much chaos so they wouldn't do it. Just a year ago, the next Minister of Health refused to do it. He didn't want to do it. And then, oh, on the eve of an election all of a sudden the NDP decide they're going to review regionalization.

I think they probably finally tuned in that the public wants this review. The public is driving it, but

this government didn't want to do it in time to get the results before an election because it will show where they've made some big, big messes themselves, and the Burntwood Regional Health Authority is certainly one.

Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Auditor General found that Manitoba Health was mis-managing the Pharmacare program by failing to find efficiencies and ways to control the cost of the program. So who pays?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Brandon East. Oh, the honourable Member for Selkirk.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a great pleasure to rise today to speak to this government debate: a budget that is balanced, a budget that invests in the programs that Manitobans desire and need, and a budget that cuts taxes. That is why it's a great pleasure for me to be involved with the debate today.

Listening to the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) talk about—many members have talked about the Filmon years. I was here for those years and their legacy is well documented, you know, vote rigging and selling off Crown corporations.

But, when you look at what they actually built in those years, I think you can look to maybe two things. One is casinos—two casinos they built, \$100 million over budget; and a jail in the Remand Centre. That's all they did in their 11 years in government, so they could hardly bring forward a budget calling it *The Building Budget* as we did here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to just inform the House that this year of course is Selkirk's 125th anniversary. I know many communities are celebrating this milestone and Selkirk is as well. We feel, of course, being from Selkirk that there's much to celebrate, and I invite all the members to Selkirk this summer to celebrate some of those events. Most of them will be held in July.

* (16:10)

I want to recognize the Selkirk Steelers on winning the junior hockey title a few weeks ago. I know all my colleagues support the Selkirk Steelers. The Steelers are ranked No. 2 in the nation, and this upcoming Friday they play Humboldt from Saskatchewan. I know that all members wish them well as they move forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As well, I want to congratulate the organizers of the Women's World Hockey Championship. There were four games held in Selkirk. I went to many of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I really enjoyed myself. I missed the last game because, as members know, Selkirk suffered a bit of flooding. There was an ice-jam and parts of the constituency suffered flooding. That happened, of course, on April 4.

I want to just recognize and thank the municipal leaders, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the mayor and his council, both from the City of Selkirk and the R.M.s of St. Andrews and St. Clements, their emergency staff, staff from the Emergency Measures Organization, from Water Stewardship, the RCMP, the highways staff as well. I know that their support, their prompt response, was appreciated. I was just out there on Friday. The Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) and I toured the area once again, and we had a chance to visit with the mayor of Selkirk and the reeve from St. Andrews. Both of them wanted us to extend to members in this House, government members, their thank you for their response.

I want to, as well, pay tribute to the Premier (Mr. Doer) who visited Selkirk twice. The Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick), I believe she was there every day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the Emergency Measures minister. I want to thank them for their concern and their speedy response to that crisis.

I can report to all that the water level has gone down, although, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was I think somewhat overblown in the media. I realize that, regrettably, a hundred people had to move, but when you read the media report, what did it say? Selkirk swamped is what it said. It said Selkirk flooded, and, you know, there was, of course, the golf course. The media did tend to overblow the issue, but I do want to thank my colleagues for their prompt response.

Contrast that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the actions of the Leader of the Opposition. He went there a week late. What did he do? Did he care about the citizens of Selkirk? No. What did he do? He went up there and he found his candidate. They didn't meet with anybody. They looked around and they came back here to the House the following week, asked the question in the House and what did he do? Well, he named his candidate. You know, he made an issue, a non-partisan issue, into a political one. He was playing politics with the crisis that was facing our community. That was regrettable and the citizens of Selkirk recognize that. Rather than trying to put

forward issues, concerns, maybe some of the issues that were presented to him, it was his attempt to promote his candidate in the Selkirk community. The Leader of the Opposition says that he was born in Selkirk. You'd think he'd show a little bit more concern for Selkirk, and I think that's shameful. That is not leadership.

I went on the Conservative Web page today, and they had a press release: Opposition questions government over Selkirk flooding. They had it on there for a number of days, but they became so embarrassed by the misinformation in the press release, they took it off. You can no longer access that press release. No doubt about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and rather than—*[interjection]* A lot like his résumé, as the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) says.

Rather than do any research about the cause of that flooding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he took the line that the floodway is the cause of the ice-jams. That was the lazy way out. Did he talk to any experts? No. Did he talk to Professor Jay Doering from the University of Manitoba? No. Did he read the Clean Environment Commission report? No. Did he read the KGS report? No. All he did was put misinformation on the record.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's been reported time and time again that there is no connection between ice-jams and the operation of the floodway. In fact, the floodway does not create water; it diverts water. In fact, last year, there was over 24,000 cubic-feet-per-second of water flowing through the floodway. Was there an ice-jam? No. And you could go on and on. The floodway was operating in '95, '97, '99, '98, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2006. Were there any ice-jams? No. But that was his line. Rather than do any work, the member stood up, accused the government of flooding Selkirk in a shameful way. Lazy opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is obviously a good-news budget for Manitoba. It's a good-news budget for Selkirk as well. It was reported in the budget that the government will be building a new hospital in Selkirk and, as members know, I'll give you a little bit of history, the current one that was built in 1980, '81, was built by the Lyon government, at the time of the Sterling Lyon government. I guess it was built to last 25, 26 years because it's now 25, 26 years old and it needs to be replaced. Our government, rather than ignoring the issue, rather than avoiding it, we've taken on the commitment to replace that hospital in Selkirk which is a regional facility serving Selkirk,

St. Andrews, St. Clements, all the Interlake and good sections of east Manitoba as well.

As mentioned by my colleagues, we're investing over \$4 billion in highways, transportation infrastructure over the next 10 years. The Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and myself, the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), who chaired our committee of the 2020 – Transportation Vision exercise, it was our recommendation that the government spend, I think, \$3.2 billion over the next 10 years in infrastructure investment, transportation infrastructure investment, but we exceeded that. We did better than the report. I want to thank the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) and all my colleagues for supporting that. Many highways in our area, the local highways, are being improved: Highway 59, Highway 8, Highway 9. The bridges are being replaced in our community. The Member for Flin Flon is proud of his accomplishments as a member, and I know that the voters in that area will acknowledge that during election day.

As well, it was mentioned in the budget that the government will be supporting a new library in Selkirk. Even though the Liberal Leader, part of his comments saying that the government do not, I, in fact, have a letter from one of his former candidates, from the Liberal candidate in Lac du Bonnet who has sent me a letter thanking the government for our prompt response to his request for funding to build a new library in the Pine Falls area. In fact, I'm working with my Liberal opponent. We are working on this project. We went just last week. We spent some time together as we moved forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to—[interjection]

Well, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says it was him. In fact, it's a her, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He doesn't know the sex of his candidate in my community, so he's obviously well connected to the management of the Liberal Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to acknowledge that our government is expanding Neighbourhoods Alive! to Selkirk, as well into Flin Flon and, I think, into Dauphin and to Portage. I've just highlighted some of the good news but clearly this is a result of hard work of community leaders, and I just mentioned the library. There's a group of dedicated volunteers working on this issue for a number of years, and I'm pleased that our government is there to support these local projects initiated often by individuals, local individuals.

* (16:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, when you listen to the gloom and doom of the PC parties and the Liberals in this Chamber, well, what do Manitobans actually see? I just highlighted a number of them in my own community, and they see that not only in Selkirk, they see that throughout this province. Members of the Conservative Party, they often will attack the government on our so-called over-spending, but they've benefited so much from decisions made, financial decisions made by this government.

You see, when the budget comes down they grab it and they look at it and they see what projects we are doing in their community, projects which they have ignored for years, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We've highlighted those in this Chamber from time to time. We know that Brandon, they have a new hospital in Brandon, a new hospital in Gimli. We've done work in the Steinbach area; we've done work in Winkler. I believe there's a new school coming to the Morden and Winkler area. We've been unlike the Filmon government when they were in power; they only funded projects within their own constituencies. We do not. We fund projects based upon their merit, not upon the political representation of that particular constituency.

So, when you listen to the gloom and doom of members in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the older members are trying to fool the newer members into believing that things aren't going very well. But all people have to do is get out of this building and take a look around. I know the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) was reading some news release or some editorials or some sort of paper, but I want to just highlight a couple of articles that were in the business page of the *Winnipeg Free Press* and this was one that was following the day after the budget and the headline is: "Manitoba bucks construction decline." It goes on to say that Manitoba became the only province to post an increase in building permits activity for the month and that was the month of February. The heady numbers are in sharp contrast to what is unfolding everywhere else in the country. Every province saw a decline in building permits in February except for Manitoba.

But do we hear that from the Conservatives and the Liberals in this Chamber? No, we don't.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another headline. This was in Saturday's paper: "Aerospace industry set to soar." In the same article, in the same front page, in the

same page of the business section: "Manitoba wage jumps third highest in nation." It goes on to say Graham Starmer is pleased with the provincial wage boost. Wednesday's paper last week: "Fewer leave Manitoba." We know that this is a very important trend that people are coming back to this province. They don't buy the rhetoric coming out of the Conservatives or the Liberals about the strength of our economy. Manitobans are coming back.

As I said before, they try here to convince the newer members of this Chamber that they were tax cutters. But we know they're not tax cutters because they increased taxes, Mr. Speaker. I was interested in the comments of the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) who was bragging in this Chamber about privatizing MTS. He said he was proud of it. We're so grateful that he put those words on the record because we can all use those words in the upcoming election, whenever that day is. We can all use those words when we go door-to-door in our communities and remind people that the Member for Russell was proud that he privatized MTS. Before the privatization of MTS there were around 60 Manitoba Telephone System jobs in Selkirk, now virtually nothing. The building has been abandoned; rates have gone up by 60 percent.

We know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the negative effects of the privatization of MTS have particularly hurt rural and northern Manitoba. As I mentioned, job loss, rates have gone up. What happened, we know that the Tories sold those shares for half the value. We know that their rich friends have gotten richer on the backs of Manitobans, especially in rural and northern areas. As I said, they go around here trying to convince people that they're tax cutters and we know that they're not.

We know that it's this government and it's this Finance Minister and this Premier (Mr. Doer), Mr. Deputy Speaker, that are the true tax cutters in this province. We've eliminated a complete tax, and we're moving forward on others as well. We could go on and on about the tax cuts. We could go on and on about our investments into roads. We could go on and on about our investments into health care, but I know that others are eager to speak to this. I know that I'll be eager to go door-to-door in Selkirk with this budget. I know my colleagues will be eager to go door-to-door to campaign with this budget because they know Manitobans support this budget. Manitobans support this government. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to rise today to put some things on the record in regard to budget 2007, but before I do that I'd like to pay tribute to some of my colleagues in the House: the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), the Member for Fort Garry (Ms. Irvin-Ross) and, possibly, the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), who will still be making up his mind very soon about what his intents are.

Having said that, I know that they each will make way for their new futures as they move on to the next chapter in their life. We certainly do wish them well. I know that each one has left a significant mark on their achievements here in the Legislative Assembly. A number of them have been here for a number of years. In fact, I know three of them from our side of the House will be deeply missed, and we certainly do appreciate all the hard work that they have done on behalf of all Manitobans and especially on behalf of the PC Party of Manitoba.

I also want to thank the table staff and the Speaker of the House, also all the constituents that have shown faith in me since June 3, 2003. I just feel it's a real honour and opportunity to serve those people of Lakeside. I certainly feel the assurances of the people there as I meet with our various municipalities, the R.M.'s, the towns, the R.M.'s of Rockwood, Coldwell, Rosser, Woodlands and the town of Stonewall and the town of Teulon. I know that as I go from town to town and council to council and talk about issues that are of importance to them and also the Interlake School Division, I have a deep regard for what they have to say.

The No. 1 issue that we talk about when we're out there is infrastructure. I know that the budget's calling for a large number of significant increases in the highways budget, but we feel we could have done a little better, especially when it comes to Lakeside. I know Highway 6 has been on the bill list for a number of years. It's our gateway to the north, our road to the north. In the constituency of Lakeside, we've had a number of deaths on Highway 6. Certainly, my condolences go out to the families of those poor people that lost loved ones on that tragic road. There's some serious work that needs to be done there. We know that that should be the No. 1 priority for all governments, whether it's NDP government or a Conservative government. We certainly would, in our vision as a PC caucus, assure the people of Lakeside that something will be done with those curves, in particular on No. 6 highway.

I want to put on the record the fact that pulling doubles on Highway 6 has really got some serious concern. A number of my municipalities have written the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) with those concerns. We just don't have the shoulders. We don't have the capability of handling those and I know that the minister will be having a look at that, but I hope that we don't have a casualty before that does happen. I know that Highway 6 is the main route in order to get the trucks up to the north with the Inco mine and also with the number of calcium that's being hauled down as well for the cement plants. So we know this is an important road and we know that the government sees an important road, but I think we need to be very careful on our leadership as we show in that particular highway.

*(16:30)

I do want to talk about Highway 227, the connecting route between Warren and Highway 16. This property was bought back in the early 1980s. It was viewed at that time to become Highway 16A. The Pawley government decided to build a bridge over in Selkirk, and that bridge is a bridge to nowhere at this point in time. Unfortunately, the paving of Highway 227 hasn't come about. We certainly feel that it would take an awful lot of pressure off Highway 1. It would take a lot of pressure off for those people that are wanting to get to the Yellowhead Route and go north, whether it is to B.C. or to Edmonton. We certainly feel that the highways budget should be focussing on that particular highway and look after the people there.

Even though the processing plant in Dauphin is not going ahead, there are still a number of hog producers that do use that route. We feel there is wear and tear on the trucks and the vehicles that are going across that road. We've met with the RCMP a number of times as well, and the Interlake School Division about the lack of vision on seeing that this highway gets paved sooner than later.

I know my daughter has been very supportive, and we have quite the family debate because the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) actually comes from her area. He has this joke going about move your birdbath. Well, she's the only one in her constituency that has a paved place for her birdbath. So, certainly, well looked after in that area; I just wish they'd spend some of the money in other parts of the area. I think she'll have a change of heart

whenever we do get into election mode and certainly voice her opinions with her ballot.

We also have other roads within Lakeside I do want to address. When we look at hospitalization and doctor care, the people from St. Laurent, especially Interlake, they doctor in the Teulon area, and people from Lundar doctor not only in the Teulon area but also in the Gimli area. There's just not the east-west connections that we need when we look at highways 415, 411, 419, 518, 229. Highway 227 is in real bad shape, and these people are just not offered the services that they really should be obliged to.

I know that the minister announced today an expansion for the Eriksdale area. That might take off some of the pressure, but I know that they're having a hard time with doctors up there. They look at the Brandon area. They built a new hospital there and they're having problems with doctors there. So, just because you build a facility, it doesn't mean you're necessarily going to have the doctors there to look after it.

I know that a number of highways are crumbling all over the province. Certainly, I know that meeting with my councils, it's very imperative that we look after the infrastructure within the province and all of Manitoba, not just significant areas where the ministers have portfolios. I know that in opposition we don't get near the care that we should, but we shouldn't have to wait until government changes before we get some of those services.

When we look at the health care issue, I know that going back to 1999, the No. 1 priority with the Interlake region was as soon as the hospital was built in Gimli, the next major initiative was increasing personal care home beds within the Teulon area. We have met with the minister a number of times, not only us, but the members from the Interlake Regional Health. The town councils have sent in motions and letters of support to increase the beds in the Teulon area. Certainly, the hospital foundation has had their money on the table since that time.

Unfortunately, the sad part of it is that people who have lived there all their life have to go outside of their community. That's really a sad thing for people, especially the farmers, where their wives, most of them don't have a licence, and most of them are unable to drive and access the loved ones that they leave behind. So we know that we will see those beds built one time. We will probably have to have a change in government to get that done but,

unfortunately, when they say they govern for all people, they don't necessarily speak out of both sides of their mouth. *[interjection]*

We will get to the other issues shortly. I know they're very anxious, very anxious on that side of the House to hear other views outside the Lakeside constituency, and, unfortunately, this is the only opportunity I have for the other side of the House to actually listen to what's important to the people of Lakeside. We do write a number of letters to the various ministers, but I know that sometimes they fall on deaf ears. But we will make sure that in the next election, after this is over, we will be having the opportunity to move some of these projects forward with a new change in government.

The government has done a great job at trying to put fearmongering into the people of Manitoba, that the Conservatives are out there to sell Manitoba Hydro. We have made it very, very clear that we are not going to sell Manitoba Hydro. We talk about the future of Manitoba Hydro and we know that the future of Manitoba Hydro is strong. We know that we can do what we say we're going to do. We won't have overexpenditures like what they're seeing on the downtown building here in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The thing that we have to remember is that we don't pull \$200 million out of Manitoba Hydro to balance our budget. It's very unfortunate that that's what we call doing a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. When we look at the overall projects that have come forward within Manitoba Hydro, the government has really blundered the whole issue. We're very disappointed in the NDP government with respect to that. Certainly, I know the people of Manitoba can see through it. We will make sure that Manitoba is maintained and we'll be there for the long term, not only for our children but our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren and down the road.

I know the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) talked a little bit about Manitoba Telephone System, and I can assure you that when he was talking about the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) being proud of the fact that the government of that time did sell it, you know what? That was in the 1990s. This is in the 2000s. You know what? It's unfortunate that the government can't talk about anything that they've done. They should not be going back into the 1990s. They should be talking about their record, but, obviously, they don't have much of a record to be talking about. So, unfortunately, it holds no water

with me as far as I'm concerned. It holds no water with the people of the province of Manitoba. They want to talk about what's new, what you have to do for the future, what you have to do the next day and the day after that. That's what they want to talk about. They want to talk about the future.

Now, I know the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has been very patient when it comes to talking about water regulations, in fact the first Minister of Water Stewardship. What they did, they brought in some regulations that blame the hog industry for all the problems within the water regulations. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I don't know why a department would not talk to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) about her beliefs on this particular issue.

Now, I was at the hog banquet last week or a couple of weeks ago, and I felt very sorry for the Minister of Agriculture being booed there. It was all on the back of the Minister of Water Stewardship, the previous minister, who blindsided the hog industry and put a moratorium on new and expanding hog operations within the province of Manitoba. I say shame on them.

They should've done a better job. They should've made sure of their facts. In fact, when you look at the overall hog industry, the amount of business that they bring into the province of Manitoba, they have spent some \$20 million just on the science to make sure that those expansions are within the regions, and they certainly meet the regulations that are there. Why would you put a moratorium on the best scientific evidence, the best barns, the best and brightest barns? The people of Manitoba want to see that business grow and expand.

But we realize, yes, there are some problems within the hog industry. We're quite ready and willing to admit that, and we know that there are good MLAs and bad MLAs, some that do their job and some that don't. But you don't blame the whole House. You don't blame the whole hog business for one or two bad apples. We agree they need to be made an example of. We know that those people need to be punished. We agree with the CEC hearings and we certainly support the fact that these barns need to be built.

I know that they said they were going to allow barns that have permits to move forward. Unfortunately, some of those barns are not going to be moving forward, and I'm very disappointed that the government went on record and said that

17 projects—17 projects—would move forward, and yet they all never got the permits that they were promised. So some of those barns, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, are not going to be moving forward, and until this moratorium is lifted—I know the minister did go on the record at the hog banquet and say that it would be lifted by November.

* (16:40)

Now, obviously, she has inside information that will assure that, and I know the hog producers certainly will see to it that she will be held accountable. But I can assure the members of the hog council, the hog producers of Manitoba, that with a change of government we will make sure of the fact that the moratorium will be lifted, and those barns will be, indeed, built and expanding those operations as well.

Mr. Speaker, I know the fact that this government has no vision for rural Manitoba. There are 59 boil water advisories within Manitoba, seven new—*[interjection]* We talked about it; you must have just got here late. The Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) must have missed the important part with regard to water regulations when we did talk about that.

I know the \$2.5 million is supposed to be a lot of money, a lot of money, Mr. Speaker, to go and input these new regulations. It's \$100 million, not 2.5, not \$2.5 million. It's \$100 million. We can't even get the city of Winnipeg done for \$2.5 million. We know that the realistic number is \$100 million, and \$2.5 million is actually, quite frankly, an insult to the producers of Manitoba.

Back to the boil water advisories, there are seven new in 2007. I'm certainly glad that the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) is here. She can address these issues. I know that she's very anxious to get up and talk about the boil water advisories within the province of Manitoba. I know today they announced a clean-up of some of those towns and villages. In fact, one of those villages was mine; it was Grosse Isle that they talked about this morning. I can assure you that this was on the wish list for a number of years. They've been promised since 1999 that these problems would be overcome. Unfortunately, they haven't.

We talk about BSE, Mr. Speaker. We talk about the four years of nothing accomplished by this NDP government. What they did do was put a backdoor tax on each and every farmer. They confiscated \$2 a

head off each and every producer for each number of head sold within the province of Manitoba. What they did do with that, they went out and claimed fame because 25 percent of the producers asked for their money back. Well, I can tell you, the farmers are just livid about the fact that this government—they do press release after press release, news articles, TV advertising, \$2.4 million just in the last bit, but they couldn't have the wisdom to advise the farmers that their money would be available to them for the \$2 checkoff, which was available to them for March 1.

So there are a number of producers that missed that opportunity because of lack of vision from this Province to see to it that the money would be refunded to them in a timely manner. I know those cheques will be coming once the election is called, which we think will be quite shortly. Those 25 percent that did apply for it, certainly, speak with their voices, and I know the producers that never got their money back, they will be speaking with their ballots, Mr. Speaker, because I know the number of hardships that are out there. They think that the BSE is over; it's certainly not.

I know that the minister has claim to fame with this Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council. They collected some \$625,000 off the checkoff, left them a net \$450,000, which eats up everything they have just in administration costs. The administrator is paid \$108,000 a year. There are two administrative staff. They have lights. They have heat. They have insurance. They have meeting costs. They have a board of directors that is headed by one Bill Uruski, a former minister of the NDP government. He gets paid \$360 a day for each day that he's out there. The board members get \$140 a day. Unfortunately, that doesn't leave anything left for the increase in slaughter capacity.

I know that it's embarrassing for the minister as she goes out and talks about the way that they have increased slaughter capacity. They have nothing to show for their record. Unfortunately, it's very upsetting for those people in rural Manitoba, and we, certainly, as a PC caucus and PC Party support our cattle producers, our people of rural Manitoba, wanting to make sure they are indeed going to be looked after.

I know we brought in a plan in 2003 and forwarded it to the government, and what did they do? They totally ignored it. That was a year of drought. The next year was a year of flooding. We've had four tough years in the agriculture sector.

What does this government do? It waits until they find out the ill-thought-out CAIS program is not working. In fact, they're going to be doing the same thing with the new improved income program that is being supported by the PC government, the federal government of Manitoba. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has not made a commitment, has not made a commitment to her 40 percent when it comes to their share of financing for the new improved program. We, certainly, encourage the minister to do her due diligence and make sure of the fact that the farmers in Manitoba are going to be looked after. I know there were a number of issues that were brought forward by the federal government, not only the Conservative governments but Liberal governments as well, and the minister never got onside with a number of those programs. So we lost some hundred million dollars for the farmers of Manitoba, and unfortunately that money will be gone forever. Certainly, she has an opportunity now to come good on those commitments to our producers within the province of Manitoba.

When we look at the overall finances of the government, they got some \$600 million in new spending and that they do a great job of. They spend and spend and spend some more until our children just won't be able to repay it. Our grandchildren won't be able to repay it. Our great-grandchildren won't be able to repay it, and I say shame on them.

I know the First Minister, the minister from Concordia, is always bragging about what a great job he does in getting new support in transfer payments from Ottawa. Well, I know his knees must be really sore from his begging, and I know that a PC government would make sure that we would indeed have a have province, not a have-not province, Mr. Speaker.

In closing, I know my time's just about up and how quick it goes when you're talking about issues that are important to all parties, all members of this House. I certainly know some of our members will not be coming back after the next election. I know that there'll be a lot of NDP members gone, and we certainly will make sure a number of those areas will be replaced with PC candidates.

I want to thank the people from Lakeside for their support and prayers. We certainly do encourage the future of Lakeside and also all the other constituencies to make sure that the government is changed. We certainly want to make sure that our

voices are heard and our change of government will come forward. We thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, as in the past, it's always a privilege to be able to stand and give my thoughts and express opinions on a budget or a Throne Speech. I've always argued in the past that my role is to ensure that government is as accountable as can be and part of that accountability is having the government come to the Legislature, sit inside the Assembly. I must say that it has been a bit of a challenge with this government in terms of respecting the importance that this Chamber plays in ensuring democracy, and start off by challenging the Premier (Mr. Doer) to do the right thing and to ensure that there is more accountability inside the Province of Manitoba.

With regard to the budget, Mr. Speaker, when you spend over \$9 billion I sure hope you're going to find a lot of good things that you can do for the province of Manitoba. There are many aspects of the budget that have very positive things. I think that right offhand I would acknowledge that fact, but on the other hand, there are other things within the budget which I would disagree with, things that I believe the government is moving in the wrong direction on. I want to spend some time on that particular issue.

When it comes to the amount of money that we're spending, you need to look at where we're getting our money from. I'm very much concerned just to the degree in which this government continues to rely on Ottawa funding so much of our programming, transferring over so many millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, to our province. A shift in attitude in Ottawa could have a dramatic negative impact on the province of Manitoba

We are more dependent on Ottawa than any other western province, and, ultimately, I think all Manitobans need to be concerned about the dependency factor that the Province of Manitoba has in regard to Ottawa. When you think of it in terms of how do you try to convey to the average Manitoban just how much more money this government spends, Mr. Speaker, one of the ways that I thought would be interesting is to look at a per capita basis in terms of Manitobans.

* (16:50)

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, when this Premier was the Leader of the Opposition the government of the day spent \$5,264.52 on every Manitoban?

Whether it was a newborn baby or it was a 92-year-old lovable senior, it was \$5,264. Today we spend \$8,090.36. That's an increase of \$2,825 on every person in the province of Manitoba. I believe if we had the resources and we were able to do a comparison, that that has got to be one of the highest, if not the highest, in terms of all governments in North America. Now, maybe the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) will be able to respond and indicate just how we do compare. All I know is that people don't mind paying taxes, but they want to see value for the taxes that are being collected. I don't believe that this government has delivered on value.

I don't say that lightly, Mr. Speaker, because this government made a commitment back in 1999, and I have in my hand the campaign brochure. The five commitments for you and your family are what this brochure states. The No. 1 commitment back in 1999, and I quote directly from the brochure: (1) We will end hallway medicine and rescue health care beginning by hiring more nurses and reopening hospital beds to reduce waiting lists.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to: We will end hallway medicine. Health care today is no better in the minds of most than it was in 1999. I'd like to convey to the Legislature, to the Chamber, a couple of recent pieces of correspondence that I have received, and I put the letters A and L because these individuals do not want to be identified.

It reads: My Doctor A sent me for an MRI in December 2006 for the left knee. I fell on the steps at school, October 4, '06. The MRI revealed that I have torn cartilage that needs surgery. Doctor A sent my file to Doctor L and a referral to Doctor L. I phoned three times since January 8, '07 to Doctor L's office. The secretary gave me a consultation appointment May 23, 2007. All these months I am limping on the job and everywhere. I need this surgery before spring.

Mr. Speaker, I had another letter that I just received in the last couple of days: I was admitted to the Seven Oaks Hospital, acute medicine, via the emergency department on March—and I blanked out the date because, again, I don't want necessarily the person to be identified—2007 for IV antibiotic treatment. I would like to share with you my observations I made during my hospitalization. The physical cleanliness of my hospital room was disappointingly, almost alarmingly poor. The bathroom I shared with a 93-year-old male smelled strongly of urine. My first request to a housekeeping

staffperson for a cleaner bathroom resulted in no improvement smell-wise. My second request to a nursing assistant was well received, and she began an immediate gathering of tools and spray bottles of cleaning fluid. The new Swiffer-style mop would not work, so the kind, young woman used a towel to wipe by hand. I saw how dirtied and black the towel was before she quickly refolded. The toilet and surrounding walls no longer smelled of urine. I only left my hospital room for three- or five-minute walks and observed the hospital room dry-mopped once. The floor was never wet-mopped. I knocked my eyeglasses off the tray table onto the floor and had to search beside and under the bed by hand, feeling for glasses. The floor was so dirty that I used a facecloth to sweep gently over the floor. It came away filled with fluff and dirt. Although I have not been admitted to a medical ward in about 26 to 27 years, I've had several surgeries. Many of my surgical procedures have been day surgery with the most recent at Seven Oaks Hospital. My experience at Seven Oaks day surgery was far surpassed at the Health Sciences women's centre. The organization, patient care and compassion were excellent in action.

Mr. Speaker, I bring these two letters in particular for one purpose. The government has missed the mark. On the most important things to Manitoba, our public health care system, the government has failed. They like to believe that, because they're New Democrats, they own the issue. Well, the government is wrong. The NDP have proven themselves to be an absolute and total failure in protecting public health care in the province of Manitoba.

As opposed to ensuring that we had more bedside health care being delivered, what we have seen is the greatest increase in health care bureaucracy that has never happened to the degree in which it has happened under this administration. As they continue to feed the millions, the tens of millions into the health care bureaucracy, the front-line health care workers in our hospitals are being asked to do things which they shouldn't have to be doing. They are being asked, and they're being pushed, because they don't have the numbers at the bedside care.

My challenge to this government, Mr. Speaker, is to be open in the process, to challenge the government to invest those tax dollars into the delivery of health care inside our hospital facilities, inside our walk-in clinics, to look at how home care services can be expanded to ensure that we're

delivering not only better quality service to patients or clients but we're also saving tax dollars. There is a better way.

What this government has shown over the last seven years is that they don't understand the concept. They do not understand the concept. They fuel bureaucratic administration costs like no other government in North America, Mr. Speaker, and it's sad to see that they have neglected health care to the degree in which they have. They know it's the case, and the reason why they know that is because now they want a review. They want a review, but they don't want a review that will be public, that's open to the public. They've made it a closed-door review because they have sensed the frustration of the health care workers, but instead of trying to fix the problem, they've sugar-coated some sort of an artificial review in which they'll be able to do what it is that they want to do at the end of the day.

I believe that the only way we are going to ensure that there is going to be a better health care system in the province of Manitoba is to ensure that more Liberal MLAs get elected in the next provincial election, Mr. Speaker. That is the only way in which we're going to ensure that there's quality, better health care delivery to all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about crime. This government, again, has missed the mark on crime. There's no province in Canada that has the vehicle thefts in the numbers that we are experiencing in the province of Manitoba, and I will tell this government that the individuals, those 200-to-300 youth that are stealing so many of our cars, thousands every year, are doing more than just stealing vehicles. They are breaking into homes. They are selling dope. There are all sorts of other crimes that these youth are causing, and instead of trying to come up with programs, or instead of ensuring that the society is being protected, this government has sat back and done nothing other than talk, and talk is cheap.

Mr. Speaker, they'll say, go to Ottawa. Well, this is a made-in-Manitoba problem. Manitoba's the only province that is experiencing the problem that we have in regard to automobile theft; no other province, just Manitoba, and this government has failed on the issue of automobile theft.

Why do we not have more bait cars, or why do we not have electronic ankle bracelets, Mr. Speaker? Why don't we have a more active government, a more proactive government getting tough on the

crimes that are affecting Manitobans every day? But this government sits back and does nothing other than issue out press releases talking tough, but in reality, they have failed, and they have failed miserably, on addressing the issue of crime on the streets of the city of Winnipeg.

Again, if we want to start to see results in terms of a government that's going to be more accountable, one of the things that has to happen is we need a premier and we need a minister of justice that are committed to listening to what Manitobans are really saying, Mr. Speaker. Stop the talk, and let's start seeing the walk. Let's start seeing action that's going to be effective and protect the citizens of our province. Don't make the victims, victims again, and that's what this government has done.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about poverty, poverty in this government's approach, again. You know, poverty, like health care, the NDP like to stake claim that they are the only party that can deal with issues of health care and poverty. Well, like health care, poverty, once again, clearly demonstrates the failure of this government. This government has not dealt with the issue of poverty.

* (17:00)

The number of children, Mr. Speaker, that are out there today that are living in poverty, living in conditions that are absolutely and totally unacceptable, is something that has to be addressed. Over the next few years, my constituents willing, I plan on addressing that issue in a far more aggressive way because I believe that this government is more concerned about being politically correct than it is about dealing with the issue of poverty with our children. We have brought forward initiatives. I brought forward a private member's bill to deal with fetal alcohol syndrome and this government all but ignored the issue. It wasn't going to cost the taxpayers any money; it would have ensured more education on the issue. What this government did? It did nothing. It ignored the issue.

Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. This government has failed on the issue of fighting poverty, and if they believe that they've been effective I would challenge any one of them to take a walk in some of our communities. Take a walk and you'll see first-hand the type of conditions that our children are having to live in. It is disgraceful, and this government has done nothing to be able to try to minimize that disgrace.

Mr. Speaker, I can talk about "Spirited Energy" and where it is this government spends its money. This government has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on converting our buffalo into a bull. Have you seen our new logo? It looks more like a bull on steroids than a buffalo. I don't even think this government knows what a buffalo looks like. We spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on that initiative. Oh, what a burner of an idea that was. How many millions of dollars are we spending on the promotion of "Spirited Energy"?

What a cobweb the government has put together, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the—well, the private sector is contributing millions and hundreds of thousands of dollars, and we find out that it's all donations of kind. It includes the corporations. This government has spent more money on self-promotion than any other government, I believe, in recent history. They have spent millions of dollars in this last year on different campaigns to try to make the government look good. I give the government full credit on its ability to spin. But I believe Manitobans are catching on. I'm telling you that there is more and more a mood for change. I welcome that change and Manitobans are going to be demanding it. There is going to be a change. I can see less orange in south Winnipeg, I can see less orange in Brandon, I can see less orange in all regions of the province of Manitoba because Manitobans are starting to recognize the need for change. You know, the New Democratic Party, it might be known as the nose-dive party after this election. But we'll wait and see.

Mr. Speaker, I raise the issue of Manitoba Public Insurance. Millions of dollars, the province is just sitting on millions of dollars through MPI. They're not issuing out the cheques. I heard that lame answer from the minister responsible earlier today in Question Period. What a joke. I believe those cheques could have been and should have been issued out weeks ago. But, no, this Premier (Mr. Doer) wants to see it coincide with a possible election. Well, again, they expect that they're going to be able to fool Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I could talk about the Crocus Investment Fund. What an absolute and total disaster. People's lives have been affected and individuals like Pat Jacobsen fired because she had some thoughts. We have seen tens of thousands of Manitobans' interests forgotten in favour of their own political self-serving interests. Tens of thousands of Manitobans have lost millions, millions of dollars and this government stood on the side and

misinformed. We all heard of the big lie. Well, I'm telling you, this is starting to borderline on that particular issue. We now know, only because of a leaked document, a leaked Cabinet document that clearly shows that the government knew back in 2000 about the Crocus file. This government did nothing, nothing at all to protect the integrity of the Crocus Fund. It chose instead to defend its own. It put the political interests of the Premier and this government ahead of the Crocus shareholders and Manitobans. Those 33,000-plus are not going to forget when it comes time to vote because I'm going to ensure that the constituents that I represent, that those that invested in Crocus—and there were many of them—that they're aware that the government could have done something, but it dropped the ball. They can say what they will, but that's the reality. The government dropped the ball.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about lip service from the government, and it's in regard to immigration. Immigration is very, very important to the constituency which I represent, in fact to the entire province of Manitoba. The Provincial Nominee Program was a program that was brought in by Jean Chrétien and the former government. It was a federal Liberal initiative which enabled provinces to be able to bring more immigrants to their respective provinces. The Province of Manitoba at the time was one of the first to join in, and I give credit to the Conservatives for joining in as quickly as they did, but there is a need for making some changes, some reforms, that would even make the program better.

One of the petitions that I've read deals with that change and I encourage the government to be more sensitive and listen to Manitobans and listen to what some of those changes could be. Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) is in an interesting spot. Being the Premier of the province, he gets the privilege to appoint Cabinet, and I am very disappointed in the Cabinet, the selection, and, more specifically, the individuals who have not been appointed to Cabinet. The Premier has had the opportunity to appoint members of the Filipino community or the East Indian community to Cabinet, and this government, this Premier, has chosen not to do that. I believe that the Premier owes an explanation as to why he has not looked, whether it's at Wellington, The Maples or Radisson and felt it fit enough to make one of those individuals a Cabinet minister.

These are communities that have great potential and the abilities are there. They are just as

competent, Mr. Speaker, as anyone else inside in this Chamber, but the Premier has chosen to exclude them from Cabinet, and I believe that that is a mistake. At the end of the day, this Premier is going to regret not recognizing the important role that, in particular, those two communities could have played in the last six, seven years inside this Chamber, had they been involved and sat around the Cabinet table. I await, and I know that the Premier has staff who go through and listen and there's a majority of the NDP caucus who are here now. I challenge the Premier to explain to this Chamber why the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), the Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos) and the Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub), any one of the three, have been excluded from his government's Cabinet table.

He's been the Premier for many years. Why have they been excluded? I think he owes those communities an explanation, Mr. Speaker, because I'll tell you, one of the greatest issues facing the immigrant community today is immigrant credentials. We see far too many immigrants who come to our country, in particular to Manitoba, who have the ability to do so much more, but for whatever reasons their credentials are not recognized.

This government periodically says, well, we're doing this; we're doing that. We've recognized a few here; we've recognized a few there. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to suggest to you that it's time that Manitoba established an immigrant credentials advocate office in the province of Manitoba. We need to be more proactive. It's not acceptable to have a doctor, a medical doctor, who could be delivering babies selling furniture because even though he's delivered babies in India, hundreds of babies, but he doesn't qualify to be able to deliver babies in the province of Manitoba. How many nurses do we see in the province today who could be practising and using the skills that they have from abroad?

Mr. Speaker, the government has failed and they have failed miserably in recognizing the credentials of immigrants. The Premier (Mr. Doer) himself has set the example by excluding the Member for Radisson, the Member for Wellington, and the Member for—I'm missing another one. Radisson, Wellington—*[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: Inkster.

* (17:10)

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, Inkster is not eligible for that. Not today, but it will be. Rossmere, Wellington and The Maples, Mr. Speaker. Those are the three constituencies. He has set the example. When I go to the doors, and when I get the immigrant community—and it goes beyond immigrant communities. Mainstream—everyone wants to see the credentials get recognized. I am disappointed that the Premier (Mr. Doer) does not value the recognition of that to the degree in which I believe the Premier could.

But we're still not too late, Mr. Speaker. The Premier, if he wanted to, could make a Cabinet change before the election call. We're still not too late. The Premier could establish an immigrant credentials advocacy office. So if the Premier really wanted to do something, he now cannot say that the issue has not been brought to his attention.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to talk about agriculture. As a person that appreciates the importance of our agricultural community, I want to express a lost opportunity. It was the BSE crisis that was so devastating to the cattle industry in the province of Manitoba. I would have thought that a New Democratic government would have been aggressive at establishing a slaughter industry in order to protect the cattle industry—at least, attempt to—in the province of Manitoba. There was an opportunity. The Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) says the attempt was there. I don't believe there was an attempt, because if there was an attempt, I am very disappointed in the results. You lost an opportunity. There was an opportunity to ensure that Manitoba had a slaughter industry. Other provinces, Saskatchewan and Alberta, were able to expand their industries, but not Manitoba. I suspect because this particular government is not sensitive to the needs of rural Manitobans and the needs that they would like in certain areas.

The environment is also an issue that I want to briefly comment on. It's an issue in which maybe I'm not as strong as I could be. I respect the fact that my leader is a very strong advocate and sets, I believe, the stage by example. Whether it's the vehicle he drives, to the dishwasher soap that he uses, to his debates and discussions, not only inside the Chamber but outside the Chamber, in regard to Lake Winnipeg, and the passion that he has in regard to Lake Winnipeg. I believe that there are things that we can be doing, Mr. Speaker.

I am concerned about levies. I don't know how effective levies are compared to having rebates or the bottle collections. If you go around and collect a bottle, you return it to the store and you get a nickel or you get two cents. The tin cans, and what happens, a lot of people would collect tin cans, they bring them to Saskatchewan where they can actually get some sort of a refund on the tin cans. Mr. Speaker, my point is, I think there is a lot that we could be doing that would make a difference. We need to be doing just that.

I am concerned about overspending. Whether it's the floodway, tens of millions of dollars overspent. Whether it's the Manitoba Hydro building, again, tens of millions of dollars being overspent. I don't believe this government is a good manager of the tax dollars, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans don't mind paying taxes as long as they feel that their taxes are being spent wisely and being spent smarter. I think the government has been a disappointment in respect to that.

Mr. Speaker, we have legislation that is now coming before us, the holiday that has now been designated for February. It was interesting to see the response when the Leader of the Liberal Party made reference to having a half day and how my leader was soundly criticized by the government for suggesting that we even look at a half day. Well, due to a radio program we now have a government that says, oh, yes, it's politically saleable now; let's make it happen, and assume whatever credit we can. Let's incorporate the schools into this particular plan.

Why didn't they incorporate the schools on the drafting of our new logo, Mr. Speaker? We'd probably still have a buffalo as opposed to a bull as a symbol, but, no, whatever that day is going to be, family day, multicultural day, you know there are plenty of days that we could name it after. You know the bill's brought in just in time, hopefully, to generate some good positive press coverage for the NDP and they've been successful. The spin doctors have been effective. The money that they spend on their spin doctors has been well worth it, but if you dig a little deep you'll find a lot of problems.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to conclude my remarks by saying, you spend \$9 billion, there's going to be a lot of positive things. There are 34 NDP MLAs who will stand up and talk the wonders of the budget and how wonderful the budget is, so I felt it was more important for me to give a perspective from an opposition point of view and say

to this government, get off your high horse; you're really not doing that good of a job.

Manitobans deserve better and I believe whenever the Premier (Mr. Doer) has the courage to call the election that we're going to see the NDP take that nosedive because Manitobans are sensing the need for change. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to just put a few comments on the record regarding the budget that was presented to the province of Manitoba just a few days ago.

I'm going to just give a few third-party quotes as to what the general public out there were thinking about the budget itself. I see this one that was in the *Winnipeg Sun*. It said: "Election stinkaroo," for instance. It follows on the theme that one of my colleagues was talking about last week, but, anyway, just to quote some of the comments that were made: As pre-election budgets go, the Doer government's fiscal blueprint tabled in the Legislature yesterday was a stinker. I was expecting bold moves of some kind, anything, a provincial sales tax cut, the removal of school taxes off property bills, slashing income tax by 30 percent, something that the Premier could take to voters and say, hey, I'm doing something for you. What did we get instead? It was the same ho-humdrum provincial budget we get every year from these guys.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's just one of the comments that's out there, and we've had a fair debate within this Legislature about whether the taxes are going up or they're going down or what's happening to the taxes out there. A colleague of mine the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) indicated so clearly the fact that registration fees have gone up on vehicles from—they've gone up by \$23 to register your car.

The other one is from the Justice Department. Two years ago they were \$5. Now they're up to \$35. You take the PST and I'm sure all of us have to and need to occasionally use accountants or lawyers or engineers, architects. Well, anyway, they were mandated in the year 2003 to add sales tax to whatever they did.

So we see a government here who is money hungry. They continue to add taxes and they say on the one hand that they are actually lowering taxes, but the bottom line is that we're paying more taxes as time is going on.

So what did the president of the Business Council of Manitoba say? He said the major story is the 10.1 percent increase in transfers from Ottawa, so we should all stand up, look east, salute the Canadian flag and sing "O Canada!". That's another reality that has taken place.

Another comment that's out there that was in the papers and this again from third party, from people who are looking and taking a good, good view of the budget as was presented: flush with cash, empty on ideas. Mr. Speaker, we know that the revenues, the cash that this government has is unprecedented, never been this high before.

* (17:20)

Then another comment that was made and this was made in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on Thursday, April 5: "A timid blueprint—NDP is expert at thinking inside the box." Mr. Speaker, we, as legislators, as MLAs, we are elected to think outside, to give some new thinking to the province of Manitoba. What did he say about it? He said, "No matter how you cut it, the 2007 provincial budget delivered yesterday at the Manitoba Legislature is" a triumph—of what?—"of thinking 'inside the box'."

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the comments that have been made by third parties out there. I would like to submit to you that there are a broad range of issues that are impacting the province of Manitoba in terms of where we stand today. We're looking to the government and to the Finance Minister in this budget for more decisive action in some of the areas that are a concern to regular Manitobans, to Manitoba families, to young people who are making their decisions about where they are going to live, work, invest, and raise their family.

Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded of a comment that was made. I know that the Premier (Mr. Doer) was out and speaking to Manitobans just last week and saying how they had kept all of their promises. Well, let me just remind him of the one that he made in 1999, that in six months and with \$15 million, he would fix the health care system. What a sham. What an irresponsible statement.

Mr. Speaker, how about in the year 2000, October 13? In my area, the Health Minister—this government fired 500 nurses. I have a contract. I have a letter with me here today which came from one of the nurses. Five hundred were fired. Unbelievable. Do they really think that Manitobans are so ignorant and do not know what's taken place?

Do they take them to be fools? This is what the NDP are hoping is going to take place, but they themselves fired nurses. The Conference Board of Canada has ranked Manitoba 10th out of 10 when it comes to health care.

Now, let's look a little bit at job creation. Statistics Canada last week found that Manitoba is seventh place in the country when it comes to job creation, having created half the jobs of the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we can do much, much better. With the kind of revenues that we have within this province, we are capable of doing a lot better.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to spend a few minutes just talking about the area that I represent, the communities of Morden, of Winkler, then, of course, the surrounding municipality, the R.M. of Stanley, Manitou, La Rivière. These are all growing communities. Morden grew at a rate of 6.7 percent. This is a community that continues to grow and to attract newcomers. They have a good mix of people moving into the community.

As I have said numerous times, they are in dire need of replacement of their personal care home. Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation, a responsibility to the elderly in our community who have helped to make sure that our community has had a good base so that they could continue to grow and attract people. We now, as a province, as a government, need to do our part to give them the opportunity to live out the balance of their lives in dignity by providing for them a new Tabor Home. With this obligation should come the funding that is required to care for our aged. It has been drawn to my attention that the personal care homes in my constituency do not get funded on an equal basis as other personal care homes in the province. Again, there should be consistency throughout the province. It is the provincial government's responsibility to provide that funding, and the budget was silent on that topic.

Talking about Morden, we have an attraction there that is second to none within this province: the museum, the fossils that have been found within the area. It took several years, and finally last year, I must indicate that the highways department did finally allow signs to be put in place which show that if you travel in a certain direction, there is a museum and there are fossils out there. These are fossils that, as I say, would rival what they have in a museum, would rival what they have in Drumheller. So we

have the opportunity to showcase Manitoba, to showcase the community of Morden. Yet, though, it's been next to impossible to get any recognition of that from the current government.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the city of Winkler. They had a growth rate of 14.6 percent last year. They also have needs that need to be supported by the provincial government. Again, the budget was silent in addressing any of those needs. I know the minister of highways has heard me numerous times talk about Highway 32. Now this was promised in 1999. The NDP took that recommendation by the highways department off the books, and now it isn't even in the 10-year plan. This is unacceptable. This community continues to grow, continues to contribute to the economic base of Manitoba, yet very few resources come back to the community.

Mr. Speaker, when talking about Highway 32, there are changes that could be made, but somehow we are fixated with the idea that there's only one way that we can put that Highway 32 through the city of Winkler, which is again, I repeat, a provincial highway. It is a provincial responsibility. Yet there is no give at all on this one. The department, through the direction of the minister of highways and transportation, is not prepared to look at it and so the community continues to struggle. I must say that there are over 16,000 cars that pass through the city of Winkler on this highway on a daily basis, and there are numerous accidents that have taken place.

Then, Mr. Speaker, surrounding the city of Winkler, the community of Morden, the town of Morden is the R.M. of Stanley, and this rural municipality is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. They had a growth rate 24 percent last year. And again, there are numerous things that these communities have in common that they need, and these are again responsibilities as they pertain to the Province of Manitoba, to the provincial funding. I'm sure that the members in this Legislature have been following what has taken place within these communities, but just a few months ago the communities, through the Pembina Valley water resources, were looking for water to be piped into these communities. And yet, though, in a stalling tactic, the government took the approach that the best thing to do was to just end the hearings, to not allow this to take place. But we do need water so that these communities can continue to grow. We need good, potable water.

Now there's another way that we could go when you start looking at water, and I've always been a proponent of the Pembina dam. It's an opportunity for us to, rather, just ship all the water to the Red River and then to Lake Winnipeg, to hold some of this water back, and I know that, in my discussions with my counterparts from the U.S., there is a recognition of an opportunity to build two dams along the Pembina River, one just north of the U.S. border and then one just a little closer to Valhalla. There are good opportunities to do this. We need to avail ourselves of those opportunities. But yet, somehow we're so fixated in areas, such as the problems that originate in—as perceived at Devils Lake, that we forget about some of the things right locally. Talking about the Pembina dam that I really feel should be constructed, we spend millions and a billion dollars on a floodway system—and, yes, the city needs that—but the fact that \$60 million of that was taken and sent to the union buddies in the south is unacceptable. We are squandering money when we could be using this for water retention within our own province.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to represent these communities in the Manitoba Legislature. They continue to contribute to the economic, social, educational, cultural, spiritual base in this wonderful province. They are proud of their contributions. However, they feel that they are being neglected by this government. They are prepared to contribute their fair share. However, you cannot continue to take and then give very little back. These are growing communities, and they have numerous things in common. We have a good mix of young and older people moving into our communities. Stresses are being placed, as I indicated before, on our water supply. It would appear that the provincial government, under the direction of the NDP premier, feels that the best way to curtail growth is to cut off the water supply. This budget did nothing to address this issue at all.

* (17:30)

Then, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the education system within our province, and I see the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) is here and I want to indicate that, yes, we have gotten one new school, the Emerado Centennial School. However, when that school was occupied, we still had over 800 students in huts. I would say it's a problem, and yet, on the other hand, I would say that it's a good problem to have. We have growth within our community. However, it is unacceptable to have that

number of students in huts. The huts are nice, however with this do not come the adequate facilities of washrooms and, of course, the gym facilities that they need so badly. So I know that the minister is listening, and I know that we will be receiving another school and an expansion to our high school which we need desperately. I mean, this is the future of the province of Manitoba, the young people who are out there, and we want to continue to give them the facilities that they need so badly.

This NDP government continues to take advantage of our community when it comes to funding for people with disabilities. Why is the funding not consistent throughout this province? Our communities should receive the same amount as other communities. I do, however, want to thank the board, the staff and the communities in the way that they continue to fund those who are disadvantaged. They fill that gap which is really the responsibility of this government.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I just want to indicate that I am pleased to represent the Morden, the Winkler, the R.M. of Stanley, the R.M. of Pembina, Manitou, La Rivière. These are growing communities. They are doing an excellent job in the work that they are doing. However, I feel that it is a responsibility of this government, with the amount of money that they have received through taxes generated by people within this province, the industrious people within the province. They have received unprecedented taxes, from the transfers of course that have come from the federal government, up 10.1 percent from where they were, and they continue to grow, and somehow we have a government here who is happy at being a have-not province. We have such potential within this province that I believe that we can do more, and we can do much better than what we have done.

So, again, I want to thank you for this opportunity to put a few comments on the record, and thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the work that you continue to do.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I'm pleased to rise just to add my comments to our latest budget. One, Mr. Speaker, that I'll start off by saying that I'm quite proud of in the work that our Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has done in bringing this budget to the people of Manitoba, and for the initiatives that we have taken in this budget, of being agents of change and improvement in the quality of life and conditions for all Manitobans.

But, first, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome you back, Sir, and for the guidance that you have shown to members of this Chamber and for the guidance that you have provided and shown to me over my years here, and I really appreciate those comments and those words that you have had in past, and I look forward to many more days in the future with you in the Chair.

I would also like to thank the members of the Chamber staff that are here with us today. I've always been quite impressed with the high quality of the young people that we bring to this Chamber and the work they do on behalf of the members of the Assembly day in and day out and for the skills that they display here. I'm quite proud and I say quite openly that we have had very good fortune over my years here, at least that the pages that we have had to service in this Chamber, and I know that the future of Manitoba is quite bright looking at the leadership of the pages, at least if they're representative of the youth of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I know that we have some returning members of the table officers here in the Chamber and, of course, for new staff that have joined us here and I'm welcoming the new staff as they continue to help and assist members of the Assembly in the performance of their daily duties.

I'd like to also, in tribute to the retiring members of the Assembly, in particular, the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), and perhaps other members of the Conservative caucus that may be retiring here in the coming days and weeks ahead, I'd like to pay tribute to those members and, in particular, the Member for Emerson who has announced that he is not retiring. Of course, I know that we have had our disagreements in the past, but I do wish him well because I think that he has performed his duties on behalf of the members of his constituency to the best of his ability. This is, obviously, not an easy life that we lead here in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) thinks it's easy, but I wish him well in his duties in opposition. I wish him a long life in opposition, for that matter. So I wish the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) and other members of this Assembly that may be retiring, I wish them well in their future endeavours, and for the service that they have provided on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

We could not perform our daily functions and duties in this Chamber, or as a part of government, without the thousands of Manitobans that work for

government and government services, and inside this Chamber as well, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the members of the Civil Service that continue to perform those duties in each and every department that forms a part of our provincial government function and offices.

I want to add some comments, Mr. Speaker, about our budget and, of course, talk a bit about some of the priority issues. I know that the Leader of the Opposition and members of the Conservative Party have not seen fit to keep health care as a priority. I'm not sure why they made that change, but I still continue, and our government still continues, to see health care as the high priority, No. 1 priority of Manitobans. We have continued to make our investments as a government into health care, as you've seen by the recent announcements. *[interjection]* Yes, and we helped the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) with respect to some announcements that we have made for his community, as well, in so many different areas of government. It goes to show you, and to members opposite, that we don't play favourites in government, and that we like to make sure that our services are spread across the various constituencies of our province. It's a good, balanced and fair government working for the benefit of all Manitobans, not just a select few.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there's been much said over my years here in this Chamber with respect to—and I recall, I know, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has used this language in the past when he referred to the dark days of the 1990s. I believe it was the doctors of this province that talked about the dark days of the 1990s wherein we lost some 120 doctors in this province, and negotiations were not going well.

We had a nurses' strike in this province during the 1990s. I remember walking the picket line with the nurses, Mr. Speaker. That was a very cold and dark day in this province when those events were occurring. We lost some 1,600 nurses in this province as a result of the Conservative government actions where they actually fired the nurses, and those nurses were lost to the people of Manitoba.

I was quite proud of the fact that our Minister of Health of the day and our Minister of Finance and our Premier saw that health care was the No. 1 concern and priority of Manitobans. We started to take steps to turn that big ship around, to head it in the right direction with respect to the health care

services in our province, and we started by initiating the nurse training program that brought back the two-year diploma program. We've now graduated some 1,600. So we're just back at the starting point of all the nurses that were lost under the Tories. We've now just recovered those nurses back into our system, but we still have some more work to do with respect to training, and that's why we're graduating over 700 nurses a year. Our retention rate is very, very high, keeping those nurses working for the benefit of all Manitobans. We're quite proud that those nurses continue, those young people continue to train for nursing positions and stay working in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I know that our Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has made announcements with respect to training of doctors. Everyone knows that it takes anywhere from seven to 10 years to train a doctor, depending on the specialty that the doctor would enrol in. We're now at the just seven-and-a-half year mark of our government, and we are now just at the point where we're starting to see some benefits of our doctors that are getting ready to enter into service here in the province of Manitoba. I believe that we have now increased our doctor training spaces from, I think it was 35 training spaces here in the province of Manitoba, and we're up to 100 training spaces now. We now have graduated 180 more doctors in the province of Manitoba and about 200 more technologists to operate the equipment and perform the functions in the health care system, but there is still more work to do.

* (17:40)

I know Concordia Hospital, which is a community hospital that services my part of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, is going through some renovations, and that we have made an investment into the emergency services department of Concordia Hospital, and that is moving forward. I had the opportunity to join with the Minister of Health just a short time ago at the announcement with respect to the training of more emergency room doctors in the province and the investment that our government has made into emergency doctor training here in the province of Manitoba. I had a chance to talk to one of those emergency room doctors at that particular announcement, and got some advice with respect to things that we're doing. That doctor was there because he believed that we were making the right investment and encouraging people to go into emergency doctor training.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also quite proud of the fact that our government has also seen fit to invest in the Health Sciences Centre, over \$100 million of investment into the new Health Sciences Centre expansion project. Of course, as a part of that particular facility, we have made an investment in the burn unit. I know that one Martin Johnson, who is a constituent of mine in my community, is the leader, the only sole remaining leader of the original leader of the Firefighters Burn Fund in the province of Manitoba. I am quite proud of the fact that Mr. Johnson has been recognized for those efforts in this past year and has received the Order of Manitoba. Mr. Martin had the opportunity to join with the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) recently at the grand opening, ribbon cutting for the new Firefighters Burn Unit in the Health Sciences Centre. I had a chance to tour that facility and to see the wonderful new facility and the brand new equipment that's there and the investment that our government has made to assist burn patients and victims with their very, very serious injuries, and for the very, very solid foundation and work that the firefighters continue to perform on behalf of Manitobans day in and day out, including investments into the burn unit and the direction that they provide.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit, because I don't want to go on at length, with respect to the initiatives of our government, while trying to touch on some of the highlights. Our government talked about investing into the education system of our province, that we would fund education at the growth of the economy of our province. We have done exceedingly well, I might add, with respect to our investments in public education in our province. In fact, this year the Minister of Education announced, I think it was 3.3-percent increase in funding for our public schools in our province here. I know the school division of which my community is a part, the River East Transcona School Division, was a benefactor of that. I remember back in the dark Tory days of the 1990s, when we saw minus 2, minus 2 and minus 2, and then zero in the election year as the Minister of Education—

An Honourable Member: No, they did increase it in the election year.

Mr. Reid: Oh, perhaps they did increase it by 1 percent in the election year, but I seem to recall that my division got zero in the election year, but, overall, other divisions, perhaps Tory divisions might have received some funding increases in

education during the 1990s. But, during our government, Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has provided increases in public education every year of our administration, something that I am very proud of, and the fact that it has benefited so many families, working families in our province.

I know the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) recently announced that we have invested, I think it's \$185 million into new schools capital program—

An Honourable Member: A hundred and thirty-five.

Mr. Reid: One hundred and thirty-five, Mr. Speaker, considerably more than all of the Tory years combined. I know that there was an announcement as a part of that package that one of the three high schools in my community will be receiving some funding with respect to their operations and expansion of the opportunities for the young people of my community. We have, for the eighth year in a row, frozen the tuition at 10 percent reduction. This has provided a significant opportunity for young people. Our enrolment in our colleges and universities has increased considerably.

The fact that young people are staying and working here in the province of Manitoba and that we have an expanding population here in Manitoba speaks well to the policies that our government has brought forward to encourage our young people to not only complete their education here, but, at the same time, to continue living here after they've completed their education. We have provided the incentives to encourage that to occur.

Mr. Speaker, I know I listened to some of the debate with respect to education. I won't go on at length for all of the initiatives that we have done. I'll talk about the taxation component of education in a few moments, but we have done a considerable amount in education to help our young people. We have expanded our apprenticeship and training programs in the province of Manitoba here. We expanded our college spaces for training for the apprenticeship program, obviously giving new opportunities. We have built the downtown campus of the Red River College, which provides not only new growth in the downtown area of Winnipeg, but new opportunity for our young people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite during their speeches have talked considerably about how proud the Tories are, the Conservatives are, in the fact that they have sold the

Manitoba Telephone System. Just this past week—and I find it distressing that the Tories, although I am not so concerned by the fact that they're finally coming out of the closet, so to speak, and talking about the sale of the telephone system and the fact that they have sold the telephone system, which they are now openly admitting to and taking responsibility for, which, I guess, is the first step on the way to recovery with respect to the sale of the telephone system, but I had the opportunity in the last week to talk to folks that work as a part of the MTS system, for the few folks that are remaining in the province of Manitoba. They recall the dark Tory days of the 1990s just prior to the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System or, as I should say, the robbery or the outright theft of the telephone system from the people of Manitoba.

When we used to have some 33 offices around the province of Manitoba where MTS employees would work and those folks would be living in those communities, providing economic opportunities for those 33 communities of Manitoba, I'm told, Mr. Speaker, now that we're down to two remaining offices, two remaining offices in the province of Manitoba that MTS continues to operate. All of those other jobs were lost to the rural communities. So the folks over in the Conservative benches that always talk a good talk about how they want to increase rural opportunities and economic incentives for rural Manitoba, decimated those rural communities when they took those offices out of those rural communities and the devastation that it caused.

Now, we see, Mr. Speaker, now that MTS is combined with Allstream, the decisions are now being made with respect to—the investment decisions in MTS are now being made south of the border in the U.S. We have U.S. ownership and control of the Manitoba Telephone System. I think that this was the wrong decision for the Conservative Party to make. But I'm glad that they've actually come forward now and admitted or taken responsibility with respect to the sale of the telephone system. I can tell you, and I ensure members of the Conservative Party, that we will be talking more about this in the coming election campaign to remind Manitobans of the changes and not only the loss of jobs, in the loss of decision making here in Manitoba, but also the movement of those profits down south and the raising of the rates, the telephone rates, for Manitobans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, also, as a part of our government, we have taken decisions working with Manitoba Hydro, a corporation that we're very proud

of and for the work that Manitoba Hydro has done in this province with respect to conservation. I know Hydro has made some investments through its greening programs in my own community, as they have done in so many other communities around the province of Manitoba, and they have undertaken conservation programs, saving many thousands of megawatts of electricity that can then be sold to our customers elsewhere in North America.

We have invested, through Manitoba Hydro, in partnership with other companies, into wind energy, and we have, through our minister, made further investments, or about to make further investments, with respect to wind energy and other—I believe it's a thousand megawatts of wind energy that we're looking to expand. Wuskwatim hydro-electric dam is now underway. Construction into that site is underway, and we'll be starting the dam site very shortly. Having had a chance to fly over it not too long ago in one of my visits north, Mr. Speaker, I had a chance to see that particular site. We're proud of the fact that Hydro is building a state-of-the-art, energy-efficient building in downtown Winnipeg, helping again to rejuvenate the core of Winnipeg and creating more opportunities in construction for the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) when he talked about Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, and I want to share with him the fact that he says that Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation is not investing in the people of Manitoba. We have nearly \$400 million of investment, of funds that have stayed in the province of Manitoba, being invested into our municipalities, our universities, our schools and our hospitals here in the province of Manitoba. We are proud of the investment that Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation is making into the province of Manitoba in so many different ways. We have investments by MPI into bait cars in the province here in Manitoba. We have the fact that Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, the only insurance company in all of Canada, and perhaps all of North America, that has invested in the vehicle immobilizer program here in the province of Manitoba, a \$50-million investment that we are taking steps to make sure that vehicle theft is reduced here in the province of Manitoba. We have invested through Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, and our government, combined in a partnership together with the Winnipeg Police to be involved in the monitoring of repeat vehicle-theft offenders here in the province of

Manitoba. *[interjection]* How is that working? It's starting to work. It's starting to take effect.

* (17:50)

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite say that the immobilizer program is not having any impact. In fact, I know the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) says that we shouldn't be involved in the immobilizer program here in the province of Manitoba. Now, I don't know why he would say that because I think that prevention is the first step. But there are many things that we have taken initiatives on to prevent automobile theft here in the province of Manitoba. Don't get too worried. There'll be other announcements in the coming days with respect to the steps that we are taking.

We had an announcement today from the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) with further investments by MPI into the trucking industry and training of people to work in that particular industry, Mr. Speaker. In seven of the last eight years, we have had rate rebates and reductions here in the province of Manitoba. In fact, I know the Member for Inkster talked about the rebate coming. This will be the third rebate Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation has provided to the people of Manitoba during our term of government. So Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation is taking steps to make sure that they play an active role in the quality of life for all Manitobans, and we are proud of that corporation.

I'll go on now and talk a bit about the taxes and the budget directly, Mr. Speaker. We have, through this budget and past budgets, reduced our middle-income taxes from just a touch over 16 percent when we first came into government, and we've now announced that they're now being reduced down to 12.75 percent. This government has reduced, year over year, the education support levy tax on property in this province. We have now eliminated the education support levy tax, one of the two education taxes in this province. We have announced previously that we have taken the property tax credit from \$250 up to \$400, and, in this budget, we are taking it now to \$525. To my way of thinking, that's a fair and balanced way to provide support to the property taxpayers, the education taxpayers of this province because the folks in the middle and low incomes of this province will be the ones who will be the greatest benefactors of that. It not only be the homeowners, but it'll be the renters as well that will be taking advantage of that.

We have reduced the small business tax from 3 percent down to 1 percent. The pension splitting is something that the folks of my community like. We are again seeing the building crane, not only in the city of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, but we have the building cranes in the community of Transcona constructing a seniors housing facility in the community of Transcona. We have just opened this year Access Transcona, our new state-of-the-art health and family services facility. We have invested in the Buhler Recreation Park, a 140-acre recreation facility for people of all ages in my community, due to open later this year. I know the folks of my community like the third week of holiday that was announced, and I know folks in my community have called it Manitoba heritage day, but we'll wait and see what happens with that.

I know, Mr. Speaker, in closing, that I'm quite proud of the fact that I've had the opportunity to not only serve the fine people of Transcona now for some, well going on 17 years, but I've also had the opportunity during my time in government to work with many members of my caucus and this Assembly. I'm quite proud of the fact that the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and I had the chance to work on the 2020 - Manitoba Transportation Vision and, yes, our report did call for \$3.2 billion of investment through the various transportation initiatives in our province. But we've exceeded that as a government by announcing a \$4-billion investment into highways in our province.

In closing, I also had the chance to work as a part of the government graduate drivers' licensing task force in our first term as government. That is starting to show benefits now, and we now have less accidents and fatalities in our young people driving in this province. We will never know the lives directly that we save, but we do know that we are saving lives through that initiative, and I'm quite proud of the fact that we were participating in that. There's so much more that we could go on to talk about: new jobs, high school graduation up 14 percent, a growing population, less people on income assistance, an increasing minimum wage every year, and we can go on and on and on to talk about the initiatives of this government. But I'm quite proud of this budget and the government that we have, and I'm looking forward to getting out on the campaign trail. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it is a true pleasure for me to rise today and

address the issue of the budget recently presented, April 4, to the Legislative Chamber. Now, I would like to begin first off with a recognition of two retiring members of our caucus who have served Manitoba such extraordinarily well.

The honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), as was mentioned earlier today by colleagues opposite, has served since 1988 here in the Chamber and has represented the constituency of Emerson extraordinarily well in Cabinet and now presently in opposition. His knowledge of agriculture in Manitoba is extraordinary, having previously served as the first president of the now widely well-known Keystone Agricultural Producers. I want to commend him for his service to the public.

Mr. Speaker, also, the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) has announced his retirement. Again, the honourable member has served his constituency for very many years. I actually came to know the honourable member when he served as a school trustee for Neepawa. I was wanting to say that it is something that I am very, very pleased to say that I have shared a caucus with these two honourable, knowledgeable and dedicated Manitobans.

Now, I would like to also say that I am most honoured and privileged to represent Portage la Prairie. It is with very, very great delight that I will once again be continuing to serve as the PC candidate come the next election. It is something that I am looking very much forward to, the next election, and taking on the challenges in debate, issue upon issue upon issue, because this government has afforded me too many to mention in this address. I will be challenged by an NDP candidate, a friend of mine, who is a high school teacher. I know across the way that the caucus is a little short on educators. That is why another educator wants to get into the caucus and give that perspective from the educational side of things, because, obviously, the ones who are serving now are not doing justice to the educational system. That's what he is motivated to do because those serving today are not doing the job, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to take great exception to some of the things that have been said

in regard to the budget because, if one was just to listen to the honourable Minister of Finance's (Mr. Selinger) address, you would think that everything was rosy and the future of Manitoba was bright. That is not true. If this budget goes ahead, we are putting a noose around our children's necks when it comes to financial affairs of this province. They will not be able to sustain the debt burden that this government will leave as a legacy of their tenure in office.

May I just point to the interest rates that continue to escalate under this government. This year, now topping \$860 million in interest that is going to be paid to those bankers down in Toronto and elsewhere in the country—

An Honourable Member: New York.

Mr. Faurshou: Yes, I might just say that some of that is offshore interests to be paid to the New York bankers as well. So, Mr. Speaker, it is something that I want to make mention. That's \$860 million that cannot go towards the health care, the education, the judicial system, as well as our infrastructure, namely our highways.

The honourable member across the way stated how proud he was of the \$4-billion program that was announced over 10 years. Mathematically speaking, that's \$400 million per year. Do any of you members opposite know what wear and tear is going to take place on our highways in just the next year? Mr. Speaker, \$450 million. You're leaving \$50 million of infrastructure roadway debt to our children to pay for. You can't even pay your way. If you want to start figuring \$400 million and add inflation to that, next year, it's going to be even worse.

I've got a bridge just outside of Portage la Prairie that has now been totally dismantled. That bridge is on the Trans-Canada Highway, the most important roadway in our province, and this government, through its mismanagement and lack of planning—

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

As previously agreed, the hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 16, 2007

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Lamoureux; Chomiak	849
Bill 23—The Forest Health Protection Act Struthers	839	Soil Survey Program Nevakshonoff; Wowchuk	849
Petitions		Child Care Taillieu; Mackintosh	850
Removal of Agriculture Positions from Minnedosa Rowat	839	Speaker's Ruling Hickes	850
Grace General Hospital ER Driedger	839	Members' Statements	
Crocus Investment Fund Lamoureux	840	60th Anniversary of Canadian Citizenship Aglugub	851
Headingley Foods Taillieu	840	Golden West Broadcasting Dyck	852
Ministerial Statements		E.M. Crowe Memorial Hospital Nevakshonoff	852
Yom Hashoah Holocaust Memorial Day Allan	840	Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Memorial Day Stefanson	852
McFadyen	841	Volunteers in the Community Jha	853
Gerrard	841		
Oral Questions			
"Spirited Energy" Campaign McFadyen; Doer	842		
Rowat; Smith	843		
Goertzen; Smith	844		
Goertzen; Doer	844		
Emergency Room Physician Shortage Driedger; Oswald	845		
Physician Shortage Goertzen; Doer	846		
Goertzen; Oswald	847		
Little Scholar Kollege Day Care Taillieu; Mackintosh	847		
Health Care Gerrard; Oswald	848		
		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
		Adjourned Debate (Seventh Day of Debate)	
		Nevakshonoff	853
		Schuler	854
		Oswald	857
		Driedger	860
		Dewar	863
		Eichler	866
		Lamoureux	870
		Dyck	875
		Reid	878
		Faurschou	882

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