

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	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, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 10, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Highway 200

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Highway 200 is paved from Winnipeg to the Canada-U.S. border except for approximately a 10-kilometre section between highways 205 and 305 which remains unpaved. School buses, farm equipment, emergency vehicles and local traffic must travel on Highway 200 which is dangerous, if not completely impassable, during wet spring weather and other times of heavy rainfall.

Due to unsafe conditions, many drivers look to alternate routes around this section when possible and time permits. The condition of the gravel road can cause serious damage to all vehicles.

Insufficient traffic counts are not truly reflective of the traffic volumes because users tend to find another route to avoid this section. Traffic counts done after spring seeding, during wet weather or during school recess are not indicative of traffic flows.

Maintenance costs for unpaved highways are high and ongoing. It would be cost-effective to pave this section.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) consider paving Highway 200 between highways 205 and 305 to ensure a smooth, safe and uninterrupted use of Highway 200.

Signed by N. Doerksen, Jean Bilodeau and R. Sorin.

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

Riverdale Health Centre

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

These are the reasons for the petition:

The Riverdale Health Centre services a population of approximately 2000, including the town of Rivers and the R.M. of Daly, as well as the Sioux Valley First Nation and the local Hutterite colonies.

The need for renovation or repair of the Riverdale Health Centre was identified in 1999 by the Marquette Regional Health Authority (RHA) and was the No. 1 priority listed in the RHA's 2002-2003 Operational Plan.

To date, the community has raised over \$460,000 towards the renovation or repair of the health centre.

On June 1, 2003, the Premier (Mr. Doer) made a commitment to the community of Rivers that he would not close or downgrade the services available at the Riverdale Health Centre.

Due to physician shortages, the Riverdale Health Centre has been closed to acute care and emergency services for long periods since December 2003, forcing community members to travel to Brandon or elsewhere for health care services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier to consider ensuring that acute care and emergency services are available to the residents of Rivers and surrounding areas in their local hospital and to live up to his promise to not close the Rivers Hospital.

To request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) consider developing a long-term solution to the chronic shortages of front-line health care professionals in rural Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by Violet Roth, T. Gercama and Lori Kiesman.

* (13:35)

Generally Accepted Accounting Principles

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:

Manitoba's provincial auditor has stated that Manitoba's 2003-2004 budget deficit was the second highest on record at \$604 million.

The provincial government is misleading the public by saying they had a surplus of \$13 million in the 2003-2004 budget.

The provincial auditor has indicated that the \$13-million surplus the government says it had cannot be justified.

The provincial auditor has also indicated that the Province is using its own made up accounting rules in order to show a surplus instead of using generally accepted accounting principles.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider adopting generally accepted accounting principles in reporting Manitoba's budgetary numbers.

Signed by D. Zelinsky, R. Zelinsky and Sabina Howanyk.

Westman Area Physician Shortage

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

These are the reasons for the petition:

The Westman region serving Brandon and the surrounding area has been, and will continue to be, periodically without the services of an on-call pediatrician.

As a result of the severe shortage of pediatricians to serve the Westman area, Brandon and area women with high-risk pregnancies as well as critically ill children are being forced, at even greater risk, to travel to Winnipeg for urgent medical attention.

The chiefs of the departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Family Practice and Anesthesia at the Brandon Regional Health Centre have publicly voiced their concern regarding the potentially disastrous consequences of the shortage.

Brandon physicians were shocked and angered by the lack of communication and foresight on the part of the government related to retention of a local pediatrician.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) has stated that Brandon has to put its best foot forward and recruit its own doctors.

Doctors have warned that if the current situation is prolonged, it may result in further loss of services or the departure of other specialists who find the situation unmanageable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To strongly urge the Minister of Health to consider taking charge and ensuring that he will improve long-term planning efforts to develop a lasting solution to the chronic problem of pediatrician and other specialist shortages in Brandon.

To strongly urge the Minister of Health to treat this as the crisis that it is and consider consulting with front-line workers, particularly doctors, to find solutions.

To strongly urge the Minister of Health and the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending highway medicine now.

Signed Dennis Gollett, Scott Walker, James Ryland and others.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

In May 2004, 46-year-old Peter Krahn suffered a heart attack while exercising in East St. Paul and was pronounced dead just under an hour later after being transported to the Concordia Hospital in Winnipeg. Reports show that it took nearly 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 uses a benchmark of 4 minutes.

Ambulance coverage for East St. Paul is provided from Selkirk, which is almost 25 kilometres away.

The municipalities of East St. Paul and West St. Paul combined have over 12 000 residents.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider providing East St. Paul with local ambulance service which would service both East and West St. Paul.

To request the provincial government to consider improving the way that ambulance service is supplied to all Manitobans by utilizing technologies such as GPS in conjunction with a Medical Transportation Co-ordination Centre (MTCC) which will ensure that patients receive the nearest ambulance in the least amount of time.

To request the provincial government to consider ensuring that appropriate funding is provided to maintain superior response times and sustainable services.

Signed by Richard Karp, Mark Rehaluk, Darlene Karp and others.

* (13:40)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 16—The Wildlife Amendment Act

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation):

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk), that Bill 16, The Wildlife Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la conservation de la faune, be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Conservation, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, that Bill 16, The Wildlife Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, honourable members, it is my privilege to rise today to introduce Bill 16, which contains a number of amendments to The Wildlife Act to improve public safety, enhance enforcement and better protect wildlife. These changes will enable provincial natural resource officers to more efficiently deal with problem wildlife, regulate the use of potentially threatening poisons and establish rules regarding the conduct of investigations and the allocation of hunting licences and royalties. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Budget Speech Tax Relief

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, during the past six years, this NDP government has failed to provide leadership and failed to make decisions to make Manitoba competitive. Organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Retail Council of Canada were all pleading for this NDP government to provide meaningful tax relief to Manitobans.

With more than \$500 million in new revenues, historic high levels of revenue, the NDP lost an opportunity to provide meaningful tax relief to hardworking Manitobans. I ask the Minister of Finance this. Why has the NDP not listened to those recommendations? Why have they failed to make Manitoba more competitive?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this economy since we have been in office has grown by \$10 billion. It was 31.9 billion in 1999-2000. The forecast is 41.7 billion. That is an increase of 33 percent since we have come to office. We have reduced corporate taxes, never done since the Second World War. We have reduced small business taxes by more than 50 percent and doubled the threshold by 100 percent. We have reduced personal income taxes by 19 percent. We have improved the capital tax deduction to a full exemption. Not only that, we had the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit which has a refundable portion. None of these things were ever done by the members opposite. We have done them and Manitoba keeps growing.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, all at the same time as he has increased the debt of this province by over \$3 billion since 1999. Middle-income Manitobans remain the highest taxed west of New Brunswick, even with the NDP's budget announcements. A two-earner family of four earning \$60,000 annually only saves \$49 in taxes. Meaningful tax relief and a competitive tax environment is necessary to keep our young people in Manitoba.

Why does this NDP insist on making middle-income Manitobans the highest taxed west of New Brunswick? Why is he creating a tax environment in Manitoba which chases our young people out of Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Once again, the member denies reality in the budget text. Young people have increased in Manitoba by over 1100. We have reversed the trend of the nineties. Young people are happy to be here because we have a tuition freeze which members opposite opposed every time we brought it in and voted against it.

When it comes to the Manitoba advantage, Mr. Speaker, we remained in the first or second or third place compared to all other jurisdictions in Canada. The cost of living in Manitoba is one of the most affordable. For young people, the Autopac advantage is huge.

* (13:45)

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the only person denying reality is the Minister of Finance. He tries to make Manitobans believe that we had a \$13-million surplus when we had a \$604-million deficit. The

NDP lost the opportunity in the budget to provide a competitive tax environment for Manitobans. Record high revenues, so little tax relief, so much uncontrolled spending, record high debt. This budget could have made Manitoba competitive. Instead, the tax gap between Manitoba and the rest of Canada increased and guaranteed that Manitoba would remain a have-not province for a very long time. Why has this NDP not made Manitoba more competitive by offering meaningful tax relief?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, in a previous answer, I explained what we have done on taxes, far superior to anything the members opposite have done and, as we know, in this province the investments we have made have attracted more young people to live here. We have made significant investments in universities, significant investments in colleges, significant investments in infrastructure, and the member opposite has been the beneficiary of that in his constituency but refuses to accept that we have done it when he did not.

Hip and Knee Surgery Wait Lists

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, six months ago the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province sent out a fancy media release announcing \$500,000 to perform 100 additional hip and knee surgeries at Concordia Hospital.

Since that announcement, the vice-president and chief medical officer of the WRHA has stated that this money did not in fact purchase any additional surgeries. My question is this. Can the Minister of Health confirm today that this money did not buy any additional surgeries at Concordia Hospital?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): I am informed by the WRHA and Concordia Hospital that in fact they will meet their target this year for an additional 100 surgeries.

Mrs. Stefanson: Brock Wright, the vice-president of the WRHA, said more money was invested in the system but it did not buy additional surgeries. That is what his own employee, the vice-president of the WRHA, said. Empty promises are little consolation for those who are waiting in our gallery today and are waiting at home, housebound and bedridden, waiting in pain for hip and knee surgery. It is little consolation, announcements that are made yesterday,

six months ago, four months ago. It is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps the minister is in fact refusing to answer the question about exactly how many surgeries have taken place because not one additional surgery had taken place when this Premier of this province announced \$500,000 more and provided false hope for Manitobans, promising 100 additional surgeries. Shame on them. How can patients in this province trust this Premier and the Minister of Health when they provide nothing but false hope for patients in this province?

Mr. Sale: As I told the member opposite, the Concordia Hospital officials have told the WRHA that they are on target to meet the additional volume this year that resulted from the transfer of surgery and from the increased funding.

Mr. Speaker, since 1999-2000, the increase in procedures, including all hip and knee procedures, is approximately 20 percent. That said, the reason that I made a very important announcement yesterday of 10 million additional dollars over the next couple of years is because we have an unacceptable wait time for hips and knees. We need to improve that record as we did with cardiac surgery, as we did with waiting time for radiation therapy, as we did with waiting time for MRIs, for ultrasound, for bone density, et cetera. We have improved. We have more to do, and we are going to do it.

Hip and Knee Surgery Wait Lists

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): On November 5, 2004, the NDP Minister of Health had a press release indicating that an additional 35 hips and 30 knee replacements would be done at Boundary Trails Health Centre. Could the Minister of Health indicate to this House the actual number of those additional surgeries that have taken place to date?

* (13:50)

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to get that information for the member.

Mr. Dyck: Maybe I could give him that information. The information is zero.

I am hearing from my constituents who are on the waiting list that their surgeries are being postponed because the quota is filled. Will this minister confirm today that the 80 additional surgeries promised yesterday in a press release will actually take place, or is this just another broken promise to the thousands of Manitobans waiting in pain for orthopedic surgery?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, both Brandon General Hospital and Boundary Trails Hospital approached us approximately two or three weeks ago. When we made it known to them that we were interested in increasing the support for hips and knees, they made a proposal to us. Their proposal, with their budget with their staff: to increase the hips and knees volume in Boundary Trails and Brandon by a total of 200 over the next two years. That is their proposal. They are accountable for that proposal and we will fund that proposal and they will meet their targets.

Hip and Knee Surgery Wait Lists

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, the residents of western Manitoba are living with the pain and anxiety of hip and knee health issues daily. Manitobans have gone from hallway medicine to highway medicine under this NDP government. We now have a new phenomenon in Manitoba, medicine by media release.

When can the residents of western Manitoba expect the 120 surgeries promised yesterday? When can they be performed in Brandon?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we have some very good people who manage the Brandon Regional Health Centre, and we are proud to have built it after it was cancelled a number of times by members opposite. We are proud in particular of the new operating rooms which are state of the art. They are probably the finest operating rooms in Manitoba at the current time, fully equipped with IT that allows the most advanced procedures and the best quality of care. I am delighted the Brandon Regional Health Authority made a proposal to us to do an additional 120 surgeries on hips and knees. They have fine surgeons, fine nurses. I believe when they made that proposal, they intended to carry it out, and I believe they will.

Mr. Cullen: These empty promises are of little comfort to the 2500 people on the orthopedic wait list.

Mr. Speaker, 76-year-old Alan Greer of Glenboro, Manitoba, needs a hip replacement. He has been told the quota has been reached at Boundary Trails. Mr. Greer is now going to Montréal for his surgery, using his own personal savings for a new hip. Is this the minister's strategy for reducing wait lists in Manitoba?

Mr. Sale: The reason we announced \$10 million over the next two years is simply that we agree that the waiting times for hip and knee surgery that is required by Manitobans is too long and we need to do better, Mr. Speaker. That is why we are working with Boundary Trails, with Brandon, with Grace, with Concordia, with Pan-Am to improve both the volume and the speed with which we can do surgeries. That is why we are working at prehab so people are more ready for surgery and will recover more quickly. That is why we are working at segmenting the waiting lists so that procedures that can be done on an out patient or a less intense basis are done more quickly, and that is why we will meet the target of a thousand additional surgeries over the next two years.

Health Care Services Funding

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, in an article printed in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on December 26, 2004, the Minister of Health is quoted, and I quote from that article, "We had reduced the budget for Health to an absolutely unattainable level in terms of reductions." I would ask the Minister of Health if he has been properly quoted in this article and if he could explain to the people of Manitoba what he meant by that statement.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I ask the members to cast their minds back to the situation that we were in prior to the Health Accord in 2004, in the fall. We had no increases in Health funding in the base budget since 1994-95, when \$7 billion was taken out of the base. We had one-time money that came in and evaporated. We had no escalator formula. We had a situation in which we were still at that time in a severe drought. We had BSE crisis, and we had a severe fire situation in Manitoba. In that context, we had to live within our

means and we told our health authorities, we told our own internal authorities we needed to balance the budget in accordance with balanced budget legislation and we would do so. That put a tremendous amount of pressure on our health care budget, and it basically meant that we would have to do some very uncomfortable things. That is what I meant by those remarks.

* (13:55)

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, I would point the minister to the dictionary which defines "unattainable" as "impossible to attain," a fairly simple concept. The minister said publicly that his budget was impossible to attain. In fact, he said that he purposely underfunded his health care budget for the year.

I would ask the minister are those quotes attributed to him accurate. In fact, what did he mean by those statements?

Mr. Sale: I think I have already explained that, Mr. Speaker. We were put in a position where the funding from the federal partner was declining and was basically unchanged since 1994-1995. We have a commitment to manage the finances of Manitoba in a prudent manner and to do it in a sustainable manner, and so we challenged our health care system to do some very difficult things. We were delighted when the current federal government came to office with a commitment to provide additional resources to the health care system. When those resources were provided, we made sure they went to the health care system.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, once again the minister is ducking and dodging this question. He made a very simple statement and I quote, again, from the article, "We had reduced the budget for Health to an absolutely unattainable level in terms of reductions." Unattainable means that you cannot accomplish that goal. It is impossible to attain.

Is the minister telling the legislators and the people of Manitoba that in last year's budget they set a budget amount that they knew that they could not meet?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, when we went to the RHAs and to our department early in the year 2004, we told them the kind of situation that we were in, and we challenged them to take an extremely difficult course

and to identify for us what would have to be done to live within the then-known revenue which we had from our own sources and from the federal government. That was a very, very difficult challenge. It would have meant very serious reductions in the health care system.

We were delighted, as I have said, and I am sure all Canadians, all Manitobans, were delighted when a new federal Liberal government was led by a new Prime Minister and he made a commitment which we took and believed that there would be additional funding during the year for our health care system. I am delighted that that Prime Minister made good on his commitment and that our health care system now has a known and sustainable increment each year and a significant increase to the base in our funding.

Livestock Industry Slaughter Capacity

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, this NDP government lost an opportunity in Tuesday's budget to truly help Manitoba livestock producers by providing meaningful assistance to expand our slaughter capacity. In the last two days alone, slaughter facilities have been announced in Alberta and Québec.

Can the Minister of Agriculture finally tell what this NDP government plan is for increasing Manitoba's federally inspected slaughter capacity or will it continue remain stalled, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, we very clearly do support this expansion of slaughter capacity in this province. I am very pleased that the opposition—although when we first started to talk about slaughter capacity they had then said there was no need for increased slaughter capacity. We are committed to it. We have announced additional funding. We look forward to proposals, and I can tell the member opposite that there are many people who are calling people who are talking about their business plans. I hope that they can put these plans together successfully so that we will see further increase in slaughter capacity in this province.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, \$3 million is only \$6 per head. Do the math on that, and it certainly is not going to work. With \$606 million in increased revenues, the NDP government lost a golden

opportunity to do something meaningful for Manitoba's livestock producers. Instead, this budget has told Manitobans that they are on their own and are not to keep up their hopes.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture tell Manitobans when a new slaughter facility will open in Manitoba? Will she finally get on with the job?

* (14:00)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we were committed to slaughter capacity long before the opposition even got interested in it. We will continue to work with it. The Rancher's Choice group is moving along with their proposal. There are other groups who are looking at how they can increase their slaughter capacity.

I wish the opposition would get on board and recognize that there is a commitment in this budget to the industry. There is a commitment with an increase of over 19 percent in this budget, a reduction in taxes for them and a commitment to work with them to reposition our beef industry in this province. Slaughter capacity is one of the components of repositioning the industry, and we are there working with the industry.

Crime Reduction Government Initiatives

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, since taking office in 1999, the NDP government has increased overall expenditures by in excess of \$2 billion. If you take retail sales tax, our gasoline tax, our alcohol tax, our tobacco tax, all the monies from the Manitoba Lotteries and you add them all up, you still do not get \$2 billion. The new theme for the New Democratic Party should be so much to spend, but so little results.

My question is, as the Justice critic, how do you spend so much money and be so ineffective in dealing with crime in our province?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the fact that the Justice Minister, at a meeting of federal-provincial officials two years ago, put together a proposal to the federal government and asked the federal government to change the legislation with respect to protecting police officers,

to put in stricter penalties, to put in stricter regimes to protect our police officers. That was two years ago, on the record, that this Justice Minister and this government took that position. I would like to ask the Member for Inkster what his position is in that regard.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am not a minister yet, but I will tell you, I would not be fearful in terms of taking responsibility. This government fails to take responsibility. In my hand I have a handful of press releases that my researcher, better known as my wife, went to the Legislative Library—two years, two years of press releases from the Minister of Justice.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, child prostitution, home invasions, gang activities, automobile thefts, they are just as bad as they ever were under this administration. They can spend the money. They can shoot out the propaganda, but where are the results?

I question the government: Where are the results when it comes to fighting crime in this province?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, today is a very sad day in the history of this country as our leaders are in Alberta as a result of the tragic deaths of four police officers on duty in Alberta. Yesterday a tragic incident occurred at the Ontario Legislature that involved a very difficult situation with our police enforcement officers. The day before a young individual in British Columbia was crushed to death by a stolen car by a 16-year old. These are difficult times for all Canadians.

But, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Member for Inkster why he voted against this Legislature bringing forward an additional 40 police officers in the province of Manitoba when he had a chance to stand up and make a difference, why he voted against that measure?

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the simple answer to that question is I am not a New Democrat. I am not the one that spent \$2 billion and got nothing for results for that additional \$2 billion.

Auto Theft Reduction Strategy

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the chronic problem with this government is if there is a

problem in this province, blame Ottawa. No one does it better than the Minister of Justice. The Minister of Justice is quoted in an article saying, "Ottawa's mandatory auto-theft plan is too little, too late." Manitoba has the worst auto theft in the country. Every other province is able to deal with the issue. Not this government. Instead of trying to deal with the issue, what they do is they try to blame Ottawa. They shoot out the press releases, anything and everything that they can think of to avoid responsibility.

I ask the minister responsible this. Can he tell us why this government is, in fact, the worst in Canada when it comes to auto theft? Do you have any ideas that the Province can take on preventing children from stealing cars?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am not asking the Member for Inkster to comment or even vote on the \$2 billion that he talks about. All I am asking him is why, when he had a chance to make a difference, when he had a chance to vote to have 40 additional police officers on the streets of Manitoba, he and his leader voted against it. I want to know that, and I want to know why he voted against a budget that increased sanctions for convicted auto thieves that this government brought in, why he voted against including driver's licence suspensions and sanctions against auto theft, why the measures brought in by this minister and this government have been consistently voted against by the Member for Inkster and his leader.

They cannot have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. They cannot vote against these measures and then criticize lack of action. I think the public sees through that every single day.

Devils Lake Diversion Update

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, as Member for the Interlake, I, like many Manitobans, am deeply concerned about the quality of water in Lake Winnipeg as this body of water in its entirety lies in my constituency. Could the Minister of Water Stewardship update the House as to the status of negotiations with our neighbours to the south regarding the Devils Lake Diversion Project?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I know this is of interest to all members of the House because we know how important it is to ensure that the state outlet, the Devils Lake outlet, does not proceed this summer. That is why we have been stepping up our efforts to make sure that our federal government is calling for reference to the IJC.

I visited Minneapolis-St. Paul. I made it very clear that we in Manitoba appreciate the support of the State of Minnesota Governor Pawlenty. In fact, we are particularly pleased with new developments including the Great Lakes Commission representing the Great Lakes states, Ontario and Québec. As well, there is indicated that we have to have the Devils Lake outlet referred to the IJC.

I am also pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that we will be going back to court on the NAWS project to go for a complete injunction to stop the construction of that case, a part of the Garrison system that will transfer water into the Hudson Bay drainage basin. We will defend Manitoba's interest on Devils Lake and on NAWS.

Kyoto Plan Funding

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, once again this NDP government has proven that the singular worst thing for the environment is an NDP government. With the Kyoto accord coming into effect on February 16, 2005, the government announced in its budget \$2.4 million for energy and climate change initiatives, of which half is salaries. Where is the Kyoto plan?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, not only will I provide the member with a copy of the Kyoto plan that was published three years ago, but I will also provide the minister with a checklist of the number of measures that have been put in place as a result of the Kyoto plan that was adopted by this government. If I remember correctly, I do not think members opposite support the Kyoto plan.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Springfield has the floor.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, in this last budget, 2.4 million for energy and climate change initiatives, of which 1.2 million for salaries and only \$14,000 for grant assistance for energy and climate change initiatives. This is the \$14,000 Kyoto plan.

I ask the minister this. After two years to prepare for February 16, is that the best that this NDP government can come up with, a \$14,000 Kyoto plan? Shame on them.

* (14:10)

Mr. Chomiak: First off, Mr. Speaker, this was the first provincial government and the first government in the country that produced a Kyoto plan and a Kyoto strategy.

Second off, Mr. Speaker, this government has been recognized both nationally and internationally as having developed the most extensive Kyoto plan in the country.

Thirdly, Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government received an A rating, the only A rating in the country by the Energy Efficiency Alliance for its demand side and its energy efficiency announcements just this year.

Fourthly, the largest wind farm in Canada is in the process of being developed, Mr. Speaker.

Fifthly, Mr. Speaker, today we successfully pioneered and demonstrated a hydrogen bus that was on a regular route in Winnipeg, something members opposite said was a pipe dream, and would never happen. It ran on a route today. I wish the member would have had a chance to take a ride with us on something he said would never happen.

Souris Day Care Centre Staffing Shortages

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Family Services lost an opportunity. She lost an opportunity to address a serious staffing shortage in the Souris Day Care Centre. The director, Deanna Wey has written to the government and stated, and I quote, "The government needs to address staffing shortages, not spaces and to help maintain, increase and improve Manitoba's child care system before it fails drastically."

What will the minister do to ensure that the Souris Day Care Centre will not have to close more spaces?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate this question because it gives me the first time as the minister to proudly say that, opposite to the actions of the 1990s where there was an attempt to destroy the child care system in Manitoba, this government since 1999, you want to hear this now, has increased funding by 64 percent.

We are also the only province in this country that has a plan. This plan was developed with the input of over 24 000 Manitobans. We worked within that plan. We are committed to our community-based not-for-profit child care system in this province. We will continue to work with our child care community.

Mrs. Rowat: I really appreciate the rhetoric and non-answers of this minister. Not.

I raised my kids through the nineties, and I have had a great child care service. My children are growing up in a community that required child care services. This minister is failing my families, my community. A 64% increase? Where are the spaces in Souris, Manitoba?

Can the minister respond to my specific question, to my community where my children go to day care, where they go to after-school programs, where there is a chance of losing 105 spaces? Can the minister answer me directly, specifically to my community?

What does this minister have to say to the parents of Souris? They have indicated what would the increase do to my community. What does the increase in government money do for us? That is specifically a question from the parents, and I want her to respond.

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, what is a child care system? A child care system is recruiting quality people. It is training these people so they are professionals. It is retaining these people so that we keep them in the system to care for our children. It is creating new spaces. That is what our five-year plan is all about since 1999. We have created over 3500 spaces in this province.

Physician Resources Pine Falls Health Complex

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the Pine Falls hospital is an extremely important regional hospital in the Lac du Bonnet constituency. It serves a local population that is quite large, and it is the first hospital that can be reached from northern Manitoba along the east side of Lake Winnipeg. It was disturbing when the emergency department was closed due to a lack of physicians for a two-week period over Christmas a year ago. It is also disturbing when residents complain that revolving-door medicine is practised at that hospital.

With unprecedented levels of revenue coming into the Province this year, when will the NDP use some of this money to recruit more doctors in Pine Falls who will stay at the hospital to ensure that residents receive the quality and sustainable health care and service that they deserve and they require?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I think it was at about 22 minutes to two when the member asked us to use the money to cut taxes. Now it is a quarter after two and he wants more money spent in his hospital. I guess, you know, maybe that is the privilege of opposition. You do not have to be very consistent.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition also voted against spending money to equip the operating room at Beausejour Hospital to do children's dental surgeries. They have a difficult problem with consistency. They should address it.

Health Care Services Funding

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to remind the minister that people in this province can actually do two things at once. You can cut taxes and make the Province competitive and you can spend responsibly at the same time.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More to the point, I would remind members opposite that it is possible to walk and chew gum at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health is that on December 26 he stated, and I quote, "We had reduced the budget for Health to an absolutely unattainable level in terms of reductions." Is that an accurate quote from this minister?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): I have already answered that question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, in fact this minister refuses to answer this question, and so I will ask him one more time. I will put it to him very plainly. It is a simple question. You can come back with a simple answer if it is not beyond you.

Mr. Speaker, he is quoted as having said, "We had reduced the budget for Health to an absolutely unattainable level in terms of reductions." Does he stand by that quote? Was it accurate when he said it?

Mr. Sale: Indeed, we have done a large number of things at once. We have managed to balance our budget according to balanced budget laws every year, Mr. Speaker. With this budget we have replenished the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. With all of our budgets we have strengthened our health care system, our education system and our economy. The growth of \$10 billion, 33 percent over our first five years in office, is an unprecedented rate of growth. You will not find it in any Tory years.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, I would remind this minister that he does not have latitude. It is his responsibility to answer questions in the House. I am asking him a very direct question. He is quoted as saying, "We had reduced the budget for Health to an absolutely unattainable level in terms of reductions."

Did he make that quote? Does he stand by it? Will he stand up and be honest with Manitobans, or is he simply doing, as the Auditor has suggested, misinforming the people of Manitoba day in and day out? Which is it?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I just want to draw attention of all honourable members of using the word a little loosely about "honest." All members in the House are honourable members and all information that is brought forward is on a factual basis, so I just want to remind all honourable members.

Mr. Sale: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the honourable member will have some

opportunity overnight to read Hansard, and he will see that I answered that question. In fact, I answered the same question roughly three times. I think those answers were clear, they were factual and I stand by them.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, I am looking for a direct answer. Do you stand by the quote, sir?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, this is not exactly a productive exchange. The answer has been given. It is in Hansard. I invite him to read it. If it is still unclear to him, perhaps he could ask the question again tomorrow.

* (14:20)

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, the minister refuses to answer this question. This is a very serious matter. He is quoted in the newspaper as saying that he purposely underfunded the health care budget. His government purposely underfunded it. He is quoted as saying that he reduced the budget for Health to an absolutely unattainable level.

I am asking on behalf of my constituents, on behalf of all Manitobans, does he stand by the quote. Is that what he did?

Mr. Sale: Well, Mr. Speaker, I will help the member again. When we were in the position of dealing with Estimates for the year in question, we had a federal government that had cut funding in 1994-1995 by \$7 billion. We had a federal government that since 1990 had never escalated the underlying formula for health care spending. We had revenues for this province that were affected by BSE, by SARS, by 9/11 and by drought. We have a commitment to balance the budget and to live within our means, and that is an enormous challenge which we met. In the process of meeting that challenge we have grown this economy by \$10 billion in five years.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, once again, I will give this minister one more opportunity. It is his quote; it is his comment.

I would ask him to stand up—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Fort Whyte has the floor.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your assistance in this. The member is quoted in the newspaper as saying, "We had reduced the budget for Health to an absolutely unattainable level in terms of reduction." The article states how he explained to the reporter that the Province had purposely underfunded its Health budget.

I am asking him a very simple question today. Does he stand by that quote or does he not? He has an obligation to answer that question for the people of Manitoba. He has a responsibility to come clean and tell this Legislature and tell the people of Manitoba whether, in fact, his Health budget last year was fudged. Will the minister stand in this House and stand by his quote? I ask him to do the honourable thing.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, the obligation I have as a Cabinet minister is to serve without fear or favour and that I have done in Family Services and Housing, in Energy, Science and Technology and it is what I am doing today in Health. In every work that we have done as a Cabinet of this Province, we have strengthened the economy, we have improved the education system, we put forward the first Kyoto plan in our country.

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

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): No, Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. I appreciate—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would remind all honourable members that a point of order and a matter of privilege are very serious. They should only be raised when it is a serious occasion, and the honourable member is raising one. So I ask all honourable members and I have to hear every word that is spoken. So I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Order. The honourable Member for Fort Whyte, on privilege.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you. I rise on this matter of privilege understanding that there are two conditions that must be met. The first is that the matter be raised

at the earliest opportunity, and I would put to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is the first opportunity that I have had to raise this matter in the House, given the non-answers from the Minister of Health.

The second condition is that a prima facie case be made regarding this matter of privilege. I do sincerely believe that there is a prima facie case to have you rule on a matter of privilege, and I appreciate the opportunity to explain that to you.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to that second condition, in this case I believe that my rights and privileges as a member of this House have been breached. I would refer you to page 59 of the *Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba* in the appendices under the Matter of Privilege to the last sentence that states: ". . . interference of any kind with their official duties are breaches of privileges of the Members."

Mr. Speaker, I will also refer you to the new MLA manual regarding matters of privilege. I quote from there: "Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the rights enjoyed by a Legislature collectively and by its members individually which are absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers."

I would further quote from the manual: "Any act or omission which obstructs or impedes a Legislature in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or Officer of the Legislature in the discharge of his or her duty, or which has a tendency to produce such a result may be treated as contempt."

I would also refer you to *Beauchesne's*, page 25, section 92, entitled "Interfering With Members," that states, and again I quote: "A valid claim of privilege in respect to interference with a Member must relate to the Member's parliamentary duties."

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the official opposition, it is my legislative duty and the obligation I have been given by the members of my constituency and by the peoples of Manitoba to attempt to hold this government to account for its actions.

I would also refer you to *Beauchesne's*, chapter 15, rule 595 and I quote once again, "The Crown, being the executive power, has the responsibility for the raising and spending of money. Acting through

responsible ministers, the Crown makes known to the Commons the financial necessities of government. The Commons grants such aids and supplies as are necessary to meet the demands of the Crown and provides through taxes and other sources of revenue the ways and means to meet the supplies that have been granted. The Crown, therefore, demands money, the Commons grants it and the Senate assents to the grant. The Commons does not vote any money except for the necessities of the country as defined by the Crown."

Mr. Speaker, I believe that lays it out very clearly, and I will leave it to you to look at other sections in that particular chapter referring to budgetary matters, but typically each year the government of the day, the Crown, brings before this House a budget. My obligation as a member of the opposition is to question the Crown on that budget, but at the same time I must take the Crown at face value for what is in that budget.

I believe they are honourable members. I do believe it is their responsibility to bring forward a budget which clearly states the true picture of the finances and the sums of money that government needs in order to carry out the programs which they have identified within the budget. This is a very serious matter for this Legislature to look at. In terms of a budget, we set aside purposely eight days of debate for members on both sides of the House to debate that budget. We set aside a period of Estimates time, 100 hours in this case, in which as members of the opposition we have the obligation and we have the opportunity to question the government on their budget and what policies they are promoting through the demand of funds from this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, in the case I am referring to, last year, we took the budget and we accepted the budget as it was presented to this side of the House, believing as we do today that they are all honourable members on the other side. On that basis I went into Estimates. I questioned every member that I had access to, every member where I felt there were some issues in that department. I did not question the members on whether the amount that was printed in the book was accurate or not because I took that at face value. That is what the Crown does. The Crown, responsible members, brings budgets to this House which are accurate and reflect their intentions to spend throughout the course of the year.

* (14:30)

We went through that process, Mr. Speaker. My rights, my privileges, my duty as a member of this House were to question the government on the budget they brought forward, and that is what we did. On that basis, we decided as a party, I decided as a member of the opposition, that, although I disagreed with many of the policies in that budget, I disagreed with much of the spending in that budget, I disagreed with the direction that budget was going to take this province, for those reasons and others, I decided that I would vote against that budget.

At no time did I question anybody on the opposite side of the House whether, in fact, the amounts of money stated in that budget that were laid before this House, that were laid before me, were accurate. That is the process we undertake, Mr. Speaker, and you know. You have been in this Legislature long enough to understand what a serious, serious issue the laying before this House of a budget is.

I find out on December 26 that the Minister of Health has indicated in a very frank and very plain way and, again, I will quote from the article. I have given the minister the opportunity today to tell this House, to tell legislators, to tell Manitobans whether, in fact, he was misquoted. He has refused to answer the question. I will read the quote again. The quote from the minister: "We had reduced the budget for Health to an absolutely unattainable level in terms of reductions."

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in the day, I went to the dictionary because I wanted to be absolutely clear what that quote meant, and I would remind the members opposite that "unattainable" in the dictionary is described as "impossible to achieve." When I transpose that into this quote, what do I get? I get the minister saying, and I quote, "We have reduced the budget for Health to an impossible-to-achieve level in terms of reductions." The article also explains and, again, it refers to the Minister of Health, and I quote here again from the article said Friday, "The Province purposely underfunded its Health budget for this year while waiting for Ottawa to come through with additional cash."

If at any time during the budget speech, anybody during the budget debate, anybody on the opposite side of the House would have stood up and said,

"Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, we realize that within this budget it is unattainable. We realize that we cannot meet the numbers that we have put in this budget." Then, as members of the Legislative Assembly who have the right to ask questions, we could have questioned this government on behalf of our constituents, on behalf of the people of the province of Manitoba, on those very facts.

But we did not have that opportunity, and on that basis I lay before you a prima facie case that, in fact, my rights as a member of this Legislative Assembly have been breached. I have not been able to carry out my duties as I would have liked to because this government, because this minister did not lay and purposefully did not lay an accurate number before this House, and that is unconscionable. That limits my right as a member to question those Estimates. How can I be expected to go into an Estimates procedure and question the minister on a budget laid before this House when, in fact, there are items that are not printed in that budget line, when, in fact, there are issues that this government knows they are going to have to spend money on and yet they do not even identify?

I would again refer to *Beauchesne's* Rule 596, and it is talking here about the standard of bringing budgetary items and the Crown laying these matters before the Legislature. I quote again, and this is a standard referring to how the budget is laid before the House: "This standard is binding not only on private Members but also on Ministers whose only advantage is that, as advisors of the Crown, they can present new or supplementary estimates or secure the Royal Recommendation to new or supplementary resolutions."

Now, if at any time during the budget debate the Minister of Health had come forward and said, "Look, we have printed the document. We thought that we could meet this budget. We knew it was going to be tough, but we know we cannot, and as a result we are going to come and ask for supplementary approval to spend more money on health care to meet the plans that we already know exist." But did they do that? No. Did they come forward?

You know, it was interesting yesterday that the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) started out his budget speech by indicating that not only had they managed to balance the books, but, in fact, they had been direct and honest about it. Once again, this is an indication, and this matter of privilege rests

around that whole issue of has this member and has this government been direct and honest with legislators, thereby allowing us to do our job to the fullest of our capabilities. The case I lay before you says it very clearly this government and this minister have not done that.

Mr. Speaker, I would also refer you to the rules of the House and the *Beauchesne's*, specifically to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, page 18, "Reflections on the House as a Whole," which, as you are aware, I am sure, deals with reflecting badly on the character of this House. I would indicate at the same time, that by the minister publicly stating, and I quote again, "We have reduced the budget for Health to an absolutely unattainable level in terms of reductions," by his going out in public and stating publicly that they had brought, he had brought before this House a budget that was unattainable, a budget that was impossible to meet, he has, in fact, reflected badly on every member of this House.

We all know and we have seen in the polls that, unfortunately, the regard of politicians these days is slipping badly. We sit here day after day, and we ask ourselves why. We wonder why. Well, it is reasons like this that the public looks at us, and it is reasons that I brought forward today that show that the Minister of Health has reflected poorly on the House as a whole. By his going out in public and admitting, by saying that his government brought a budget to this House that did not reflect their true intentions, did not reflect everything that they knew they were going to spend throughout the year, he is, in fact, reflecting poorly on every member of this House.

He is standing up and saying, basically, no member in this House has a responsibility for what they say inside or outside. They can say one thing one day, and they can lay a budget before this House. This is not a simple matter, Mr. Speaker, of "he said, I said." This is a matter we are dealing with of the Crown laying before the opposition, laying before the people of Manitoba, its budget, and laying before the people of Manitoba how it is going to spend the money that it raises by taxing the individuals in the province of Manitoba. That is why I consider this to be such a very, very serious breach of my rights, breach of my privileges and why I consider this to be such a serious reflection on the House as a whole and, I must say, a very negative reflection on the House as a whole.

I must admit, Mr. Speaker, that when I saw this quote, I was absolutely astounded. Never in my life, never in my imagination of following politics would I imagine that a minister of the Crown would go out in public, outside of a Legislature, outside of the House and state that he had purposely, his government had purposely, underfunded a particular part of its budget, in this case, the health care budget, which, I would remind the minister, is over 40 percent of the spending of his government.

So, when we go out to the public, when I am dealing with my constituents, or we are dealing in the province of Manitoba, and I have to explain to them that we have a minister of the Crown who laid a budget, and a government that laid a budget, before this House where over 40 percent of the spending of the taxation dollars we demand from the citizens of Manitoba and we receive from the citizens of Manitoba, that was, in fact, inaccurate, not only just a mistake but, in fact, it was purposely placed before this House in an inaccurate fashion. In fact, the government of the day believed and knew full well, the minister knew full well, that the budget was absolutely unattainable.

Mr. Speaker, it is particularly important as we are in the middle of another budget debate, and, unless we settle this issue, unless we settle it quickly, how are the people of Manitoba ever going to have any confidence in government again? How are they going to trust a government to lay before them their plans for the year, to lay before them for their budget for the year, when a government and a minister so callously and so arrogantly would go out some eight or nine months later and say, "Well, we knew we could not do it, but you know we have this balanced budget law, and we did not want to take a reduction in salaries, so we had to present a budget that gave the appearance of being balanced."

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, not only does that make it impossible for me to fulfil my obligations as a legislator, to fulfil the obligation that I have to the people of Manitoba to hold this government to account, but it reflects very, very poorly not only on me, but on all 57 members of this Legislative Assembly. So that is why I am raising this issue today. I consider it to be an extremely serious issue, one that I would hope we would, in this House, be able to deal with. In fact, we might even be able to deal with it today. If the minister would offer an

apology, I would certainly be satisfied with that. Having said that, I wish to conclude because I fully appreciate that we are in the middle of a very important budget debate.

If we do not know, if the numbers are accurate, maybe we will find that out six or eight or nine months from now. I can only do my duty to the best of my ability. I can only take the word of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that the budget he has presented this time is different than last time in that it does include all of the information known to the government, and that, in fact, it has been set before this House by responsible, and I quote from *Beauchesne*, "by responsible ministers as are the rules of any sound government."

On that basis, Mr. Speaker, I move that, as a result of the seriousness of this breach of privilege, this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs. Furthermore, I move that the Minister of Health be requested to apologize to Manitobans and to all honourable members of this Chamber for purposely and knowingly misleading Manitobans and the honourable members of this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Fort Whyte, do you have a seconder for that motion?

Mr. Loewen: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker. That motion is being seconded by the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I recognize the honourable member, any other members that wish to speak, I would remind the House that contributions at this time by honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity, and whether a prima facie has been established.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the alleged matter of privilege. I think it is important to establish first of all that it is important to raise the matter at the first opportunity. I would question, in this case, raising a matter of privilege on a newspaper clipping the member, himself, referenced that dates back to December being raised now, three days into the session. I think clearly it fails on that test.

Second of all, I find it interesting that the member seemed to spend a lot of time reading the dictionary. He read various elements of *Beauchesne* but he seemed to have missed section 31, subsection 1, which directly relates to matters of privilege. This says, "A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfil the conditions of parliamentary privilege." And, Mr. Speaker, 31(3) which states very clearly: "Statements made outside the House by a Member may not be used as the basis for a question of privilege." There have been numerous Speaker's rulings to that effect.

It is important to note that we are in the budget debate. If the member has a concern about the budget, he has the opportunity to raise that. I noticed he asked numerous questions in Question Period. One might ask if really this is all that members opposite could see to raise two days after the budget is released, but if that is what they consider to be the most pressing matter of the day, they have that opportunity. Later in the session we have the opportunity in Estimates. We even have the opportunity in grievances. I might add, the origin of grievances in parliamentary practice is very much related to the supply motion. It is only the last number of years in this House that grievances have become unattached from the supply motion.

I want to indicate it is clearly a dispute over the facts. If the member is frustrated, that does not make it a matter of privilege. I get frustrated when I hear members asking questions about health care when I know in the last election they promised 1 percent in the budget. I know there is a gap of \$200 million that would have been there if they had formed government. I know there is a certain degree of inconsistency—I do not want to use stronger language—when they ask for anything involving health care when they ran on a platform that was going to cut it, Mr. Speaker, but that is why we have budget debate. That is why we put forward the views of our different political parties in budget debate. That is not a matter of privilege.

My frustration over their inconsistencies on Health is not a matter of privilege, Mr. Speaker. So I want to suggest that in reviewing this matter, and a bit of advice to the member opposite, you know I have had the opportunity to rise on a few matters of privilege over the year. Some were successful and some were not. I can appreciate at times where people may want to use a supposed matter of

privilege to raise a point, but after listening to the member now for about 45 minutes, I think the only point I can pick up is that they really do not have much to say about the budget. They are going back to a newspaper clipping from December. They are going back to last year's budget. Who knows, maybe we will get back to the nineties by the time this is over.

That is not a matter of privilege, Mr. Speaker. It is not even a point of order. It is not even a point. Thank you.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I rise here this afternoon to put a few comments on the record with regard to what has transpired here this afternoon. I guess I will preface my comments by saying that at the outset during the debate, during Question Period, when the matter first raised its head, I happened to be sitting with the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms. Hearing the exchange back and forth, I kept asking myself, "How many times can you ask the same question, and how often can you get the same answer."

I started talking with the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, and I am not trying to roll him into the argument, but the question seemed to be over and over the same question. I felt the member was quite concerned that the facts that he was stating to the House, and he was trying to ascertain whether or not the accuracy was correct. We collectively, Mr. Speaker, and as you will without a doubt, have the occasion to peruse Hansard, and to rule all the parliamentary books that we have at our disposal, and there are several as you already know, that matters of privilege to the members of this Chamber are an extremely serious issue.

It is not often, Mr. Speaker, as you already know, in fact I do not think you had the occasion yet, Sir, to rule on a particular matter of privilege in order. If you have, it is very rare. I, on the other hand, have had the occasion to raise a couple of issues. It is something that has to inherently hurt the rights of a particular member. I have listened intently right now to the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) as he attempts to bring forward the argument about voting on the particular budget, particular estimates in the Department of Health.

We are correct. The Acting Opposition House Leader in his remarks where he talks about

Beauchene's 31, and I believe there are a couple of sections in there. It talks about timely matter, it talks about disputes over facts of certain members, but there is a particular rule, Sir, and it is not one that we use very often. It was under Marleau and Montpetit in the book that they produced for us where it says, "the rights of the House as a collectivity."

I do not want to paraphrase, Mr. Speaker, but right in the middle of a particular paragraph, the privilege is needed by the House to perform its constitutional duties require the power to protect itself and punish any transgressions against it much like a court of law. The House of Commons enjoys very wide latitude in maintaining its dignity and authority through its exercise of contempt power which is inherent to any superior court. In other words, the House may through its orders consider any misconduct to be contempt and may deal with it.

* (14:50)

Privilege as defined in *Beauchene's*, a book that we have become accustomed to for many years, *Beauchene's* 24, and I would hope, I am sure that we will hear this particular section over and over again.

But, starting with 24, for the members in this Chamber assembled here today: "Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals. Thus, privilege, though part of the law of the land, is to a certain extent an exemption from the ordinary law. The distinctive mark of a privilege is its ancillary character. The privileges of Parliament are rights which are 'absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers'. They are enjoyed by individual Members, because the House cannot perform its functions without unimpeded use of the services of its Members, and by each House for its protection of its members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity." This is partly put in place by Sir Erskine May.

We go on to section 25. I have stated, you have stated, Sir, on a number of occasions, "I have defined what I consider to be parliamentary privilege. Privilege is what sets Hon. Members apart from

other citizens, giving them the rights which the public does not possess."

I suggest that we should be careful in construing any particular circumstance which might add to the privileges, which have been recognized over the years and perhaps over the centuries, as belonging to members of the House of Commons.

Citation 26: The distinction between, and here is where we get caught up, privilege and questions of order. "A question of order concerns the interpretation to be put upon the rules of procedure" and is a matter for you, Sir, to determine.

Paragraph 2: "A question of privilege, on the other hand, is a question partly of fact and partly of law—the law of contempt of Parliament—and is a matter for the House to determine." The decision of the House on a question of privilege, like every other matter which is in the House and we have to decide can be elicited only by a question put forth from you, Sir, and be resolved either in the affirmative or in the negative, and this question is necessarily founded on a motion made by a particular member, in this case the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen).

It follows that, though you, Sir, can rule on a question of order, you cannot rule on a question of privilege. When a question of privilege is raised, Sir, your functions are limited to deciding whether the matter is of such character as to entitle the motion, which the Member for Fort Whyte, who has raised the question, desires to move to priority over the Orders of the Day.

"A question of privilege ought rarely to come up in Parliament. It should be dealt with by a motion giving the House power to impose a reparation or apply a remedy. A genuine question of privilege is a most serious matter and should be taken seriously by the House."

Mr. Speaker, I sat intently listening to the Member for Fort Whyte and the argument he was attempting to make in this particular publication that came out, I believe, some time in December. I heard the Member for Fort Whyte attempting to, if you will, entice the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) to confirm the allegations as they were produced in said document.

Marleau and Montpetit, and I refer you one more time back to there where they say, "We enjoy a very wide latitude in maintaining our dignity and authority through its exercise of contempt power which is inherent to any superior court." In other words, the House may, through its orders, consider any misconduct to be a contempt, and we may deal with them. The integrity of every member, as pointed out by the Member for Fort Whyte, is at stake here today.

We, on a regular basis, Sir, are asked to stand in our places, vote yea or nay, in the affirmative or the negative. We take members' words and we will take them to the bank. Our words in this House mean an awful lot to us. We do not question the integrity of a particular member, no matter which side of the House they will sit on. A member of the government will give me his word, and I will take it to the bank. A member of the opposition will give us his word, and we will take that to the bank.

This is part of the character that we possess in this Chamber. We do not have to second-guess, nor do we check up on. We should not have to. In this particular document that the Member for Fort Whyte refers to, the budget document, a document that we spend hours, days and weeks tearing apart and trying to fulfil our commitment to our constituents to see whether or not the amount of dollars being requested by the government and which they say they are spending on a particular program and/or department. We spent days and weeks trying to either convince our constituents this is good for them or that the government of the day has a particular interest in spending the dollars elsewhere. Every word that is in that document, Mr. Speaker, we will take to the bank because it is supposed to be a factual document without which we would not be able to do the service that we do on behalf of our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, albeit the Acting Government House Leader has said in a timely manner, that we have missed the door. I would venture a guess that if you look at Marleau and Montpetit, you would see that they have left us a little bit of a leeway, in order to recompense ourselves with the general public and give us some credibility for what we do here in this Chamber. There is not much more that I can add. I sense the Member for Fort Whyte's argument is a valid one. I sense that what the Acting Government House Leader has brought forward is also valid.

I think you, Sir, have a responsibility to this Chamber, that the arguments we make on behalf of the constituents in the province of Manitoba are all valid, and we can only do that once we have factual information. Without it, Sir, we might as well be at some schoolhouse doing whatever we must be doing. Unless we can trust one another, we are not going anywhere, and we are not doing anything for the people of this province. I beseech you, Sir, take time, peruse the Hansard and the rules, and, hopefully, you will find that the Member for Fort Whyte has made a prima facie case in bringing forward his argument.

Mr. Speaker: I think I have probably heard sufficient argument. If the honourable member is rising because she feels there is some point that has not been touched upon, I will hear her very briefly.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I rise today to speak on this matter of privilege, and in my whole tenure as a politician, I have never ever risen to speak to a matter of privilege before, but I take this so seriously that I feel compelled today to put some comments on the record. My comments will be new information added to this discussion.

Mr. Speaker, I was the critic at the time this budget we are discussing right now, this budget that is under dispute. I was the critic at the time when this, what seems to be now a false budget, was put forward. I have to say, as the critic of Health, I feel pretty used and manipulated to think the NDP government put forward a budget that was not honest and was not accurate.

I feel my privileges as a member have certainly been abused in this situation as I have spent hours and hours, year after year, with the Minister of Health going through line by line every budget item. Now we hear that this budget was fudged. In the business world, something like that would be considered fraud. Here we have a government and a minister that actually went out and admitted this in public. The minister said right at Christmastime that the Province purposely underfunded its Health budget, the budget that I spent hours questioning the government on. The minister said that the Province really had no intention of ever meeting the budget for Health it set in April. Well, then, what was I doing as the Health critic spending hours asking questions if it was not even a budget that was accurate, honest or even ethical? The minister is quoted as saying, "We

had reduced the budget for Health to an absolutely unattainable level in terms of reductions."

* (15:00)

Mr. Speaker, this is far more than just about what this government and this minister admitted to. This goes far beyond just this manipulation of this one situation. Did the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province agree to this? Obviously. Those budgets are looked at by Treasury Board and by the Premier of this province. This is more than just a Minister of Health running out talking about the manipulation, the fudging of a budget. This would go right to the top of a government in terms of their ethics and what they are putting forward to us.

How can I come here and honestly do my job and represent the people as a Health critic of the people of the province, the people of this province who right now are struggling with a health care system that is falling apart. Right now, where health care is the biggest spending in the province, where that budget is the biggest budget for health care in the country, where this government has poured over a billion dollars more into the health care system and they continue to do so, where we have a Premier that said the health care budget is going to force a provincial budget to hit a fiscal wall and within a few years, health care is going to consume everything in this province.

We are debating health care as the most serious issue in this province, Mr. Speaker. It is where most of the money goes. How do we now know if the numbers that are being debated in Estimates or in a budget are even accurate, not only for health care, but perhaps for many other departments? This is about ethics of how a government presents itself, its budget, its numbers.

When the NDP first became government, the Minister of Health said at the time that the health care budget was like a runaway train. There was no accountability in it. He said the buck stops nowhere. Well, Mr. Speaker, it still looks like it stops nowhere. This is so disconcerting because of the challenges right now that was face in health care. What we have heard this minister say in his comments and when questioned today in Question Period, whether or not those statements were accurate, he refused in a straightforward way to answer the question. I think

that is so disrespectful not only to the members in this House but to the taxpayers of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, what now comes into effect is the credibility of this minister, the credibility of the next Health budget, the credibility of the Premier of this province and the Treasury Board, and the credibility and ethics of this NDP government. This is absolutely unbelievable. It is disrespectful and it is absolutely insulting to everybody in this province.

If I could not carry out my duties and obviously then all of the questions I was asking about the budget, what was the point in me having had to do that? Right now, I hear chirping from the other side of the House. I am amazed at the arrogance that they sit there so smugly when such an issue like this is in debate.

I do not accept just an apology from this Minister of Health. My privileges as a member were abused by this government in the last round of Estimates. What is going to happen in this next round? I think the Auditor General needs to have a look at the Health budget based on what this minister admitted in December. A good question really arises from all of this. Will the Attorney General sign off on this budget? Sorry. Will the Auditor General sign off on this budget? It certainly brings into a lot of question.

Mr. Speaker, no wonder the public finds politicians and politics, brings it into question, and they wonder what we do. We lose respect because of some of the shenanigans that go on here. As far as I am concerned, this is a situation where ethics have been misused, where honesty comes into question, where credibility is certainly an issue. As I said before, in the real world of business, this would be dealt with as fraud. I am absolutely appalled at the comments that this minister made, the misleading of a huge budget, the biggest budget in all of government at over 40 percent. How they could do that and then turn around and say we intended, we purposely did it.

I urge you to look carefully at this situation because this does go far beyond a matter of privilege in this question. This has huge ramifications for all of us for years to come in this province. And certainly with the minister refusing to properly answer that question today after he has admitted it to the media, is a breach of what I feel are the

privileges that we have. I feel he has abused that particular privilege of all of us, and I think he has really thumbed his nose at the people of this province.

I think it is a disappointing day in this Legislature. I am very disappointed to see what has happened, and I urge a very thorough look at this. Certainly, as the critic involved at that time, I am not particularly happy with the answers that have been given by this government. I do not accept just any apology, although an apology should be forthcoming. I think this is a huge matter and a matter that the Auditor General probably needs to have a look at. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Before we proceed, I want to remind all honourable members this is not the time for the debate. What it is right now is you are dealing with was this raised at the earliest opportunity and is this a prima facie case. From those arguments I will make a decision, and if it is affirmative, then you will have the opportunity to debate, but right now this is not the time for debate. This is the time to raise at the earliest opportunity and whether it is a prima facie case.

I saw that the honourable Government House Leader was up on his feet. The honourable Member for Inkster, with new information?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, it is. Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the efforts from the member from Fort Whyte in raising this very important issue.

First, in terms of the earliest opportunity, let me say that if the member had not asked the questions that he did ask today, I think there might have been an opportunity for us to say that it was not the earliest opportunity. I think what we saw was a genuine attempt by a member of this Legislature to seek clarification from a minister in a very succinct fashion, and the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) had ample opportunity to give clarification on what is a critically important issue. One might be able to say that, because it was a news article, what the relevance is in terms of inside this Chamber. I would suggest to you, given the very nature of what has been said and how the minister has chosen not answer the question, that the seriousness of the issue has been elevated tremendously. In reality what we have seen is the Minister of Health has rolled the

dice. He has taken a huge chance at the expense of Manitobans.

When he came forward with the budget, he had no idea of the outcome of a federal election. The federal election was not even called at that point in time. We had no sense in terms of what sort of financial dollars were going to be coming to the province, yet he chose to throw in the numbers that he had thrown in. I am sensitive to that because, over the last number of months, I have tried to get a better understanding of the provincial deficit. The role the provincial auditor played at trying to shed light as to what the actual situation was is 180 degrees different than what the government of the day was trying to portray. I like what the member from Charleswood is suggesting. We do need to get the provincial auditor involved in this. I think that this is, indeed, very serious.

* (15:10)

If, in fact, the Minister of Health is not prepared to stand up in his place and say that he was misquoted, or that he made a mistake in the interview he had with the member of the media, if that is not the case, then he needs to apologize and say that he gave wrong information. Ultimately, if the information he gave to the reporter is indeed correct, well, then, I would argue that we should bring in the provincial auditor's office to investigate this whole matter.

If we are suggesting to you that the provincial auditor needs to be investigating, one has to question whether or not the rights of individual members, and the Chamber as a whole, have been breached in any fashion. Mr. Speaker, I believe unless the Minister of Health is prepared to stand up today and rectify the issue by making the very clear statements that we were debating back then was, in fact, valid. If he is not prepared to do that, then our rights have been infringed upon.

We just had a budget that was tabled just a couple of days ago. When you open up that budget, there are 13 pages on the Department of Health. Are these the actual numbers? Does the government have those numbers and able to do what is being talked about?

I think a shadow of doubt has been cast by what the Minister of Health has done. For that reason, Mr.

Speaker, I do believe that there is merit for us to proceed ahead with this matter of privilege and would suggest to you that it needs to be taken very seriously. I appreciate the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) allowing me to say a few words prior to him, and in anticipation of what ruling you might come up with. Thank you.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Well, I thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me an opportunity to put a few remarks on the record with respect to this matter of privilege. This is an extremely disappointing day in the Chamber because this situation and the actions of this minister have cast a shadow and a pall upon the integrity, the credibility, the honesty of not only this minister, but, indeed, of this government.

Mr. Speaker, how are Manitobans supposed to believe anything that is laid before them by way of official documents such as the budget? When members of the public ask us to justify how it is that we would allow the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) in the newspaper article, to be quoted as saying that he purposely downplayed the budget of the Department of Health, and how we could, as members representing the public, allow this minister to get away with it, this is something I cannot answer. That is why we bring this matter to the floor of the House because if there is going to be any integrity and credibility of this House and its responsibilities to our citizens, then we cannot allow this kind of corruption to sneak into this Chamber and into this House.

Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely, extremely serious matter. I am going to pause until I get the attention of the Minister of Health. I can understand by the body language across the hall that there is some discomfort about this issue and there should be. There should be because they have, without being drawn into it by anybody from the public or anybody from this side of the House, this minister has stated that he has purposely misled this Legislature, the citizens of this province by understating the Health budget, knowing that he could not, indeed, achieve the levels of expenditure he said he could in the budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it goes beyond that because this member was also, and could be still, a member of Treasury Board. Now this is a member of Treasury Board who goes before this body that

scrutinizes whether or not each department has brought forward its best estimates to this body to approve and then this goes to the Cabinet of which the Premier (Mr. Doer) is the head. It implicates the inner sanctum of the government. These are the people who we depend upon to lead this province in every aspect of our lives. If you do not have honesty, how can people ever have or ever hold members who hold these offices in any kind of esteem? We have to correct this, and, unfortunately, it falls in your lap because now you have to decide on how it is you are going to manage this.

We are giving opportunity to the Minister of Health to stand in his place today and to correct the record. The member from Fort Whyte used a significant amount of Question Period today to ask the minister precisely whether or not the words that were recorded in the newspaper, in the *Free Press*, reflected what he meant and what he said. By not denying the fact, by not saying that it was an error, by saying that this was not a reflection of what he said, or a reflection of the words, he was, in other words, admitting that what was on the record was, in fact, accurate. Otherwise, he would have stood in his place and he would have said what was said in the newspaper is absolutely a misrepresentation of what I said and what I meant. But he could not stand in his place in this House and do that. What does that say to us? That says to us that, indeed, what he said in the newspaper and what was quoted in the newspaper, was an accurate reflection of what he said.

That is why the member from Fort Whyte rose in his place and very eloquently put the case before this House. Mr. Speaker, this was not done without a considerable amount of thought and research. For days the member from Fort Whyte was troubled by the fact that we in this Legislature debate the issues of the Estimates that are laid before us, and that is why we devote significant amounts of time to ensure that, through questioning of those Estimates, we, in fact, get an accurate picture of where this province's finances are as they relate to each and every single department we have within this government.

The member from Charleswood, who was the critic for Health at that time, went before the Estimates process having faith in the fact the documents that were laid before her by the Minister of Health were a true representation of the true picture and the facts as they were, never suspecting

for one single moment the minister had put an untruth and an untruthful picture before her, knowing those numbers were not accurate, that that was not achievable and, in fact, he was able to convince his colleagues in Treasury Board and in Cabinet that it was okay for him to do this, Mr. Speaker. She did not know that, and so as a representative of citizens of this province, at the end of the day, she allowed the Estimates for her department to be approved without raising the issue because it was hidden from her.

* (15:20)

If you look at the track record of this minister, I am not surprised that we are where we are today because I go back to his undertaking of his portfolio in energy and mines when he came to us cap in hand saying, "Members of the Conservative Party, please support this legislation on ethanol because we will not get federal money if you do not approve this." Another lie. On the basis of his pleading, we said we would allow this bill to proceed through the House without the prolonged course that bills in this House usually take. Then he had the audacity, after he had approval from this House, to say that we did not support his efforts to get this legislation through. Now, that is an abject, dishonest statement that was made by him.

Mr. Speaker, that is an unparliamentary word, "dishonest," and I regret to have used it.

An Honourable Member: That makes us feel a lot better, Len.

Mr. Derkach: How the member from Thompson feels is not my concern. But, let me say this, this same minister, then as Minister of Family Services, repeated that very same kind of action. I refer you to the issues surrounding Hydra House. Do I have to refer you back to the Auditor General's comments as they relate to Hydra House and the actions of this minister then?

Now we come before the House where the minister has said publicly in the news media that he purposely fudged the books of the Department of Health. What kind of a track record is that? But, more importantly, what do the citizens of this province think about politicians, members of Privy Council, members of Executive Council who do this wilfully, knowing that, in fact, it does not reflect the

truth. It does not reflect the true picture. As a matter of fact, it is misleading citizens of this province into thinking that, in fact, those benchmarks are achievable when, in fact, when the minister set those benchmarks, he knew those benchmarks were not achievable.

Now the minister can try to weasel his way out of this in every way he can. But the only way that he will regain any credibility in this House, in this province, to the citizens of this wonderful and great province is if he stands in his place and apologizes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the prima facie case here because never in the history of this province have I ever heard anybody stand in this House and say that he wilfully misled Manitobans by understating the numbers in his or her department, especially in a department that spends 40 percent of the provincial budget. We can spend some time on this, and it takes away time from the budget debate this year, but I will tell you, members of the public—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: —watching our debates, listening to our debates, reading the newspapers are going to be asking the question, "Is this the real budget? Is this the fudged budget?" We do not know because who knows that six months down the road some minister on that side of the House will say, "Well, we knew we could not achieve that level, but we printed it anyway." The Premier (Mr. Doer), the First Minister of this province, who has the obligation to ensure that all of this is done with integrity, credibility and honesty, has to wear that. I want to know what this Premier is going to say when he steps out into the public and has to admit that he knowingly allowed his minister to understate a budget in Health.

I want to know what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has to say about this because, Mr. Speaker, I have had a significant regard for him as Minister of Finance because I think he does an honest job in his task as Minister of Finance. Now I question, did he know what his colleague the Minister of Health was up to? What did he say to his colleague, the Minister of Health, when he read the article in the newspaper? What was the discussion around the Treasury Board table? What was the discussion with Mr. Kostyra when that happened?

What was the discussion around the Cabinet table when that happened?

So, Mr. Speaker, not to take any more of your precious time, but to refer this matter into your hands, unless we have a full and complete apology to the citizens of this province, I ask you, in the spirit of protecting the integrity of this House and the integrity of this Legislature, to seriously take this matter into consideration and to do what is best, not just for the immediate but for the future of this Legislature so that Manitobans will indeed regain the respect, the integrity, the credibility and their view of honesty for the sanctity of this Legislature in the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: A matter of privilege is a serious concern. I am going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities. I will return to the House with a ruling. Now we are in—
[interjection]

Order. On a point of order?

An Honourable Member: No, Mr. Speaker, information that was requested from me earlier—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am still on privilege.

An Honourable Member: Oh, I am sorry.

Mr. Speaker: We are still on privilege, and I have just informed the House what my actions will be. We will now continue Question Period.

ORAL QUESTIONS (Continued)

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health had the floor, and the honourable Minister of Health has 30 seconds remaining.

Mr. Sale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the information of the House, a hip surgery is currently underway this afternoon in Boundary Trails and at Concordia Hospital, which in 2003-2004 did 480 surgeries. We transferred 150 from St. Boniface. We announced an additional 100. Their target this year is 730. They expect to do 738.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are on Members' Statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Portuguese Association of Manitoba

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): On March 5, my wife and I had the privilege of celebrating 39 years of the Portuguese Association of Manitoba. We attended the anniversary dinner at the cultural centre at 659 Young Street, in the heart of Winnipeg's West End.

Mr. Speaker, the Portuguese community in Manitoba is a large and vibrant one. Forty short years ago, most Portuguese immigrants worked as agricultural and construction labourers. But, today, Portuguese Canadians are an important part of our entire business and professional community. The pride of Portuguese Canadians and the vibrancy of their community were most evident last summer along Sargent Avenue and Ellice Avenue during Portugal's dramatic run through the European soccer championship.

Mr. Speaker, the Portuguese Association of Manitoba has played a vital role in advancing the interests of the Portuguese community and promoting and preserving Portuguese culture and heritage. Several hundred families belong to the association. The Portuguese Association of Manitoba runs a heritage school and provides ESL and music classes. The cultural centre is also home to four dance groups with over 100 participants and hosts the Portuguese pavilion at Folklorama. These activities make a valuable contribution to the multiculturalism of our province and have played a key role in advancing the Portuguese community in Manitoba.

At the dinner we had the pleasure of being entertained by Portuguese singers and one of the dance groups and, this being Winnipeg, we also enjoyed the Romanetz Ukrainian Dance Ensemble who were guest performers and a great example of the spirit of co-operation in our multicultural community.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate the Portuguese Association of Manitoba on its 39 years of enriching our mosaic. I would also like to recognize the contribution that Portuguese Canadians have made and are making to our province. Thank you.

* (15:30)

Sierra Noble

Good Neighbours Senior Centre Fundraiser

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Last night I had the privilege of attending the 10th Annual Fundraising Dinner of the Good Neighbours Senior Centre. At this successful event, two community women, Eleanor Stalmack and Sonja Lundstrom, were recognized as community builders. They are members of the Seniors' Health Resource Team has been working in northeast Winnipeg for over six years to build a culture of wellness rather than illness in our community.

I had the privilege of being part of the announcement that brought the Seniors' Health Resource Team to our community. This was a public-private partnership between the Filmon government, who provided the financial resources for the staff, and Martin Bergen who provided the bricks and mortar to physically house the staff in his seniors apartment blocks. We have seen this community-based health care project blossom as a direct result of Eleanor and Sonja's distinctive skills, qualifications and passion for their work.

Eleanor and Sonja bring years of experience to their positions, but just as important, they bring a friendly smile and sympathetic ear to River East seniors. There are many outward and visible signs that we have something special in our community. People are valued as individuals, more connected to each other and treated as persons, not statistics, recognized, remembered and valued. We see how delightfully integrated this team is with the River East Council for Seniors and the Good Neighbour Seniors Centre. Servicing the largest seniors population in the city of Winnipeg, the Seniors' Health Resource Team may not be able to quote exactly how many people they see in a week or a year, but they can assure you that no file of a living recipient is ever closed. We have witnessed evidence of their success in making our community a better place to live. We know that with their boundless energy we will see many more new and exciting things to come.

I am truly privileged and proud to represent a community with leaders and innovators like Eleanor Stalmack and Sonja Lundstrom.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a very special young person, a rising star in Manitoba's arts and cultural scene. That young person is Ms. Sierra Noble. Sierra, a resident of Wolseley with her mother, Sherry, is known by Manitoba's Métis community as the 14-year-old fiddling sensation. Sierra began playing classical violin at the age of 7. Her mother tells the story of how she knew at a very early age she wanted to play violin, and Sierra began studying traditional Métis fiddling at the ripe age of 8 under the tutelage of Manitoba fiddler, Tommy Knott. She went on to win Manitoba's Junior Fiddling and Jigging Championship in 2003-04, and along with her specialization in Métis fiddling, Sierra also excels and studies classical, Celtic, country, old-time bluegrass and middle eastern musical styles.

Now, Sierra's passion for her music is perhaps only eclipsed by her passion for activist issues such as the global banning of land mines. She received the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal from Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, as well as several other humanitarian awards. Ms. Noble was also one of Canada's representatives for the Ban Land Mines International Children's Conference held just last year in Japan.

I have had the privilege of joining Sierra on several recent occasions as she meets with local school groups to share her love of the Métis culture and to encourage young people to get involved in local and global issues.

In conclusion, I want to congratulate Sierra, her mother Sherry, and their proud community of supporters on her recent release of her CD, *Spirit of the Strings*, and I am a proud owner of an auto-graphed copy in my office, I might add. I also want to commend Sierra for being such a strong role model for a better world, not just for young people but for all Manitobans. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

La Salle Women's Curling Team

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share with this Assembly the success of the La Salle Women's Curling Team. Skip Calleen Neufeld, Sabrina Neufeld, Laryssa Grenkow and

Lindsay Edie recently won the Provincial Junior Women's Curling Championships.

These young women have curled together for two years and have been working hard to improve their game. They participate in as many bonspiels as possible, practise often and also curl out of the Victoria Curling Club in Winnipeg.

Led by Calleen Neufeld, the La Salle women's curling club proudly represented Manitoba at the 2005 Canadian Junior Curling Championships in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Although Neufeld and her team did not win the nationals, they put forth a valiant effort and hope to represent Manitoba again in upcoming seasons.

Mr. Speaker, we know that participating in sporting activities is important to young people in our province, particularly to young women who are interested in leading healthy lifestyles and want to put their skills, abilities and energy to good use. It is encouraging to know that so many young women are physically active and involved in their local communities.

Mr. Speaker, it is also International Women's Week, a time to celebrate the accomplishments and successes of women. The theme this year is rural and northern women, as well as to acknowledge these women who have made a difference in the lives of other women. Calleen Neufeld and her team deserve our recognition for their success here in Manitoba, and our heartfelt appreciation for representing our province nationally.

On behalf of all honourable members, I wish to extend congratulations to Calleen, Sabrina, Lindsay and Laryssa for their victory at the women's Provincial Curling Championships and wish them all the best in future tournaments. Thank you very much.

Border Explorers Snowmobile Club

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, March 4th, I was fortunate enough to participate in the dignitaries ride offered by the Border Explorers Snowmobile Club. The club consists of 42 enthusiastic snowmobilers from Creighton, Flin Flon and surrounding areas. Along with members of the club, other dignitaries enjoying the ride to the ski chalet via Creighton, Douglas

Lake, Booth Lake and Phantom Lake where Mayor Dennis Ballard from Flin Flon, Councillor Lavern Hinzman from Creighton and Councillor Roland Chretien from Denare Beach.

Friday's weather was beautiful. It was exhilarating to zoom along the immaculately groomed trails and view pristine northern scenery from something other than a car or an airplane. Nothing on earth can rival the beauty of northern Manitoba in winter. At the end of the ride, a fabulous trail lunch awaited us at the ski chalet. Hot chili, buns, coffee and dessert never tasted better.

The dignitaries ride on Friday was part of a three-day rally as the Border Explorers hosted the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association's provincial festival. On Saturday the festival included a breakfast, three lengthy trail rides, an awards banquet and a social. President Barry Bradshaw and other Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association representatives along with Snowman representatives were an integral part of the events.

I would like to extend a big thank you to all organizers and participants in the weekend rally. Thank you, Border Explorer President Dwayne Wenger for inviting me, and thank you, also, Cathy Daneliuk for supplying me with safe and warm winter gear. Thank you, Ken Mansell, for letting me ride on your snowmobile. It was great fun.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE

(Third 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. Murray), in amendment thereto standing in the name of the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), who has two minutes remaining.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I would just preface my comments by

saying I dearly hope that this budget this year is actually factual.

Mr. Speaker, this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity driven by a strong U.S. economy the likes of which we have not seen in centuries, driven by increased revenue from the GST, driven by a minority federal Liberal government who is desperate to send themselves back into power, into a majority.

This government has received over \$470 million in new transfer funds, but they have missed the opportunity to make Manitoba competitive by reducing the job-killing taxes of the payroll tax and the capital tax. They have missed the opportunity to fund universities properly, to keep the Bobcats in Brandon and to fix the leaks in the roof at the University of Winnipeg. They have missed the opportunity to reduce the most punishing tax this province has ever seen. In fact, they are increasing it by \$40 million, and I am referring to the gambling and VLT tax. They are punishing people. They are causing deaths in this province by not taking action on that file.

Most regrettably, they are missing an opportunity to provide meaningful help and assistance to the working poor in this province who would benefit greatly from this government finally making a decision to index the personal exemptions to the cost-of-living. They are giving them a paltry \$100 which is a joke. Do the right thing; do it for everybody. Put the cost-of-living addition to the personal exemptions.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, this is a government at sea. This is a government that has no basis, no strong underpinning base on values. This is a government that does everything according to what they believe is politically expedient on that particular day, and they ought to be ashamed of themselves. Thank you.

*(15:40)

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, in this debate on the budget, the MLA for Wellington will focus on the problem of inequality, economic inequality, and whether or not it is the function of government to alleviate or remedy this social fact, and if so, how best may the government implement distributed and redistributed policy to narrow the gap

between the haves and have-nots in our society. This problem should not have happened because of the well-known doctrines about equality in our democratic society. We have what we call political equality, we have legal equality and we have social equality. And yet we are under this problem of economic inequality.

Thomas Jefferson, inspired by the British philosopher John Locke, when he was writing the original draft of the Declaration of Independence stated initially, "We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable: that all men are created equal and independent, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent and inalienable among which are the preservation of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness." He changed that original draft, and the final revision came. He stated, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights and that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Our direct observation and our experience seem to point to the contrary. All persons may be equally born, but they are not all born equal.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Our direct observation of human beings make us all painfully aware that no two human beings, even twins, are precisely equal in physical appearance, in mental faculties, in potential and actual abilities. While we were all created equal, in fact, some are more equal than others. Indeed, we are not equal in ability, in resourcefulness, or in merit, but there is that human passion for equality, an ideal state of affairs to which we may all aspire. The doctrine of political equality means that unless disqualified we all have the right to vote, to run for public office and to participate in political activities. Legal equality assumes that we are all equal before the law and before courts of justice. Social equality calls for our respectful treatment of each other in our social relationships.

Political, legal and social equality derives from what the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau called "an equality that is moral and legitimate, and that men who may be unequal in strength or intelligence become every one equal by convention and legal right." Rousseau continued by stating, "Under bad government, this equality is only apparent and

illusory. It serves only to keep the pauper in his poverty and the rich man in the position that he has usurped."

How did the philosopher Rousseau explain the very origin of human inequality? In Rousseau's dissertation on the origin and foundation of inequality of mankind, he asserted, "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying, 'This is mine,' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society." At that point in time, anyone might have saved mankind by pulling up the stakes and crying to his fellows, "Beware of listening to this impostor. You are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all and the earth itself to nobody." Once established as a right, property tends to expand. Small proprietors become big proprietors. Big proprietors, to protect their possessions against invasion or plunder, institute civil government ostensibly for the security of all, but, really to secure for themselves their property and their power. Such was the origin of inequality of humankind.

But there are so many meanings to this equality bit. What are some of the different meanings of equality, rhetorically speaking, or pragmatically speaking? Is there really equality among human beings? We already mentioned the rhetorical equality doctrine of political equality, legal equality, social equality. These are doctrinal principles that may or may not be meaningful to a specific individual depending on interpretation and application by persons in authority, such as the police, the administrative agencies, the courts, the media and the general public.

Even if we acknowledge that every qualified person has the equal right to vote and to run for public office, an individual may not really be able to run for public office if the potential candidate does not think that he or she has the number of people who will be able to help in the campaign, or if the potential candidate does not believe that he has enough money that can be raised in time to pay for anticipated campaign expenses to make his or her candidacy successful. Legal equality may exist in name only if an individual lacks enough money to hire a good lawyer who will obviously be charging him more than the potential client can afford consistent with the lawyer's prestige, skill and experience in litigation.

Social equality may be illusory if the person you are dealing with is either so arrogant, so rude, or impolite, and therefore, not able to accord due respect to another because of a perceived gap in social economic status. Therefore, the things we deeply and sincerely believe in such as political, legal and social equality in our democratic society, may for some people exist only as rhetorical words, nice to hear, but actually empty words devoid of meaning in the harsh, pragmatic world of economic reality.

What is the actual and pragmatic meaning of equality in the real world, the materialistic world of human experience? There are at least three meanings of human equality in the materialistic world of economic reality. First, we assert that all human beings are equal in our relationship with the divine. The MLA for Wellington believes that our maker is a just, wise and merciful God who treats all human beings as his beloved creatures, regardless of wealth, power or social status.

Second, all human beings are equal in the sense that they all are subject to the varying degrees of human limitations, regardless of their ambitions, desires or aspirations. They are all subject to the vicissitudes of fortune and subject to the vicissitudes of death. The poet John Donne said, "And that comes equally to us all and makes us all equal when it counts."

Third, all human beings are endowed with life, with liberty and discernment which are variously known as conscience, reason or rationality. For example, we all cannot perceive, regardless of our level of education or level of literacy, that all persons in similar or like circumstances should be treated as much as possible equally to approximate human justice and fairness.

* (15:50)

So the rhetorical concepts of equality in terms of political, legal and social equality and the actual pragmatic meaning of reality in the materialistic world, meaning equality before God, equality of our limitations in our mortality and equality in our rational faculty, all these are not sufficient to overcome the adverse effects of material and economic inequality among human beings.

Moreover, economic inequality is generally inherited. They continue from generation to

generation. As the rich become richer and the poor become poorer, is it a proper function of government to alleviate economic inequality, and if so, how may the government devise and implement distributive and redistributive policy through the budget process in order to narrow the ever-growing gap between the haves and the have-nots in our society?

Is it the proper function of government to alleviate and remedy economic inequality? As the custodian and trustee of the general public good of all the people, it is the proper function of government to alleviate the growing economic inequality in our contemporary society. In his work entitled *A Discourse On Political Economy*, Jean Jacques Rousseau stated that government includes the administration of property, the protection of persons and the provision of public wants. Adam Smith, in his book *The Wealth of Nations*, stated that the political economy was there to provide plentiful revenue for the subsistence of the people and to supply the state with revenue sufficient for public services.

It was Karl Marx, in his work *Capital*, writing as an economist as well as a social scientist, who criticized the way capitalism works without conscience in the sense that some men get richer than they need to be and some others become poorer than they should be. Thus, compared to Adam Smith whose purpose is to increase the wealth of nations, Marx strove in his writings and his activities to rectify economic inequality and to remedy inequitable distribution of wealth for all economic systems.

If it is the proper function of government to help alleviate economic inequality among all the members of society, how may the government devise and implement distributive and redistributive policy, particularly through the budgetary process, to narrow the gap between those who have much and those who have too little? Should there be a direct redistribution of resources from rich to the poor? Robert E. Lucas, Jr., a noted economist in his contributory work to the 2003 report of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, May 2003, stated, "We live in a world of staggering and unprecedented income inequality. This seems to us a terrible wrong, justifying direct corrective action of this kind should be taken. But of the vast increase in the well-being of hundreds of millions of people that has occurred in the 200-year course of industrial revolution to date,

virtually none of it can be attributed to the direct redistribution of resources from rich to poor."

If direct transfer from the rich to the poor is not legitimate, how do we effectively redistribute income and wealth? Many economists believe that the economic inequality which is manifesting itself in some quarters as abject poverty can be remedied primarily by economic growth. Economic growth will include accumulating of education and skills, human capital, physical productive capital assets and promoting technical innovation in the means of production and distribution.

The condition, which is called Pareto optimality, can be satisfied by increasing the economic pie through economic growth because, according to the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, it is a common economic situation in which it is hardly possible to reallocate productive and consumptive activities to make all consumers better off without simultaneously making others worse off. In other words, it is very difficult in the face of scarcity of resources to make one person better off without making anyone worse off.

That is the reason why, in most industrialized capitalist countries, the distribution of income is done through governmental taxation and budgetary policy. Government redistributes income by progressive taxation of the relatively well-off and then making transfer payments to individuals by such progressive programs such as Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Child Tax Credit, Employment Insurance, social assistance to single parents, the net effect of all of which is a mild and gradual redistribution of income.

But in the distributive and redistributive effort of government are guiding principles that can be followed. According to Richard Musgrave and Peggy Musgrave in their book entitled, *Public Finance in Theory and Practice*, Third Edition, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973. There are at least three alternative guiding principles of economic redistributive justice: 1) the endowed ability principle, 2) the utilitarian principle, and 3) the equity principle is subject to certain qualifications.

What is the endowed ability principle? The endowed ability principle basically states that a person may keep whatever his endowed abilities enable him to earn either in the form of unearned

capital investment income or earned labour income in the competitive market, given equal position at the start. For example, in a capitalistic economic system, interest, income from capital investments and salary income from one's personal labour the earner may keep all, although some classical British economists insist that unearned capital income should be more heavily taxed than salary income.

The second principle is the utilitarian principle. It states that income should be solely distributed so as to maximize both the total welfare and the average welfare in the sense of securing the greater level of happiness to the greatest number of people. The British utilitarian philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, stated that, "It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong," *A Fragment of Government*, Oxford, 1948, p. 3.

It follows that a good government is one that provides for the pursuit of happiness of every citizen. The individual contentment of everyone is just as important as the contentment of every other person no matter how exalted, no matter how humble one is in social and economic position in life.

The third principle is the social equity principle. The social equity principle asserts that the equality of well-being is inherently desirable. Therefore, the best rule for the distribution of income is one that will maximize the welfare of everyone relative to the others. But there is one exception that it allows, meaning the inequality can be tolerated if only for giving the greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of society.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Although these three guiding principles for distributive and redistributive policy of government may be viewed separate and independent of one another, there is nothing that precludes a good government from combining any of the three principles with the others. For example, the endowed ability principle, whereby a person may keep all the fruit of his abilities and skills, whether from earned labour income or from unearned capital income, may be combined with the social equity principle with the maximization of benefits to the least advantaged group by assuring a minimum level of economic safety not to fall below some poverty line. Thus, as

stated in the *1974 Economic Report of the U.S. President*, "Those who produce more should be rewarded more, and no individual or household should be forced to fall below some minimum standard of consumption, regardless of production potential."

* (16:00)

In Canada, we try to entrench some of the flexible standard of economic equality, not among individuals, but among political jurisdictions of the central and regional levels of government.

Section 36 of the 1982 *Canada Act* amending the *British North America Act* provides for equalization of regional disparities as follows: "Without altering the legislative authority of Parliament or of the provincial Legislature, or the rights of any of them with respect to the exercise of their legislative authority, Parliament and the legislatures, together with the government of Canada and the provincial governments, are committed to (a) promoting equal opportunities for the well-being of Canadians; (b) furthering economic development to reduce disparity in opportunities; and (c) providing essential public services of reasonable quality to all Canadians."

We have before us a 2005 budget that can be reasonably supported by every member of the Legislature. If others cannot support it, it is simply because of their respective role and function in the Legislature. By the nature of things, some are fulfilling their role of opposition and they are opposing anything. There are people, despite the fact they already have two hats in our society, they already crave for more. They want to be really rich and really wealthy, but there is a risk to that. They say they each fall into the temptation and the snare into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

Why do we want to be rich when there are some risks and a delusion to it? The delusion is that the love of money is the root of all evil, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with their sorrow. We already have enough for us to live to the last day of our lives. We still want more. There is an evil into it. The evil is that we cannot be satisfied in our desire.

Of course, it is a natural human feeling, a natural human aspiration to get the most of what you can

get, but there is a ruling principle in life that we have to remember. Charge them that the rich in the world that they be not high-minded or trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy, and that they do good, that they be rich in good works ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against a time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life.

A good government is one that looks after the wellbeing of all its citizens. This is a government that is trying to do that and trying to apply in the real world this principle of redistributed justice and equity. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Acting Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to put a few items on the record today in regard to the proposed budget, on behalf of the members of Turtle Mountain, and also I think the people of Manitoba need to know where the current government is heading in their proposed budget. I think maybe we should be pointing out to the people of the province that they have this legacy of debt that the current government is working towards and their spending habit they seem to have encompassed.

Before I get into the details, I do want to take a minute to acknowledge the four RCMP officers that lost their lives last week outside of Edmonton. We wish their families well and the best in the future. I know over the last 125 years we have lost over 200 officers to crime during active duty, and we certainly appreciate all the efforts that the RCMP and all police officers put forward on behalf of our efforts.

I do want to also acknowledge Jennifer Jones, our Manitoba champion, and wish her all the best in her Canadian championship endeavours. We also hope that Randy Dutiaume will do well in Edmonton. Certainly, Turtle Mountain is a real curling hotbed, as well, and I know our constituents are certainly thinking of them.

I also want to acknowledge our MLAs. They certainly have spent a lot of time in talking with their constituents and the people of Manitoba, so they do know where we are headed in terms of budget deliberations. Also, our leader has made a real effort to travel around Manitoba and talk to Manitobans so that he does know where Manitobans want to be.

I think this budget is a little bit about missed opportunities. It is quite a bit about priorities, and I want to talk a little bit about some of the priorities in the budget and maybe where the current government has missed the mark. At the outset, I do want to set a bit of a tone. I think in some of our discussion today, it comes back to trust, and we are just not sure if the people of Manitoba can trust the current government and where they are headed. The revenue forecast for this year's budget, the budget has forecast additional revenue of \$524 million, largely on behalf of the federal government is where that money is coming from.

The other side of it, the spending is going to be up about 6.6 percent giving us the largest budget in the history of Manitoba, \$8.1 billion. The unfortunate part is this spending will add another \$459 million to the provincial debt which we think is headed in the wrong direction. As a point of interest, since the NDP government took over office in 1999, the provincial debt has increased over \$3 billion, which is a 32% increase in the provincial debt. That provincial debt now totals over \$20 billion, \$20 billion. We ask on this side what the government has for a vision of Manitoba. Is it a spend, spend priority? And looking at this budget, the spending versus the tax relief has a ratio of 4:1.

The other thing the provincial government is now doing is they have begun their advertising campaign telling Manitobans what kind of a job they are doing and how they are going to spend our money. Unfortunately, that is just another spending habit they have picked up, and they are playing the politics of it again. We know they did the same thing last year when they announced the tax rebate to education tax on farm property. They also spent a lot of money doing the politics of it. It certainly is a step in the right direction, and it is good to see them take a page out of our policy booklet.

I do want to talk about agriculture because agriculture is very important to Turtle Mountain and the constituents of Turtle Mountain. Talk a little bit about BSE, that entire crisis has been here for almost two years. When I campaigned last year, BSE was the hot topic in Turtle Mountain, and, quite frankly, it still is. When I visit my farmers and producers in the area whether it is in the coffee shops or the rinks, anywhere in Manitoba, the BSE issue comes up. We know the border is still closed and the issue does not go away.

The government has announced a lot of money in terms of the BSE situation. The government documents themselves point to \$116 million going into BSE programs. Of that \$116 million, \$67.9 million is, in fact, out there for loans to producers. The situation is those loans are going to have to be paid back, and farmers do not have a market for their commodities now so I think it is important that the government have a look at slaughter capacity in Manitoba. The \$3-million announcement over the last week we hope is a step in the right direction. I think the real thing is the government has to work with the slaughter facilities that are there to upgrade to federal levels so that we can ship Manitoba beef outside of Manitoba. Also, we hope the government will work with the interested companies that want to put federally inspected slaughter plants in Manitoba. We think there has to be a will of government to work there.

* (16:10)

The other program the provincial government has put money into, or has planned to put money into, is the CAIS program, Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization. They have announced another \$2.2 million for that. The problem with the CAIS program is it really does not work for Manitoba cattle producers. The way the program is laid out and the way the inventory situation works on livestock, a lot of farmers are not eligible to access the CAIS program. I think it is time the government actually took a look at that entire program and reworked it so that it was going to be usable for Manitoba producers, especially cattle producers.

I do believe the Manitoba cattle industry can be good. We certainly have larger numbers in Manitoba. I think the future is good, but it is going to take a commitment from this government to save the industry, get some slaughter facilities in Manitoba and move the industry forward. I hope the current government will take a look at our five point BSE plan and strategy. I know they have come along and started to implement some of those plans. I would hope that they would take a serious look at it and implement some more of those plans out of that five point BSE plan.

I have some reservations where the government is headed in terms of the amalgamation of MACC and MCIC, the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation and the Manitoba Agriculture Credit

Corporation. They are two separate entities, one dealing with farm loans, and one dealing with farm insurance. I am not sure that amalgamating those two offices may be the thing to do. I think we are going to have to have a serious look at that before that moves ahead.

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has announced the Destination 2010 program for Manitoba and the restructuring. Unfortunately, 2010, does that reflect that we only have half a vision or are not sure? We do have around Manitoba vacant offices, agriculture offices that are vacant. Is that the intent of the provincial government, for vacant offices? Is that how they are going to balance the budget by not having any more staff? People in Turtle Mountain have some serious reservations about having empty agriculture representative offices.

At this point in time, we need assistance. We need some direction in terms of rural initiatives and rural economic development, and I think that is the minister's department too, is rural initiatives. It has been added to her department. We are hoping that she will seriously have a look at that. It is something we think is very important is the value-adding to Manitoba's production. In the past, we have been very short on this regard. Basically, we have been exporting our jobs outside of Manitoba. I think it is important we take a hard look at the rural initiatives and economic development in Manitoba.

People in Turtle Mountain are also a little concerned about the immigration program that the provincial government has put forward. We think we should be spending more resources on our young farmers in Manitoba. The problem is our young farmers are not very young anymore. They are aging all the time, and it is hard for young producers to get involved in agriculture. We need a commitment on behalf of the government to help our young producers and really facilitate the growth and the ideas that our youth have.

In terms of the tax strategy that the budget proposes, it has been a bit of a slap in the face, the \$100 increase in the personal exemption. One of my colleagues alluded to it earlier, that we should certainly implement the cost of living on the personal exemption, and possibly that personal exemption should be raised. I think the hard-working Manitobans deserve a chance to keep some of their

own money, I think they know how to spend it better than Big Brother does. We as Manitobans remain the highest-taxed province west of Québec.

Another thing the proposed budget does is increase the Pharmacare deductibles. Of course, that is on the backs of the low income and seniors. The Pharmacare deductibles actually increased by 15 percent since 1999. The other thing I want to remind the government of, and I think it is important that Manitobans are reminded of some of the hidden registration fees and taxes that have been brought forward over the last five years. In fact, there are more than 30 occasions that the Doer government has quietly increased the fees paid by businesses and individuals. It really shows that the tax cuts that are being put forward are quite meaningless.

I just want to go through a few and put a few on the record if I may. In terms of registrations and driver licensing, Autopac, we have had dealer plate increases of 100 percent; dealer permit fee increases of 167 percent; registration fees on farm trucks up 29 percent; vehicle registrations on cars increased 43 percent. Diesel tax has increased 11.5 cents; private vehicle inspection and body certificates up 67 percent; driver's license fees up 15 percent; automobile and motor carrier fees up by \$9 million.

I guess that brings us to another question: Where is the amalgamation of Manitoba Public Insurance and the department of Driver and Vehicle Licencing at? That was just another example of the provincial government trying to bypass \$6 million of expenses onto the backs of Manitoba Public Insurance purchasers. *[interjection]*

We will get to that in other discussions.

In terms of the justice system, there has been a lot of increases in fees there. A statement of claim has increased 25 percent; filing for a petition of divorce is up 13 percent; civil cases that are not solved out of court, a 100% increase; general family cases increased 100 percent. The commissioner for oaths renewal, that fee is up 42 percent; a statement of defence filed, up 17 percent; a garnishment order is up 20 percent.

A list of costs of doing business: PST is now charged on labour performed by plumbing, heating, electrical contracts which add at least \$400 to the price of a new house. PST is also assessed on

professional services such as architecture, accounting and legal fees. That has accounted to \$24 million to the budget.

What has been eliminated which is not a real good thing is the commissions for businesses. That is businesses with more than \$36,000 in annual taxable sales that collect retail sales tax, revenue tax, tobacco tax, motor fuel tax and gas tax on behalf of the government, they are no longer getting paid to collect those fees. Those commissions have been eliminated.

The other thing that the provincial government has done over the last few years for consumers is they have marked up the liquor to the tune of \$10 million. Land transfer taxes increased by a million dollars, tobacco taxes increased by \$13 million. Those are just a number of items that the provincial government has done over the last few years.

Let us talk about the rainy day fund. The government has proposed to put \$314 million into the rainy day fund. That is a bit of a red herring. Though \$150 million of that is actually reserved, it is going to be used for health care. The other thing that the members opposite forget is that they withdrew \$348 million out of that budget over the last five years out of the rainy day fund. They are going to put in 314; they have taken out 348 over the last five years. When the current government came into office, the rainy day fund had a balance of \$427 million. Today the balance of the rainy day account is \$79 million. It obviously shows the spending habits of the NDP government.

Not only that, but that was not enough to balance the budget, so what they did, they had to go to Manitoba Hydro and use Manitoba Hydro as a slush fund. Over \$200 million of direct dividends were taken out of Manitoba Hydro. That accounts for \$715 per customer at Manitoba Hydro.

What has happened then after the money was taken out of Manitoba Hydro? We had to increase the hydro rates by 10 percent, a further drain on Manitoba's people. Oh, we increased the water rates, too; \$200 million was not enough. Now, over the last three years, the current NDP government has taken \$700 million out of Hydro either directly or indirectly. That is a bit of a hidden agenda and Manitobans do not like a hidden agenda. The Hydro debt alone is \$7 billion; a \$7-billion debt with Manitoba Hydro.

* (16:20)

Other issues relevant to Manitoba, let us talk about justice. Record murders in Manitoba, record murders in Winnipeg, unbelievable auto thefts in Manitoba, and, obviously, that costs us all through Manitoba Public Insurance and also affects our personal property. The way the crime is in Manitoba, our families are living in fear. We have more gangs in Manitoba than ever before. The Pas alone has five gangs in one community. We have had an increase in drugs; we have had an increase in drugs in our school. Our youth are being exposed to drugs earlier and more often. Our police are very underfunded. The police are doing a tremendous job with the resources they have and we expect that.

I guess what the current NDP government seems to be doing is making announcement after announcement and making promises and promises. Unfortunately, we have never seen those. We keep talking and hearing about the 20 officers; now we hear about 40 officers. In reality, we keep hearing about these officers but we never see them.

What is happening out in the real world? When I talk to my police officer friends, there are police away on maternity, there are police being re-assigned to other duties, they are assigned to desk duties, reduced work. The numbers appear on paper that they are still there. The unfortunate part of the situation is the police are not out there doing their job. We do not have the numbers out there on the street like we should. So let us have a look at the real numbers. The paper numbers show the positions. The real numbers show how many are actually out there doing work. So let us have a look at that.

The other big issue we are having problems with are sex offenders. We have just a growing rate of problems in that regard around Manitoba, and we have to have some real concrete resolutions to that idea.

I have so many more things to say with so little time. I want to briefly talk about infrastructure.

An Honourable Member: There is just not enough time to talk of all the mistakes these guys make.

Mr. Cullen: That is a fact.

Our roads throughout Manitoba are just in a terrible situation. Winnipeg alone has a \$2-billion

deficit, and we know that highways throughout rural Manitoba, and I am thinking of No. 2, 5, 18, 23, 34, 340 and 350, in particular, are certainly in terrible disarray.

Health care. We have got tremendous issues in health care. One constituent of mine has decided he is going to have to go to Québec for his surgery to get his hip replaced. He and another 2500 people on the wait list wonder where the priorities are for the current NDP government.

Education is another interesting issue. The Province is now funding only 56 percent of provincial funding. In the past they offloaded their expenses of education back onto the property owners. We think that is something that certainly has to be addressed.

Secondary education. Brandon University has a \$2 million deficit. They probably are going to lose their sports program as well.

So, in closing, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think what we are afraid of here, we do not like a pay-as-you-go system. We are leaving a terrible legacy here for our family. The debt is piling up to the tune of \$20 billion. We did have the single largest revenue increase in Manitoba's history, but we still have increased debt. How can that be?

Obviously, the current government has a spending habit, and I believe it comes to an element of trust where Manitobans really do not trust this government. This is the sixth budget proposed by the current NDP government. Three out of the last five were actually deficits. I guess we will wait and see what the Auditor General has to say.

We are also tired of the announcements and the re-announcements of different programs. We actually want to see some proof in the pudding. We think that money should be left in the hands of Manitoba taxpayers because they think they can do the job better than what Big Brother can.

In conclusion, Mr. Acting Speaker, I just want to say we have to be careful that we do not spend beyond our means. Thank you very much for allowing me those few minutes to put those ideas on the record.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I rise with a good deal of pride to

have the opportunity of speaking on this budget debate, Mr. Acting Speaker, as a member of this House going into my 15th year and being honoured to represent the people of Kildonan. I think that the sixth consecutive balanced budget of an NDP government is something significant that we should talk about.

First, Mr. Acting Speaker, a test of an opposition is do they have any issues they can get off the ground? Do they have any issues that actually are substantive? We have seen from—how many question periods we have had this session and how many we had last session—virtually no issues have any resonance amongst the public. We get into issues where members stand up and personally attack individuals. We have no discussion of issues. The reason? Because, generally, this budget and this government are in concert with the aspirations and the beliefs of Manitobans both in the city, in rural Manitoba and in the North.

Let me just go through a little bit of a discourse with respect to the opposition. First, they said, "NDP cannot balance the budget. You will never balance the budget under balanced budget legislation." Six balanced budgets later, Mr. Acting Speaker, they now say, "You will never balance the budget under summary balanced budget legislation." Now that we have balanced it under summary budget legislation, they are saying, "Oh, the public debt is too high." Having said that, every single member opposite said, "Build me a school, build me a hospital." Every one of those goes on the public debt side.

That suggests to me that they do not have issues to talk about. Instead, they talk about personality. Instead, they talk about issues of matters that were raised that actually happened under the Conservative government, but now they come under NDP auspices and it is our responsibility to fix. Now they find difficulty with that, issue after issue. A sign of an opposition that does not have legs: they cannot get issues off the ground.

A classic example is this budget, Mr. Acting Speaker. The opposition stands up early in Question Period and says, "Our priority is to cut taxes, our priority is to cut taxes. Well, we know you have cut taxes, we know you have reduced taxes more than when we were in government over 11 years, but still we want you to cut taxes." The same member stands up four questions later and says, "We want you to

build our hospital, put money into our hospital" during the same Question Period. They cannot even be consistent during the Question Period. Never mind during the debate, never mind during several months of a session.

Members opposite know that the majority of Manitobans agree with the balanced approach that has been taken by this NDP government, by this Premier and by this Finance Minister. A balance between fiscal responsibility, a balance between orderly payment of the debts and the liabilities that were built up under successive governments, an approach toward people and programming that recognizes the core function of a government is to assist and to help and to educate and to care for our citizens. I often say, actions not words are, in fact, what are reflective of the government and the public recognizes it. The public recognizes it.

The Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) knows that previous Conservative governments said year after year they would rebuild the Health Sciences Centre. In the 1996 budget they froze it, and it stayed frozen. If the member would have walked toward William Avenue, that structure, over \$100 million, is near completion, and most sophisticated. If the member cares to visit Brandon, he will see the Brandon Health Centre rebuilt that had been promised seven times by the Conservative government. Rebuilt. If the member would travel to Brandon, he would see the first MRI ever outside of an urban centre. In Brandon.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, actions do speak louder than words. Actions speak louder than points of order in the Chamber or numerous privileges that have no basis, not in an attempt for meaningful debate because they do not have issues. They do not reflect what the population of Manitoba cares for.

* (16:30)

There was a time when a Conservative opposition could be perceived as left-of-centre social conscience. These are not those kinds of Conservatives. They have adopted a strident, right-wing, single-horse, you-have-got-to-tax-cut approach to every single issue, Mr. Acting Speaker. The only issue they lean on is cut taxes, cut taxes, cut taxes. The environment does not matter, health care does not matter, education does not matter, social services do not matter. Cut those taxes. And we have, but we

have done it in a prudent, balanced, made-in-Manitoba fashion, not in a rhetorical style that puts us in a situation where we cannot fund those programs that are of importance.

Mr. Acting Speaker, let me discuss several issues. I would be happy to talk about the health care budget. I would be happy to talk about the rankings of Manitoba. The problem is members opposite are locked into 1999. They still do not accept the fact that one of the reasons they were defeated was because of the shoddy treatment that they gave to health care for 11 lean years, lean years.

A thousand less nurses fired off of the front lines have been rehired back. We have 138 more doctors in Manitoba, including 52 in rural Manitoba that were not there in 1999 because of programs we put in place. And those programs, I might add, cost money. We have to pay for those programs. We have to pay to educate those doctors. Those very doctors that we have brought back, that we have educated, cost the province millions of dollars to educate, Mr. Acting Speaker. Members opposite would say, "Cut those doctors." And they did. They cut the medical class. They literally cut the medical class. And now they come to us and say, "How come there are no more doctors?" That is a difficulty. They do not have issues that they can go on. There is no resonance to that. It is phoney. Their attacks are phoney. They are not substantive. An opposition that only attacks and attacks and attacks finds itself as an opposition attacking and attacking and attacking. No substantive agenda, no issues, no vision.

Take the budget, Mr. Acting Speaker. Any reasonable opposition would take a look at this budget and say, "This is a balanced approach." Even Stephen Harper in Ottawa, the icon of the members opposite, chose to support a budget. Even Stephen Harper did. Surely members opposite, many of whom I sat with and now sit in the federal parliament, who worship Stephen Harper and his philosophy, surely even members opposite, if they were not so ideologically bound and so locked into their attitude, could look positively at some of the aspects of this particular budget.

I wanted to deal specifically with one of the issues that came up in Question Period. I got asked unbelievably in Question Period today about the budget for climate change. Now, that was another example. After a myriad of questions about tax

cutting, members opposite said, "The budget for climate change is not big enough. You are not spending enough money on climate change." I thought to myself, "Climate change; I thought they did not believe in climate change. I thought they did not believe in Kyoto." In fact, they do not. They do not support Kyoto. Then I thought, "But wait; could they have failed to look at the plan that we put out in 2002 that said 'Kyoto and Beyond: A Plan of Action to Meet and Exceed Manitoba's Kyoto Targets.' Could members opposite have failed to see that particular plan and that particular document? Could members have failed to see that?" I will provide members opposite with a copy of the plan on Kyoto that the government has not only put in place but is following.

An Honourable Member: Table it.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) says, "Table it." Those copies were provided several years ago when members opposite did not—

An Honourable Member: You have done nothing.

Mr. Chomiak: Now the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), the king of rhetoric, the king of ideology on the right, says we have done nothing. Let me, perhaps, have an opportunity to respond. If the member would listen for a change, which he does not, perhaps I will go through our plan.

An Honourable Member: Tell us the plan.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Acting Speaker, you know, Manitoba is recognized as a leader in earth energy, ground-source heat pumps. We currently install 20 to 30 percent of all units in Canada. Sales have tripled in Manitoba in the last four years. Sales have tripled of geothermal ground-source heat pumps—

An Honourable Member: And?

Mr. Chomiak:—deliberately as a result of action by the government and a program introduced by Hydro. And the Member for Springfield said, "And?" Mr. Acting Speaker, they are recognized by the EPA as the most significant way to reduce energy emissions of any single source of energy possible. The EPA is the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States, for the Member for Springfield.

Secondly, it is curious that of all days the membership says, "Where is your climate plan?" would be the day that a bus powered specifically by hydrogen was announced and was travelling on the streets of Winnipeg. A bus that was built in Winnipeg by New Flyer. A bus that travelled and demonstrated that hydrogen can be used as an energy alternative in a climate like Winnipeg as a leader. The member may not know it. He may not like it and that is the problem with members opposite. They cannot stand that anything works. They cannot stand if anything works. The fact that New Flyer is the leading exporter, the leading manufacturer of hybrid buses in North America bothers the members opposite. That is my problem with the opposition.

The problem with the opposition is they can only attack, attack, attack. There is no reflex mechanism that says, "Hey, wait a minute. Maybe we want to go climate change. Maybe we want to have Kyoto. Maybe we want New Flyer to manufacture hybrid buses. Maybe it is good that New Flyer manufactured and participated in the study of a hydrogen bus in a place like Winnipeg, the only time in Canada." We will not ask that on the very day that it happened, the member happened to discover the environment.

This year, Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba received an "A" rating for energy efficiency from the Energy Alliance of Canada. An "A" rating. Both the government of Manitoba for its programs and Manitoba Hydro. I would be happy to take members through the specific programs, but it was in recognition of the demand-side management programs, the heat pump programs and some of the innovative conservation programs that have been put in place, both by the government and by Hydro. First time, an "A" rating.

Now, the members opposite talk about, actually they are trying to be helpful. Yes, there is boreal forest in Manitoba. In fact, we have put forward a UNESCO World Heritage site on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, and we have actually submitted it for recognition as a World Heritage site. I do not know if members opposite have ever travelled north of the Perimeter Highway, but that is one of the largest untouched boreal areas in North America, and we submitted it. We are in the process of applying to be a world UNESCO Heritage site. Again, part of our Kyoto plan, part of the recommendations of the

east side planning committee that had meetings on the east side.

The Member for Springfield is asking me to talk about budget, but I would rather talk to the Member for Springfield about the Kyoto plan, which I am afraid he is unaware of. It might be helpful if I go through all those items on the Kyoto plan so that he could plan accordingly in terms of Question Period. We are in the midst of negotiating with the government of Ontario as part of the CETI plan, a transmission of clean energy to Ontario. Manitoba has coal burning to the east of us, coal burning to the west of us. We have the opportunity with clean hydro, 97 percent of generation in Manitoba is renewable clean hydro. We have the capacity to export to the east, export to the west, to export to the south in order to eliminate greenhouse gases. We have the opportunity of eliminating somewhere in the neighbourhood of at least seven to ten megatonnes, the largest single reduction in the Canadian scene today of greenhouse gases if we are able to conclude an agreement with Ontario to export.

* (16:40)

I am very happy to say that this matter came up in the Ontario Legislature last week. I am very happy to say that the Minister of Energy had some very favourable reaction to the Manitoba plan. I am also very happy that the federal Minister of Environment, the federal Minister of Finance have all endorsed the Manitoba vision of an east-west power grid.

If you would look at a map of North America, which I have in my office and members are happy to look at any time, most of the transmission lines run north-south; B.C. into United States; Manitoba into United States; Québec into United States. Our plans, the vision first put forward by this government to the federal government to Ontario, to Saskatchewan, to the other provinces of building an east-west grid, have been accepted by the federal government as an opportunity and a plan to build in this country, to take renewal energy which Manitoba has and other jurisdictions have and displace millions of megatons of greenhouse gases.

We are negotiating, or I should say we are discussing with Ontario, Mr. Acting Speaker, an agreement that would see the export possibly of 1500 megawatts of power to Ontario of clean energy that would allow Ontario to, in the words of the federal

Minister of Finance, to reduce or eliminate coal-fire generation.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this is something that has currency not just for tomorrow or the next day or this year's budget or this year's Question Period or this individual member's chance to get a point into Question Period, this is talking about the future, our children's and our children's children. With the decline of fossil fuels and with the movement towards a requirement to need to deal with greenhouse gases, we have taken our 2002 plan and we have put it into specific categories.

I can outline to you that Manitoba has been recognized and, again, as the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) said, it is difficult, but we have been recognized as a leader in implementing and in leadership on Kyoto, be it on clean energy and the clean energy to transfer, be it on hydro-electricity, be it on hydrogen, be it on our movement towards bio-diesel, be it on the geothermal installations or be it on energy efficiency of which there is. Hydro has announced a doubling of its DSM, demand-side management program.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Kyoto plan that was put together by this government, I would have thought at this point, would have had the support of all members of this House, but no avail. As I said in my opening comments, if you are in opposition whose only goal is to attack and attack and attack, if you do not have that basis or that vision, then all you will do is attack and attack and attack. The public will recognize that. If they would look at—*[interjection]*

The Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) will have his chance to discuss the Conservative climate change in Kyoto approach when he has his opportunity at any time either during Question Period or during debate, Mr. Acting Speaker. I suggest that the member review the Kyoto plan, look at the climate change impacts and initiatives that were put in place by the Government of Manitoba. They will recognize that the balanced approach, the made-in-Manitoba approach, the approach that balances fiscal responsibility with social responsibility, with spending on the priorities of Manitobans, is one that is reflected when you go door-to-door. Manitobans know when you go door-to-door that this is a government that listens, this is a government that puts its interests in conjunction with those of their constituents, and reflects their interests.

It does not get it all right all the time. We have admitted that.

We are not a perfect government, but we work at improving the situation for Manitobans every day. That has been what we have done since 1999. That is what we will do for the bulk of our mandate, for the rest of our mandate, and will continue to do into the future, work on behalf of Manitobans, reflecting their interests, not a narrow, ideological, strict conservative view that only sees one opening which is to attack, attack, attack. Thank you.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): The member from Kildonan, the Minister of Energy, just completed his impassioned speech. He spoke like a man who had seen the apparition of Howard Pawley in Question Period, I think. Some of the precursors of the collapse of an administration when they are no longer honest and straightforward with the taxpayers of the province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I hope the doorknob did not hurt him on the way out, but it strikes me that—pardon me, I withdraw that statement. I had all of these nice notes made about the budget and how important it is and darned if he did not get me distracted onto environment. The first person who talked about east-west transmission was who? Sterling Lyon?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Cummings: Then who killed it? Who killed it?

An Honourable Member: Who?

Mr. Cummings: It was the Schreyer administration that killed it because they got greedy. They wanted more and more money to transport power to the east-west, and eventually the West said, "Keep your power." Now, if the members want to talk about our revisionist history, we could spend the next 20 minutes talking about that type of short-sighted thinking and planning. I think more importantly we need to deal with what is probably one of the most disappointing moments in the history of this administration when they have piles of money that they are shovelling through, having received one of the largest growths in income in the history of this province year over year.

They have had their budget, and they are all excited about being able to spend this money. People

are saying, "Whoa, wait a minute. That is nice to have all that money, and this is not going to happen every year. Maybe we would like to know if you have a plan." Do you have a plan on how you are going to spend all this money, or do you really believe that by being generous in a number of areas people will not notice that the only way you approach this budgeting process is to simply spread the gruel around a bit, at the very time that anybody who has tried to make a living in this country and anywhere else will tell you one of the most important times to be making very good decisions is when you have a plethora of funds? Some of the worst decisions in history are made by business, by individuals and by governments when they have a plethora of money and they do not realize that it may not always be permanent.

We have seen growth in the Canadian economy that has been generous to our transfer programs in this country, and Manitoba is a recipient. We are one of the biggest have-not provinces in the country, apparently, and this government has made a craft out of getting more money out of Ottawa. It is true to say that Ottawa has not lived up to its obligations in health, education and social transfers, and I would suggest because of sheer fear they are starting to share some of that revenue.

This government is, I could only describe it as, you know, a young kid that is out looking for a pony. He is digging through the pen, and he is sure there is a pony under there. He is throwing the money left, right and centre looking for that pony. This government is throwing out this money to the left, right and centre without a discernible plan on how they see this province looking four or five years down the road as a result of this infusion of cash, and there will probably be an infusion next year.

But can we always be sure that our own sources are going to keep up the revenue to this government? Agriculture has just come through one of the most devastating years in recent history, and that will start to show up on the negative side of revenues to the province in about the next nine, ten months, maybe more in the next fourteen months.

So here we are with \$2.8-billion revenue from federal transfers and equalization, 34.2 percent of all provincial revenue. That is a scary proposition, ladies and gentlemen, when we have the economy of this province so dependent on transfers. Are we at risk of

putting growth and building into the base to this budget and into the base costs of running government in this province more cost, more overhead and less productivity?

* (16:50)

I look at the area I represent. I look to the budget of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, and I see a 19.4% increase in budget this year. Wonderful, until you realize that is an education tax rebate. Should that not be more correctly reflected in the Education budget or in the Department of Finance budget? But, no, this government thinks that outside of the perimeter, we stubble jumpers are so stupid that we would not think the \$20 million is not of the Department of Agriculture budget; it goes to tax relief, tax problems created by the funding of education that this government has not dealt with in a forthright and direct manner. *[interjection]*

Well, the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) is peering over the edge of his desk over there. I would remind him that for years we have been talking about changing the manner in which education is financed and delivered in this province. The best we can get at a time—frankly, his administration campaigned against that principle. In the last election, the scare factor was alive and well. Oh, you cannot do that. Central government will control the cost of education. Central government will starve your education system. You cannot do that. Well, their choice, I think, is even less desirable. To continuously put this into a rebate program, you know what the farm leaders are thinking? So this is not a rebate program. One stroke of the pen and it can be gone. We had a bad year. It can be gone. *[interjection]*

Now I am being threatened by the Minister of Education, "You better not do that when you are in government." Perhaps he saw the ghosts of Howard Pawley today too, because the fact is that governments will not make good decisions, and governments will find themselves in some disrespect in the eyes of the public when they are not fair and honest relative to how they are governing and relative to how they are displaying the money they are spending on behalf of the public. That is one of the things I think is most important to remember, that the public will give government an awful lot of time, they will give them an awful lot of respect, frankly, until they realize that maybe they are pulling their

chain. Maybe there is something about the communication system, that communications are so important that they become the only way they can convey their vision to the public, by press release.

Obviously, if you have a vision and you have a strategy, you put out a press release around it, but if you cannot substantiate the words that are in the press release then people start to say, "Does this government know what it is doing?"

At a time when you should be revelling in the accolades from the general public about your wise choices for their tax dollars, about how you are fixing the health care problem, about how education is now a priority, which is what we have heard mouthed for years, "education is a priority," why is it that our post-secondary institutions are wondering what their future is going to look like? If ever there was a time in our history they should be comfortable and confident that they can move forward, that they can ride this growth in enrolment, which we keep hearing from the Premier, "Oh, these are record growth and enrolment figures that we have; it must be because of our good policies." The problem is he refuses to reflect on what is happening across the rest of the country. Hello, it is happening everywhere else in the country too, except that in most other places in the country the post-secondary education institutions have some confidence that perhaps they will have a long life, and that they can make plans based on solid understanding of where the government wants to go.

I think when government does not know for sure how it is going to handle a situation, when it is afraid to make hard decisions on one hand, and on the other hand it wants to be loved by everybody, eventually those two problems become irreconcilable.

It is funny, we were talking about environment for the last few minutes, and I heard the Minister of Energy (Mr. Chomiak) talking about how he is going to save the globe. You know what this government did immediately upon coming into government? It decided to pull back from the recycling programs in this province, pull back the PST that is charged against materials that were being recycled. They decided to pull that back.

I cannot believe that the public has rolled over and did not say anything. The programs were moving forward. Okay, I guess there is no problem. The

problem is that the door is slowly starting to close. The door that PST money used to help keep open, the door that has enough money behind it in order to pay for the cost of recovering those materials. This government, because of its greed, decided that it would take that money and leave the programs to manage on their own without any further plan. If there is a plan, for goodness' sake tell the public. If there is a plan, do something or you are going to have two or three of the larger and better programs in the country floundering as a result of their own success.

Now is that leadership? Is that government? Perhaps, it is NDP leadership and government, but I am amazed they believe that is suitable for this province and when they are off saying they are going to meet the Kyoto standards.

I am embarrassed to say that I was fooled by the previous Minister of Energy into thinking that we had to have the legislation on ethanol passed within days or the sky was going to fall. I fell for that shtick, and I do not think I am overly gullible. But these guys were convinced they were going to save the world and get the ethanol plants all up and running. They talked us into passing an ethanol bill which we wanted to have more debate, more discussion and more understanding about. No, you have to get it passed before Christmas so we can have access to the federal goodies, and we will get our ethanol plant.

How many years ago was that now? I am embarrassed to talk about this. If they deal with their fellow honourable members in that fashion, I think we saw today that perhaps they are prepared to deal with the public in that fashion. The public will not like it, and it will be the opposition's job to point out that the public deserves better treatment than that. They deserve better leadership than that. They certainly deserve more transparency and honesty.

The one example of transparency that I want to leave on the record, or the lack of transparency that I want to leave on the record is: They have now removed any way to ascertain what the administrative costs are of the WRHA. Why would government do that? What practical, logical and defensible reason is there for going down that route? The public deserves to know. If it is defensible, they will understand. If it is not defensible, the government needs to deal with it.

I look at the budget and I look at the increases in the budget, and most of the increases are between 9 and 2 and 4 and 2.4, 7.5, 9.6. Agriculture already dealt with that one. That is a misleading 20% change, but public debt, 12.7% change in the Estimates of this province. Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade is the only other one that comes close to it, along with the Healthy Aging Secretariat. I guess we can assume that the government does not mind reducing the agricultural portfolio. They do not mind increasing the public debt costs and they are prepared to put 24 percent into the Healthy Aging Secretariat.

* (17:00)

That is a very small line. When I find all of the other lines are within a range, and those ones stick outside of it, then I have to ask, "Does this government have a plan?" There does not seem to be a great deal of consistency in the way they have approached that part of responsible budgeting

I cannot sit down without referencing the derision that has been expressed by some government members about the balanced budget legislation and how they have been able to, for the last four years, talk about how they have been able to meet balanced budget legislation requirements and have got away with saying, "Well, we met the same standards that the Conservative administration did." The fact is, the Conservative administration had a balanced budget that was balanced on both counts. This government did not, and the one thing that is the most hurtful about this is that you can pass legislation to try and require government to live within certain guidelines, and frankly, when I first started thinking about balanced budget legislation, Minnesota was one of the first examples. They are required to live within certain guidelines, and frankly, their Legislature does not sit all that much because, for their budgeting purposes, they are required to live within some very stringent guidelines. You can legislate that, but you cannot legislate honour and honesty if somebody sets out to find a loophole to avoid a requirement.

I say to my constituents, "It is pretty simple. When you are driving through a school zone and it says a certain speed limit, be it 15 or 20 kilometres, and you are doing 40 and you did not get a ticket, does that mean that you did not know what you were doing wrong? That is what this government's attitude

is." They did not get caught because they found the loophole they could use, and they are using what I would consider very questionable accounting tactics to in fact sustain their argument.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am far too used to 40-minute speeches, but I want to leave that message with this government and I intend to take that message to my voters and to the voters of Manitoba. I want them to know that governments should live by the spirit as well as the letter of the law, and up until now, when it comes to balanced budget legislation, this government has avoided living by the spirit of that legislation, and I am embarrassed.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): It is a pleasure to speak on the 2005 budget, a budget based on four pillars. Number one, paying down the debt. Our debt payment increased to \$100 million from \$96 million, and we have a plan; in fact, we are addressing Manitoba's pension monster. We are paying down what was a formerly unfunded pension liability for teachers and civil servants, and every year we are putting money against this. Eventually that unfunded liability will be gone because it is my understanding that anyone who is newly enrolled as a civil servant or a teacher has a pension that is funded in the current year, fully funded. There has been no draw on the rainy day fund this year, or there will be no draw.

Second, we are making strategic investments in more hip and knee surgeries as was announced at Concordia Hospital yesterday. There is an 8% funding increase for the city of Winnipeg. There is more funding for highways, transit and water systems. There is a new fuel tax-sharing agreement with municipalities. There is a 10% tuition reduction which is continuing for the fifth straight year. There are significant increases for health and education, and an additional 40 police officers across Manitoba, I believe 20 in the city of Winnipeg and 20 in the rest of the province.

Thirdly, our third pillar is we are cutting taxes. This is a promise made and a promise kept. Our six-year tax reductions total \$500 million. There is a new \$30-million reduction in the ESL and residential property. The average homeowner saves \$120 on a \$125,000 house. Personal income taxes have been cut by another \$30 million, and there is a 19% cut in middle-income taxes since 1999.

Another 2000 low-income earners were moved from the tax rolls. This is probably one feature of the

tax reductions that will benefit mostly constituents of Burrows. I represent many low-income people. In fact, the average family income in Burrows is about \$28,000 a year, and there are many people who have fixed incomes either from employment income assistance or pensions, but there are also many working-class people, and I expect that by taking people off the income tax rolls altogether, this will benefit some of my constituents. Business taxes have been reduced by \$54 million.

The fourth pillar of our budget is saving for the future. We have made it a positive \$314 million into the fiscal stabilization fund. Our budget is balanced under the balanced budget law, and we have \$196 million projected surplus under the summary budget statement.

I suspect that some of these things are very frustrating for members of the opposition. They, of course, wanted us to put more money in the fiscal stabilization fund, and we have done that. They want us to be balanced under the summary budget, and we have done that. We did not even promise to do these things, we just did them. We promised to cut taxes, we have done that. That is a promise made, a promise kept. But we have done some things that I think took the wind out of the sails of the opposition. There is not very much to shoot at here and as a result, I think we are hearing matters of privilege and other matters because they would rather debate that than debate our budget.

I would like now to go to some of the details about things in the budget that are of particular interest to the constituents of Burrows. For example, supporting Manitoba's capital city, Winnipeg. Funding for the city of Winnipeg is up 8 percent through the new Building Manitoba Fund. Winnipeg Transit operating funding is increased by 15 percent or \$2.5 million through the new Building Manitoba Fund, the first significant transit increase in a decade. We have a six-year plan to invest \$500 million in renewing Winnipeg's infrastructure, and I think people will be happy to hear this because we know that there is a need to improve the infrastructure, whether it is the sewer system or whether it is streets and roads. This is a concern to taxpayers—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Martindale: One of the members opposite wants me to repeat it. It is a six-year plan to invest

\$500 million on renewing Winnipeg's infrastructure. How much? It is \$500 million. Happy to repeat that for the member.

An Honourable Member: Is it \$500 million?

Mr. Martindale: It is \$500 million over six years. For the first time, a 5% share of casino revenues to enable the city to add 20 officers to the Winnipeg Police Service. That is how we plan to pay for it, 20 more police officers. And \$56 million for the expansion of the Red River Floodway, the largest infrastructure project in Winnipeg's history, something that will benefit all members of the Winnipeg community. Support for tripartite programs that help fund such infrastructure projects as upgrading Winnipeg's waste water treatment system and building the Kenaston underpass, something that the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) has been asking for for many years, and we are doing it. We are going to build the Kenaston underpass. We are also improving the water treatment system for Winnipeg. We are funding the twinning of the northeast section of Winnipeg's Perimeter Highway, and beginning in 2006, the Province will begin to share assessment costs with Winnipeg as it does with other municipalities.

Another aspect of this budget that will affect many of my constituents in a positive way is our commitment to health care and healthy living. As I mentioned, there will be new resources for hip and knee surgeries. We are going to reduce the waiting lists and, hopefully, reduce the waiting times. There are more medical school spaces. Manitoba now has 85, up from 70 in 1999. There is \$9.7 million more for home care. We are continuing to improve cardiac care services as outlined in the Koshal report. A 16% increase for Pharmacare, plus \$1 to \$5 per month increase in deductibles for most Manitobans. We continue to streamline administration to focus on front-line services. There is \$3.6 million more for healthy living initiatives. We are implementing a diabetes prevention strategy in partnership with communities and the expansion of the provincial diabetes program. I would be pleased to point out since we are talking about diabetes that at our convention there is a resolution on diabetes. In fact, under the health section, the first resolution is on diabetes. It was written by one of my constituents, Pam Keating [*phonetic*], and I would like to pay tribute to her.

* (17:10)

I think it is very appropriate that when someone who is a member of the party is in tune with what society is saying about diabetes prevention and education and what the government is saying about diabetes prevention and education that this individual is on the right track. I am sure that when this resolution comes up to be debated at our provincial convention that it will be approved because we know that we have to do more in terms of diabetes prevention and education. It is something that the Aboriginal community, in particular, is concerned about, and we as a government hear these concerns and we are taking action.

The next section I would like to comment on is creating new opportunities for young people. As I mentioned, the 10% tuition reduction has been maintained for the fifth year in a row, and enrolment is up 33 percent over the same period. I think this is one of the best things we have done as a government: making university and post-secondary education accessible and affordable. There are many individuals from low-income families who would not otherwise be able to go to university because students experience what has been described to us as "sticker shock." When they see a very high cost for tuition, they do not even apply; they may not know there are bursaries and scholarships available. So I think it is important to keep the tuition as low as possible and, at the same time, increase funding to universities. I believe we have done both.

There will be more training for health technologists and new medical school spaces. There is a \$750,000 expansion to the student loan and bursary program. I believe it was under a Conservative government that the student loan and bursary program was eliminated in Manitoba. We brought it back, and we enshrined it in legislation so that if any future government wants to get rid of it, it will be much harder to get rid of.

Actually, there are many, many things that the previous Conservative government got rid of. I remember when they amended legislation so that students on social assistance could not go to high school. I remember in the debate I called it "the Gary Filmon kicking students out of school bill" because that is what it was. Some of you who were there at the time, for example, the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) was there and the Member for Pembina

(Mr. Dyck) was there. He will remember the people making presentations at the committee stage of the bill. In fact, one of those two gentlemen was probably chairing that committee. They will remember how angry people were when they were told they could no longer go to high school to upgrade themselves. I think that was a very short-sighted policy because we know that the more education people have, the more likely they are to be employed, get off social assistance and become taxpayers. We, of course, voted against that bill. When we had the chance, when we formed government, we brought back the loan and bursary program for post-secondary education.

We are increasing funding for technical-vocational training and apprenticeship programs. We have more support for the college expansion initiative. We are increasing funding for arts and culture, and we are providing an additional \$500,000 for sports programs.

We are also building the clean energy advantage. It was rather interesting to hear the Minister of Energy (Mr. Chomiak) being heckled by members opposite when he was talking about the hydrogen bus. I think a hydrogen bus is the way of the future, and we are investing in hydrogen. It is the way to go.

In fact, some of you may have seen last night on Vision TV a program called *The End of Suburbia*, which was really about hydrocarbons running out and our economies having to change because the cost of gas and oil will be so high that we will not be able to maintain our current modes of transportation. So we need to look down the road 10 years, 20 years ahead when hydrocarbons run out and plan for alternatives such as hydrogen and ethanol, alternative fuels. Manitoba is doing that, and we believe it is important. That is why Manitoba Hydro and the government support developing alternatives.

We know that hydrogen is a workable alternative in Manitoba even though it was panned on this program that I saw last night, this documentary. We have the necessary means to produce it because we have electricity and we have water, so what more do you need? Those are the two basic ingredients for hydrogen energy, right? There are no pollutants because the pollutants are, what shall we say—the by-product is water, right? So there is no downside to hydrogen that I know of. If there are some, I would be interested in knowing what they are.

We need to develop hydrogen buses. We need to be concerned about greenhouse gases. We need to be concerned about global warming. Interestingly, the first part of the private sector to wake up to global warming was the insurance industry because they were facing horrendous claims due to hurricanes and other factors that scientists believe, and the insurance industry agreed, were caused by global warming. That was one sector, probably the first sector of the private sector, to wake up to the fact that global warming had consequences for business and industry. I think the support for Kyoto and the support for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are growing all the time, including in the private sector.

We are preparing for the potential Wuskwatim development in northern Manitoba and pursuing other opportunities, such as the proposed Conawapa Dam. We are launching a new initiative to coordinate energy efficiency programs for Manitobans. We are examining biodiesels and other clean alternative energy sources. We are supporting new energy developments, such as the new wind farm in St. Leon, which is currently under construction. I understand from the Minister of Energy (Mr. Chomiak) that when it is finished we will have the largest wind farm in Canada. That is very significant. It is a good alternative to other sources of energy.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We have a five-year tax reduction plan which will continue, a new \$30-million reduction in the education support levy on residential property, saving the typical homeowner with a \$125,000 home approximately \$120 in property taxes in 2005, as I already mentioned. The farmland school taxes have been cut by 50 percent or \$20 million in 2005. Taxpayers will save a total of \$142 million in property taxes in 2005, a result of six years of tax reductions and credit increases.

I know that the opposition wants these to be even more. In fact, if you listen to the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen)—I did not add up all of his tax reductions that he was campaigning for yesterday, but I think if you were to add them up, they would be at least a billion dollars, which begs the question: How would he pay for them? Would he cut a billion dollars in spending? If so, which programs would he cut? I do not think the Tory tax reductions are affordable. Of course, maybe they would do what

they did in the 1990s and cut nurses, lay off a thousand nurses.

The Conservatives will always argue, of course, that when you cut taxes that stimulates the economy, that people spend money. I think that has been proven false by many economists. The logic of it is not sound because when affluent people get tax cuts they do not spend the money in the local economy. They do things like take holidays in Hawaii. So they are not even spending the money in Canada, let alone in Manitoba. If you increase the minimum wage, to use a contrasting example, low-income people spend that money in the community in which they live, which actually does stimulate the economy. So I think this is a misguided notion, that massive tax cuts will stimulate the economy. I think we are stimulating the economy by building schools and building hospitals and expanding the floodway and building hydro dams and university infrastructure. I think we are putting people to work. We are seeing the lowest level of employment in many, many years and the lowest levels of social assistance enrolment in many, many years because people are going back to work, and that is a good thing.

Personal income taxes will be reduced again effective January 1, 2006, saving Manitobans \$30 million. The middle-income bracket will be reduced to 13.5 percent while the basic personal exemption will rise by a hundred dollars, removing another 2000 Manitobans from the tax rolls. In total, Manitobans will save \$249 million annually as a result of personal income tax cuts announced since 1999.

* (17:20)

Now I would like to go on to the section called "Putting People First" because many of our policies do that. For example, the new integrated shelter benefit to increase affordability of housing for low-income Manitobans was announced in the budget. This is something that I think is badly needed because, as we know, I believe it was a Conservative government that brought in some of these targeted programs like SAFER and SAFFR and CRISP and 55-Plus. There is a certain rationale for targeted programs, but what we are going to do is we are going to expand it because one of the problems is that it was not indexed and the thresholds stayed the same. The result was that the take-up was less and less every year, and the amount of money that both

Conservative and NDP governments were putting into it was less and less every year. We are going to enhance it; we are going to augment it. We are going to improve it so that more people who are working will get a shelter allowance. That is certainly something that will affect some of my constituents in Burrows, although I do not have a lot of rental properties in the Burrows constituency, but it is something I support. I remember when the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) was the Minister of Family Services and Housing, I wrote him a letter and recommended that SAFER and SAFFR be improved. Now I am happy to report that under our current minister, the Member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), we are enhancing this program, and we are calling it a new integrated shelter benefit.

We will raise the minimum wage 25 cents an hour in 2005. This is another example of a balanced government that is doing things incrementally, but it makes a difference when you increase the minimum wage 25 cents a year. That is another thing that will affect some of our constituents in Burrows.

We are spending over \$17 million more to expand community living supports to assist adults living with mental disabilities. I think this is probably the part of the budget of Family Services and Housing, except maybe for housing programs, that has expanded the most. We continue to move people out of institutions into the community. We continue to expand the budget to help adequately pay people who work with those in community living settings.

Of course, we remember what happened under the Conservatives where there was no increase in wages for many, many years, and it was very, very hard for non-profit organizations, which the vast majority are, to retain staff because people would leave because they could get higher pay working as a teaching assistant for a school division. Almost any job paid more than working in a community living group home. So we have tried to address this problem of providing adequate wages.

Manitoba's five-year child care strategy continues with a new partner: the federal government. We know that the federal government announced \$5 billion in their budget; we are waiting for the details. We are waiting for the money to flow, but you can be sure that Manitoba is going to use the money to continue to implement our five-year plan. We also

need to address wages. We need to retain the workers that are there, and I believe the plan is to put some of the money into wages, not just to expanding the system. We need to do both. We are very supportive of the federal government, and we are disappointed that provinces like Alberta want to take the money and do whatever they wish with it. We think it should go into a sustainable child care system.

We have new supports for parents based on proven approaches. In fact, BabyFirst and EarlyStart will be combined into a new program to better reach out to families. We have already had a briefing on this, and it looks like a good plan. I am looking forward to seeing it being launched.

There will be more resources to help new immigrants settle in Manitoba.

We are also building safer communities. In addition to an additional 40 police officers, as has already been mentioned, there will be new resources to combat domestic violence, a plan to tackle illicit drug manufacturing and all alcohol-related crimes. There will be renewed focus on preventing auto thefts. We will expand Manitoba's successful Lighthouses program for youth, and one of those centres is in the Burrows constituency at King Edward School.

We are protecting Manitoba's water and the environment. Manitoba's Green Strategy addresses climate change and protects water and natural areas. I think this is something that everyone can identify with, whether you have a cottage on the lake or enjoy fishing or whatever it is. I think there are just so many rivers and lakes in Manitoba and such a consciousness now about the importance of clean water, especially after people died in Walkerton and people got sick in North Battleford. I think people know that we have to make this a priority, and our government is doing that. We are building water treatment facilities; we are changing the sewage collection system in Winnipeg; and we have the committee that is working on the water quality of Lake Winnipeg.

We believe that improving the quality of water for all Manitobans, whether it is for drinking or recreation or for fishing, is very important, and we are moving ahead on this file. In fact, we are probably the first government in Canada to appoint a

Minister of Water Stewardship. We think that he is doing an excellent job, and I think he has his plate full as well.

So we are increasing resources for water quality initiatives. We are working with communities to protect the great lakes, Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba. That is the first time I have seen this expression, the great lakes. We would normally think of the five Great Lakes, but these are Manitoba's great lakes, Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba, and I think from now on we should probably refer to them as our great lakes.

We are upgrading facilities in provincial parks including more support for the popular Birds Hill Provincial Park. We are maintaining and enhancing Manitoba's network of protected areas. There are new resources for a sustainable forest management such as the forest resource inventory database. That is only a part of the good news that is in our budget. I could go on and on, but I am not going to.

I am going to end when we reach the adjournment hour, but I would like to share something interesting that I found on the Internet. I looked up the Conservative Party of Manitoba Web page. It is very interesting. I compliment them for having a very clear statement of party philosophy, with their philosophy, their principles, their aims and objectives and their beliefs.

So I did a little analysis of it. It is very, very interesting, because the emphasis in the Conservative Party is on the individual, and it comes across loud and clear if you read their statement of philosophy. In fact, the word "individual" happens 11 times, but if you look at community, or people, or Manitobans, where is it? Well, community occurs once, people once, Manitobans twice; by contrast, well, private ownership is in there twice, and individual 11 times. I guess this should not come as a surprise to me, but just the fact to see it in black and white really tells one what the Conservative Party is really all about. It is really no surprise that they want tax breaks for individuals, because the word "individuals" is in their philosophy statement 11 times.

Now, I was looking for other values like equality and social justice, and did I find them? Well, I found the words "social justice" once, "equal opportunity," "equal treatment," "equality," for a total of three times. There are some rather interesting omissions.

They talk a lot about equality, and they talk about individual rights, in fact, over and over again, but, when it comes to their statement of aims and objectives, they are not found. For example, they want to ensure human betterment and economic progress, but they left out disabled people, and they left out sexual orientation. Also, under beliefs the language is sexist; they need to revise their Web site, and get with the times. Some people did that 25 years ago, but I guess the Tories have not quite caught up to where society is in those terms.

I think it is rather interesting that they would emphasize individual rights and individual responsibilities, but when it comes to voting for individual rights they vote against the government on things like same sex benefits and same sex rights. It is too bad they do not actually follow their philosophy as laid out on their Web page. I would actually commend everyone to read this, because it is such a clear statement of where they want to go, for example smaller government. This is kind of a George Bush, Republican, American idea that the Reform Party, and now the Conservative Party, is pushing. It is implied, if not outright in their beliefs. It says it is absolutely essential that government at all levels be limited in size and maintained as close to the people as possible.

I think the way you limit government in size is that you eliminate programs; you privatize. You do things that benefit individuals, but not necessarily society. I do not have time to read into the record our statement of principles, but, obviously, I think everyone knows we are much more communitarian, much more community minded. Our emphasis is on people, putting people first, which is right in the budget speech, and we have done that.

I think, to summarize, or conclude, or wind up here, since we are reaching the adjournment hour, I think we have put people first in this budget. If you talk to your constituents, if you go door-to-door, if you talk to people in your community, they will say their priorities are health care and education and social programs. Yes, people like tax cuts; those are always popular. Nobody is going to vote against tax cuts, except the official opposition in the Manitoba Legislature. We can see it coming; they are going to vote against tax cuts. But, if you look at public opinion polls, tax cuts are at a much lower level than what are the priorities of Canadians and Manitobans, mainly improve health care, improve education,

improve social programs. We have also got some tax cuts as well, some quite significant tax cuts in terms of dollars. *[interjection]* Well, I do not have a list here right in front of me of our total tax reductions, but they are quite significant.

I did find the NDP tax relief summary Budget 2005: total tax relief, \$137 million; since 1999, \$520 million. It is a lot of money, but if you look at what we are putting into health and education, I would have to say it is a lot more because those are the priorities of Manitobans and those are the

priorities of this government. At the same time, I think we are a government of a balanced approach. We are not one-trick ponies, as someone described—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) will have four minutes remaining.

The hour being 5:30, this House is adjourned, and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 10, 2005

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