



Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickey
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	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.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
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.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren	Lac du Bonnet	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	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
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, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 19, 2001

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

Point of Order

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise and deal with a statement that I made yesterday in regard to some words which I used in reply to a question from the honourable member of River East.

Let me say that my intent was to deal with, I believe, an honestly held difference of policy and opinion between our two parties. They believe honestly that people should be required to do some things for their or their family's benefit. We believe, on the other hand, that the overwhelming majority freely choose to make good choices when they are given the chance to do so. It was this difference, honestly held between our two parties, to which I was trying to draw attention in my remarks.

In reviewing those remarks this morning in Hansard, Mr. Speaker, I can see that some of the words which I used could give offence. I therefore want to retract and withdraw those words which may have given offence.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege and will have a substantive motion at the end of my comments.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member rose on a point of order. I have to deal with the point of order first.

On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Family Services, it is not a point of order. It was clarification, I guess it would be.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Minister of Family Services and Housing Comments

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, after having had an opportunity to

review Hansard from yesterday's Question Period, I rise today at my earliest opportunity to raise a matter of privilege. I indicated just a moment ago that I would have a substantive motion following my comments here in the House today. I well appreciate the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) rising in his place before Question Period today, but I do not believe that he has addressed the issue in totality with his comments. I did not hear an unequivocal withdrawal of the attitude and the comments that were put before this House yesterday.

The Minister of Family Services' comments were talking about the previous government's record in the area of women's health and support initiatives. I only wish I had been able to stand yesterday in my place and raise this as a matter of privilege, but I had great difficulty hearing the answers to my questions from the Minister of Family Services because of the noise and the loud applause in this House by colleagues on the Government side as a result of the Minister of Family Services' response.

When I had the opportunity after Question Period to review the tape and see first-hand what was happening in the Legislature during answers to those questions, I found it very disturbing to see right on that video tape both the Member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) and the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) bursting into laughter and applauding the kind of language that was used by the Minister of Family Services.

The Minister of Family Services stated in reference to women: "We do not think you have to take a stick and beat them like the Opposition does." It is incumbent upon a minister of the Government and specifically, in this case, the Minister of Family Services and Housing and Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities that in both word and deed he respect the rights of all honourable members. The Minister of Family Services' reckless and unfounded accusation yesterday that members on this side of the House either condone or participate in violence against women is an

affront not only against the men and women of our benches but indeed all members.

* (13:35)

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Legislative Assembly for over 15 years, it is the first time I have had to stand in this House on a matter of privilege. As a former Minister of Family Services, who witnessed first-hand the horrific consequences of violence against women, and as a member of a government that introduced zero-tolerance legislation when it comes to domestic violence, and as a woman, I find the minister's comments to be offensive, unfounded and dangerous, as they perpetuate the fallacy that violence against women is acceptable.

As a member of the Legislature and a former member of Family Services, I worked very hard in my six years as Minister of Family Services to establish several policies and programs to assist women in Manitoba, including the Women and Infant Nutrition program, to provide nutritional education and a nutritional benefit to provincial-assistance clients who were pregnant or who had children under the age of one. The program offered professional consultation and peer support on positive parenting practices to lower-income new parents.

Stop FAS was a pilot project targeted at substance-abusing women of childbearing age to decrease alcohol abuse, provide care for existing children, decrease dependence on the service system and prevent the birth of alcohol-affected children.

Baby Think It Over was a teaching tool that was used within the Manitoba Education and Training family studies curriculum. By using an infant simulator, it provides adolescents with the experience of parenting.

Healthy Choices was an initiative that helped pregnant teens explore adoption as an option, decrease the likelihood of repeat pregnancies and research contributing factors to the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy.

BabyFirst was one of our initiatives that addressed the needs of families and children who are at risk by promoting positive parenting and

the prevention of child abuse and neglect. In partnership with public health nurses, it provides for in-home assistance and education through a home visitor to ensure infants receive the care and stimulation critical to the long-term well-being and healthy development of the child. Assistance is also provided to support the parent adapting to life with an infant and learning the necessary skills to care for a child.

EarlyStart was an initiative that provides focused early intervention with children aged two to five years to increase school readiness and decrease the need for costly education, health or social services intervention. EarlyStart program elements include: providing outreach to parents, including home visits; ensuring active parental involvement in the program; participating in child development activities at least two years before school starts; helping children and their families access health, education and social services within their community; and providing health and nutrition information and links to other health supports.

Mr. Speaker, during our time in government, Manitoba Family Services attributed 55 percent of its income assistance expenditures on sole-support parents to adolescent parents or those who first became parents as teenagers, hardly a figure that equates with beating women with a stick.

Mr. Speaker, the tone and the intent of my question yesterday in Question Period was to simply seek information on the Doer government's prenatal program. I simply asked the minister what measures he was implementing to ensure that pregnant mothers actually received proper nutrition through the program that he announced.

Mr. Speaker, the minister may try to justify his comments as being flippant, rash or tongue-in-cheek, but members on this side of the House condemn in both words and action violence against women. What also worries me is that this kind of intolerant, violent thinking is being perpetuated by other government MLAs. I reference the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) who, unable to debate rationally about his philosophies and ideas, accused the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) of

supporting an organization such as the Ku Klux Klan. In a civilized society, violence and discrimination based on race or gender has no place. We as MLAs were elected to represent the community at large. We must be especially vigilant to condemn all forms of violence. Our words become part of this province's permanent record and history, and it is unfortunate that words such as those uttered by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) yesterday, which advocate violence against 50 percent of our population is now part of the Legislative Assembly permanent record.

* (13:40)

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. McGifford) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) to join me in condemning the words of their colleagues. These two ministers are charged with representing and safeguarding women in Manitoba. The Minister responsible for the Status of Women is charged with promoting, celebrating and elevating women in Manitoba. The large number of women in today's Legislature is testimony to how far we have come. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) is charged with the responsibility to uphold the laws of our province, including the policy that our Government brought in, and that is zero tolerance.

We must, Mr. Speaker, never take for granted the advances women have achieved over the years. It is only when we take something for granted, when we assume it is safe, that a single individual can threaten our collective progress by insinuating that any elected individual would support violence against women.

I say shame, and therefore I move, seconded by the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray),

THAT the Minister of Family Services did break the privileges of all Opposition members by accusing those MLAs of condoning and participating in one of society's most heinous crimes, that being the physical assaulting of women, and that this House finds the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) in contempt of this House for casting aspersions against members of the Opposition; and furthermore that this

minister be directed to withdraw and apologize to this House unequivocally; and that this matter be referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections for the committee's consideration.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind all honourable members that a matter of privilege is a very serious matter and I would ask the cooperation of all honourable members for silence when the privilege is being heard.

Before recognizing any other members 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 case has been established.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): We certainly find the remarks of the member opposite to be odd in this regard. I believe the member opposite already had her time to speak. I believe it is an opportunity now for this side to respond.

The Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale) came into this House today and took a high road and immediately sought your eye and got on his feet, gave an explanation as to his answer to the member's question. He concluded by saying, and I am going by his notes which were written: I retract and withdraw the words which gave offence. That was clearly a retraction and a withdrawal and unequivocal in every way.

* (13:45)

I now want to say that it appears the member came in here with this speech that it appears she put some time into but wanted to proceed with her speech oblivious to the fact that the matter which is the subject of her motion had already been dealt with. It had already been dispensed with in this House. Mr. Speaker, it is a tradition and an important convention of this Assembly that when a matter has been dealt with it has been dealt with, particularly when there has been an unequivocal retraction and withdrawal of words used by a member.

Indeed, I have a note here from the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). He recalls an instance where there was an incident arising between him and the former Government House Leader the Member for Charleswood where there was an apology issued in this House and the matter of privilege therefore was not allowed to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, if indeed it is your decision that the matter of privilege proceed, and again it is our position that the matter has been dealt with, it is functus that this clearly is not anything in the sort of a matter of privilege. A matter of privilege is set out in *Beauchesne's*. It describes what it is: The privileges of Parliament, it says, are rights which are absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers. That, of course, is a quote that has been used time and time again in this House, and it is a part of this Legislature.

I then want to note that the member opposite says that she found the remarks offensive, which the minister acknowledged may have been the effect. So, therefore, *Beauchesne's* citation 69 says: The Speaker has reminded the House, "It is very important to indicate that something can be inflammatory, can be disagreeable, can even be offensive, but it may not be a question of privilege unless the comment actually impinges on the ability of members of Parliament to do their job properly." Clearly this is of no such character.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, surely the matter has been dealt with. The motion presented to the House, the subject matter has already been dealt with and surely that ends the matter.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, your job will not be an easy one today. Tradition in this House, the honourable member is correct there is a tradition that an apology should come and it should be unequivocal. It has been ruled upon in the past when members have attempted to right their wrong by putting an explanation before their apology. Members have been requested to stand up and put an unequivocal response on the record that they were sorry for their statements.

This member did not do that. Mr. Speaker, No. 1, for earliest opportunity for this matter to be raised, yesterday during Question Period we did not have an opportunity to rise on a matter of privilege or on a point of order, because we did not hear the statement made in this House at the time because of the applause of the members on that side of the House when the minister spoke those exact lines.

Mr. Speaker, today when we had an opportunity to review, because yesterday it was brought to our attention that this was said, I had a hard time believing that a minister of this Crown could come forward with these types of statements. The public is demanding that we clean up our act in this House. They are expecting us to deal with matters up front and we as Opposition to be asking questions. They are not always easy questions for government, but they are questions that have to be answered. For them to answer in defamatory ways and fashions, it makes our job impossible.

For this member to accuse us of beating women, how are we supposed to go out and work with those women who have been abused by their spouses? How am I supposed to go into their house and ask them to speak to me when this member accuses me of being a woman beater? That is a privilege that he has exercised against me personally and all members on this side of the House.

* (13:50)

So, Mr. Speaker, you have a very difficult job today because your job is not, as Monpetit on page 122 states: The ruling does not extend to deciding whether a breach of privilege has in fact been committed because it is a question which can only be decided by this House. But we have to prove that there is a prima facie case, and we have established that there is a prima facie case, because if we allow ministers to continue to defame us when we ask serious questions on behalf of the public we are having our rights as members left aside.

When we ask for an apology we ask for an apology that is direct and from the heart. We do not need an excuse that says we have a difference in policy. When I hear that he says we beat women, I take offence, and it had better be a

serious apology when it comes across the House, and this House had better deal with the matter.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): I would like to briefly address the issue before us, a very important issue before us. Despite the assurances from the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh), I take double offence at the very guarded remarks made by the minister involved. All he has put on the record is that he regrets the usage of specific words, "beating wives," but has equated our policy of implying that is what it amounts to, and that involves all of us, despite the distinguished record that the former Minister of Family Services has in this field and has put on the record this afternoon in her raising the matter of privilege.

I listened very carefully to what the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) was saying. He was not apologizing at all. He was just apologizing for the selection of certain words which he knew were buzz words, "wife beating." I accept that part of his apology, but I am affronted even more, and all of us, that he implies that our policy, the policy of the last years, the policy of the Filmon government stood for wife beating. That is what he said in the House today, and we will read Hansard tomorrow. We will read that answer tomorrow. So the issue has compounded itself by the minister trying to be slick and trick about it.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I beg to present the petition of Linda Becker, Helen Oleschuk, W. Burokas and others, praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro (Mr. Selinger) consider alternative routes for the additional 230 kV and 500 kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flood Conditions

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement to make to the House. The levels of the Red River rose close to half a foot from Emerson to Morris since yesterday. Rises from St. Adolphe to the floodway inlet were just one tenth of a foot due to the lowering of the gates of the floodway structure. Levels rose close to one third of a foot from Winnipeg to Breezy Point. The forecast for the Red River remains unchanged. Further rises of about a foot to a foot and a half are expected. The crest is still expected at Emerson on Saturday, at the floodway inlet on Wednesday. A minor closure in the Emerson-Noyes area was made yesterday. It is unlikely that closures will be required at other towns but it will be a very close call. If significant rain falls tomorrow then a closure is likely at Morris. This would result in PTH 75 being closed to heavy truck traffic possibly as early as Saturday, April 21.

* (13:55)

Levels of the Assiniboine River from Portage la Prairie to Winnipeg will be kept fairly steady at the present condition until the crest on the Red River has passed. The intention is to keep levels in the city of Winnipeg no higher than 17 feet to reduce the chance of basement flooding in case of rain. Levels of the Assiniboine River are already rising from Millwood to Brandon as a result of recent milder weather. Serious flooding is not expected unless heavy rain develops. Streams in the Dauphin area are stable but will begin rising in the next few days. Much snow remains on higher ground in the Swan River area. A fast melt with some rain would create significant flooding. This situation will be watched very closely for the next several weeks.

The Roseau River fell close to one third of a foot since yesterday and no further difficulties are anticipated unless heavy rain develops. The predicted rain for tomorrow could result in some further rise, but it is unlikely that the earlier crests will be exceeded.

The Souris River is presently cresting at levels significantly lower than in 1999. Low-lying areas are flooded from the international boundary to Hartney. Flooding from Melita to Hartney should end within a few weeks, but flooding at Coulter will last through much of May.

The crest on the Pembina River is at La Rivière today. Minor flooding for the valley from Swan Lake to Winnipeg will continue for the next 10 days. Flooding from Rock Lake to Swan Lake will continue until mid-May based on average weather conditions. This year's crest is lower than those of '96 and '97.

Levels of the Whitemud River at Westbourne, and the Fisher River at Peguis Reserve continue to fall. A minor rise on the west Fisher River south of the Peguis townsite was observed this morning due to melt from last weekend's snowfall. However, renewed flooding at the townsite is unlikely based on the present weather forecast.

Overland flooding has subsided in the St. Laurent area but continues in the Ashern area. The weather forecast calls for 15 to 20 millimetres of rain over portions of the Red River watershed between Grand Forks and Emerson, with lesser amounts north of Emerson to Winnipeg. This will need to be watched closely as it could cause some further rise on the Red River. The additional rises are likely to be less than a foot but this would be enough to close PTH 75 to truck traffic. Thank you.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for the statement that he put before the House just now. I want to indicate to the minister that I attended a meeting this morning at Morris, Manitoba, that was called by the DFA to deal with the community situations in the Red River Valley. For those of you who are not aware, the area east of St. Jean is entirely inundated. Highway 217 is closed and overrun with water. St. Mary's Road as a matter of fact has been cut by the municipality at five places to try and avoid the huge damages caused during the last four years of flooding in that same area. This flooding has largely occurred because of overflows out of the Roseau River and indeed the Red River. That area has been

significantly impacted. Many of the farmyards are isolated and some of them have had to be evacuated. Those that are not evacuated have had to have water brought in.

I want to also say that there has been in this province this year especially significant overland flooding in areas such as the Whitemud River area. That has in large part caused more property damage than many times when rivers and streams over flood because you never know where the overland flooding in fact occurs. I would encourage the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his Cabinet to specifically look at the situation as it has evolved today and pay some significant attention to the large amount of damages that have been caused to municipal roads, to country driveways and lanes and specifically to those yards out in rural Manitoba that have been damaged that need not have otherwise been damaged because of frozen culverts and plugged drainage ditches, because of frozen ice of last fall.

So we say to the Premier pay specific attention to that because that is where many of the unseen damages will be, and hopefully there will be significant consideration given to them.

* (14:00)

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: I rose several days ago to comment on an earlier statement of the minister's with regard to a flood situation. I want to begin by saying thank you for the update, but I want to follow up on my earlier comment that I think this spring provides an opportunity for the minister to provide an assessment of the provincial drains, the strengths and weaknesses in the system. They are continuing to cause problems on an ongoing basis and I would hope that in one of his reports the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) would in fact provide us a province-wide overview of the status of the provincial drains and the work that needs to be done.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education): I am pleased to table the following reports, copies of which have already been distributed: Manitoba Lotteries Corporation First Quarter Report for the period April to June, 2000; the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Third Quarter Report for the period April to December, 2000; the Assiniboine Community College Annual Report and the Keewatin Community College Annual Report, both for 1999-2000.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): I am pleased to table the following reports: the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualification Board Annual Report 1999-2000; the Public Schools Finance Board Annual Report for the year ending June 30, 2000. Copies of these reports, Mr. Speaker, were previously distributed during the intersessional period.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 12—The Real Property Amendment Act

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton), that leave be given to introduce Bill 12, The Real Property Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, this bill proposes amendments to The Real Property Act to eliminate the requirement for the Land Titles office to issue a duplicate certificate of title. It will also permit the district registrar of the Land Titles office to destroy existing duplicate certificates of title on file in the Land Titles office.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable

members to the public gallery where we have, from Devils Lake High School in Devils Lake, North Dakota, 35 Grades 11 and 12 students under the direction of Mr. Al Henry.

Also, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my left where we have with us Brian Pallister, former member of the Legislative Assembly for Portage la Prairie and also current member of Parliament.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Justice Initiatives Government Commitment

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, while there has been much talk out of this Government in terms of making our streets and our communities safer places to live and work, the talk has not been backed up by action. The gang problem is worse, car thefts are up dramatically and the number of drive-by shootings, brutal stabbings and murders continues to rise. In recent months—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): This is a very serious matter. I am sure the people who were shot last night are not laughing about this matter the way the Government is today.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Murray: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, in recent months Manitobans have been bombarded with horrific headlines, for example: Thugs burst in and terrorize; Mother rescues raped teen; Bandit shoots it out at Polo

Park; Shots fired into car in north end, passengers flee; Drive-by shootings increasing on Winnipeg's streets; City rocked by shootings; Tortured for days.

During the 1999 election, the then-Leader of the Opposition said, and I quote: "Tough talk has not made us safer." We need action to make our neighbourhoods more secure places to live and raise our families, and one need only pick up the newspaper or turn on telecasts to notice that this Government is failing miserably and has done nothing to make our province safer for Manitobans. The problem has only gotten worse.

The Premier keeps repeating the phrase—I will say this very carefully, Mr. Speaker—the Premier keeps repeating the phrase that the one thing he is not going to do is make a promise and not keep it.

Could the Premier please then explain to Manitobans why he has not kept his justice-related promises as he committed to during 18 months in government?

* (14:10)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I believe there are more Crown prosecutors now to deal with the court backlog than when they were in office. I believe we have more judges than were in place under the former administration. I know we have high-risk offender units and other programs that we have put in place, and we are also working to have more people in the community working to prevent crime and provide hope for young people.

Preventing crime is important as well as enforcing our laws, and we have started to invest in programs in the inner city, whether it is housing, whether it is opening schools to the community past the school closing time, whether it is putting in place supports in education, in child care centres, in families, with parent-child centres at the front end. We are continuing to try to build hope and opportunity for our youth, rather than despair.

I would point out that, as part of these two measures, we have now announced more RCMP officers than ever in the history of this province.

Auto Theft Reduction Strategy

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact is under the Doer government crime is on the rise. The Premier simply is not being accurate. While he would like to leave the impression that his Government is taking action, all they have done is talk. Considering he, himself, stated that, I quote: "Tough talk has not made us safer." he should start following his own advice and start taking some action.

Mr. Speaker, during the 1999 election the Premier promised immediate action, but he has failed. He has failed to reduce the youth court backlog. He has failed to establish a home security loan program for seniors. He has failed to crack down on people who knowingly sell sniff, and he has failed to implement court-ordered assessments of solvent abusers.

Considering the number of car thefts have increased by almost 1000 in the year 2000 over 1999, Manitobans are absolutely stunned that the Premier has broken his promises to immediately implement a four-year mandatory suspension of driver's licence for those convicted of auto theft, move the driving age from 16 to 20 for youth convicted of auto theft and to implement a notification process whereby neighbourhoods would be alerted when an auto theft occurs in that area.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the election promises and in light of the Member for Thompson's (Mr. Ashton) comments—he said on June 26, 1997, in the Legislature, and I quote: I think car theft is one of the most solvable problems that we have in Manitoba—could the Premier please explain to Manitobans when he will be implementing his long overdue promises and explain why he has not solved what his own colleague, his own colleague, says is the most solvable crime in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The answer to part of the rambling question that the member posed, Mr. Speaker, is we will be introducing legislation soon in this session of the

Legislature, and within 18 months we will be fulfilling our commitments on legislative initiatives on car theft. I look forward to co-operation from members in passing it.

Antigang Strategy Funding

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yesterday alone in Manitoba, two men were gunned down and taken to hospital in serious condition, and five men, Mr. Speaker, were arrested after terrorizing and robbing a jewellery store, armed with shotguns and hammers, and that was just yesterday.

There is a growing crime problem in our province, not to mention an escalating gang problem. The headlines, Mr. Speaker, speak for themselves: Gang has couple fearing for lives; Gangs wage turf war over cocaine; Police probe gang link; Violence linked to turf war; Street gang activity uncovered in Selkirk; Body in ditch may be linked to gangs; Two men gunned down.

Mr. Speaker, membership in gangs has risen by 500 since 1999, and members opposite like to talk about their 18-point gang plan, but their plan simply is not working.

Can the Premier please tell Manitobans: When is he going to get serious about the growing gang problem in our province, and can he explain why his Budget failed to address such a serious issue?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, more Crown attorneys, more judges, more RCMP officers is action in this Budget and last year's Budget to deal with the enforcement side.

Mr. Speaker, I worked years ago as a volunteer at a drop-in centre in the inner city and worked again as the first president of the Boys and Girls Club of Winnipeg. As a volunteer, I know directly that the more we can do to prevent crime, to give kids hope, to give kids opportunities, the more we can do to slowly but surely reduce the number of people who turn to crime rather than turn to other useful and productive work as young people.

Mr. Speaker, no one on this side takes any pleasure in any victim of crime. In fact, we have enhanced the victim protection laws in Manitoba to give victims more of a voice. The numbers doubled and tripled in terms of gang enrolment under the previous government in the past 11 years, and any increase in gang activity is a failure. We must do everything possible to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that everything we can do, whether it is reinvigorating our community clubs, reinvigorating our schools, reinvigorating all of our community assets, reinvigorating our neighbourhoods, better housing, better schooling, safer communities, over time will reduce the numbers of people and youth that are turning to crime. The member should not for one moment purport that any crime is acceptable to any member on any side of this House. We all are neighbours in our communities. We all abhor crime, and we will do everything possible to prevent crime and to hold those people accountable, when a crime is committed, with more prosecutors and with more judges in the justice system.

Antigang Strategy Government Commitment

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, the Premier wants to talk about more prosecutors and more judges. In fact, what we have according to the Winnipeg Police Service is more gang members, an increase of 500 since 1999. Last night we had two more young Manitobans gunned down in the streets of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Justice explain why gang membership has increased 33 percent under the Doer government?

* (14:20)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, it really is astounding and alarming to hear this. I know that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) and the Member for Fort Whyte were not in this House the last number of years, but surely they

had access to the newspapers and the media. Surely they know, and this is why I find it very interesting to hear these questions, that the people opposite, the remnants of the former government are responsible for not even answering the gang hotline for up to five months at a time. It was the former government that broke not one, not two, not a few promises on crime but, according to our estimation, 20 to 30 promises on crime, including the five they made on auto theft.

Mr. Speaker, I also find it incredible to hear the members of the Opposition who oversaw about a 300% increase in auto thefts in Manitoba. These people do not have credibility.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: How can he talk about credibility in this House when in his very own press release, his very own gang strategy last May, he announced that by last summer there would be a public—*[interjection]* It is a very serious issue.

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Loewen: There is a question.

Mr. Speaker, he talks about credibility, when last summer, last May, he announced that by last summer a new public Web site—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, while I look forward to the questions from the member and the new-found interest in public safety of Manitobans, the member should be reminded that a supplementary question requires no preamble.

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

Mr. Loewen: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order. I find it interesting that the minister I am trying to ask questions of is the same minister that is standing up and trying to prevent the simple question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble. I would ask the honourable member to please put his question.

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Mr. Loewen: I would ask the minister why he issued a press release May 14 of last year announcing that there would be a new public safety Web site available last summer entitled "How to keep our kids out of gangs" when in fact that Web site is not even available today, one year later. What is his action plan?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, we were very proud to introduce for the first time in Manitoba, not just one initiative like a gang hotline that is not answered for five months, but a comprehensive approach to deal with gangs, and we now have in this province, and indeed I understand for the first time in Canada, a gang unit in Prosecutions. We have six prosecutors who are targeting gangs, who are specialized in that. We now have an RCMP gang unit, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the honourable House Leader is very quick to get to his feet when he does not like the question, but *Beauchesne's* Citation 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate. Clearly the question that was asked was about the Web site which does not exist today, which he promised would be on site last year.

Mr. Speaker, if the honourable member wants to provoke debate, he is doing a very good job of it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind all honourable members that a point of order is a very serious matter, and it is very difficult to hear.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): On the same point of order, having used that citation on occasion myself, I think the Opposition House Leader may find that the comments of the Minister of Justice were well within the parameters of what is normally considered a reasonable response to a question. The question was on an announcement that was made by the minister and in fact the series of questions deals with gangs and gang policy. I believe the Government House Leader was in the process of indicating the many steps we have taken on our gang strategy here as an NDP government of the province of Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, further elements of that initiative that are unfolding include some national leadership, particularly with the Province of Québec in pursuing and—*[interjection]* If the members opposite think this is funny, Mr. Speaker, I think it reflects on—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would ask the co-operation of all members of the House. I have to hear the question, and I have to hear the answer in case there is a breach of the rule or unparliamentary language. I would ask the co-operation of all members.

Mr. Mackintosh: So unlike the former government, Mr. Speaker, that oversaw the rise of criminal street gangs in this province, this Government is taking a comprehensive approach which includes, by the way, Project Gang Proof, their Web site and a handbook, which will be released within weeks if not days and was delayed, unfortunately, due to a serious illness on the part of the person who was charged with the responsibility of producing that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by saying that national leadership on laws, new prosecution resources, the highest level of RCMP support in this province's history, speak to this Government's commitment to public safety.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister: When is a promise a promise? Why is the Doer government so good at spending our money in terms of the huge increases we have seen in funding to the Department of Justice? Why are they so poor at providing timely results?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, today we announced an increase over the last two budgets of \$6 million to the RCMP, to which the assistant commissioner said: This is welcome relief. I might also add that it is interesting, when we have here this member saying, you know: You are spending, spending, spending. Then we had yesterday another member get up and say: You have to spend more, you have to spend more.

Mr. Speaker, they found a line in the Budget where there had been a reduction, and they said: You cannot do this. Unfortunately—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Laurendeau: I find this passing strange, Mr. Speaker, that I have to rise today when it is our House Leader from the Government that has been answering the questions, but *Beauchesne's* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

Mr. Speaker, I think, if you look at all three sections of what I have just stated, this minister has broken all three.

* (14:30)

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I think, if you peruse Hansard and look at the question, the member opposite was questioning the resources allocated

to the Department of Justice in a typical way for members opposite who, on a daily basis, on the one hand talk about tax cuts and on the other hand complain about expenditures. I think the Minister of Justice was dealing very directly with that point and the inconsistency, I will use that word, of members opposite who, on the one hand, criticize those expenditures when in fact we are taking initiatives that are going to deal with the gang problem.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, the honourable member does have a point of order, and I would like to remind all honourable ministers that according to *Beauchesne* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate.

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Mr. Mackintosh: To conclude, Mr. Speaker, so the members opposite find a line in the Budget where there had been a reduction and said that this is inappropriate. If they had done their research, as they should have when they looked at their own record in government and how they deal with public safety, it is no longer required for us to maintain their white elephant. The Chevrier courthouse is not needed. Talk about spending.

Auto Theft Reduction Strategy

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I do not know exactly which minister to ask this question of, the Minister of Justice or perhaps the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton). As promised in the last election—the First Minister alluded to it—specific legislation dealing with car thieves was promised. We are now 18 months into your mandate. We have seen nothing.

Can the Minister of Justice tell me: Is that legislation being prepared, and when will it be presented to this Chamber for first reading?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): In about 1993 the auto theft rate in Manitoba skyrocketed, and over the course of the term of government of the members opposite the rate of auto theft increased

about 300 percent. An epidemic was created under their watch.

What are we doing about it, Mr. Speaker? Given that nothing was done by members opposite, except their five promises were broken, we will be introducing legislation in the coming weeks and during the session—we hope for the support of members opposite—that will deal with auto theft as we did last session in dealing with those individuals who attempt to flee the police and cause injury and other damage to the property and lives of Manitobans.

We will be acting unlike the members opposite when they had their 12 years.

Auto Theft Impact on Insurance Rates

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I address a question to the Minister responsible for Manitoba public automobile insurance, and simply ask him to list for us, and I accept this question being taken as notice, the cost of auto thefts to the Manitoba public automobile insurance for the years 1988 to 2001. We will understand and have a clear picture of what cost the problem is to all Manitobans who buy automobile insurance.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): I am very pleased that there is this new-found interest in auto theft by members opposite. I wonder why that question was never asked of the Filmon government, Mr. Speaker—it is a very serious issue—by the Member for Lakeside. So I wonder where the Member for Lakeside was as he sat at the Cabinet table and as Manitobans suffered an epidemic in auto theft over the course of their mandate.

We have to deal with a very serious and deep-rooted problem—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

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

with the matter raised. Unless the minister has those numbers at his fingertips, we have already said he could take it under advisement. He is just sitting there and provoking debate.

We would ask him to just take it under advisement and get back to the House with the answer.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* citation 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and not provoke debate.

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Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, the cost to Manitobans in terms of the Autopac costs, the claims costs, the impact on premiums, is certainly of concern. Of greater concern, I am sure, to all Manitobans is the threat to the well-being and the safety of Manitobans when auto theft occurs. It often occurs as a prerequisite to robbery or other crimes, when people flee the police or people who are injured and killed in this province. We have to do things differently. We cannot continue on the same path that the former government was on.

Justice System Court Backlogs

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, we seem to be on a roll of broken election promises every time we rise on a question.

During the election, members opposite, including the now-Premier (Mr. Doer), the now-Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) said to Manitobans that they would promise to eliminate court backlogs. Chief Justice Judith Webster has said, and I want to quote from this memo: Due to the serious court backlog problems in Winnipeg and the shortage of judges, there will be very limited assistance available. Essentially, Brandon and area must try to make do with two judges for the foreseeable future. The Government is not prepared to appoint more judges.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Justice, given that he took the management decision to reduce the number of courts in Manitoba, I want to ask him what he has to say to Manitobans and to victims of crime who have to wait to have their matters dealt with in the courts, and how long do they have to wait?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the issue of court backlogs is a serious one, and that is why we are addressing it. But today, I guess, we have from the member the theme of spend, spend, spend.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they are having it both ways. It was cut, cut, cut last week and this week it is spend, spend, spend.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, will the minister please explain to Manitobans what actions he will take, given the fact that his Budget is increased, however the Budget line on courts has been decreased, what actions he will take to address the growing court backlogs and the bottleneck that he has created?

Mr. Mackintosh: I am disappointed that the member was not able to find the time to do the necessary research to back up the question, Mr. Speaker. The member stated that there was a decision to close courts. There was one court that was closed. It is the white elephant court on Chevrier Boulevard.

If the member had taken the time to do the necessary research, he would have discovered that the decrease in the Winnipeg courts' budget line is because the Chevrier courthouse is not continuing this year. In fact, I just want to clarify—

* (14:40)

Point of Order

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I do not rise on a point of order often, but I think it is important to all Manitobans that when we put remarks on the record that these remarks be accurate. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) just said that they have not cancelled or closed any courts. Yesterday I indicated to him that in a memo from the Brandon courthouse we have courts

cancelled in Rosburn, Boissevain, Minnedosa, Russell, Killarney, Virden, Neepawa and Waywayseecappo. These courts are cancelled until further notice, and there is no foreseeable future for them to reopen.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister to put accurate information on—

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind all honourable members, when rising on a point of order, a point of order should be a breach of the rules or for unparliamentary language.

The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order?

Mr. Mackintosh: On the question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, to clarify the facts—and I am confident the member knows this—there are no courts being closed in this province. Decisions made by the Chief Judge are proceeding in discussions with the Associate Chief Judge in Brandon in terms of rescheduling while there is a six-week reduction in judicial resources in Brandon.

I remind the member that when he talks about Winnipeg courts and the reduction on that line, that once the white elephant adjustment is made to that line, the base budget for courts in Winnipeg is actually increased by \$466,000.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, is the minister satisfied with the fact that, even though the number of police officers has now been increased, the backlogs, the bottlenecks, the court closings or the court cancellations will now result in cases being plea-bargained away in order to be able to manage the now ever-increasing backlog?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, it is a sad comment that the member gives because it is a reflection on the professional judgment of our prosecutors who, when it comes to plea

negotiations and discussions, look at matters of law and evidence. The backlogs are being worked on diligently by all the stakeholders in the system, including the judges. This Government for the first time is paying attention to the needed resources in Prosecutions.

Victims' Rights Legislation Proclamation

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, we have heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) tell Manitobans and I quote, that tough talk does not makes us safer; we need action. We have seen him talk, the Premier talk, about the need to take action on gangs when there were 1400 members and after a year and a half in office there are now 1900 members.

We have heard him talk about tough talk on car thefts. There is a thousand more this year, Mr. Speaker. We have heard him talk about a Web site. No Web site. We have heard him talk about auto-theft legislation: boy, we will get tough. No legislation.

I want to ask the Premier today, why after eight months when this House gave unanimous consent to a victims' rights bill where we all work together to assure passage, his Government, that cares so much about victims, has failed to proclaim that legislation.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud that in the first 18 months of our Government we have done more to put in place changes at the provincial level, recognizing that crime has to be dealt with by all levels of government, by schools, by families, by communities themselves. We now have in place a gang unit in Prosecutions. We are mobilizing community resources to deal with those who are involved in gangs to get them out of gangs. A couple of weeks ago we announced a young offender mentoring program to deal with female young offenders. We have taken a national leadership role ensuring that there will be federal gang laws to protect Manitobans and indeed all Canadians. We have put in place resources for the RCMP like never before, resources for Brandon Police, resources for Dakota Ojibway Police. We have worked with the City of

Winnipeg to put in place new school programming. There is more to come, much more to come, including the victims' bill of rights proclamation.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask this Premier (Mr. Doer), who just a few minutes ago in this House said that no member on his side takes great pleasure in seeing the victims of crime, that is why his Government brought in the legislation. I want to know, while they had so much time to issue hundreds of press releases, why his Government cannot just do the simple act of making the victims' rights bill law as this House gave him the authority to do eight months ago. Mr. Premier, answer the question.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, how ironic from remnants of a former government that failed to deliver and indeed broke over 20 promises on crime that they made to Manitobans, especially in the 1995 election. These people have no credibility on crime, no credibility whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, *Beauchesne's* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate. Mr. Speaker, the question was very clear. We were asked last year to pass this bill. We did that unanimously in this House. It was The Victims' Rights Bill. We agreed with it, Mr. Speaker. We thought it was important then. We think it is important today. We are asking the minister when will he proclaim this bill that was such an urgent bill to bring through this House?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Transportation, on the same point of order.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I think if you refer to the question, there was a little bit of rhetorical flourish, a slight element of debate in the question. I think the Government House Leader, the Minister of Justice, was merely responding very much to the tone of the question, so I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, the

Official Opposition House Leader does not have a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Opposition House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, we have to deal with victims of crime in a way far different than what we have seen over the course of Manitoba history, indeed Canadian history. We brought in, with the agreement of the members opposite, even though they chose not to do so in government, a Victims' Bill of Rights that provides a voice for victims, provides information to victims. Since that legislation has been passed by the House, the department has been working diligently, very hard, and with the assistance, I might add, of the federal government in looking at our system's design and the information systems that we have in place.

We are changing the culture of the justice system with this legislation. The culture of the justice system must be adjusted. There must be a balance, a balance of rights and that is what we will be bringing in, not like the members opposite that took over a year to bring in their domestic violence legislation after it was passed, again unanimously, in this House.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, the only culture in Justice is a press release a week and no action. My question to the minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Minister of Transportation, on a point of order.

* (14:50)

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, supplementary questions do not require a preamble and I believe the member introduced a preamble in the question and is therefore out of order, and I ask you to call him to order, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Laurendeau: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe in standing up and defending somebody when they are wrong and the member was wrong. The member did start his question with a statement and the member is correct. He does have a point of order, but he was provoked by the answer given by the minister, and I think when we are looking at the questions being put, we should also take into account the responses they are receiving.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the Minister of Transportation, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble. I ask the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet to please put his question.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Justice, because the Premier (Mr. Doer) obviously will not answer in his defence. I want to ask the Minister of Justice why, if he needed so much time to implement this, in his own press release last year he indicated that in last year's Budget he had allocated \$90,000 for staff for the job. I want to ask him, if he is talking about credibility, why has he been so tardy in proclaiming a bill that all members passed. What does he say to Mr. McLaughlin who obviously was not consulted by his Crown attorneys on the disposition of that murder charge?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a choice of a number of questions I can answer, but if the member is concerned about backlogs, I can answer that. If he is concerned about victims, and indeed our child victim court, a first in this province, I am prepared to answer that. If he wants to talk about getting tough on crime, then I will ask him why it is that the former government fell down on the job. They could not even collect the fines of Manitobans, \$24 million outstanding.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Laurendeau: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, maybe the honourable member is not aware, but there was an election that they won

just a little while ago that put them in government.

Mr. Speaker, I want him to know that we are prepared on this side to seek leave to allow the honourable member to answer the question that was given by the minister.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on the same point of order?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am probably out of order, but I just want to ask the minister. He budgeted \$90,000. His Premier (Mr. Doer) says it is important. It is a matter of creditability. Why is it not proclaimed? Why does he not just tell the people of Manitoba why he is so tardy in doing his job?

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

Mr. Mackintosh: On answering the question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I would have to rule he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: I believe that we got the legislation right. Now it is our duty and our challenge to get the implementation of the legislation right, get the culture shift done right, to bring in new respect for victims of crime. Assisting us with that development are the staff resources that were allocated in last year's Budget.

Antigang Strategy Government Commitment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, it would seem that today we are focusing on the extraordinary incompetence of the Justice Minister, not able to do even a simple thing as a Web site in a timely fashion, but I would like to ask the Minister of Justice a question from a slightly different perspective.

All the answers he has provided relate to the fact that he wants to put more people behind bars and in jails, and these jails by experts in criminology are well known to be what are called crime universities or training grounds for people who will then become more gang members. I would ask the minister what he is going to do to prevent and alter this shift so that we have fewer people trained in this peer review gang training system and we have more people obeying the law in appropriate fashion.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for the question. It goes to the issue of how a government has to deal with the terrible mess and the disregard for public safety that was left to us.

Mr. Speaker, not only did the former government oversee the horrendous rise in the auto theft rate, gang membership in this province, indeed helped to create the conditions that have caused this.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Minister of Justice, I ask the minister: Given the very high cost of operating the jails, running these crime universities or training programs for gangs, when is he going to start and make a shift so we have a more effective justice system which does not cost so much and which is less of a burden on the taxpayers?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I wonder, is the member advancing the notion that the jails in Manitoba should be shut down. The best way to reduce incarceration rates is to reduce the crime rate and that is our intention, that is our objective. Our actions so far speak to our commitment to the public safety of Manitobans.

Mr. Gerrard: I would ask the Minister of Justice once more: When is he going to interrupt this vicious cycle and provide us a justice system which works better, is more effective, and which does not cost so much to taxpayers?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, one area that we are developing is the need to involve communities to a greater extent in dealing with crime. In a proactive way with regard to crime prevention initiatives. I had an announcement

today with the member's former colleagues from Ottawa where we are developing new partnerships to enable communities to protect their neighbourhoods in ways that they see fit and they know best. It is also important that we encourage and support the development of youth justice councils or committees.

We are all in this together. We cannot point our finger at someone else, as we saw too often the last number of years. We cannot blame someone else. We all have a role to play and that role may vary from time to time, but it is our intention as a new government to take that role

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Healthy Baby Initiative

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, this Government remains committed to Manitoba's children and families. We are proud to say that we have been able to demonstrate our priorities on families and children, all within the framework of a balanced budget. Again and again research has shown that early childhood experiences in safe, healthy and nurturing environments result in better outcomes throughout life. Not only do we believe that for every dollar invested in our children, two dollars are saved in future costs, but we are acting on that belief and investing in innovative programs.

The 2001 Budget continues the investment this Government is committed to making to children in Manitoba. This year, we are introducing the Healthy Baby program, a new prenatal program to help more low-income women meet the special nutritional needs of pregnancy and ensure that babies get a healthy start in life. The first of its kind in Canada, the benefit starts in the second trimester of pregnancy and provides eligible expectant mothers with monthly nutritional cheques and other supports. Healthy Baby provides both health and social supports, including informational community programs that offer information on prenatal and postnatal wellness and nutrition.

* (15:00)

Mr. Speaker, the program is available to all lower-income pregnant women, including those on income assistance, those working and those living in First Nations communities. Initial funding for Healthy Baby is set at \$4.1 million through the Healthy Child Manitoba Initiative and will assist more than 5000 Manitoba women. This program builds on the work of the previous administration and is possible only in co-operation with all levels of government.

We are dedicated to putting families first. In addition to new programs like Healthy Baby and the increase in funding to the Healthy Child Initiative, we are increasing child care support by 7.7 percent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our Government will be announcing further details and initiatives on programs for children for a healthy start in life.

Flood Prone Areas—Property Buyouts

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a few words on the record regarding the buyout for 28 property owners of Greenview and St. Mary's roads south of the floodway. Following the devastating flood of 1997, the Filmon government agreed to construct a dike to protect these residents, believing it to be the most cost-effective and humane way to deal with the threat of future flooding. However, since taking office, the Doer government has decided to buy out these residents instead, forcing them to relocate.

When questioned in the Legislature about the status of the buyout, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) stated, "We are over 50 percent completed on the work." In my view, this is totally erroneous and the affected residents are very concerned about the accuracy of that statement. Subsequently, the Premier (Mr. Doer) when questioned could not provide a clear answer about the status of the buyout and whether affected residents will be compensated if this area were to flood again this year.

Sadly, the vast majority of the buyout offers remain to be settled, and there is growing

frustration on the part of the affected property owners. These people are disheartened and worried about their homes, their property values, their community and their futures. They have been waiting nearly four years to resolve this matter, and their patience has more than worn thin. It is high time that all levels of government sat down and worked towards a solution.

I am calling on this Government to work with the other levels of government to resolve this matter and bring some sense of certainty to the affected individuals. They should not be made to wait any longer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Housing and Homelessness Initiative

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative program.

Under the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative, over 70 Winnipeg houses, duplexes, suites and apartment blocks will be renovated this spring. This will be the biggest project of its kind for the community groups involved.

The Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative is a tripartite government partnership aimed at improving Winnipeg's social viability and helping community organizations to build deteriorating neighbourhoods. Eight million dollars for four years has been dedicated to the project by this Government, and improvements are already under way in several neighbourhoods, including West Broadway and the north end.

Community groups have praised this initiative, noting in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and elsewhere that a few years ago little or no work was done and that inner city housing projects hit rock bottom two years ago. Community group leaders believe that the worst is over and more homes will be repaired or built in the coming years. Improving housing stock is an important element of this Government's commitment to revitalizing Winnipeg's inner city.

I commend all the community groups who have taken advantage of this excellent initiative

and help to renew hope to many Winnipeg neighbourhoods. Thank you.

Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the recent announcement by Defence Minister Art Eggleton regarding the relocation of the 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry means that the constituency of Tuxedo will be losing 700 soldiers and their families and an important part of our community.

I wish the military personnel and their families well, and know they will continue to prosper in their new home in Shilo. I also want to take this opportunity to express my regret that our community will be losing these families and the contribution they have made to the community throughout the years.

With the departure of the infantry, there will soon be much discussion on the future development of the Kapyong Barracks site. I am looking forward to playing a role in these discussions, in conjunction with the federal government and the City of Winnipeg, to ensure that the future development of the barracks will create significant economic-growth opportunities for the constituency of Tuxedo and the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, I want to once again thank the men and women of the 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and their families for the contributions they have made to the Tuxedo community. They have been an integral part of our community, and we are sorry to see them go. I bid them farewell, and wish them the best of luck as they begin their relocation to CFB Shilo. Thank you.

National Child Benefit

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, in this year's Budget, our Government announced that the National Child Benefit would no longer be clawed back. This important achievement is one step in our plan to put families first in Manitoba. The benefit has been fully restored for families on income assistance

with children under the age of six. This restoration will improve benefits for approximately 11 600 children in about 7600 families.

Under the previous government, the National Child Benefit was deducted from children in families on income assistance, including working parents who received a wage top-up from income assistance while at the same time assistance rates were being reduced. This had a profound effect on children living in families on income assistance, and we saw the depth of child poverty in our province grow rather than decline during a decade of insensitive government.

Our Government is committed to reversing the trend of child poverty by ensuring that all families receive the supports they need to live dignified and independent lives. Last year the Government began to reduce the clawback of the National Child Benefit by allowing increases to flow to families on assistance. Ensuring that all Manitoba families, including the poorest, have the financial means to adequately care for their children is central to our commitment to healthy and positive early childhood development. Restoring this benefit fulfils our election promise, while other items in this year's Budget such as increased funding to Healthy Child Manitoba and child care go yet further to ensure our children are properly cared for. Our Government believes that strong and healthy families are vital to building an even better Manitoba.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET DEBATE (Fifth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto. The debate remains open.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I would like to thank my colleagues for that overwhelming support that they just showed me. It brings me great pleasure to stand up and speak on behalf of the residents of the R.M. of Springfield and the

R.M. of East St. Paul, the constituency of Springfield.

Over the past year I have had the opportunity to spend a lot of time in the constituency talking to the residents about the various concerns and issues. We spent a lot of time talking about the effects of the last Budget and what it meant for Manitobans and certainly the disappointment that Manitobans had in regard to the last Budget.

If there is one phrase that would best capture my standing here again it is *deja vu*. We have got another spend, spend, spend budget with absolutely no vision into the future where the Government plans to go and frankly how the Government plans to cover all the expenditures. The Government wants to spin—I think we mentioned that in last year's Budget. They do that exceptionally effectively. They are incredible spinners—that we on this side are calling for more spending. In fact that is not true. What we have done for I think 18 months on a very consistent basis is we have asked for better management.

We have seen where more spending actually means less services, and that is a new acronym that we seem to have found that the NDP government in Manitoba has coined.

Last year I spoke at great length about the comparisons between Manitoba and other provinces. I mentioned that the NDP in Saskatchewan had gone on the path of tax cuts, and quite substantial. Since then they have taken another run at it. The soon to be defunct NDP in B.C. at that time had also undertaken tax cuts, if you can believe that one. The NDP, in most areas, and I would suggest probably even the federal NDP, will be coming out with some kind of a platform on tax cuts. Yet we have a government here that seems to be mired in its history. It seems to have these mud boots on just stuck in the past on spend and tax, spend and tax.

They have done some window dressing. It is sort of like they hung a few curtains up to sort of make the window look a little prettier. You know, they shave a little off here and they shave a little off there. Certainly when you listen to the

Premier (Mr. Doer) you would think we would all be walking around paying no taxes, the way he spins it, but the fact is that there really is nothing substantial. Yet the spending has gone up phenomenally. The spending goes up and up. We have seen again today with today's Question Period, we have in the Department of Justice, we have seen a substantial increase in spending over the last two Budgets, and yet we have less services.

It brings me back to that point I made just a little while ago that this is probably one of the first governments that can actually take more and make less. I think probably that is going to be the biggest disappointment that Manitobans are going to face with this Budget, that they believe that with all of the spending in health care that it is going to improve health care. The way the NDP government is going, no, it is not going to mean better health care. They think that by spending all this money supposedly that they are spending in the various departments it is going to improve things, and no, it has not. In fact, things have gotten worse. It is about management. It is about the way they take the money, the way it is appropriated and the way it is most effectively put forward.

Mr. Speaker, certainly in my constituency we have had some disappointments. We had some flooding problems, and in most instances, with increased budgets the answer comes back we do not have enough money, and yet, the windfall that was left this particular Government from the previous government should have been enough to get an awful lot done. I would really caution the Government. They have an incredible opportunity. They have a very strong economy left behind by the Filmon government. They have strong transfer payments coming forward. They really had a golden opportunity, and I want to address some of those.

In fact, often it is better if it is not just coming from us. I would like to just make notice of a few authorities in the province who have spoken about the Budget, who have made some comments on the Budget. I would like to bring some of those to the attention of the House.

I would like to refer to an article of April 11 that really, really just lays it out beautifully, and

it goes: Hey, Big Spenders. It sort of gets everybody's attention because that is exactly where this Budget has gone to. Even when I quote from the article I understand I cannot use the individual's name, so: The Finance Minister made our worse fears come true yesterday, tabling a provincial budget with some of the heaviest government spending we have seen in a long time, and what they mean is since the Howard Pawley days.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The minister jacked up spending \$358 million over last year's Budget, a 5.6% increase, leaving little room for the kind of tax cuts this province desperately needs to stay competitive. That would be \$358 million more in spending. That is a phenomenal amount of money that can really go a long distance. Our question to the Government is: Is that being spent? Is that being managed appropriately?

We talk about this, the tax competitiveness. I have spoken to a lot of civil servants be they—well, not that teachers are exactly civil servants, but to some degree they are paid by the public treasury. You take nurses and others like that. I have spoken to them: Would you rather have an increase in your wages or would you like to see taxes come down? The answer that comes back is what they would like to see is more take-home pay.

Mr. Acting Speaker, rather than going down that path of increasing, increasing, you are probably far better off giving people meaningful tax relief where they actually take home more pay. More than likely the individuals who are going to be receiving that pay are in the middle class, and those dollars will be turned over very quickly. Those dollars will turn over into the economy. In fact, I believe they have found that there has not been a tax cut in modern history that has come forward that did not actually increase the economy, that did not actually spin off benefits to the economy.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think that tax competitiveness, and I would say to the NDP opposite, even if ideologically you have a problem with it, you can still see that we really

have a problem in this province when we are not competitive to our neighbouring provinces. Even the NDP in Saskatchewan and, as I mentioned, that soon-to-be-defunct socialist republic party of British Columbia, they saw that as well, that to keep people it is not good enough to just raise their wages. It is not good enough to just give people pay increases. People want to have more take-home pay. They want to see tax cuts.

The article that I have been quoting from, and we are not just talking about Alberta and Ontario anymore; we are talking about Saskatchewan too. The Saskatchewan government announced major income tax cuts in its budget last year. It goes on to say the Doer government does not understand that economic reality. They are living in a dream world where they think money just falls out of the sky.

Again, it is made sort of tongue-in-cheek, but it is really good advice to be very careful. On the one hand you have this great windfall, and on the other hand you are just spending it, rather than giving it to the citizens, encouraging the economy, encouraging people to stay, giving people the opportunity to place their pay where they think it is most important.

It goes on to say: And they were giving it out in buckets yesterday, spending it almost faster than it is coming in. Eventually, this money is going to run out and what we will be left with is a high-tax province saddled with an expensive government that cannot attract business investment. It is not a pretty picture.

I would go beyond getting a business investment. Certainly, some members in this Chamber have children older than myself, professionals, and I have young children, and what we all would like to see is our children stay in the province. So it is not just about attracting business; it is also about keeping our young people, attracting professionals, young people to come into this province.

In fact, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) got up and said the reason why the Web site is not up is they could not get a Web designer. Well, the problem is they are all leaving. They are leaving for better

opportunities. You know, maybe the minister, the first thing he should have done before proclaiming that he is going to do a Web site is talk about meaningful tax cuts to encourage some of these people to come back to Manitoba.

He is absolutely right. I have been trying to get my Web site up for almost a year, and it is almost impossible. At least he still has the budget of a whole department. I have my little budget which hardly, hardly can compete with the minister's budget. It is almost impossible to get good Web site designers because of the tax regime that this Government has placed upon people, that our young, our bright, our best are looking at other places. That we have to watch out for. That we have to make sure does not become a trend. In fact, the trend has to be the other way around.

I would take this as sound advice. I think it is good advice what this article says, that eventually the money is going to run out, and what we will be left with is a high-tax province saddled with an expensive government that cannot attract. I would suggest to the Government—and I know there are some reasoned politicians that are sitting across the way, and I would encourage them to look at that, maybe give it a sombre second thought.

I would like to move on, Mr. Acting Speaker. There was another authority, young Brendan O'Hallarn, and he writes in his article: Well done. Tax axe fails to fall. Manitoba lags behind on income taxes. I would like to take a quote out of here: A family of four with a single-income earner making \$60,000 will pay \$5,898 in provincial income tax, the highest total west of Québec. In fact, the same family will pay \$850 less in NDP Saskatchewan.

Can you believe that? That means a family here in Manitoba after not even two years of NDP government will pay \$850 more in Manitoba than the same family living in NDP Saskatchewan. You know what, Mr. Acting Speaker? This NDP government is lagging behind other NDP governments, never mind other Conservative and Liberal governments. They cannot even keep up with their own.

When Manitobans, those hardworking families, wake up tomorrow morning—that is the morning after the Budget—they will know they are among the highest taxed in Canada. I am very disappointed, said the leader of the Conservative Party. Our leader goes on to say: The only personal income tax cut announced yesterday which will take effect in 2001 is a .1—to repeat that, a 0.1% reduction in the top provincial tax rate. Middle- and low-income earners will have to wait.

* (15:20)

Whatever happened to us believing that the foundation of our society is our strong middle class, and I have to say the biggest disappointment with this Government is the way that they have approached the middle class. Where is the tax relief? Where is the meaningful tax relief for our middle class? I will repeat that again. Middle- and low-income earners will have to wait until January 1, 2002, for reductions in the provincial tax rates, 2002. The Premier (Mr. Doer) said the income tax cuts announced by the Government are 0.5 more than the party promised when it won government in 1999. You know, Mr. Acting Speaker, if there is one thing that that Premier does well is spin and spin and spin, because 10 percent of nothing is still nothing.

The article goes on to quote Victor Vrsnik of the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation who said a family of four with an income of \$40,000 will pay twice as much in provincial income taxes as a family in Alberta. Alberta has lapped us in tax relief he said, and that is what I find particularly amazing is there you have the Alberta government which has gone out of its way to protect that, I would say, very fragile middle class and I believe you do judge a society by its middle class; how strong is it, how large is it. That is one thing that we have had in Manitoba, we have had in Canada, is a particularly strong middle class. It is what gives you economic stability, it is what gives you political stability, it is what gives your community stability, and we have seen the Conservative governments across this country protecting that stability. They are giving meaningful tax relief where it is necessary and this particular Government is not

doing that, and I think it bodes poorly for our province. It bodes poorly for our future.

I would like to move on. There was an article again in the *Winnipeg Sun*: Urge to splurge. NDP's increased spending, tiny tax cuts draw criticism. What we saw here basically and what we will hear repeated again and again, six dollars spending on this side, one dollar on tax cuts, and that is what this Government spins as being balanced. So their idea of balance is you take six weights, you put it on this side; you take one of the equal, put it on this side and somehow that is balance. Right off the hop, the Opposition saw through it; right away the media saw through it; certainly the tax groups saw through it and I believe Manitobans have seen through it as well, that this is basically a tax and spend Budget, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The article goes on to say: Government is about choices and today the Premier made his choice. He chose to spend today rather than work hard for tomorrow. In fact, that was a direct quote from the Conservative leader, my leader. He chose to put this Government on a spending program that is probably unmanageable in the long term, because if I read correctly, in the government documents, the Government is proposing that there will be a 6.1% increase in government revenue over the last year. I would like to ask government members, because they are so quick to throw questions about, what if you have a 4.5% growth in revenue? What if it is a 3% growth in revenue? What are you going to do? Deficit spend? Well, you cannot do that. Where are you going to cut? What are you going to do? Claw back the tax relief that you gave. Where exactly have you left some room for yourselves in that Budget?

I wonder if this Government lives in any kind of reality, because if you look at what is going on in North America there are some concerns that we are facing a slowdown. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk) called it a recession in her speech. If the minister is right—I hope she is not, I hope she is wrong on this one—but if that is the case, you will not see a 6.1% growth in your revenues, so how are you going to offset that terrible largesse

of spending that has been proposed by this Budget.

The Liberal leader said the NDP had a unique opportunity to provide long-term solutions to Manitobans. They had a lot of money. They had a booming economy. This was an opportunity to make major changes that needed to be made. They have failed and that is almost universally the message that is coming through, in that this Government has taken its tax and spend Budget to the people and frankly it comes back as having been a failed budget.

There is another article on April 12, and again it reiterates spending up \$6 for every dollar saved. Mr. Acting Speaker, this is where they spoke about this balance, this big, big balance where you put six on one side, you balance it off with one and somehow that is supposed to balance out. The Conservative leader said the NDP government announced \$6 in new spending compared to \$1 of new tax relief. The leader of the Conservative Party said: He made the claim of six to one ratio based on numbers from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The folks at CFIB were only too happy to back them on their claim. Spokeswoman Shelley Wiseman said: If tax cuts from last year were included in the Budget, the Government should also include increases in program spending, and this is where this Government is particularly brilliant in spin. Because what they did is they clawed the tax relief from last year but did not include the spending from last year. So this is how you shuffle things back and forth. You spin it out there and you hope you do not get caught at it, and unfortunately that is exactly what happened. The Government got caught in their own web that they wove. My, what a tangled web we weave, and they got caught on it.

Wiseman said the CFIB did not count the Province's new green tax on pesticide and fertilizers and the two dollars per carton hike in cigarette taxes against the tax cuts the Province did announce. If anything, we were too generous to them. Responding to the Budget in the Legislature the Conservative leader said the Budget kept middle income Manitobans among the highest taxed in Canada. There we are, Mr. Acting Speaker, \$6 in new spending; \$1 in tax relief.

I have got another article here, Mr. Acting Speaker, that says: NDP has no excuses. Government had plenty cash for bigger tax cuts. It goes on to say, and this is quoting from our Premier (Mr. Doer): He wants the wealth that comes from being a player in a global economy, but he refuses to do the things necessary to remain a competitive player in that economy. That is the real story out of yesterday's provincial Budget. A financial plan laden with lavish spending and very short on tax relief: \$6 new spending, \$1 on tax relief, and the \$6 they are spending is not being spent wisely. It is not being managed. Only this Government, only the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk) and her colleagues could actually take more money and provide less services. It is just a remarkable trick of the hand. It is like one of these card tricks they seem to be able to pull out of their sleeve, and it is unfortunate for Manitobans that more and more money is spent, more services are provided.

The next article: Spending levels decried. BIZ leader saying NDP throwing money at problems. It goes on to say: Over the last two budgets this Government has increased spending by close to one billion. I remember during the election it was the doom and gloom New Democrats, Oh, a billion dollars, we never have a billion dollars, a billion dollars never. We predicted the billion dollars over four years and they have now spent a billion dollars in two years. Not just were we right projecting a billion dollars over four years, actually we were very conservative in our projection in that we saw that there was actually a billion dollars in two years. What we said is half of all that money would go for tax cuts and half of it for new spending. The downturn, and Starmer goes on to say, the downturn in the US economy has a larger impact than we realize, their own projected expenditures will be in trouble. Again, something that I said earlier on. The Government must concentrate on managing its problems, not throwing money at them. And that is just classic, classic NDP socialist monetary policy. You have got a small problem, throw a lot of money at it. You have got a big problem, throw even more money at it, but just as long as you throw money at it, hopefully eventually it will go away. Mr. Acting Speaker, that is certainly what we have seen.

* (15:30)

The article goes on to say that efficiency would be a good word in this particular Budget. Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce Chairman, Murray Sigler agreed current spending is not sustainable without a fast growing economy. It will catch up to us quickly. Sigler said he does not want Manitoba's competitive advantage to be neutralized by higher tax rates than other provinces, Mr. Acting Speaker, and it is very telling what he is actually trying to point out here.

I think we all agree that there are a lot of advantages that we have in Manitoba. I tell you, I would have to start with the fresh air that we enjoy. You know, we do not have the smog, the pollution. We do have lots of clean water.

We do have good hydro rates, not just that it is a competitive rate, but the fact that it is readily available. I mean, you know, as long as the Government would enforce every line through my constituency, I would be happy with it, but I mean, still, I think Manitoba Hydro is probably for Manitoba what oil is currently for Alberta. If we can encourage the Minister of Hydro to better manage how we deal with its citizens and their complaints, I think Manitoba Hydro is really going to be the jewel in the crown of Manitoba.

That having been said, we have got other assets in Manitoba. We certainly have a great agricultural community. It just needs a little bit more support from this Government, moral or financial. This Government has not been as forthcoming as it should, but we have got great people. We have got a strong population base; a million-plus is a great base to start off with, and there are a lot of advantages to being in this province.

What Mr. Sigler is trying to say here is be careful, by lagging behind in the tax reduction or the tax relief to the citizens, that you do not eat away those benefits of basically inexpensive water. I would not call it cheap, but it is inexpensive water, inexpensive hydro and so on and so forth. I would even go so far as to say our technology sector.

In the wisdom of the previous government, they privatized MTS, and look how well it is doing. It is probably one of the few companies in the technological sector that weathered the decline in the market as well. I do not believe there are very many companies that can hold their head up as high as the Manitoba Telephone System. They have done an excellent job. They are keeping our communications in a modern state. I think it is a real benefit to us.

The caution that Murray Sigler is giving to the Government and to Manitobans is careful, because you are lagging so far behind in one area, that it starts to eat away the other advantages. I think that is a very reasoned piece of advice. I think that is something that hopefully the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) will take to heart and have a look at. I mean, it is not something shrill out there. I think it was very reasonably put.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

He goes on to say, if we spend money on health care and advanced education, that is good, but if our graduates go to B.C. or Alberta, all we are doing is subsidizing their education to go elsewhere. Certainly, that has to be a concern. I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has an awful lot on his mind, doubling up as Minister of Hydro. I cannot imagine how he gets through some days. He has an awful lot of issues to deal with. He has got a lot on his plate, but you know what? I would really caution him on this one. We have to make sure that we not just educate our young people because clearly that is what we have to do, but we must retain them. We must have retention of our young, educated people in this province. If we do not keep our young people in the province, those who have got good training, those who have got good education, those who have grown up in a very healthy, good environment, and then we just export them, I mean would that not be the ultimate shame that this be known as a province that its greatest export is its young people?

I would suggest to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), I would suggest to the Premier (Mr. Doer), and I would suggest to the Cabinet and their colleagues that, you know, do not just

take it as being this is something that the Opposition is propagating. Listen to the Siglers, and listen to the other groups that are cautioning you on this particular point. Be very careful. Our greatest export should be hydro. Our greatest export should be our products. It should be our agricultural products. It should be the things that we manufacture in this province. Please do not, in the tenure of your Government, make our greatest export our young people. That would just be a disaster for us.

Shelly Wiseman goes on to say in the article—she is of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—she said the Budget fails to put more money back in Manitobans' pockets and boost consumerism. The Budget also fails to show balance, Wiseman said. This is quite in contrast to what the Government has been trying to spin. For every dollar in tax cuts, there are \$6 in government spending.

Business Council of Manitoba CEO Jim Carr said: The crunch will come if the gap widens in our ability to compete. Here is another individual, hardly a member of my party. In fact, I understand that he sat in this House at one point in time representing the Liberal Party. Business Council of Manitoba CEO goes on to say: It is not just the tax regime, the quality of life and our ability to fund public institutions, Carr said. We will not be able to fund them unless we enhance the tax base, and we will not be able to do that unless we attract businesspeople who appreciate the entrepreneurial spirit and understand someone has to create the wealth before we distribute it.

I think all of us really appreciate the fact that we have the low unemployment rate that the Filmon government left as a legacy. We have all these people working more than ever before, and I think the Government on the other side that assumed this legacy is proud to see it continue. If we want to have high-end jobs, we want to have jobs where we keep our trained university-educated, high-paying jobs, we want to bring more of those to Manitoba, we have to watch out on the tax competitive side.

Again, coming from Jim Carr that is hardly a partisan from this side, and I would say neither is Mr. Sigler. Murray is hardly a partisan. I think

that is very good advice. I think it is reasoned advice. I have mentioned to a lot of people in my life that the beauty about advice is that it is free. Take it or leave it. At least look at it, at least listen to it. I think there is some very good advice that was given here, and we hope that this Government and this minister come to their senses in time and see that something has to be done.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* goes on to say: NDP spending out of control says the article. It goes on to say that the Opposition accused the provincial government yesterday of going on a spending spree. The leader said: The train is running at full throttle, and the engineer is out shopping. It reminds you of that cliché, you know, the light is on and nobody is home. Hello. Hello somebody over there. You have to be watching the shop. You have to be minding the store. You cannot just open the doors, turn on the lights and walk out. Somebody has to be minding how the spending is going, and it is sort of this train just barrelling along with its spending and nobody at the controls. Certainly, the Government is going to have to, at some point in time, get control of its spending.

The Leader of the Opposition likened the NDP to kids in a candy store. I think that is a very telling analogy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because those of us who have young children know exactly what that is like. Young children will go into a candy store and—certainly mine, I will speak for my children—will walk in and there is not a piece of candy that they would not like to buy. In fact, my little guy, he would probably just eat candy till he fell over and passed out into a coma. Boy, that almost sounds like this Government was spending, you know, spending money to the point they are in such a euphoric state they are almost passing out into a coma. They are going to have to watch this glee in spending and start doing the hard task of managing, of sitting down and making tough decisions. I will repeat again and again, only, only this Government can spend more money and deliver less services, and that is the unfortunate thing of the Budget.

The Conservatives went on to say: The NDP Budget devotes six times as much money to new spending as to tax cuts, \$6 on spending, \$1 on tax cuts, and that is most unfortunate.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* put out an editorial and that is by Nicholas Hirst, and he also talks a little bit about the Manitoba Advantage. I wanted to share just some of the stuff he had to say with the members opposite. For instance, I know the Minister of Finance, doubling up as Minister of Hydro, has probably been too busy to read some of these, so I just like to share them with him.

* (15:40)

The so-called Manitoba Advantage, however, has not so far put the province at the forefront of economic or population growth. Manitoba's problem is that, with the exception of electricity costs, most of the other cost advantages claimed by the province have to do with lack of demand. Land and buildings are relatively cheap because too few companies want to move into them. The cost of commercial space in downtown Winnipeg reflects not so much a cost advantage, although that is certainly there as a statement that downtown Winnipeg has been in decline for years. Decline and slow growth do present opportunities, but faster-than-average growth creates more, and that continues to elude us.

He makes an exceptional point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have to be careful that, if we become less and less competitive and because of that our real estate gets cheaper and because of that other things become cheaper, I mean that should not necessarily be seen as an advantage because it just proves the point that people are not coming, because if you do not have enough people to buy the homes, you are certainly not going to see a demand and see the prices increasing. If there is a Manitoba Advantage, few perceive it. Nearly all of those that do live here already and even those not convinced, the Aspers consider locating a new business unit in Calgary. The Calgary Herald crows that Alberta can attract Manitoba businesses with its lower taxes. So far, the turnaround in the province's fortunes remains painfully slow.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Nicholas Hirst is trying to give some, I think, pretty reasoned advice in that you have to watch in just trying to sit back and say, well, we have got all these advantages and, as one individual indicated, as you fall further and further behind in your tax

competitiveness, you are eating away some of those benefits. The other thing is that some of those benefits may not necessarily be a benefit, is what Nicholas Hirst is saying because, if your economy is going down and the value of your real estate is going down, that is hardly a benefit because you are certainly not going to turn around and make money off of a house if there is no increase in value. So I would recommend to the Government members, I would recommend to the Minister of Finance to have a look at this article of Saturday, April 14, by Nicholas Hirst, and if they cannot get a copy of it, certainly I would be more than willing to share it with them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last article that I want to reference is one from Saturday, April 15, from the *Winnipeg Sun*: NDP's fiscal policies stay mired in ideological tar pits. That brings me back to my speech of last year. For those who were not fortunate enough to be in the House when I gave that speech, man, I really recommend that. That is actually the kind of stuff one should read to one's children before they go to bed because it just gives them that proper dose of information that will help them in their next day getting through life. It was one of those timely speeches, and I do not know if the current occupant of the Speaker's chair was here for that one, but it was a dandy speech.

It really talked about governments. Initially the NDP really did start out as a very ideological party, as a protest movement, and it has moved through various stages, as a political scientist, and I am sure there are a few of them in this Chamber, as we have studied through the years.

The hope was by Manitobans, when they voted for the Government opposite, that they would not be an ideological party but that they would be a pragmatic party. That is what we have seen the NDP in Saskatchewan become. Talk about pragmatic. I would say NDP in Saskatchewan is almost a misnomer. I would call them a Liberal or right-of-centre party. Even the brutally desperate group of individuals currently trying to cling onto power with every shred of hope that they have in their body, even they were starting to distance themselves from the ideological tar pits that is spoken about.

I spoke about that in my first speech to the first Budget. The hope was that this particular government would not get back into the tax and spend, that they would actually do what they had promised to do, and that is be fiscally responsible. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know they can crow all they want and pound on their chests and thump their chests, whatever they want, but do you know what, just because they have got this largesse—and right now they are living at the end of an incredible boom that they inherited—that is not proper management of money. It might have been prudent to scale back the spending a little bit; I mean, even if they would have put a little bit of money back, held some back in case the revenue projection was not as great.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, this has been a government and a budget that got itself mired in its ideology and resorted back to its historic ways of spend, spend, spend, and they just put a new twist to it. This NDP government got a new bent on spending, in that more spending, \$6 more spending, equals less services. Only this Government could have come up with that kind of a system. I mean, even under Howard—I should not speak about Howard Pawley. I will let them speak for Howard Pawley. He was probably there too, but that is the big downfall of this Budget, that it is more spending, \$6 of more spending to \$1 of tax cuts, more spending and less services, less benefit to the taxpayers, less benefit to the citizens of Springfield, less benefits to all Manitobans.

I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, along with many of us will not be able to support this Budget as it fails our citizens and our people. Thank you very much.

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): As the Member for Riel, it is my pleasure today to speak on the Budget presented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). Had I known last night when I was preparing my remarks that I would follow the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler)—or as he likes to call his constituency of Springfield, East St. Paul—I might have dealt with a different paradigm, but in listening to you I am afraid that in your paradigm this train you talk about is

really on its way to Albania. My train is in a very different paradigm.

First, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance on his financial action plan, a plan that builds on the priorities of Manitobans by investing in families, education, health care and flood protection while reducing personal income taxes, business levies and the debt. I would also like to congratulate the members of the Treasury Board and its staff who gave many hours and much thought to the Budget presented by the Minister of Finance.

C'est remarquable d'écouter les gens de Saint-Boniface qui sont tellement fiers de leur député et le rôle qu'il joue aujourd'hui comme membre de notre gouvernement et comme ministre des Finances.

Je cite Raymond Hébert dans *La Liberté* du 12 avril 2001 qui croit sur le plan politique que le Budget sera difficilement attaquant par l'opposition: Le Budget est modéré, équilibré et prévoit des mesures populaires, dit Monsieur Hébert.

Paul Ruest, recteur du Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, dit aussi dans *La Liberté* que, et je cite: Le Budget prévoit des réductions d'impôts pour les entreprises qui n'ont pas été faites depuis 50 ans. Tout le système social, l'éducation, la santé et les programmes sociaux, a subi d'énormes coupures budgétaires. Les gouvernements sont là pour mettre en place des programmes qui assureront la solidité du tissu social et non pas pour subventionner les entreprises, ce qui va à l'encontre de l'esprit d'entreprise.

Le docteur Ruest a aussi déclaré que le Budget est une bonne nouvelle pour les étudiants.

C'est évident que les Franco-Manitobains et Franco-Manitobaines félicitent leur ministre des Finances pour son travail.

Translation

It is remarkable to listen to the people of St. Boniface who are so proud of their MLA and the role that he is playing today as a member of our Government and as the Minister of Finance.

I quote Raymond Hébert in La Liberté on April 12, 2001, who believes that from a political perspective the Budget will be difficult for the opposition to attack: The Budget is moderate, balanced and provides for popular measures, according to Mr. Hébert.

Paul Ruest, the rector of the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, also states in La Liberté that, and I quote: The Budget provides tax reductions for businesses that have not been made in 50 years. The entire social system, of education, health and social programs has undergone enormous budgetary cuts. Governments are there to put into place programs that will ensure the strength of the social fabric and not to subsidize business, which runs counter to the entrepreneurial spirit.

Doctor Ruest also stated that the Budget is good news for students.

It is clear that the Franco-Manitoban population is congratulating its Minister of Finance for his work.

* (15:50)

English

Let me also congratulate the Premier (Mr. Doer) on his leadership and vision as reflected in this Budget. It is a great honour for my colleagues and me to serve with this leader as we face the challenges of government and the implementation of our budgetary priorities.

This Budget is a document, in my opinion, that charts a path characterized by principles of equality and fairness. This Budget balances the demands of fiscal responsibility and people's needs. Today I wish to address four of the areas impacted by the Budget.

The first, flood protection. I have lived on the Red River since 1943, when my parents bought four acres for vegetable gardening. Now, I realize most of you in the House do not remember 1943, but I have learned to live with the river's moods over the years, including the 1950 flood when the waters reached our house roof and swept my dog Queenie away, and the

1997 flood when our seven-foot dike held the water back.

I remember the discussion in our home about Duff's Ditch and the relief we all felt when the floodway became a reality protecting us every year except 1997 with the flood of the century. Today our Premier (Mr. Doer) is taking a bold step forward as the Free Press editorial described it on April 14, 2001, with his visionary action on the issue of flood protection for Winnipeg. I quote: "The significance of the budget commitment of \$40 million toward the expansion of the Red River Floodway should not be underestimated. It marks the first clear sign of the political leadership and determination required to see the project through in the shortest possible time and with the greatest possible benefit."

For those of us who have lived with the Red River and other waterways and experienced the destruction and grief that these waters can inflict, flood protection is a very serious matter. The Premier and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) are to be commended for their foresight in addressing the issue of flood protection now. The Budget dedicates \$82.3 million for flood protection and water-related infrastructure, including \$40 million toward the Red River Floodway and \$25 million for flood protection outside Winnipeg.

In their application, these initiatives are consistent with the principles of fairness and equality stated earlier which are essential elements of this Budget. It responds to the needs of all Manitobans, rural and urban alike, in the area of flood protection.

The second area is education. One of the pillars of a democratic society is education, education for our citizens and providing new hope for young people through increased opportunities, particularly in education and training. I remember some years ago my parents gave me \$400 and told me to pursue my dream of a university education. Today, in different circumstances and with the increased recognition that a civil society provides equal access to higher education for all its members, it is imperative for government to invest in our

young people so they have the opportunities that my generation had.

In that vein, this Budget maintains the 10% tuition reduction and increases tax credits for students. The tuition reduction means a direct saving of \$9.8 million annually to post-secondary students over the tuition that was in effect in September 1999. Manitoba's average university fees will continue to be the third lowest in Canada while college fees are second lowest in Canada. There is a \$1.7-million increase in tax credits available for students. A typical full-time university student will receive an additional \$234 in Manitoba tax credits, a 34% increase.

The Budget increases funding for the Manitoba Bursary Program established last year which now stands at \$6.3 million. This program will assist some 2600 students with awards averaging \$3,300. The provincial and CMS bursaries combined will assist over 5000 students.

There has been an unprecedented level of capital investment in our colleges and universities, with over \$100 million in new capital, investments in Manitoba's economy and the future of our young people. With substantial increases in operating funds for our universities and colleges and \$10.9 million invested so far in a major expansion of college enrolments, results already show a 13% increase in enrolment so far this year.

In March 2001, our Government committed to the largest capital investment in the universities in decades: \$50 million over five years to the University of Manitoba and \$20 million to the three other universities. A new downtown campus for Red River Community College is being built at a cost of \$31 million.

Our Government has invested more new resources in this post-secondary system in the past two years than the previous government did in 10 years. We have increased all resources, operating and capital funding, to the universities and colleges by 17 percent over the past two years. For example, our Government is committed to providing greater access to colleges for underserved populations and to

addressing the emerging skill requirements of the Manitoba economy.

Investment in colleges is an economic investment. Colleges will continue to support expanded nursing education as well as new programs in areas such as business, information technology, and agriculture. Furthermore, there will be an overall \$10.4-million increase in operating grants to the universities in 2001-2002. The Strategic Initiatives Fund continues to be available to the universities. This has increased \$1.4 million, an increase of 180 percent.

This Budget also provides more funding to public schools. As a parent of a graduate of the public school system, specifically Collège Jeanne-Sauvé in St. Vital, as a former school trustee, and as an educator with more than 35 years experience in the system, I am delighted with our Government's increased funding to public schools by \$47 million in just two years. Combined with the improved education property tax credits, this Government has increased support for publication directly and indirectly by \$100 million.

Even more important, our Government has opened a dialogue with teachers that once again values teachers for their role with young people, and it has increased the resources needed for them to help meet student's needs.

I congratulate the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) for his efforts in humanizing the education system and identifying closely with teachers so they once again are valued. As the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) stated, I quote: "Our future prosperity depends on the skills and education that we provide to our citizens. Education and training are vital to the well-being of Manitobans and their families and are the foundation of our economic plan for Manitobans."

The third area is health education. Health care continues to be the priority in my constituency. I am very pleased that it is a key aspect of the Budget. First let me congratulate the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and his staff for all the hard work and countless hours they are giving to improve the system and meet Manitoban's needs.

My constituents appreciate their efforts on their behalf and tell me that in their experience the system is improving. The health care funding increase to \$2.6 billion is most welcome. Such initiatives as strategies to keep doctors in Manitoba, 80 new ambulances for medical emergency services, new MRIs, CT scanners, ultrasound machines, and other vital medical equipment are essential in our efforts to improve the health system and to preserve the universal non-profit health care.

Support for expanding nurse training and recruitment programs has already increased enrolment by 60 percent, greater emphasis on disease and illness prevention through programs such as the new Health Check information initiative on prevention of child injuries, and adding 15 medical school spaces, with 9 dedicated to training family physicians for rural and northern Manitoba are but two thrusts in this Government's efforts to move forward on health care.

* (16:00)

I concur with the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Selinger) declaration that, and I quote: "As we move ahead on health care, we will continue to focus on stabilizing funding, dealing with the shortage of health care professionals and working on innovative made-in-Manitoba solutions."

Our Government's initiatives and its determination to maintain and sustain the public health care system accessible to all our citizens conforms with the principles of fairness and equality.

Environment: This Budget focuses on keeping Manitoba clean, green and growing. This is certainly in tune with Riel constituents who express growing concerns about the environment. They certainly will be pleased with the \$1-million fund to address the effects of global climate change. Such initiatives as safeguarding the quality of drinking water with a \$300,000 training program for inspectors and testing, a new ecological tax credit to reward property owners who preserve Manitoba's wetlands, an 11% increase for water projects and a million-dollar increase for drainage are most

welcome by all Manitobans as our respect for the environment increases.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of my constituents to thank the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) and his staff for their work.

There are other aspects of this Budget that are also very important to Manitobans, including the increased funding for Healthy Child Manitoba and child care, ending the National Child Benefit clawback for families with children under six, debt retirement and payment for pension liabilities. In particular I want to mention the education property tax credit increase of \$75 for the second consecutive year, an important initiative for constituents in Riel. The credit is now at \$400 compared to what it was under the previous government when it was reduced to \$250. Tax credit increases from the last two budgets mean an average 6% reduction in property taxes in Winnipeg and 9.4 percent in the rest of Manitoba.

In conclusion, this Budget is about people, people of different ages and financial means, families and people in need, people who rely on our Government to respond to their needs in a balanced, equitable and fair way. This Budget is also about moving forward on each of our Government's five main election commitments as well as taking major steps on new initiatives like expanding the Red River Floodway and a new prenatal program to help low-income mums meet the special nutritional needs of pregnancy. It is a budget that is balanced not only in terms of a bottom line but also in every other sense of the word. Let us go forward with this financial plan for Manitobans. Thank you.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Indeed it is a pleasure have an opportunity to put some comments on record regarding this Budget that has just come to Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, middle-income Manitobans woke up the morning after the Budget and found out they were amongst the highest taxed in the country. So more and more young people are preparing to move to other provinces. The Doer government boasts about

increasing the education property tax credit by \$325 annually.

What the Doer government does not boast about is that this Government's spending has increased by \$750 million. In this Budget alone, spending is up by \$359 million, or 6 percent over last year. We have in this Budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a spend, spend, spend philosophy. Spending is good, providing the choices that are made benefit Manitobans. In this Budget alone, in other words, for every dollar the Doer government handed out in tax relief, the CFIB suggested this Government was spending \$6. That was not members on this side of the House that were talking about this, it was the CFIB. Where has all the money gone?

We talk about the fact that Manitoba needs to be an environment, a place where families want to live, want to build their homes, want to stay. I know in our family we have six children, and one of them now is looking to leave the province, which is of a great distress to me. What is the reason he is looking to leave the province? Because of the high tax rate.

Indeed this Budget is about people and this Budget is about families. This Budget is about the need for families to be able to have disposable money so they can buy the music lessons, they can take their kids to the cultural events that help them grow and develop. It is about having homes to live in and food on the table.

We hear across the way about boastful comments about we spent here, we spent there, we spent everywhere, and when you look at where the spending is, some very interesting things have happened.

Where has all the money gone? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will tell you where it has gone: 21 out of 24 Government departments will increase spending this year. More staff has been added to the Premier's Executive Council. The Doer government is spending \$10,000 more per person for executive assistants and administrative assistants.

There is a problem here. The spin that is given to how the money is spent in this province

has been very misleading to Manitobans. This spending has added up to some 240 more people at the cost of \$410 million a year. This is a tremendous increase in spending at the Executive Council level. The GDP is expected to increase this year by only 2.4 percent.

Who will the Doer government go to when the money runs out? I will tell you where the Doer government will go. They will go to the taxpayers. They will go to the families. They will say: Give me more money. We have spent \$6 in expenditures, \$1 in tax relief, but, oh, the money is running out. This Government has shown a tremendous lack of vision, a tremendous lack of planning, a tremendous lack of budget control. They live for today, not tomorrow.

I remember in teaching primary school in the primary levels where there was a story about a little field mouse who was delighted to eat up all the things she had. Even at a very young age the children were taught this is not a good thing, because that little field mouse ran out of food and met her demise. That is a very simplistic illustration, but maybe this is what the Doer government needs to understand, that first you make sure your granaries are full in times of plenty so when the famine comes you can survive and work and build your economies. This is definitely a spend, spend government without a lack of vision, a lack of planning for the future.

While other provinces have shown they can increase spending and still offer meaningful tax relief, the NDP government is spending faster than it can take money in. The Doer government is someone like kids in a candy store. They spend all their money on the trinkets to pay back to special interest groups without storing the essentials for a rainy day.

It is a sad day for Manitobans because we have heard a lot of comments about increased spending in education, increased spending in health care. It is puzzling that members opposite have not recognized the fact that members on this side of the House have spent a lot of money when they were in government on education and on health care. The difference is they had a plan, and it was a balanced plan. It was a plan for the

very scarce critical dollars to go into the right places.

* (16:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the problem here with members opposite and with the Doer government is that there is not a long-term sustainable plan. Over the past 18 months almost a dozen businesses have announced lay-offs, relocations or closures here in the province of Manitoba, resulting in almost 2000 jobs lost here in Manitoba. Is this sustainable economics? I answer no. It is regrettable the Doer government does not understand that it could have provided Manitobans with meaningful tax relief. It could have provided an environment that provided for families so they could stay here, so they could build a future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Doer government could have lowered personal tax for Manitobans in a way that made a difference to the family income. They could have removed the education support levy from property tax bills because when they came into government in the last election they had the most perfect economic environment set-up that any government could come into, and why was that? Because of the careful planning of the former Filmon government, of the careful long-term planning so Manitoba would be a place where families want to live, families want to stay, and youth want to grow up to build their own lifestyle here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hear members opposite chirping away loudly, loudly, loudly as if screaming across the way that, oh, the Filmon government was wrong, would fix things. I dare say it would be much better for members opposite to sit down, do some problem solving, go into maybe a four-year plan, a balanced plan, a real balanced plan. The Doer government could have created an environment that kept our youth here in Manitoba.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

When we hear about education it really saddens me when I hear and see the hyperbole, the exaggerations, the choices that are made by members opposite in the area of education. A

few minutes ago we heard from a member opposite, the member from Riel, that for the first time teachers were valued. For the first time teachers felt as if they were listened to. I quote Pat Isaac who wrote an article in the Manitoba Teachers' Society—she is part of the Manitoba Teachers' Society provincial executive— "Politics versus Pedagogy: Who loses in the Grade 3 assessment game?" When I read this article she has written, among the campaign promises, and she is talking about the campaign promises of the Doer government, this is what the Doer government has told the teachers of Manitoba: No longer would seven- and eight-year-old children be subject to the fear and pressure of the exam, and no longer would our colleagues in Grade 3 classrooms be subjected to dumping large segments of other curricula in order to prepare their students to write the exam.

Madam Acting Speaker, I say let us fast forward to August, 2001. These are the empty promises, the misleading promises that the Doer government made to the teachers of Manitoba. We acknowledge on this side of the House that students need to be tested, need to have an assessment to see where they are at reading, writing, the basics in the curriculum. As we started the testing program through the former Filmon government, we put in a standards Grade 3 test which was geared to do that. Unfortunately, the election came before we could refine and redo the things that we needed to do with the Grade 3 test. When the current government came in power, the Doer government promised that, you know, they would fix things, here another empty promise.

In the year 2001, in August of 2001, the teachers are now saying that the current NDP provincial government did disperse with Grade 3 exams, as they promised, but in their inability to plan, they have put something in that is so cumbersome, so onerous, so out of whack for the teachers and the students here in the province of Manitoba. What happened was the teachers became burdened, so burdened with designing this new test that they had to take a lot of time away from the teaching of the students. There was no consistency across the province in the test because every single jurisdiction, every single school division did their own test. What they found out was that the teachers were beat

up and burnt out because of the workload and because of the lack of consistency and because of the lack of support for designing this test.

So in this article, and I will quote it, March-April 2001, "Politics versus Pedagogy" by Pat Isaac, a member of the MTS provincial executive. Pat says: In their place, teachers are required to do diagnostic assessments of each student at the beginning of Grade 3.

So the scene has changed now, Madam Acting Speaker. The scene has changed now where the NDP government, the Doer government, in all its wisdom, put in this wonderful, what they thought to be this wonderful diagnostic test without a plan, without a vision, without an understanding of what was really going on in the educational system, just put it in and place it on the shoulders of the teachers and the students with lack of vision for finding out what was really good for students.

Pat has said in the article: Many teachers were given in-service time and, in some cases, release time to carry out these assessments. The result, what appeared to be a relatively benign election promise has turned into, I quote: a more cumbersome, more time-consuming workload increase than the previously reviled provincial exams. Grade 3 students lost valuable instruction time with teachers as they reviewed and were retested on Grade 2 curriculum content. In an attempt to capture the mood of teachers who were subjected to this new and improved assessment practice, and I say "improved," the collective bargaining standing committee surveyed Grade 3 teachers shortly after the assessment was completed.

What this article says is what we found was disconcerting, if not surprising. Teachers overwhelmingly gave the provincial assessment a failing grade. What the teachers of Manitoba, the Grade 3 teachers of Manitoba told this Doer government was: one, the provincial assessment did not give them any information they did not already receive from Grade 2 transition meetings; two, the provincial assessment took, on average, 3.3 hours per student or 72.6 hours for a class of 22 students; three, the provincial assessment robbed the average Grade 3 student of 3 to 4 weeks of instructional time. This is a

travesty. Those children in Grade 3 have lost the better part of the beginning of their Grade 3 year. Number four, the provincial assessment did not provide teachers with standard materials which begs the question how "standard" is the assessment. But the best is yet to come. Madam Acting Speaker, the cost of designing these tests, the major costs in in-servicing the teachers, was offloaded on the school divisions. So when we see on the surface members opposite in the Doer government saying that we have put so much educational money after decades of neglect by the former government, they do not talk about their hidden agenda. What is the hidden agenda?

* (16:20)

On January 25, 2001, Education Minister Drew Caldwell announced a 2.8 increase, so-called increase, in public school funding, which totalled \$22.6 million in new money. Now, \$19.3 million was distributed to increased operating budgets for Manitoba school divisions, \$3.3 million was distributed for capital costs for previously approved school construction and renovation projects. Although the total increase is calculated on the total funding amount provided to all school divisions, the actual percentage varies for each division depending on enrolment levels, property assessment changes, and other local criteria.

This recent funding increase by the Doer government falls far short of what would be required of school divisions in order to ensure that school taxes are not raised. Although the Doer government promised to make changes to the funding formula, any reduction of reliance on property tax would not occur until the 2002-2003 school year.

There is a hidden agenda. They do not talk about the costs. Superintendents, trustees are telling me about the inflation in cost of this Grade 3 assessment by the Doer government offloading it on the local school division. This is what we talk about when we talk on this side of the House of lack of planning, lack of understanding of controlling budgets, lack of understanding of providing tax relief, meaningful tax relief for taxpayers in Manitoba.

It has been a travesty what has happened with the education budgets. No one applauds louder than members opposite, than the Doer

government, about how well they are doing. Budget control, spending depends on what you spend on, what services you are getting from the money you put it.

There is a very recent example of lack of planning here in the province. I am going to tell you about it because this is an example of the lack of the Doer government's understanding about what is good for students, what is good for job creation, what is good for keeping youth in our province. There is a story that is coming out of our province that just shows an example of undeniable mismanagement of education dollars.

Here in the city of Winnipeg there is an outstanding performing arts program at Grant Park collegiate. It is touted as being the largest in western Canada. This is not a story about a school program as much as it is a story about a career path, a career choice.

Let me tell you about this particular program. Here we have a community that is willing to fundraise millions and millions of dollars to build a performing arts centre, but let me tell you about the years of work, the years of building and development that have gone into this centre. We have a centre here that speaks to developing jobs for youth, that speaks to keeping our youth in the province of Manitoba.

Do we hear from the Doer government that their education spending is spent on these kinds of programs that keep our youth here, that develop jobs here? No. We hear almost on a daily basis about a smattering of money going into this program and a smattering of money going into that program but into programs that have no plan and no sustainability.

Here, in the performing arts program in Grant Park collegiate, we have a program that has been developed for youth. Youth all across the province are coming to this program. It is, as I said, a story about a career path, a career choice for our youth. In this program, this program is not only about—it is a very fast—the entertainment industry in Manitoba is a very fast-growing industry. It will employ people, but there is nothing here presently in Manitoba to train students in the art of cameras, in the art of lighting, in the art of sound.

This program, this performing arts program is so highly regarded that agents from the entertainment industry are all drawn to this program. They are connecting these youth with industry all across Canada and certainly here in Manitoba. It is what they call enlightened education. It is a high-tech industry. It is not just about singing and dancing, but it is about how students learn how to manipulate the behind-the-scenes thing. Schools in the province of Manitoba do not have these facilities, and often the facilities that students do need are always booked. Now, stats are showing us that the entertainment industry will increase by 300 percent over the next five years.

Members opposite, the Doer government, should be looking at these kinds of education programs and saying, how can we enhance these programs because this is a sustainable program, a program that teaches students high academics. They are demanding high academics in the core areas, but they are all also demanding this highly skilled training that is nowhere to be found in any other part of the province of Manitoba.

This particular program is getting phone calls from dance schools who are saying: Do you have room for us? They are getting calls from businesses. There is no program in our education system here who can train these students. They are trained about house management, show management, lighting. The community and the parents got together and have contributed in a very meaningful way to the fundraising for this performing arts program. There have been students who have actually left the program and gone on to communities within Manitoba, and now they are looking more and more to communities outside of Manitoba to develop a career. There is one student who left this particular program and is making \$50,000 a year. Unfortunately, this particular student moved down to the U.S. because there are so many tax restraints here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

My question to the Doer government: They can match dollars for University of Manitoba; why not match dollars for a program that is

producing jobs, that is training kids, that is keeping the youth in Manitoba, developing industry, and why not match the dollars for this kind of a program? Parents in this program and the community have fundraised thousands and thousands of dollars. For their sound system alone, the community fundraised \$150,000. This is a very, very professional operation. This is a very forward-thinking operation, as I said, that not only enhances the performing arts in the area of song and dance and drama and theatre, it also enhances the job market, the job creation. It is building the economy here in Manitoba, and we have members opposite, a Government here, who does not recognize that, when they have educational dollars, these scarce dollars need to be placed carefully.

It is a matter of choices. Is it a choice to place these dollars in programs hither and yon all over the place, or is there a plan? I think not. Every time you turn on the radio you hear the news, you listen to the music. These are all camera people, lighting people, sound technicians, people that are trained in those jobs to make the entertainment industry a huge industry here in the province of Manitoba. But there is no long-term plan for the dollars here in education in Manitoba, because those same students who are becoming so highly trained in a program like this, No. 1, if the Doer government does not fund and help match dollars for programs such as that, as I have said before, now they are trained students, it keeps them here in Manitoba, creates jobs, connects them with the entertainment industry, as I said, not only with the singing and the dancing, the drama, but also with the behind-the-scenes thing, the stage production, the use of cameras, lighting. There is one student that spent some time after being trained in this program in circus lighting, in a gigantic circus production, and spent years doing wonderful things and now this program, the Government has been appealed to to match dollars.

* (16:30)

We have a community that is willing to raise millions of dollars, and they will do it because they are so committed, but this is something that the current Government will not even look at because they do not understand how we need to

keep the youth here in Manitoba, that it is not just about educating. It is about developing jobs.

Here is a program that not only educates and develops jobs but enhances our economy. It is about good planning for our youth here in the province of Manitoba, and this is the example of one program only. There are many programs throughout this province that train our youth, and in these programs there are a multitude of opportunities for creating jobs, for enhancing the industry we have here in Manitoba, for keeping our youth here in Manitoba.

Sadly, when you see the tax relief, the tax relief is so minuscule that there is no plan to have a sustainable tax relief plan to encourage our youth to stay here. It is about planning. It is about vision. It is about people and people will go where they can be trained.

Members on this side of the House were happy to hear about the 10% tuition reduction. We were unhappy to hear about the lack of planning with that 10% tuition decrease. The infrastructure is lacking. You can decrease all the tuition you want, but you have to have a plan to make sure that the youth stay here in Manitoba, a plan that makes the youth look forward to the jobs that are here. Our youth are very brilliant. Our youth are very interested in developing lives for themselves and their families, where they can live a quality of life that they want to, where they are able to achieve a standard in their homes, where they can provide for what is needed in the family.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about the education we talk the increased monies given to education. We see that this lack of planning, this lack of vision and this one concrete example right here that is happening right now in the province of Manitoba shows the lack of vision, shows the lack of planning. This is what we talk about on this side of the House when we talk about spending, spending, spending. This side of the House has put a lot of money in the past into the education system, but the first thing we knew we had to attend to is paying the bills, paying down the debt, balancing the Budget to make sure that a foundation is put in place so there are tax dollars for education, so there are tax dollars for health care.

Having said that, with all these grandiose announcements about increased funding, you can educate our students and then they will leave the province. It is not about cuts. What it is about is making the critical choices, putting the spending into the right places. Do we put the spending into a place like this performing arts program, where the community is raising millions of dollars and asking the Government to match the funds and where youth is being trained and where youth is being provided jobs in the future, where youth has hope of staying here in Manitoba and raising and keeping their families here? Do we put money into that in the education system? There are other programs too in many different schools. That is only one example. But what I am seeing here is that careful attention has not been made to put money into those kinds of programs. Money has been put into other programs without a plan to see how these people and how these students can be educated, trained to sustain themselves.

When we are talking about tax relief, we have heard over and over again from this Government about how this tax credit has really impacted on the school system. When you find that that tax credit was given and yet taken away with offloading the Grade 3 diagnostic test on the school divisions, there is a problem there. There is something else that has been offloaded. Members opposite, the Doer government, is looking quite seriously at amalgamation. The problem is that many school divisions have been requested to look into amalgamation at the cost of the local school division, not at the cost of this provincial government. So here we have another offloading of cost onto the school division. Here we have giving with one hand, on the surface, lots of money but nothing said about all these hidden agendas, all these things that are happening behind the scenes, and Manitobans deserve to know about it.

Surprise, surprise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in our last Budget, when that great announcement for the 2.8% increase in public school funding, nothing, very little, was said about the increase in taxes. So we look at the school divisions across the province. We find out that Assiniboine South school taxes will increase at least by 2.9 percent. Fort Garry School Division will at least have an increase in tax by 5.8

percent. River East School Division, their taxes will be increased by 5.7 percent. Seine River School Division used \$138,000 from its reserve fund to keep the school tax increase to 3.7 percent. So even though Seine River used their reserve fund, their taxes still increased 3.7 percent. Seven Oaks had a gas bill that increased by \$500,000 this year, so school taxes were initially to increase by 6.15 percent, but due to the city's new property assessment rates and all the other things that happened through the provincial government, the division is now implementing a 4.57 percent increase. So we are hearing all across the province increase in taxes, increase in taxes.

The art of good money management is to be able to see that the money is there for the sustaining of an education system that will bring a sound education to students across the province while keeping a balanced budget. When we find out that this Government has middle-income earners in Manitoba amongst the highest taxed in the country, that is only the tip of the iceberg because, once that happens, then all these other hopes and dreams that families have disappear. The tax burden is too much.

St. James-Assiniboia, this division used a lot of money, \$652,812, from its reserve funds to keep the cost-of-living tax increase at 2.9 percent. St. Vital, the average property tax increase will be at least around 5 percent, probably 4.69, they are thinking right now. Transcona-Springfield, property owners are facing a 5.4 percent increase. So when you hear members opposite talking about a budget that services Manitobans and that services the education system, this is a farce, and it is so misleading to families here in Manitoba.

* (16:40)

Families are waking up now. Families are beginning to wonder what is going on. There is a tax increase of 4.75 percent in Beautiful Plains School Division. In Brandon, the school taxes are set to rise 8.5 percent, Fort La Bosse, 3.4 percent. It goes on and on. So what we are having is school divisions all across the province that are looking at these tax increases.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you have a government that has increased its spending at such an alarming level, and when we find out

that for every \$6 in expenditures there is \$1 in tax relief, there is a problem there. Looking across the province and looking at the education system and looking at the possibility of our youth staying in the province, it paints a very grim picture. The Doer government has not maintained a sustainable way of doing business budget-wise in this province of Manitoba, and we are going to see in the very near future, like in the days of Pawley, how everything looks so good on the surface for the first little while and all this spending caught up with them, and then suddenly they went to the public, to the taxpayers for more money because the well ran dry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the thinking on amalgamation, the thinking on teacher shortage, the thinking on all the things that have to do with the education system here in Manitoba has been lacking. In terms of amalgamation, members on this side of the House have urged the Doer government to let the local school divisions make the decision, urged them to amalgamate where they can, where it is cost efficient, where it will benefit the students, but in the areas of critical teacher shortage, in the areas of education tax levy, all these elements of planning and vision for Manitobans unfortunately is lacking. Who will suffer are the families here in Manitoba. What will suffer is the education of the sustainable education over the years for these students. What will suffer is the fact that our youth is and will continue to move away from this province because of the lack of ability to build good solid lives in a sustainable economic climate. Thank you.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to respond to the Budget speech. I have been looking forward to this. I have been sitting here for a number of days now listening to what strikes me as a gross distortion of the facts on behalf of the Opposition here. To have followed the Education critic for the Opposition was especially enlightening in terms of what their government managed to do and what we have done in a short period of time since we have been elected here.

Just the cuts that the Education system has experienced over the years, the fact that it was

one of our prime commitments to reverse these cuts and to start putting money back into the system, something that our two ministers have accomplished to a large degree. We do have a lot of work to go yet. Ten years of neglect and mismanagement cannot be reversed overnight, but we have a very good start, in my opinion.

Just a quick comparison, over the past 18 months, we have increased funding to public schools by some \$47 million compared to a total increase of just \$15 million in the five budgets that the now-Opposition presented in their last five years in government. The facts speak for themselves. Something like that is indisputable.

The fact that they completely, totally ignored the infrastructure needs of the educational system is another glaring example of mismanagement. The bricks were literally falling off the university buildings in this province. They had to put up wire mesh, attach wire mesh to the buildings, as I understand it, to prevent the bricks from falling off and killing the students down below. That is how much the Opposition cared about our universities, and for all the years that they were in office they never turned a wheel. They never fixed one of these buildings. Obviously, they passed it on to the New Democratic government, because they knew that we have a commitment to education, that we would take action, and that is precisely what we have done.

Again, the numbers speak for themselves, \$50 million in capital investment into the University of Manitoba, long overdue, a commitment to expand on college spaces, because what we need in this province more than rhetoric is spaces where our students can learn and garner the skills where they can contribute to our society. We have invested \$31 million in expanding the Red River Community College. The new site in downtown will go a long way to rectifying this gap that has widened over the past decade in our province to the detriment of our students.

So I have to commend the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) for making these critical decisions. We are introducing a bursary program, for example, the first time in a decade that a government has taken action such as this

which will help the underprivileged students in our society to have equal access to education. Again, the gap has been widening in that respect. Tuition rates were rising astronomically under their administration, again, indisputable and our minister promised a reduction in tuition. That was followed through with a 10% reduction in the Budget last year. So, on that front, on the education front I think we have done well. We will stand on our record, and I am sure we will be standing here 10 years from now continuing to add to this system.

Our second commitment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was to deal with a similar decline in the health care system. Again, we hear lots of rhetoric on the other side, how things are not being fixed fast enough now to suit them. Yet for 10 years the system has been in decline to the point where when we inherited it, it was in a crisis situation. There is no other way to describe it. The system was in shambles. You really have to wonder what was the motivation. How could a government, a Conservative government be so irresponsible when it came to critical things for our society like our educational system and our health care system?

The decline is obvious, and one can only come to the conclusion that there were ulterior motives here, and I think they have shown their hand over their term in government. They are the party of privatization. You hear on a daily basis how they extol the virtues of King Ralph over in Alberta and how keenly they would follow his path if only they had remained in power, which fortunately for the people of Manitoba they did not. *[interjection]* Well, I will get to that. I will get to Hydro in a moment here.

First, I would like to just carry on a little bit with what I perceived their agenda to be, which was quite obviously privatization. We have a glaring example of it—*[interjection]*—well, in the health care system a glaring example a few years ago when they attempted to privatize the home care system in this province—we all remember that, do we not?—a service that is provided, to a large part, to our senior citizens who have worked all their lives, who have paid taxes and now, in their most vulnerable years, this Government was going to cast them off, was going to give their care and attention over to

some highfalutin American company that was supposed to be able to supply a better system, a company whose bottom line, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had one thing in its mind, and that was profit. When you are dealing with the health of the people, I think we cannot dwell on profit. We have to make sure that all of the money that we have available to go into the system goes into the system and a percentage of it is not skimmed off and put into the pockets of private investors, which was the objective of the now-Opposition party over here to my right.

* (16:50)

The same hand was exposed in the education system when they tried to let private corporations into our schools to brainwash our children. Of course, the plum was there. They are going to offer a few computers and all that, but the price was that our children would be exposed to propaganda that we would relinquish our control over their education for the sake of big business. To me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is pathetic and bordering on the criminal. It was largely because of actions such as that, that the people of Manitoba finally got fed up with them and did the right thing and put them over on the Opposition bench where they belong.

Now the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) mentioned Manitoba Hydro. That is a very good point he raised. That was the next thing on the chopping block. That was their next target, indisputable, despite the fact that they made all kinds of promises. We will never sell Manitoba Hydro, very reminiscent of the same promises they made when they sold the Manitoba Telephone System, one of the greatest travesties that we have seen in recent political history in this province. Here was a company supplying a good service to the people, well, there you go, best in the world, were bordering on a telecommunications explosion with the advent of the Internet. Here was a company that had great potential, and what did the Opposition do with it? What did they do with it? For a fire-sale price of \$600 million, they sold a company that was worth quite probably three times that. Certainly, when you consider the rise in share prices, I think that is an accurate statement, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The ironic thing about MTS, and I am going to share a little story with you about MTS. I had

the opportunity to go over to the Russian Republic back in 1992. I spent a year there. They were in the process of divesting themselves of their state enterprises in that country, you know, a worthy objective, I guess, but what they did was they issued each citizen in the Russian Republic 15 000 rubles that they could invest into the state enterprises. The next day, the Mafia was on the streets. They were offering 25 000, 30 000 rubles for these certificates, and over a period of maybe a couple of weeks or a couple of months, succeeded in buying up all these share certificates and, at that point, proceeded to buy up all the state corporations, the result being that all of these natural resources, these industries that were developed over decades in that country, passed into the hands of organized crime.

I quite frankly see a parallel with what happened with MTS in our province here. I recall MTS, when it came up for sale, Manitobans could only buy a certain number of shares. Right? But the message out there was: Look, you buy these shares this week; two weeks later you can flip them. You will make two to three times as much money.

Of course, the people all bought into it. They bought their shares, they flipped them, and in a matter of a couple of weeks there was no limitation on how much you could buy, in the second stage. In a matter of a couple of weeks our telephone company was in the hands of private investors, a direct parallel to the theft of the Crown corporations that took place in Russia. We saw this with the Conservative opposition that did the same thing to our state-owned telephone company, and that is another reason that they are sitting where they are today. Now they tell us that they would never have done the same thing with Manitoba Hydro, but once burned, twice shy, I think that is how the people of Manitoba felt and they did the right thing, as I said.

When you look at the MTS thing, it is quite interesting that they would take this approach toward their balanced budget. They logged the balanced budget, this was their lodestone. This was their reason for being, to balance budgets, but you do not sell off your principal assets, you do not convert your hard capital into cash and

then put it into a fiscal stabilization fund which you fritter away over the next couple of years, I think to the tune of \$300 million. They frittered away in a period when the economy was in a growth phase, when they promised that this money was only supposed to be used when the economy was in decline, but no, the last two years of their mandate they spent over a quarter of a billion dollars of this money in order to try and get re-elected. Well, it failed.

The people of Manitoba were not fooled. They broke the golden rule of the debutantes. You know, those rich women down in the south of the United States, old money, they inherited this money. The rule of the debutantes is you do not touch the principal. Never touch the principal. You live off the interest but you leave your hard assets in the bank so that they will perpetuate indefinitely. These guys did not do that. These guys took one of the best companies in Manitoba, sold it off in order to try and get re-elected and it failed. Thank God for that.

This whole push towards balanced budgets, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is, as far as I am concerned and it is not just myself, but renowned economists, one of the world's more renowned economists as a matter of fact, John Kenneth Galbraith has told us of how questionable at times this can be. It is wonderful when the economy is going well and you can balance the budget and even pay down some of the debt. That is exactly what this Government is trying to do, but we do live in a cyclical economy. Despite the fact that economists have tried for decades to control the economy, it cannot be done. It is cyclical. You have positive periods and negative periods of growth.

What is really ironic, I think, in terms of this legislation, balanced budget legislation, was that the most powerful nation in the world, the United States of America, when they had an arch-Conservative named Newt Gingrich in a Republican-dominated Congress, they could not succeed in passing this type of legislation and here in Manitoba, the Conservative government thought that the province was greater than the United States, that we could succeed so they have put us in this position. That is why today you will find that spending increases are limited and tax cuts are limited because we are staying

within the parameters of the balanced budget legislation which is what we have promised to do and is what we will continue to do.

What is very insidious about the approach that the Opposition is taking as they criticize our Budget—and it is becoming painfully obvious to me they realize we are bound by the balanced budget legislation—is that they know that there are spending requirements across the board that have to be done. Our infrastructure is crumbling. So what is the impetus for all these tax cuts, you have to ask yourself. Obviously they are trying to break us with tax cuts. They want us to go into a deficit in this province. They are deliberately pushing in this direction.

I am sorry, but we are not going to do it. We are going to balance this budget, as our Finance Minister has been able to do two years in a row now under considerable pressure, I know, given the needs to spend and the demands to keep up with the ultra-orthodox provinces of Ontario and Alberta.

* (17:00)

Heaven help us if we should fall behind them. This is something that I would like to dwell on for a moment as well, if I may, these bogus comparisons between different provinces. There is a world of difference between Alberta and Ontario and Québec and Manitoba. You cannot just compare a percentage of a tax cut and say that everything is fine across the board here. Ontario, as we all know, is the manufacturing heartland of this country. Their tax base is enormous. Québec has a population of 12 million people. We have shortly over a million in this province. Alberta is sitting on probably a trillion barrels of oil, right? Well, it is pretty tough to compete with that. Mr. Klein's popularity has nothing to do with his fiscal management, much more so the great good fortune that they are sitting on this natural wealth.

Just to give you a quick comparison of the wealth that this province has to deal with, when they tried to deregulate the hydro rates, I believe, in Alberta there, what a fiasco that was. Prices went through the roof, the end result being that the Conservative dynasty may have been

somewhat threatened in their coming election. So what did Mr. Klein do? He came out with a \$6-billion energy rebate to the people, an energy rebate equal almost to our entire Budget in this province. So when you sit here and compare Alberta to Manitoba without taking things like that into consideration it is really quite misleading and quite deliberately so.

We have heard a lot of talk from the Opposition about tax cuts and all that and yet they want spending too, right? When you go into Estimates it is a different story. They are not talking about tax cuts there. Then they want spending. I remember last year sitting in Estimates with the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton). I recall the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) wanting his road paved, of course. I think he affectionately referred to it as hog alley, I think that is what it was. Does that not just conjure up images of ecological bliss, hog alley, but he wanted hog alley paved, right? A different tune than what he is saying in the Legislature here.

Here it was tax cuts. In there it was let us pave hog alley, right?

An Honourable Member: Untrue.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, I recall that. The Member for Lakeside suggests that that is not true, but I was sitting in there and I distinctly remember that request to pave that road. We have the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) just in the last couple of days reminding us that many of the ring dikes in southern Manitoba were left unfinished by the previous administration and was calling upon our Government, rightfully so, because these communities are entitled to ring dikes and protection, but it was us that were expected to do the construction. After 12 years in office, I ask the Member for Morris why his government did not act to build these dikes, instead focusing on our Government to do it?

Then to top it all off, we have the arch taxcutter of them all. The arch tax cutter, we all know who that is, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen). He gets up day after day and can go on for 40 minutes at length, ad nauseam I should say, without hardly stopping for a breath, talking about tax cuts, and then, lo and behold,

leaps up in the House here and is demanding that the provincial government spend—what is it? How much does that underpass cost?—some \$35 million, \$37 million, \$38 million. Right? Tax cuts are all fine and dandy, but when he wants something done, then we are supposed to come across with the cash. It is very trying to sit over here day after day listening to, well, I hesitate to use some of the words that come to mind. I do not want to be challenged on using unparliamentary language. I am learning here, but I have learned that that one particular word is not appropriate, so I will refrain from that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no problem sitting, being a member of this Government. I think we are doing a fine job. We are very high in the polls. I believe the Manitoba people realize that and are still in support of us.

Now, I have 18 minutes left, so I would like to switch over, if I may, to a topic which is rather dear to my heart, which is the topic of agriculture. I represent a rural community. There are a lot of farmers there, and I am a farmer myself. I just bought a quarter section of land a couple of months ago. I have not quite figured out what to do with it yet, but we are proceeding. I hold the farming industry very, very dear to my heart. Again, over the past 10 years, I have watched while the Conservative opposition now quite blatantly moved away from the family farms in rural Manitoba, which is the backbone of rural society, and how they bought in, hook, line and sinker, into this mentality of corporate farming and playing with the big boys, the large corporations and, as far as the people were concerned, too bad. If you do not like it, there is always a job in the nearest hog barn once you go bankrupt. So I think the farming community realizes that as well.

There has been a lot of rhetoric on the other side about agriculture, given that many of their members are rural members, but really, you have to wonder at their performance and, as an example, let me use the topic of drainage, all right. Farmers need infrastructure more than rhetoric. They need good roads and good drains in order to produce. If they do not have infrastructure, the next thing you know the Government is paying crop insurance and

compensation or legal fees if it comes down to a lawsuit. This Government would much rather put the money into infrastructure so that the farmers can continue to farm and you have one less thing to worry about, given the low price of commodities internationally.

I recall, well, I think one of the members of the Opposition may have said it in Estimates as well last year that, when this Government, the NDP, left office in 1988, some 12, 13 years ago, they left it with roughly \$10 million in the capital program for drainage, \$10 million. When we came back into office in 1999, that number was down to \$3 million. That is progress, Conservative style. From \$10 million down to \$3 million and they are supposed to be the defenders of the farming industry, and that is how they do it, you know, very, very pathetic, long on rhetoric and short on production, when it comes to actually doing things that farmers need to continue to produce.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The Manitoba Government has taken a number of actions in the last 18 months to deal with agriculture. Our safety net spending has doubled to \$121 million now, doubled in comparison to the \$58 million which was spent in the last year of the Opposition's year in power. We have in terms of the Canada-Manitoba Adjustment Program on another front to lessen the impact on the farm income, for instance, we are going to give a one-time payment as part of the Canada-Manitoba Adjustment Program. Manitoba committed \$38 million this past year. The total payment to Manitoba producers will be approximately \$92 million. We will do this, we will focus on new farmers in order to encourage young people to enter into this very competitive industry.

* (17:10)

Apparently there was some \$7.8 million left in the GRIP program, the Gross Revenue Insurance Plan. This money will be paid out this coming month to put more money into the hands of producers at a very critical time as they enter this coming seeding season. In terms of AIDA and the Canadian Farm Income Program, we

moved to pay out 100 percent of the provincial portion of the 1999 AIDA payment, which means that producers will receive additional dollars this spring again when they need it most, prior to going into seeding. Our Government recently contributed an additional \$14.2 million into the CFIP program, which increases our provincial commitment to \$30.4 million dollars.

For a moment I would just like to dwell on some of the tax exemptions and all that that the farming community benefits from. For instance, there has been a lot of criticism, and I was on the front steps of the Legislature a couple of weeks ago, and I heard one farmer was calling for education tax relief. Right, well, it is quite important to know that farm land and out-buildings are exempted from paying the Education Support Levy, which is collected on behalf of the province for property tax relief of approximately \$16 million.

The tax levy that hits them the hardest is the Education Special Levy, which has gone up astronomically over the past decade thanks to a steady program of cuts by the previous administration. I think when we left office the Province was paying some 70-some percent, 72-75 percent of the costs to the school divisions. That number dropped down to a little over 50 percent when we came back into office. Hence the dramatic rise in property taxes and pressure again on the farming community that this Opposition party purported to represent. So in that respect we do not need any lessons from the Opposition.

There are numerous provincial sales tax exemptions that the Finance Minister outlined to me: PST exemptions on farm machinery and repairs worth \$36 million; an exemption on gasoline, purple gas, of some \$41 million; PST on seed, fertilizer, pesticides worth \$47 million. So the total is some \$170 million in tax revenue forgone in support of Manitoba farmers in addition to all the programs and increases that this government has also implemented, the sum total adding up to probably in the neighbourhood of \$300 million in support for farmers orchestrated to a large degree by this government. I take my hat off to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) for doing a very fine job in dealing with our farmers today.

When the Opposition pushed so hard for the corporatization of agriculture, one of the things they focused on was the hog industry. One of the first things that they did was eliminate the single desk, which basically opened the doors to the large producers and that has effectively squeezed out every small hog farmer in the province today. Now I am not saying that we are going to go back on that. We have to look forward. If we had to go back and fix all the mistakes and the mess that we inherited from the previous administration, we would need 25 years in office, not the decade that we are going to get here.

Speaking of the hog industry, one of the big pushes, one of the first things they did was cut the budget to the Department of Environment, as well, so that there was no proper monitoring of the system or anything like that. *[interjection]* Well, the member from Lakeside (Mr. Enns) is getting a little hot under the collar. I guess, after listening to all of the things that they have done to the agricultural sector, I would be getting a little upset, too, if I were you, sir. *[interjection]* Yes, it is too late now, unfortunately. It is too late now. You had lots of time to correct all these things. You did nothing, and the people have put you where you are today.

Since the former Minister of Agriculture, the member from Lakeside is getting so vocal here, why do we not just for a moment go back and dwell on the Crow rate. This was some \$500 million in federal money coming into western Manitoba to facilitate the movement of grain to the ports, and what happened? The federal government decided to do away with it, and the former Minister of Agriculture was all in favour of this stating that many more positive things will come as a result of the loss of the Crow. Thank you very much, sir. I am sure all the grains and oilseed producers in the province are just bubbling over in appreciation for that, as they are teetering on the brink of bankruptcy given the loss of the Crow rate. That was a pathetic move, I am sorry to say, and our people are suffering as a result of it.

Numerous other things. For example, the flood in southwest Manitoba a year or so ago. What did this Government do in response to that? The Government has increased crop

insurance coverage for unseeded acreage due to land that is flooded now. If we deal with this situation again then these people do not have to come hat in hand to the Government asking for relief. We have implemented this program, and they will be paid. Now when we discussed this on previous occasions in the House here, of course, members of the Opposition said well, that was our idea. We were going to do it. Boy, if we got re-elected that was one of the first things we were going to do. Well, talk is cheap. Talk is cheap, and you did not do it. You had over a decade to do it, and I think your credibility wore just a little bit thin over time. Again, the people of Manitoba could not stand for it anymore and things are different now.

Getting back to the environmental side of it, the threat to our environment. Again, I want to compliment the ministers of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), and Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), for taking this issue, for taking responsibility for it and for putting together the Livestock Stewardship Initiative panel which has gone out and done the public consultation, which is a prerequisite for our Government. Before we do anything, we will consult the people of Manitoba. We have done so. The panel has come back to us with some very good recommendations. In a short period of time we will put our spin on this industry, and it will be a sustainable industry.

We are not opposed to the hog industry. It is a benefit to this province, no question. Given the state of the oilseeds and cereals industry, livestock is the way to go. It adds value to our product. If manure is properly managed, it will go back into the soil beneficially, but things have to be done carefully. The Government has to go into something like this with its eyes wide open. It is of particular interest to me in the Interlake, given that we have some of the best water in all of North America, I would say, and yet very shallow overburdens. Our formations are highly fractured and very susceptible to pollution, and yet this industry came charging into, well, one area in particular. My home municipality, the R.M. of Fisher, there are a number of new barns that went up, and we had not even completed the water table pollution hazard maps. As far as they went was up to just north of Poplarfield. So we

went into an area like this completely blind, no consideration whatsoever for water tables, for our children and people in the future that would have to deal with this. Believe me, trying to repair aquifers is, let us face it, virtually an impossible thing to do.

* (17:20)

Mr. Speaker, I have only got a few minutes left here, if I could just close on a few points. For instance, in terms of water, we are going to start doing some serious testing in this province now. The Province is committed to paying the majority of the costs of doing tests. What did the Opposition do? What did they do? They sold the company that did the testing, to one of their friends, no doubt, and passed on 100 percent of the cost to the people of Manitoba. That is how much they care for the people that have to drink the water in rural Manitoba.

I could go on and on. My time is just about up. I will close on that point, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Budget.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On a matter of House business, I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if you could canvass the House to determine if there is leave to agree that the Standing Committee on Agriculture considering the provincial government resolution on federal support for agriculture be authorized to make committee membership substitutions by leave and that the substitutions be reported to the House by way of the committee report.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Mackintosh: Is it the consent of the House to accept that agreement without motion?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House that the Standing Committee on Agriculture considering the provincial government resolution on federal government support for agriculture be authorized to make committee membership substitutions by leave and that the substitutions be reported to the House by way of committee report?

Is there agreement of the House to move it without a motion? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Mackintosh: I wish to announce that the Standing Committee on Agriculture will meet to hear presentations from interested members of the public about federal government support for agriculture in the following communities: Dauphin, Monday April 23, 10 a.m., Parkland Recreation Complex, banquet room; Brandon, Monday, April 23, 6:30 p.m., Keystone Centre Assembly Hall, main concourse; Beausejour, Monday, April 30, 6:30 p.m., Brokenhead River Recreational Complex, Beausejour Room; Winnipeg, Tuesday, May 1, 6:30 p.m., Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Agriculture will meet to hear the presentations from interested members of the public about federal government support for agriculture in the following communities: in Dauphin on Monday, April 23, 2001, at 10 a.m., at the Parkland Recreation Complex, banquet room; also in Brandon on Monday, April 23, 2001, at 6:30 p.m., at the Keystone Centre Assembly Hall on the main concourse; also, in Beausejour on Monday, April 30, 2001, at 6:30 p.m. at the Brokenhead River Recreation Complex, Beausejour Room; also, in Winnipeg, Tuesday, May 1, 2001, at 6:30 p.m., Room 255 of the Manitoba Legislative Building.

* * *

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise and speak on the Budget Debate. I am sorry I did not get an opportunity to speak on the Throne Speech, so before I start I want to welcome the pages who are new for the session. I am sure they will serve us well this session. Also I want to welcome the new members to the Legislature, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) and also the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). This is also their first session. I also want to thank the two members who left this Legislature, the former Premier, Gary Filmon, and also our former Minister of Finance, Eric Stefanson, who served this province very well. It certainly was a great honour to be able to work with those two people who have served our party and our

province with great respect and have done an excellent job. It is unfortunate that they retired from their constituencies, but we will certainly miss them.

On the Budget, now gone are the days when the Filmon government was in power and we had some spending restraint. Instead we have a government with a spendthrift mentality. It is going to run this province right into the ground if they are given time.

The most disturbing part, I think, of this Budget is how the Doer government has all but ignored the importance of income tax relief. The Budget offered virtually no new income tax cuts for the 2001 year, and what little it did offer does not take effect until next year. That means that Manitoba will fall further behind other provinces such as Alberta and Ontario and even Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan government in their budget announced some major income tax cuts. At least it is obvious they understand how important tax relief is to attracting private investment and private companies, which ultimately create the wealth and jobs that are needed to fund health care and education and all the social programs that we have in this province.

This Government, they are living in a dream, really. Where do they think the money is going to come from? It is just going to fall out of the sky? Eventually the money is going to run out. Transfer payments are going to run out. What we will be left with is a high-tax province saddled with an expensive government that cannot attract business investment. It is not great at all. The outlook is not good at all.

When you look at the businesses that have left Manitoba just in the last 18 months, you look at Schneider, almost 1200 jobs; Strongco Engineered Systems have gone to Alberta, 61 jobs; Buhler Industries, where they have a labour problem, 250 jobs; Isobord, who is in receivership. Hopefully that company will be able to continue to grow and expand, but there are 90 jobs; Simmons Canada Incorporated, relocation to Alberta, another 40 jobs; Medichair Limited locates its office to Alberta, 6 jobs; Melrose Coffee closes its Winnipeg plant, 26 jobs; Tolko Manitoba announced a layoff from

their Woodlands division, 308 direct jobs and 300 indirect jobs; Tarr Construction relocates to Alberta, 5 jobs; Investors Group Securities, 49 jobs; Brett-Young Seeds, 60 jobs. What did the owner of Brett-Young Seeds say? Mr. Dyck said: The Budget did nothing to change his mind about the possibility of moving his seed export business head office to Alberta to escape Manitoba's heavy tax regime. That is what he said. He said there was no mention of cutting the payroll tax, no mention of cutting the capital or provincial sales taxes, taxes that do not even exist in Alberta, that cost them \$500,000 a year here in Manitoba. It is the tax gap, that we are not competitive with these other provinces. That is what is driving these businesses away.

* (17:30)

Murray Sigler, the Chairman of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, agreed, saying that the Budget simply paid lip service to the business community, did nothing to offer any relief to the high taxes that the businesses have to pay here in Manitoba to exist and to be able to employ the people. What did they do? For every dollar they spend on tax breaks in Manitoba, \$6 is spent on services. Six dollars expended.

All the articles in the paper recently talk about how the Budget is treating Manitoba. The NDP has no excuses. The Government has plenty of cash for bigger tax cuts. The tax axe fails to fall. Another item. Manitoba lags behind in income taxes. So it is just on and on. It goes on and on. The stories of every newspaper in Manitoba telling us how this province under this Government is not being competitive with other provinces such as Ontario, Alberta and even Saskatchewan. Those are just some of the things that are affecting Manitobans.

If you look around, especially, I know that in my own constituency where the building permits are down, there is not the building that there was prior to 1999. The people do not have the confidence in this Government to be able to invest in this province, and that is what the big problem is. We are not getting the investment. It is not because the interest rates are not low enough; it is because the people do not want to invest their money into a province that is not going to be competitive with other provinces.

How are these businesses going to be able to exist?

The member who spoke before me, he just left, he spoke as if profit was a dirty word. I am sorry. Any business that invests good money and has good employees to work hard, they deserve to make a profit. That is how a business operates in this world. Under this Government, they are not allowed to be able to do that. If we do not get the building permits, we do not get the development. Then in the rural communities and even in Winnipeg, we are going to lose population. That is going happen, and especially in rural areas where the agricultural sector is having a great difficulty. There was absolutely nothing in the Budget for agriculture.

Another article in the paper says: Farmers disappointed at lack of cash for crisis. Well, the little that the Agriculture Minister did come up with to help farmers, the \$38 million is a help with the federal government. It is some help, but it is not near enough. It is not near enough to sustain our grain and oilseed farmers today so that they can continue to be able to operate and be able to farm and put in the crop this year.

There are a lot of farmers out there who are having a difficult time making ends meet. Just a couple of weeks ago we met with a number of farmers. I did with a couple of my colleagues with some farmers in my constituency, and they outlined to us what the problems were. It is a combination of things. The input costs are high, plus low prices for the commodities which they have to sell, especially wheat, barley, oats and canola, the oilseeds and the cereals. They are probably the lowest that we have seen for many, many years, the prices, but the farmers today make a great contribution in other ways. They pay a lot of taxes. So it is not really the Government subsidizing the farmers, it is the farmers subsidizing the consumers. Farmers pay excise tax. They pay tax on the fuel that they use. They pay tax on the inputs that they buy, such as chemicals and fertilizers, and there is a lot of tax in that.

I agree that the federal government certainly gets a lot of this income, that they should help share in some of these things to help the farmers exist and to try to make ends meet. If they took

the excise tax off of farm fuel and if they took the excise tax off some of the inputs that are used in fertilizers such as natural gas and some of the inputs that farmers use, that would go a long ways to helping farmers be competitive with other countries such as the U.S. and European Common Market. So the farmers do really make a great contribution. They are entrepreneurs. They try to diversify into other commodities and grow other crops such as beans, forages, potatoes and things of that nature.

When we look at what our Government did, the Filmon government did to diversify agriculture, you know, we streamlined the hog industry so the hog farmers could expand and build new barns and grow and had a market for it. Maple Leaf came to Manitoba because there were farmers that wanted to produce the hogs so that Maple Leaf could come here to provide a killing plant and provide the jobs in Brandon. That was due to the good management of our former government. Now this Government wants to do away with all those things. They want to go back to the old days, with the single-desk selling. That is not going to do it, I am afraid.

The Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) talked about things like that. Well, I am sorry, those things are not going to work in today's marketplace. We need to have an open market and give the farmers an opportunity to be able to market their products the way they want to.

Another question, while we are on the agriculture issue, is the Canadian Wheat Board. Under the Canadian Wheat Board, the farmers cannot sell their wheat to where and when they want to. If they did away with the single-desk selling such as we did in the hogs, we would have a lot more industries here in Manitoba and in western Canada.

Just last fall I was in Halifax at the Public Accounts meeting. During that time while we were there they took us on a tour of the shoreline there where all the shipping takes place and some of the industries that are operating on the Halifax Harbour. As we were going down along the shoreline, explaining the different industries,

one explained was a large flour mill operated by ADM from the U.S., but this flour mill employed some 300 people. They explained that the western Canadian farmers shipped their wheat to Halifax to be processed in this flour mill that creates jobs there.

Well, those jobs should be right here in western Canada. We should be able to produce the flour here in western Canada and ship the flour to Halifax and let them ship it to other parts of the world. We should have those jobs right here in western Canada, whether they are in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta, but they should be in western Canada. This is where we produce the raw product. This is where the jobs should be.

Yet this is partly because of the way the Canadian Wheat Board operates, partly because the federal government, over the years, has always been controlled by eastern interests from Ontario and Québec. We have never had the strong support from western Canada that we would like to have. Therefore, they have all these industries down east. So we are just kind of supplying the raw material for the jobs down there. This really bothered me when they really took advantage of it and said that the western farmers shipped the—just like we are fools to ship them—the raw products and create the jobs there. It really bothered me, and that is probably just one example. There are probably just hundreds of those kinds of things that happen from time to time that we could have in western Canada.

The other thing, if the Wheat Board did give farmers an option to sell their grain wherever they wanted to, they would probably grow different types of wheat that could be used in the pasta operation, in the production of pasta or in specialized flours that are used for certain baking products that could be done here in western Canada and shipped to eastern Canada, and shipped to Toronto where the big markets are, or Montreal, or wherever the population is to sell these products.

Also, a lot of the agricultural products that are produced today in Manitoba, of course, are exported to other parts of the world, and we are very fortunate that we are right next door to a big market such as the United States. Plus the

European market now, I mean the Asian market, such as China, Japan, Korea, have really become markets that Manitoba and western Canada farmers have taken advantage. One is the production of forage. A lot of our forage produced here, timothy, as an example, or even alfalfa, is shipped to containers, loaded on containers here in Winnipeg and shipped to Vancouver and then shipped to Japan. If our farmers can do this to diversify and to grow these kinds of things to be able to make a profit, to be profitable, this is great. These are the kinds of things that help create the wealth in the province that we need to provide the services such as health care and education and other social services.

* (17:40)

What does this Government do? Puts roadblocks in every step of the way so that we cannot get a building permit, so they cannot get environmental permits to build barns. They just put roadblocks in the way, and it does not help. What did this Government do? Got rid of the Department of Rural Development. The Department—

An Honourable Member: It does not exist anymore.

Mr. Helwer: You are right. They are not the champions of diversification. They think we will be able to stay the same and exist. Well, that is not the case anymore. There is a new economy out there, and we have to be able to adapt. We have to be able to do the things to try to create the wealth that this province needs.

While I was on the topic of agriculture, I forgot to mention one thing, and that is, this Government is so against this overpass down here on Kenaston. Well, let me tell you, I have a lot of farmers in my constituency and in north of Winnipeg here that ship containers of grass seed, forages, timothy, alfalfa, and they ship this by containers to CP. They have to go across, wait in line to be able to get to that terminal to ship these containers. There is a perfect example of this Government putting roadblocks in the way of development again. Instead, they want to build a path walk across the river here for some reason or other. What economic benefit is that going to be to the people of Manitoba?

An Honourable Member: Why did you not build it? You were in government for 11 years.

Mr. Helwer: We did. We wanted to build it. We wanted to build the overpass. Anyway, there is another example, though, of this Government putting more roadblocks in the way of people who want to grow and diversify and grow their businesses here in Manitoba—just another example. *[interjection]* Well, there is another thing. They let the big companies such as Agricore close elevators in rural Manitoba. Farmers have to use now bigger trucks, semi-trailers that are going to be harder on the roads, cost the municipalities more money. What does this Government do last year? They cut \$20 million out of the highways budget. How is rural Manitoba going to exist? What are the municipalities going to do with these roads?

The closing of these elevators in the small communities—*[interjection]* We cannot go across, there is no overpass. We cannot get to the shipping. We cannot get to ship our products even, because they will not build an overpass over the railway. Anyway, the closing of these elevators in rural Manitoba has really been a detrimental effect on rural Manitoba on many communities. When you take away the elevators, the schools, what have you got left? Nothing. Towns close. Where do the people go? They have to move to larger centres. So it is helping to depopulate the rural areas of Manitoba, and it is making it more difficult for the towns, the villages and the communities, the rural municipalities in rural Manitoba to exist.

The Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) who spoke prior to me talked about McJobs. He said the jobs in hog barns are not real jobs. Well, I do not know about that. He played down the development in hogs and other value-added enterprises that we have in Manitoba. So he obviously does not believe that hogs or hog barns produce jobs. I can tell you I know many people who work in hog barns, and they are high tech. Today these barns are pretty high tech. They are run by computers and one thing and another. These are good jobs, and they are well-paying jobs. They probably pay a lot more than we make here in the Manitoba Legislature.

So I think just to hear some of these members of the Government talk about these things, it shows how ill informed they really are about what really goes on in Manitoba as to how things should really be run, what we have to do to try to attract investment, try to attract business and make sure that agriculture and all the businesses operate in Manitoba. So that is just part of their lack of vision that they are ill-prepared really.

Some of the other things that did come up at our meetings with farmers are some things that the Province could do. One is the education levy on farmland. When we were the Government we did take some of the school tax off of farmland, but it still is on the special levy and is still on farmland, and there is a tax on buildings. I think this province, this Government could go a long way in helping agriculture and helping some of the farmers who are in difficulty today by taking some of the school tax off of—

An Honourable Member: Take it all off.

Mr. Helwer: Take it all off. Well, I think there is a certain tax that is levied by the school divisions that if they want to elect their members for the school divisions they have to be able to levy the tax, but there is the provincial levy that certainly could be removed. That would help farmers to make that more competitive with other areas.

While we are on the topic of agriculture, one of the federal programs, which is AIDA, a total of over a hundred million dollars is going to the administration of this program. This could have gone to farmers' products. This is the federal Liberal government, just a waste of taxpayers' dollars, as far as I am concerned, creating jobs for themselves, for their own people, and this is taking the money directly out of AIDA that could have gone to farmers, some \$26 million alone in labour and salaries and benefits, \$810,000 for travel to try to administer this program. It is ridiculous, \$756,000 for temporary help, over \$2 million for consultants. Why would they want to consult? They come with a program, why do they need consultants, another \$2.7 million for that, just wasted money, as far as I am concerned.

Another \$6 million for materials and supplies to be able to administer the AIDA program, I cannot believe where they would be spending that kind of money on materials and supplies. This is only in the five provinces that they administer actually. This is in five provinces, yes, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, that the federal government administers. The other five provinces administer their own, Ontario, Québec, Alberta, Prince Edward Island and B.C. That is where the provincial governments administer that AIDA program. They do it, I understand, for about 3 percent, where the federal government needs 14 percent to administer the program. Something is wrong. How can they just waste that kind of money? It is unbelievable.

An Honourable Member: Ask the experts across the way.

Mr. Helwer: Yes, well, they know how to waste money. Exactly. What else can we talk about here? Oh, yes, getting back to the Budget, we had better talk about how uncompetitive this Government has made Manitoba. This is by the CFIB in Manitoba. They have some great people working for them. Some very good people put together some very good statistics as to how this Government is running this province into the ground and what is small business's outlook for this province, as an example.

* (17:50)

In everything Manitoba is at the bottom when you talk to businesses on what they expect in Manitoba and what they expect for performance expectations. It is weaker. Nobody has any confidence in this Government.

When you look at business performance by region, Winnipeg and Manitoba is one of the weakest regions. What were some of the problems? Or what did they want? Faster government debt and deficit reduction. Instead of that this Government, instead of reducing the debt and the deficit of Manitoba, they tend to spend more and more of the dollars.

If you remember during the campaign of 1999 we said we would spend half of the surplus

on social programs such as education, health and family services, and the other 50 would go to debt reduction and tax cuts. If we were the government we could have had tremendous tax cuts. We would have had at least \$400 million cut off of today's Budget that would have gone back into people's pockets right here in Manitoba so they could have—the CFIB asked what were the most harmful taxes, and of course the income tax, payroll tax. These are really taxes on jobs. These are some of the most harmful taxes, personal income tax, commercial property and business tax. All these things are hurting small business.

Something else that I should mention is that their income in the new Budget—they are going to tax Manitoba Hydro—is going to pay an extra \$57 million dollars, a tax on the water that Manitoba Hydro is going to use to produce more power. This is really another tax on Manitobans. Even though we have a balanced budget legislation—thank God we have—this government is trying to find ways around the balanced budget legislation to be able to tax more. One example of this method is tax on the Manitoba Hydro so Manitoba Hydro can pay more to the general revenue of this province.

The other thing is just today they announced there is going to be an increase in the registration fees on vehicles. Here is another tax. A tax is still a tax. Regardless of how they want to try to paint this thing, whether it is going to cost more to register your vehicles in Manitoba. Whether your hydro fees are going to go up, it is still a tax that this government is getting more revenue to run their programs. So it is still a tax. It does not matter how you paint it.

I only have about five minutes left. I just want to say a few things about health care and what is happening in Manitoba, especially in rural Manitoba. We know that the regional health authorities are being pressed for funds. I know how hard they are trying to balance their budgets. When we were the Government, the Opposition said that we should not have the 10 per cent fee on new structures such as new hospitals in a particular community. What did they do? They didn't do anything about it. They still have that 10 per cent, and we are getting a new hospital in the Gimli area, and they are

fundraising to raise the 10 per cent. They will come up with the 10 per cent, some \$700,000-and-some thousand plus the land to make up the 10 per cent for I think about a \$13-million project. So I am really pleased though that this hospital is going to go ahead in Gimli.

We also put the dialysis centre in Selkirk, which will certainly help many of the residents throughout the Interlake area. Now this Government is going to put a, what do you call, machine there in Selkirk. So that also will help because Selkirk Hospital does serve a large part of the Interlake area. That would help.

We do have a lot of seniors in the Winnipeg Beach area that really need a personal care home. They have been trying for some time now to try to emphasize to the regional health authority the need for a personal care home there. There certainly is need. They have a high senior population and they certainly do need personal care homes there.

We in the Interlake have a lower bed count of personal care homes bed per population than any other part of Manitoba. So we should be in line for some building projects such as personal care homes. I think the one that was planned by our government in Teulon and the one that the Winnipeg Beach people have been trying to generate, I think these projects should go ahead. That would certainly go a long way to help the seniors in the area.

Just while we are on the topic of health, the template that the Province put out for the regional health authorities, I am afraid this is going to have a detrimental effect on some of the regional health authorities. I don't know how they are going to deal with some of the communities, because the standards that are set out by this government for health standards whereby you must have at least four physicians in a hospital, at least 1.3 on call or rotation and no cross coverage with the neighbouring hospitals. I do not know what that would be because I think that is a good idea to have some cross-coverage between the hospitals. They also say you should have a minimum of three nursing staff in the hospital, one emergency medical

technician, and primary care paramedic capabilities on call at all times.

Well, I think, in some cases, this is going to put an unfair load on some of the regional health authorities to do something with some of the smaller hospitals. I think the smaller hospitals really do provide a service to a community that is needed in most cases. This will make it much more difficult for the smaller hospital, the smaller community. Certainly, I hope we do not do what Saskatchewan is going to do, and they say axe 50 of 70 hospitals. Well, I hope this Government here in Manitoba does not take that to heart and start chopping hospitals in rural Manitoba such as that.

Since I have a couple of minutes yet, I will just mention the floodway expansion. I certainly have some concerns. Many of my municipalities north of Winnipeg here, West St. Paul, St. Andrews, Selkirk and Gimli, we have many concerns with the expansion of the floodway. This Government has chosen to put some extra money in the floodway, which would protect the city of Winnipeg. Certainly, I do not have any problem with that. I think we have to do that, but I think it has to be done in a manner where we do not dump the water quickly onto the residents just north of Winnipeg and, for the sake of helping someone, flood somebody else to the north. I would hope that, before they make a decision on this, they would study this properly to make sure that we are able to come up with the best possible solution for the floodway because it is going to be a major expenditure. Hopefully, they will do the right thing and study it properly before any major decision is made.

I guess my time is up, Mr. Speaker, so I want to thank you for this opportunity to be able to speak on the Budget.

Mr. Speaker: Order. He is concluded. The honourable Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) has concluded his comments. When this matter is again before the House, the debate will remain open.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 19, 2001

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