

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Eighth Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 14, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### PRAYERS

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PETITIONS

#### Westman Area Physician Shortage

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

These are the reasons for the this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

Signed by Moray Jamieson, Tim Klassen, Andrew Lodge and others.

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

#### Highway 200

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

weather or during school recess are not indicative of traffic flows.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by R. Painter, Eric Cousineau, Remi Sorin and others.

\* (13:35)

#### **Riverdale Health Centre**

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

These are the reasons for the petition:

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

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

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

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

Due to physician shortages, the Riverdale Health Centre has been closed to acute care and emergency services for long periods since

December 2003, forcing community members to travel to Brandon or elsewhere for health care services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by Connie Dixhoorn, Sharon Lamb, Karen Hooper and including others.

#### **Generally Accepted Accounting Principles**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Leo Tolledo, Warren Tolledo and Carmelita Tolledo.

\* (13:40)

### **Ambulance Service**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

In May 2004, 46-year-old Peter Krahn suffered a heart attack while exercising in East St. Paul and was pronounced dead just under an hour later after being transported to the Concordia Hospital in Winnipeg. Reports show that it took nearly 18 minutes for an ambulance to arrive for Mr. Krahn.

The Interlake Regional Health Authority claims that 21 minutes is an acceptable emergency response time, whereas the City of Winnipeg uses a benchmark of 4 minutes.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

To request the provincial government to consider ensuring that appropriate funding is

provided to maintain superior response times and sustainable services.

Signed by Shane Robertson, Aaron Robertson, Jamie Robertson and others.

### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

#### **Bill 17—The Regional Health Authorities Amendment and Manitoba Evidence Amendment Act**

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** I move, seconded by the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 17, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment and Manitoba Evidence Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les offices régionaux de la santé et la Loi sur la preuve au Manitoba, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Health, seconded by the honourable Attorney General, that Bill 17, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment and Manitoba Evidence Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Sale:** Mr. Speaker, this bill builds on the work of the patient safety regime on which we have been working very hard for the last couple of years. It improves the climate within the health care system for reporting critical incidents, requires critical incidents to be examined and requires for the first time that information concerning patients be given to them in a prompt manner without any costs. I think it strikes a balance between the rights of patients and the needs of the system to have an open inquiry atmosphere.

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

### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today the Honourable Mauril Bélanger, Minister responsible for Official Languages and for Democratic Reform for the House of Commons.

Also we have the Honourable Raymond Simard, Member of Parliament for St. Boniface.

We also have Ann Scotton, director general, Privy Council Office.

We also have Orli Namian, director of communications.

Also we have Guy Jourdain, senior advisor of the French Languages Services Secretariat for the Province of Manitoba. These visitors are the guests of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

Also in the public gallery from Louis Riel Institute Adult Learning Centre we have 10 students under the direction of Mr. Darryl Toews. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickey).

Also in the public gallery from College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota, we have seven visitors under the direction of Dr. Robert Craig.

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Gang Activity Reduction Strategy

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, in the 1999 election, the NDP ran on a platform of a Gang Action Plan that was going to get rid of the gangs in Manitoba. Everyone knows that between 1999 and 2003, crime was more frequent and more violent. Everybody knows in Manitoba between that time that the Hells Angels set up shop in Manitoba. Everybody knows that between the years '99 and '03 that we became the murder capital. In 2003, the NDP then promised they were going to get tough on gangs and make our communities safer. Well, crime and violence associated with the Hells Angels got worse and then we saw the Banditos move into the province of Manitoba.

During the last few days we have seen four shootings in Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday there was a drive-by shooting, Friday early there

were two gang-related shootings and yesterday morning, another shooting that is being investigated by the gang unit.

Why is this Premier allowing the gang violence in Manitoba to grow, Mr. Speaker? He was supposed to chase the gangs out of Manitoba, not welcome them in.

\*(13:45)

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, today again, consistent with our promises that we made in the 2003 election campaign, we announced the largest increase in police officers in the history of Manitoba, some 54 police officers. This is, of course, consistent—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, this is very consistent with the commitments that we made in the 2003 election. We also promised to increase the capacity and staffing in our Prosecutions branch, which we have done. We have also promised to increase opportunities for young people, in particular, to have schools that are open into the evening and on weekends, called Lighthouses.

Mr. Speaker, I recall when the RCMP funding was cut and the number of officers that were authorized went down by 96 in 1996. In 1997, when Mr. Vic Toews was the Minister of Justice here in Manitoba, the number of officers went down under the Tories, and the number of police officers is going up under this Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, we know full well, and we agree and support any time that there can be more police put into the province of Manitoba, but clearly the record of gang activity and the record of criminal activity that is increasing under this Doer government, it is not enough.

As I said earlier, the Banditos have become the fastest growing motorcycle gang unit in the United States, Mr. Speaker. They are involved in contract murder, extortion, drug trafficking, stealing and running of weapons, prostitution, welfare and bank fraud. Now, with this Premier, the Banditos have set up shop here in Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP has promised to make our communities safer, and they have had six years to do something. They promised it in 1999 and failed. They promised it in 2003 and failed. Why will this Premier not live up to a promise that he made to Manitobans and make our communities safer?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, members opposite, including some of the ones making the most noise in the Chamber today, cut the number of RCMP officers in Manitoba by 50. The announcement we made today builds upon the full staff complement here in Manitoba, and then another 54 officers across Manitoba including 2 in Brandon, 20 in Winnipeg. We are putting more resources into police.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite in their alternative budget in the last election campaign called it a 1% increase for spending in Justice over the next four years. This budget alone puts 9.5% more into police here in Manitoba. They talk a good game. They cut the RCMP. We are adding officers.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans want action, not words. They want something now.

Mr. Speaker, a gang expert on CJOB stated that the Banditos have targeted Winnipeg because the word is out in the criminal underworld that Winnipeg is a soft touch. That gang expert called the NDP government, and specifically the Attorney General, incompetent. Score for the gangs: score A plus. But for the public, this Doer government has failed Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, StatsCan show that one police officer in Manitoba has to account for 68 cases. In Canada, that average is one in 47. When will this Premier get serious and deal with a very, very serious growing gang problem in Manitoba that is happening under his watch? When will he get serious, get more resources and put a plan in action?

\* (13:50)

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite wants to read previous newspaper articles, there is an article in 1997, 1998, in the *Winnipeg Free Press* that documents the unfortunate entry of

gangs into Manitoba, including the Hells Angels. This is documented further. I know facts do not—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, when you have no facts you just try to yell. You just try to yell.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, it is documented. I will send the newspaper article over to the member opposite. It is also documented—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. We are early into Question Period. We have guests in the gallery, we have the viewing public and the clock is ticking. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, the work of the Winnipeg city police and the RCMP, I think, is first-rate in terms of trying to co-ordinate their efforts. We have the first co-ordinated Gang Action group in this province where the Prosecutions branch, the RCMP, the city of Winnipeg police, the Brandon city police work together in an effort to co-ordinate the files, co-ordinate their efforts.

The announcement today, unlike the action in '97 by Mr. Vic Toews to reduce the number of police officers in this province, we increased the officers when we were elected, and the largest increase of police officers in the history of Manitoba is being made and announced today pursuant to the budget we brought in last week.

### **Gang Activity Reduction Strategy**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, the presence of outlaw motorcycle gangs such as the Hells Angels and the Banditos which were welcomed into the province under this administration; you know, the Premier goes down to Texas and the only thing he brings us back is the Banditos. It has increased drug trafficking, Murder, illegal weapons, prostitution have increased in the province. They have had six long years to address this problem.

We had a shootout on Corydon Avenue this last weekend, and we get the Minister of Justice today saying just give me two more years. Please just give me two more years and I will solve the problem. Well, he does not have another two years. What is he going to do today to ensure that the carnage we had last weekend is not repeated next weekend?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, it was odd to hear the critic opposite on Friday go in the hallways to denounce The Highway Traffic Act provisions around prostitution that were brought in by the Conservative government under Mr. Filmon. I invite him to denounce the other inactivity of the Filmon government in countering not only gangs and organized crime in Manitoba, but auto theft and many other challenges.

I remind the House that during most of the 1990s, Manitoba, unfortunately, during the 1990s was the violent crime capital of Canada. We are now 27% below the highest province.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Speaker, maybe the Minister of Justice can persuade his Premier (Mr. Doer) not to go to any more trade missions because all he does is bring us back more organized gangs.

Since the turf war began on the gangs in Québec, there have been more than a hundred deaths, including that of an 11-year-old boy. There have been 84 bombings, 130 reported cases of arson, 9 missing people. Now people of Winnipeg are wondering and they are concerned that there is going to be another turf war, in Winnipeg, in this city, after the shootout on Corydon and after two other shootings this weekend.

The NDP Minister of Justice has sat in that chair for six long years. He has had 2000 days of dithering and now he is asking Manitobans, please give me another 700 days and I will solve the problem. Well, Mr. Speaker, how many more people have to be shot at, died or killed on the weekend, next weekend, the weekend after or this summer? Six long years is enough. What is he going to do today to solve the problem?

\*(13:55)

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, the opposition asks what are we doing today. Today we announced the largest increase in Manitoba history to policing. That is what we did today.

Mr. Speaker, what does that largest increase to policing in Manitoba history mean? It means that, unlike when there were record crime rates and violent crime rates in Manitoba under the Tories and they cut policing, we have increased policing by \$9.5 million. That is a one-year increase. I will challenge the members opposite to vote for that budget, vote for that action.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice just continues on with his policing shell game. He knows that there is not going to be any more police officers on the street next week. He knows there is not going to be any more police officers on the street the week after that. We do not think there is going to be any more police officers on the street this summer. Now Manitobans are worried about a bloody turf war this summer because this Minister of Justice has sat in that seat for six long years and done nothing.

So now he pleads to Manitobans, please just give me two more years. I failed you for the last six years, but I am going to try harder for the next two years. Well, Mr. Speaker, after a shootout on Corydon Avenue, after two more shootings on the weekend, Manitobans have had enough. They are worried about their safety. They are worried this Minister of Justice does nothing. What is he going to do to protect us this weekend, next weekend and this summer?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, rather than one day coming in and screaming and yelling and running off in all directions at once, each and every day we have been in office we have worked hard to increase the safety of Manitobans by many innovative initiatives. Today we have announced that over the next two years there will be an addition of 54 new police officers across this province. I regret that, indeed, if the members opposite had formed government in 2003, and based on their budget from their election, this province would have had 50 less officers under their government. Thank goodness Manitobans voted for this government and a commitment to public safety.



### Financial Statements Deficit Reporting

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans do not trust any budget presented by this NDP. The Minister of Finance presented the last five budgets as balanced, yet the Auditor General stated that three of those last five budgets ran deficits. It is no wonder that the B.C. minister of the Crown commented that this NDP is guilty of sneaky accounting practices since the 2003-04 budget figures and financial statements were cooked by this NDP.

I ask the Minister of Finance this. Are the 2005-06 budget numbers also cooked?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, we balanced the budget under the laws of Manitoba every year since we have been in office. The law that was put in place by the members opposite, we balanced under their rules. If the member would have taken a moment to read this year's budget, he would have noticed we balanced under the rules and the law of the Province of Manitoba. In addition, we balanced under the summary budget recommendations of the provincial auditor.

If the member opposite can find anywhere where the Auditor says that we have not complied with balanced budget legislation, let him stand and demonstrate that today. The opposite has occurred. We have met the test of balanced budget legislation every single year, and going forward we will meet the summary budget requirements.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I cannot even hear the questions and the answers. Let us have some decorum in the House. I can hardly hear the questions and the answers. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

**Mr. Hawranik:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP have a history of cooking the books. In 1984, the provincial auditor stated that the NDP Finance Minister, Vic Schroeder, cooked the books by not showing the full extent of the deficit in the '83-84 fiscal year. Would the Minister of Finance agree that not showing the full extent of the deficit in 1984 is no different than denying a \$604-million deficit in 2004? Would he also agree that

yesterday's NDP is no different from today's NDP and that the books were in fact cooked?

\* (14:00)

**Mr. Selinger:** It is absolutely 100% clear we have balanced the budget under balanced budget legislation every year since we have been in office. We are now moving to a higher standard of addressing the summary budget as recommended by the provincial auditor. We will do that after we do our due diligence. The budget statement shows very clearly this year that we balanced under both tests, balanced budget legislation and the summary budget. We are balancing under both of those tests.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing that has been cooked in this province was the 1995 election by the members opposite.

**Mr. Hawranik:** This NDP denies running a \$604-million deficit in 2004—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Members who wish to have a conversation, please do it in the loge or out in the hallway. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers. All the yelling back and forth, I cannot hear a thing. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members once again.

**Mr. Hawranik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP denies running a \$604-million deficit in '03-04. Manitobans cannot trust this NDP when it comes to budgets. The Auditor General's recent report stated that the financial statements of the Province portrays a misleading-by-omission picture of the Province's finances.

Why should Manitobans believe any of the numbers in this year's budget, and why should Manitobans believe that this year's budget is balanced and not cooked as we have seen in past budgets?

**Mr. Selinger:** The member opposite makes an allegation which is completely at odds with the facts in terms of balanced budget legislation, and then he asks us to confirm his allegations.

We do not operate that way. We follow the laws of Manitoba. We have balanced the budgets for six years, and now we are balancing under summary budget. Like I said before, the only

people who try to thwart the democratic rule of law in this province were those people opposite.

### **Health Care Services Funding**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** The Minister of Health admitted to the media that the NDP put forward a false Health budget last year. In fact, he said that the Province really had no intention of ever meeting the budget for Health it set in April.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance why he accepted false numbers from his Minister of Health in last year's Health budget.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Once again, another artificially created accusation by the member opposite. No connection to the facts, no connection to what we printed in the budget, no connection to the actual reality of the situation. We balanced the budget last year. We balanced the budget the year before that. We balanced the budget the year before that. We balanced the budget the year before that. The only problem the members opposite have is that we have been a success under their legislation, and they have not done anything in those six years.

**Mrs. Driedger:** It was the Minister of Health who admitted to the media that the Province purposely underfunded its Health budget this year. He said that the Province had no intention of meeting the budget for Health it set in April. This came from the Minister of Health to the media.

Mr. Speaker, I went into those Estimates last year in good faith, thinking that the numbers that were presented before me were accurate. I was there representing taxpayers of this province.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance why he felt it was acceptable for his government to accept false numbers in the Health budget.

**Mr. Selinger:** Setting aside for the moment that this question is under review as a question of privilege by you, and whether or not the question should even be allowed—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Selinger:** It is very clear that we balanced the budget last year and every year prior to that. We will balance the budget next year. We will balance the budget under balanced budget legislation. We will balance the budget under summary budget legislation. We will improve health care for Manitobans. We will reduce taxes for families. We will put more resources into the justice system. We will put more resources into schools. We will protect the environment. We will make sure families have a good and prosperous future in this province. All those things members opposite failed to do when they were in office.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, by cooking the budget last year, the whole budget process now has been compromised by this NDP government. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance how can we possibly trust their numbers this year when, in fact, we have the Minister of Health who said that they deliberately cooked the books last year. How do we know those books are not cooked this year? How can we trust their budget, any of their budgets, because this whole process has now been compromised?

**Mr. Selinger:** As I have already indicated, Mr. Speaker, we have balanced the budget every year since we have been in office. We are now moving to a full summary budget. We will balance under that test as well. We will go into Estimates and explain the decisions we have made in terms of allocations of money to every department, including Health. We will be fully accountable for the results as we have been every year, and we will, once again, make sure that Manitoba moves forward on all fronts: health care, education, infrastructure, the environment, justice, Healthy Child. All of those things members opposite refused to do when they were in office. They used balanced legislation as an excuse to neglect Manitobans. We will not do that. We will balance, and we will improve the quality of life in Manitoba.

### **Financial Statements Deficit Reporting**

**Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has a long record of overspending their budget. We on this side of the House thought that happened because they could not manage spending. In fact, we are finding out

that it happens because they are compromising the budget process in the province of Manitoba. Last year alone, this government overspent its Health budget by over \$100 million.

I would ask the Minister of Finance this. What can we believe about this year's budget? How can we believe anything that is tabled in this document, given that one of his ministers and a member of Treasury Board has already admitted that last year's budget was false and totally unaccountable?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, we balanced the budget last year and we balanced the budget the year before that. We balanced the budget the year before that. We propose balancing the budget this year. We will do that.

The only overspending that I remember that was not actually budgeted for was in the election of 1999-2000, when they did collective agreements with the nurses and did not include it in the budget. They did all kinds of election, pre-election, goodies which they did not budget for, and when we reviewed the books we had to include them in the year-end statement. Members opposite know what it is like not to budget for things. We know what it is like to budget for things and then to make it happen.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, in the budget process all the numbers from all the departments go to Treasury Board. Treasury Board then approves those numbers, prints them in the budget, and they are distributed not only to the members of this Legislature but to the people of Manitoba as the honest and true facts regarding government's proposed spending for the year.

What we found out last year was this is a government that had no intention of ever meeting their budget from last year. What can Manitobans expect this year? How much more spending is not included in this year's budget? How many numbers in this year's budget have been fudged? What are we going to find out this December that is not true in this book?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, there have been headlines in the newspaper saying, "Fudging the books." There have been headlines saying, "Watchdog puts bite on surplus." Those headlines were in 1998, and the headline went, "PCs fudging the books." The headline read, "Watchdog puts bite on Tory surplus." The members opposite were the ones that brought in balanced budget legislation. They knew at the time it did not comply with the standards put forward by the provincial auditor. They created the problem. We are solving it.

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, this government has not solved the problem in five and a half years, and it is time they stood up and finally admitted that. In an unprecedented move this year, the Auditor General removed the word "fairly" when commenting on the Province's balanced budget. He indicated quite clearly that the budgets were not balanced and this government was not treating Manitobans fairly. They were not treating them fairly when they produced the budget. They were not treating them fairly when they produced the financial statements. He is not treating them fairly when he produces this year's budget. When are we going to get the real numbers?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the real numbers that the provincial auditor wants are those numbers under a summary budget presentation. We have provided them in our last three budgets. We provide them in the Public Accounts. As I explained earlier, the provincial auditor has problems with the balanced budget legislation which is the proud centerpiece of the members opposite. They created the problem, we will solve the problem. While we are solving the problem we will meet all the legal tests required in Manitoba again for the sixth time this year.

#### **Assiniboine Community College Culinary Arts Program**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP is refusing to live up to their obligation of funding our educational institutions fairly by ignoring Assiniboine Community College. Growing the award-winning Culinary Arts program would contribute to the province's economic competitiveness. Unfortunately, this

NDP government is neglecting the program by forcing it to operate out of a church basement.

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Advanced Education Minister. Why must ACC wait until this NDP government decides on whether or not to fund the college in its Culinary Arts program?

**Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. This government has a very proud record in funding both colleges and universities. I would like to point out to the member opposite that since 1999, we have added \$45 million to university operational funding.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that in the same time period we have added \$11.2 million, or 18 percent to the college budget, but if we add the College Expansion Initiative monies into that sum, we have added, get ready for this, \$40 million to college education, an increase of 63 percent. I hear the dulcet tones of the member from Russell emanating across to me.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Mr. Speaker, with the increase in funding and this government's supposed interest in excellence in education, why is this program being offered out of a basement of a church? The Assiniboine Community College is expanding their Culinary Arts program and needs more space. Its students presently prepare gourmet meals in a church basement.

Why is the Minister of Advanced Education and Training prepared to allow the Culinary Arts program to continue to deteriorate? Who is going to want to take a program in a church basement?

**Ms. McGifford:** Mr. Speaker, I do not quite understand these disparaging remarks about churches and church basements. Just setting that aside, what is quite often interesting about questions is not necessarily what is in the question but what is left out of the question. What this member did not include in her question was the information that it was this government opposite that started the program in church basements.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Mr. Speaker, with an increase of \$64 million in funding, I think that this minister is

neglecting ACC, definitely neglecting the community. The Advanced Education Minister stated last Thursday that any decision on expanding ACC would have to wait until after the process to redevelop the Brandon Mental Health Centre. I do not know where the correlation is here, but I thought that issue was dead.

Why is the Minister of Advanced Education making the college wait for a decision based on the BMHC consultation? The president of the college is saying, "Where is the connection? Why can one not happen without the other?"

**Ms. McGifford:** Mr. Speaker, just to return to the question of the Culinary Arts program for a few minutes again, the member asked why the program was started in church basements, and I indicated that it was her side of the House that, in fact, did that. They began a certification program, a certificate program. What we did in government through the College Expansion Initiative was boost that program to a two-year diploma program with that involving a large infusion of College Expansion Initiative dollars.

So we are very proud of the work that we are doing. We recognize the importance of the Culinary Arts program when it comes to tourism and economic development in the city of Brandon. We have done good things for this program, Mr. Speaker, and we remain committed to it.

### **Children's Dental Health Government Initiatives**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, when the NDP came to power in 1999, there was a major health crisis existing with huge numbers of northern Manitoba and inner city Winnipeg children having early childhood tooth decay. The solution to the problem is clear. It is almost completely preventable and yet today the crisis in children's dental health continues unabated. There has not even been a whiff of progress. We have lost five years. The surgical procedures used to treat these children who often have mouths full of disease are traumatic to the children and cost taxpayers a small fortune.

I ask the Minister of Health how his government has spent billions of dollars on health care, but achieved so little when it comes to

improving the dental health of our precious children in this province.

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, we have begun to move many surgeries into rural Manitoba so it will be closer to home for some rural children, particularly in Thompson, where there are about 700 surgeries a year.

In Beausejour, which the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) spoke against this move, Mr. Speaker, we have a hundred dental procedures in Beausejour for children. With that said, we agree that the situation with children's dental services is not adequate which is why we are adding 600 surgeries at Misericordia this year. In addition, this is 100% preventable, or virtually 100 percent. We need to work with northern communities and inner urban communities to make sure that babies do not go to bed with bottles that have sugar in them, that their mothers get proper prenatal nutrition and that this disease is avoided and eliminated.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The answer is prevention, but the NDP have done nothing. In early October 1999, at the time the Premier was sworn in, I said how the new NDP government addresses the issue of dental health for children will be a test of whether Gary Doer and his team can make a real break with the disastrous policies of the previous Tory government. Yet today, 50 to 80 percent of children in some northern communities are afflicted. In one community, it is 99 percent.

The government cannot pin this one on the former Tory government because almost all the children who are being treated today were not even born when the Tories were in office. Today children are suffering needlessly because this government is not doing its job.

I ask the Premier this. Why does the government not care enough about our children's health to make it a priority? What is this government—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Sale:** Mr. Speaker, I was very proud when our Premier said that when we introduced the Healthy

Baby prenatal allowance, a baby is a baby is a baby, whether it is a baby in a First Nations community, a Métis community, a northern community, an urban community or a southern community. That is why we introduced that allowance to all women who were pregnant anywhere in Manitoba. It stands as a centrepiece of our work with children.

Mr. Speaker, if those who sold soft drinks in our communities, all of our communities in the North simply sold sugar-free drinks, we would have a whole lot less dental decay. If the federal government mirrors the recent increase of 20 percent in the northern food allowance, which we made in our social assistance rates, we will have more ability on the part of First Nations people living on reserves to afford good food. The answer to this question is with nutrition; prenatal, postnatal. Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle that has sugar in it.

#### **Crime Rate Reduction Strategy**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Time and time again this government has been very successful in demonstrating just how much of a failure they really have been in the last six years.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to dealing with crime on the streets, when it comes to dealing with auto thefts, we have the highest auto theft in the country, in terms of per capita. In terms of gang activities, it is an ever-growing industry in our province. When it comes to child prostitution, this government has done nothing in dealing with that issue. Time and time again in crime-related issues, this government has failed. This minister has failed.

The question I have to ask of the Minister of Justice is how do you issue so many press releases, how do you spend so much money and yet get zero for results. When are you going to stop trying to pass the buck and passing the blame, whether it is to Ottawa, whether it is to the former government?

\* (14:20)

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I was certainly dismayed to hear of the remarks of the member opposite when it came to our call on the federal government to take some meaningful crime prevention initiative around auto theft. It is one thing for the justice system to suppress crime, and we have been doing our best working with law enforcement, but there are challenges like auto theft that can be prevented. They can be prevented by technology because vehicles today are manufactured, unfortunately, to too great of an extent to be stolen.

When the member stands up in this House, I would hope that he would support efforts of Canadians and members on this side of the House for crime prevention, calling on the federal government and calling on the manufacturers of vehicles to stand up for the safety of Manitobans.

#### **Canadian Millennium Foundation Aboriginal Education Projects**

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth recently announced funding for a project to assist Aboriginal students in a number of secondary schools in rural and northern Manitoba. Can the minister please explain the benefits of this program?

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Thank you for the question. I was very delighted to be joined by my colleague, the MLA for Lord Roberts, the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (Ms. McGifford) to welcome Mr. Norman Riddell, the executive director and chief executive officer of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. Mr. Speaker, we have signed an agreement that will see \$2 million from the foundation and \$1 million from the Province of Manitoba in pilot projects in six different schools. Those schools will be in Mystery Lake, Selkirk, Swan Valley and three First Nations schools across the lake, Norway House and Peguis, involving 360 students. The intent is to engage our Aboriginal community in a number of different ways to achieve more student success for our Aboriginal students.

It was an absolutely wonderful day last Monday when we made this announcement. We are looking forward to a combination of academic supports, exposure to post-secondary options, community and parent liaison and mentoring in Aboriginal cultural context. This research will help us make sound decisions around policy.

#### **Transport Vision Report Release**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, a total of 10 people died on Manitoba roads during a weekend storm, and I asked the Transport Minister last Tuesday why he did not keep his NDP government's promise to release its Transport Vision document in the fall of 2003. I would like to add, as well, that his own government on June 18, last summer, announced an innovation award to praise department employees who were working on this very worthwhile document. So I ask him will the minister finally release his vision report today.

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services):** I appreciate the question very much. Just with regard to transportation overall, the member asked a number of questions last week related to it, and we appreciate the consultation and input we have had from communities. The member from Transcona was chairing this particular committee and working group, a steering committee with regard to 2020. There is a paper being prepared and that paper will be prepared as soon as the draft is completed.

Mr. Speaker, just taking a look at our record with regard to continuing our commitment to a better transportation infrastructure program, this year's budget put \$145 million into the transportation system. Overall, that is an increase of \$16 million more than last year, unprecedented numbers in this province.

#### **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

##### **Black History Month**

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert):** I would like to draw your attention to an important event that happens in February. That event was Black History

Month 2005. Black History Month ran Sunday, January 30 to Saturday, March 5, 2005.

I had the honour of attending the official opening ceremony of Black History Month. The ceremony was held at the Berean Church of God on Manitoba Avenue, and it was a great introduction to the month which consisted of concerts, seminars, workshops, a forum on multiculturalism and various tributes.

Black History Month is an essential part of Canada's history. This is a history of resilience, strength, contributing to the community and compassion. It allows us to reflect on the achievements and contributions of black people in Canada and on their numerous achievements around the globe.

Black History Month was first celebrated in the United States in 1926 as Negro History Week. Locally the current form of Black History Month celebration committee was founded in 1984 by a constituent of mine, Wade Kojo Williams, Sr., and has since been dedicated to educating Manitobans about black history and cultures. These include the histories of those who came to North America between the 1600s to the 1900s.

In conclusion, I want to congratulate the 2005 planning committee. Wade Kojo Williams Sr., Mrs. Mavis McLaren, Mr. Daswell McLeod, Miss Nardia Leslie, Dr. Beryle Jones, Mrs. Pauline Nembhard, Miss Wilma Weekes, Ms. June Springer and Miss Carlette Hibbert. I wish Manitoba's black community continued success, and I thank them for having an active voice in promoting this diversity in our communities.

#### **R.M. of Whitemouth**

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** I had the pleasure of attending the centennial celebration banquet for the Rural Municipality of Whitemouth with my wife Pamela, my daughter Melanie and my son-in-law Steve. Also attending was the Lieutenant-Governor, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), the Member of Parliament from Provencher, the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) and many reeves, former reeve councillors, former councillors and guests.

I offer my sincere congratulations to the Rural Municipality of Whitemouth on their centennial. A community is only as good as the people who live there. The people in the Rural Municipality of Whitemouth are and always have been generous not only to their community but to others. The Rural Municipality of Whitemouth is quickly getting a reputation as a small community with a big heart. The CPR holiday trains stopped in Whitemouth for the last two years, and last year, a total of 2200 pounds of food and \$4,750 was raised for local food banks in northeastern Manitoba as a result.

Canadian singer Tom Jackson who was part of the entertainment on the holiday train was so impressed with the generosity and enthusiasm of the residents of the municipality that he staged a special Christmas performance in Whitemouth last December.

Most everyone in the municipality is a volunteer at some time or another. Everyone works together to make the municipality a better place to live, to work and to raise a family. Volunteers in every community provide an identity to the community. The identity that the volunteers provide to the Rural Municipality of Whitemouth is one of caring, compassionate, community spirit.

Over the last 100 years, many reeves and councillors were elected in the municipality. They met all the challenges they were faced with. All of them only had the public interest and service to the residents of the municipality in mind. I congratulate all of them for their selfless service to the municipality.

Congratulations to the Rural Municipality of Whitemouth on its centennial and good luck on the many other centennial events planned this year, including the school reunion banquet planned for July 23, and the antique car show on July 24, 2005. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Tributes to Flin Flon Constituents**

**Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon):** This is my first opportunity since the session started to draw the attention of the House to four people who have had a positive impact on northern Manitoba, each of whom recently celebrated an important milestone.

The first three are from Snow Lake. Snow Lake is one of those small, friendly northern communities that actually takes time to officially celebrate the birthdays of its outstanding citizens. First, Ron Barrow turned 70 several weeks ago. Ron is a true northerner who has worked in Snow Lake in several capacities, but particularly worked for the highways department for many years.

Secondly, Dr. George Skelly of Snow Lake recently celebrated his 75th birthday. Doctor Skelly is a well known and beloved physician who worked in The Pas for many years and now practises medicine in Snow Lake.

\* (14:30)

Thirdly, Ben Ford of Snow Lake turned 85 on February 5. Ben worked for HBM&S for 35 years. Ben is a well-known sportsman whose hunting and fishing talents are legendary in northern Manitoba. Ben has taught hunter safety classes to a whole generation of northerners in the Snow Lake area. All of us here wish Ben and his wife Julia all the best.

As well, on February 22, Father Alcide P. Cossette, an Oblate priest now living at Casa Bonita in St. Boniface, celebrated his 100th birthday. Father Cossette worked for many years in northern Manitoba communities including the community of Lynn Lake. Occasionally he helped out as temporary parish priest in Snow Lake.

I call on all members in the House to join me in congratulating these four outstanding northern Manitoba citizens. We wish them many more years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **University Sports**

**Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte):** Mr. Speaker, this weekend I had the very great pleasure of attending the CIS university women's basketball championships that were hosted by the University of Winnipeg. Over a hundred young female athletes from across the country came to Winnipeg to pursue their dream of winning a national championship.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Simon Fraser University Clansmen who won the championship and, in

particular, our own University of Winnipeg Wesmen and head coach Tanya McKay, who were able to get to the final and, unfortunately, although being only two points down with little over a minute left, were unable to overcome the hurdle. Congratulations to them for winning the silver medal.

Also a significant weekend in that the University of Manitoba women's hockey team was able to win a bronze medal. The University of Manitoba men's Bisons hockey team was able to advance to the national championship. I would also like to mention that we, on this side of the House, are very hopeful that the University of Brandon Bobcats men's basketball team will be participating in the national championship this next weekend and will come home with a national championship.

I just think it is regrettable that, due to the lack of funding provided by this government, instead of being able to concentrate their full attention on winning a national championship, the Brandon Bobcats are going to have to worry whether they are going to have a team to play on next year. It is an unfortunate situation when this government will not support our young people, will not support young people in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this government may not realize it, but in pursuing that dream many of these athletes are going to be faced with a difficult question of whether or not they are going to be able to attend the University of Brandon next year, whether they are going to have to look for a new university, or in fact, whether they may lose a year of eligibility because of this government's lack of foresight.

Congratulations to all those athletes across Manitoba and hopefully there will be programs for the next year.

### **India School of Dance, Music and Theatre**

**Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, March 11, our government took great pride in demonstrating our commitment to Manitoba's arts community. In the words of Premier Doer, "The cultural events and organizations in Manitoba are part of what makes our province such a great place to live and the arts in Manitoba—



**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Once again, I would like to remind all honourable members when making their reference to another member in the House not to do it by name, but members by constituency and ministers by their titles.

**Ms. Korzeniowski:** –could never be as strong as they are without the support and commitment of local organizations and volunteers."

Premier Doer's words could not be more clearly illustrated–

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I have just kindly asked the honourable member when making a reference to another member in the House, to do it by constituency or ministers by their titles, not by their names.

**Ms. Korzeniowski:** The Premier's words could not be more clearly illustrated to me than they were the following day, Saturday, March 12, at a celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the India School of Dance, Music and Theatre. Since it first opened its doors a quarter of a century ago, the India School of Dance, Music and Theatre has been a base of instruction, performance, learning and preservation of the East Indian arts.

If there was ever any question of the need to preserve an art, the performances on Saturday night were completely persuasive. The beauty, the power, the sheer artistry of the world-renowned dancer Jai Govinda, indeed the artistry of all the performers in Saturday's presentation, were breathtaking.

Classical Indian dance must be among the most elaborate and intricate performance arts. On one hand, the audience is offered a sensory feast of sound, colour and meaning. On the other hand, one is challenged to catch the multitude of subtle and explicit movements.

The school has proven itself to be a bridge across the ethnic and cultural differences, built on the arts and anchored in a multicultural society's ability to transcend differences through artistic endeavour.

I ask my honourable colleagues to join me in congratulating the India School of Dance, Music and Theatre on its remarkable history of growth, development, change and response to the artistic and ethno-cultural development of Manitoba. Join me, as well, in recognizing the work of the school's executive director, Ms. Pam Rebello. Through her work, dedication and talents, Ms. Rebello has nurtured the vision of a school of arts, and she has informed the vision of a province.

The India School of Dance, Music and Theatre is an illustration and an exemplar of the cultural and cross-cultural arts organization, that our Premier (Mr. Doer) and Minister of Culture (Mr. Robinson) took such pride in recognizing with their announcement last Friday.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### ADJOURNED DEBATE (Fifth Day of Debate)

**Mr. Speaker:** Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Charleswood, who has 16 minutes remaining.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, in the 20 minutes I am given for my budget response, the NDP government will have spent almost \$130,000 on health care. Manitoba is one of the top spenders in Canada in health care. They have poured over a billion dollars of more money into health care spending, yet, we continue to see so many problems with people accessing the system.

It begs the question why. Why has this amount of money not bought change? Why has over a billion dollars not bought an improvement in access to care? Instead, the only time we see change in the health care system is when the NDP are shamed into it after a crisis hits the front page of the papers, like the crisis in cardiac surgery where 11 patients died waiting for surgery, many

of them being bumped a number of times before they had surgery, like the crisis in the ER where patients died, unable to see a doctor, and moms miscarried unable to see a doctor.

Now the NDP crow about how they fixed those two programs, the cardiac surgery program and the ER program. Mr. Speaker, what arrogance. They had warnings about these two crises long before the crises hit. I know because I was the one who issued the warning to them, and they chose to ignore me.

Finally, they have moved on the orthopedic crisis which has gone from an emerging crisis to an actual crisis under their watch. Again, we have been after them for a long time to deal with this situation. Day after day we continue to hear about patients struggling with pain, decreased mobility, loss of work or activity, a decrease in the quality of their life. The NDP turned a blind eye despite numerous situations put before them, numerous cases of people suffering brought to their attention, letter after letter going to the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale). This whole situation with orthopedics has been left in the lurch. Only when their own study was leaked to the media showing a need for this year for at least 1000 more surgeries did they do anything, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what a pathetic response they had to this crisis. Until they were embarrassed with a front-page story, they did nothing. Instead, they allowed their waiting lists for hips and knees to soar 224 percent from 431 in 2001 to 1400 in November, 2004. Then when called on this pathetic response of theirs, the Minister of Health fudged his numbers. He padded his numbers of hip and knee surgeries to try to make things look better than they were.

Padding numbers, falsifying numbers and cooking the books have become commonplace for this government. This is certainly disconcerting in terms of what we see in health care because there have been numerous occasions where information statistics in health care have been falsified. The nurses have been forced to fudge the numbers of hallway patients waiting. The Minister of Health, in the past, has falsified information in terms of the number of nursing shortages that there are in the province. He has falsified numbers in terms of the

number of hip and knee surgeries that were done. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have the Minister of Health who has come forward to the media and indicated that the Health budget of last year that was put forward was also falsified.

\* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, this is all extremely, extremely disconcerting, and there appears to be, by this government, a very, very sad track record in terms of wrong information and misleading information being put forward under the Minister of Health. Now, unless this NDP government can get its act together, the health care system is not going to meet future challenges. Even the Premier (Mr. Doer) says it is going to hit a fiscal wall.

Knowing this, Mr. Speaker, why are they so complacent to promote the status quo because that is all they are doing by pumping more and more money into the system? It will not bring about the changes needed to meet the upcoming challenges. The status quo is only going to perpetuate one crisis after another. The NDP are not the saviours of health care. Their mismanagement today will show up down the road and it is going to be ugly.

They had an opportunity in this budget to do something about it. Instead, they took the easy way out. They threw more money at the system. They threw more money at the problems. It is Manitobans that are going to pay a dear price for this. This was, indeed, a budget of missed opportunities. The NDP government fell into a windfall paid for by the rest of Canada and they spent it all. They had a chance to do something bold and innovative and they failed. There is no long-term economic plan. There is no plan for getting away from have-not status. There is no plan to make us competitive. There is no plan to address the bleak hole of health care spending. There is no plan to reform an archaic education funding system.

The debt, Mr. Speaker, with that debt Manitobans have, it is now worse than the days of Howard Pawley. There was no can-do attitude from this government in this budget, just a can-spend attitude. Manitobans are going to suffer for it. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the 2005 budget. This is the sixth budget since 1999. It is a

progressive budget and a balanced budget. It supports families and communities. It serves people all over Manitoba. Certainly, a great budget. I must commend the Finance Minister for this great budget.

But, before I say more, I would first like to congratulate Randy Dutiaume and his curling team for their excellent play at the Brier this last week in Edmonton. The others in the Dutiaume foursome consisted of Dave Elias, Greg Melnichuk and Shane Kilgallen. They conducted themselves very well on and off the ice. They showed true sportsmanship at all times. They competed very well against the very best in Canada and, I might say, the very best in the world. We are proud of how they represented Manitoba at the Brier.

We must also recognize and congratulate Randy Dutiaume for winning the sportsmanship award at the Brier. That is well done. Also congratulations go to the Ferbey foursome for winning their fourth Brier in the last five years. All the best to the Canadian champs in the World Championship held in Victoria soon.

Mr. Speaker, I must also congratulate the Jennifer Jones team for winning the Manitoba Women's Curling Championship in the National Scott Tournament of Hearts and who are now in Scotland playing in the World Championship. We wish them the very best. The other members of the Jennifer Jones team are Cathy Overton-Clapham, Jill Officer and Cathy Gauthier. This curling team is known as a St.Vital team, but I must point out that Jill Officer, who plays second, was a student in my Grade 11 history class as I was teaching at River East Collegiate. Teachers are always proud of their students' achievements. I have always followed curling, but I know Jill Officer and I therefore paid more attention to curling than usual. Jill was already a great curler in high school, where she was winning bonspiels. She was also part of a curling team that won the national junior title of 1994.

Again, I wish the Jennifer Jones team all the best in Scotland as they represent Canada in the Women's World Curling Championship. Mr. Speaker, curling has become a very popular sport in Canada. It has sort of become an institution in our country, and we are very proud of that

heritage. Fans across Canada certainly followed the curling events.

Mr. Speaker, I have digressed from the budget, but I would first like to say what people are saying in the community about our economy as well as other indicators or what is the forecast for our economy. I just heard the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) speak here, and in her speech there was a lot of gloom and doom, the sky is falling. For instance, I want to give one example, I just read in the *Free Press*. They had a few excellent examples. Southern Manitoba was experiencing a real growth in manufacturing and, generally, places like Steinbach and Winkler are experiencing a real population growth. This is due to many factors such as the business expertise or the business acumen of the business community, but also as a result of the Provincial Nominee Program, which has brought skilled immigrants to be part of its workforce. The immigrants that have come also create a lot of economic activity because their demand for homes and other purchases creates jobs and growth.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I know a member of the Business Council of Manitoba, and he said that Manitoba should bring in 10 000 people a year, which is 1 percent of our population, and if we did that, one of our economic problems would be solved. We are following the advice from the Business Council of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, there is another underlying reason for southern Manitoba doing very well, and that is that the economy in Manitoba is doing well, and the public has confidence in the economy. Confidence in the future is the most important thing to a strong economy. If you listen to the opposition, you would think it is not there, but this afternoon I want to put the point across that the people of Manitoba certainly approve of the economy and our budget overall. Sales in real estate are doing very well in Manitoba as a result of people having confidence in the economy and in the future of Manitoba. When people invest in homes, it indicates that they believe the economy of Manitoba is strong. The land is strong. The sky is not falling.

I would just like to read a few headlines that have been in the *Free Press* recently. Here is one. This is January 3, 2005, the headline, "City Basks

in Optimism." Strong economic signs give Winnipeggers a positive feeling about their future. The article goes on to say optimism about the economic future of Winnipeg is at a record high according to a poll commissioned by the Jory Capital Inc. for the *Winnipeg Free Press*. It goes on to say that there are more than eight in ten Winnipeg adults, about 82 percent, who are very optimistic about our economy and that speaks for itself.

I would also like to say, in the same article, it says that the opening of the MTS Centre downtown, another addition to improve life in the central business district, has also contributed to a sense that the city is on a roll. As we continue in the article, it says five years ago when we just got in, people were inclined to be negative. They thought nothing would ever happen here, but now there is an extra bounce in their step.

\* (14:50)

I must quote what Lorne Weiss, chairman of the Political Action Committee of the Manitoba Real Estate Association, says: "We have good leadership at the city and provincial levels. The economy is good. The city is growing. There are lots of things to be pleased about." Well, when you read the headlines, when you read the daily papers, you get a very different story than you get from the opposition.

I must also refer to another article from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 3, 2005, less than two weeks ago. Here it says consumer confidence in the local housing market may be at its highest level ever according to the results of a recent survey conducted by the Cambrian Credit Union. It says 86 percent of the 500 Winnipeg and Selkirk homeowners surveyed in January said they expected the value of their homes to increase in 2005. Mr. Speaker, there is good news from the business community. Also, the article goes on to say people have absolute confidence right now that their homes are rising in value. It says Manitoba consumers remain confident about the health of the local economy and their own financial situation. People in the business community are supporting our work.

Also, just recently in the daily newspaper, I read that according to the Dominion Bond Rating

Service, Manitoba debt to GDP has improved, in fact, about 20 percent since five years ago. It is in the middle pack for debt-to-GDP ratio.

Mr. Speaker, while I was sort of brushing up on my speech last night, I was watching curling once in a while, and I switched the channel to channel 11. Well, lo and behold, I saw the Leader of the Liberal Party being interviewed. Lo and behold, I saw the finance critics, the Tories, on TV. They were talking with some interviewer, and I thought I might take a few notes down while they were giving their great spiel, but I soon turned it off because I was not getting anything there, and I went back to curling.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up on the farm, and you know what? Whenever you take a pail, an empty pail and you rattle it, it gets that tinny sound, the cheap sound. When you fill it with wheat, you know, it is a solid sound. Well, these people were ringing an empty pail.

Mr. Speaker, our government has been working on paying off the debt and our credit rating is increasing. The sky is not falling as you hear from the opposition in Question Period. Wherever I go in Rossmere and so forth, people are very pleased with what has happened.

I said I was going to give you some forecast. Well, the Conference Board of Canada projects that capital investment in Manitoba will grow by 6.2 percent in 2005 and 6 percent in 2006. In fact, some forecasts put it up to 7 percent. Manitoba investment will outpace the national growth in investments. It will be third and second highest among provinces in the years respectively.

I would like to point out some of the major capital projects that have been completed or are underway. Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out that Manitoba is on the move. Things are happening. I cannot give you all the projects, but I will give you a few. Here is one project which is an investment. A new \$15-million office complex in downtown Winnipeg is under construction which will be the Credit Union Central of Manitoba.

There is a Manitoba Hydro building coming downtown. It should be starting in 2005, completed in 2007. The \$19-million Millennium Library is coming downtown and being

remodelled. Plans are underway for the Red River Floodway Expansion with construction to begin in 2005, completed in 2009. This is a \$660-million project.

We have the Biovail Corporation announcing that it is going to invest \$28 million in the expansion of its Steinbach pharmaceutical manufacturing facility. Then we have the Richardson Centre for Functional Foods, which is underway at the University of Manitoba, in its SMARTpark. The completion is expected to be by the summer of 2005. This is a \$25-million facility.

We have the 99-megawatt St. Leon wind energy project coming up. This is a \$187-million project. It will begin in May of 2005. We have a \$52-million state-of-the-art engineering and information technology complex under construction at the University of Manitoba with completion in 2005.

Mr. Speaker, there are many more that I could, but time will not allow me to give them all, but I will give you another one, the Rancher's Choice Beef Co-op plan to build a new \$16-million mature cattle slaughter plant near Dauphin. Construction is planned to begin in 2005, 60 new jobs to be added. There is lots happening in this province. I have many more examples, but we will leave that for now.

*Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Other indicators point to a strong economy such as: total personal income in Manitoba grew by 4.1 percent; disposable income increased by 4.4 percent; mining grew by 8.1 percent; construction grew by 4.7 percent; real estate increased by 5.3 percent; retail trade increased by 4.5 percent. All indicators point to a health economy. Even employment has grown and, especially, full-time jobs. Unemployment is below the national average. Housing starts are up 73 percent since 2000. From 1990 to 1999, housing starts declined by 5 percent. Those were the Tory years.

House values in Manitoba are up 36 percent since 1999. According to the CMHC forecasts of Manitoba Housing, values will rise more in 2005 than in any other province. Yet you hear from the opposition, "The sky is falling." From 2000 to 2004, Manitoba experienced a net in-migration of

9000 people. From 1995 to 1999, Manitoba experienced a net out-migration of 8189 people.

The land is strong. This is the strongest population growth in 20 years. With our 2005 budget, the economy will continue to perform very well. Budget 2005 is based on four pillars: pay down the debt, which we are doing; making strategic investments; we have been cutting taxes; we have been saving for the future. But in 2005 we continue to pay down our debt in pensionable liability by increasing this year's payment by \$100 million to \$110 million, bringing the total to \$594 million since 1999 that we have paid down.

This budget continues to make strategic investment in health care, education, infrastructure and clean water. Further, it continues to keep our promises on tax reduction by producing another \$80 million in property and personal income tax, as well as an additional \$54 million in business taxes. Finally, Budget 2005 invests in our future with a \$314-million deposit in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. This is the second-largest deposit ever made into the fund and it was achieved without selling off a Crown corporation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to focus on rural Manitoba, because I grew up on a farm in southwestern Manitoba. I would like to point out that, in the midst of growth, there are still many challenges. Budget 2005 provides support for families and communities in rural Manitoba in order to address some of these challenges. The budget commits to cut farmland taxes by 50 percent in 2005. When has a Tory government ever cut taxes by 50 percent for rural Manitoba? We are committing \$3 million to enhance slaughter capacity and provide \$2.2 million for the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program. Further, most of the 20 new ambulances funded by the budget are dedicated for rural Manitoba. Quality of life and access to health care for rural Manitoba are also important themes highlighted in this budget.

\* (15:00)

The BSE is a crisis of great magnitude. I realize the stress on farm families because my family that farmed near Boissevain for many years experienced those same hardships. My family experienced drought, rain. I remember one year in

the fifties southwestern Manitoba got 10 inches of rain. We experienced hail and you name it. We had, in those days, no health care or Medicare, as we call it. We had no Pharmacare. We had those doctor bills or hospital bills on top of our crop failures. My family experienced it, and I understand the hardships farmers are going through. Some of the people in opposition think that only they know hardships. There are other people here who have experienced hardships.

Farm families do know how to survive and get through hard times. However, times are different today, I realize, than they were but I do understand the stress and hardship to rural families because of my own personal experience on the farm. I want to say we are concerned about the plight of rural people. Our government has given a total assistance of \$116 million to our cattle producers—

**An Honourable Member:** What are a few zeros?

**Mr. Schellenberg:** The member from Pembina is getting a little nervous here. I did say \$116 million.

We have plans to build a new \$16-million mature cattle slaughter plant near Dauphin, and I will re-mention that we are cutting farmland school taxes by 50 percent. This is an indication that we are concerned about rural Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could say more. The time is almost up, but I would love to speak on education and health and what good things have happened in northeast Winnipeg in health care. I will just point out a few. The River East Access Centre is up and going on Henderson Highway. The Concordia Hospital has two operating rooms for hip and knee replacement. There was just an announcement made of \$10 million to do 1000 more hip and knee replacements. Also, we are twinning the Perimeter Highway at 59 and the Perimeter. Things are happening right in my own local community.

I also missed telling you that we have an excellent cancer clinic at the Concordia Hospital. Things are happening in health care in northeast Winnipeg. As I first ran in 1993, the story out was they are closing the emergency ward. Next, a few years later, there were rumours, they will close the whole Concordia Hospital. The point is, we have moved ahead on health care. Now the member from Pembina, I think we have done a good job

with his hospital, the Boundary Trails, it has had attention. I will agree that was started under their time, but we have been adding to it. We have been making it better. We have not forgotten the constituents of Pembina.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud to stand in support of this budget. I look forward to receiving the support of all members opposite. I am confident many of them would like to give their vote for the priorities and sound fiscal planning that are reflected in Budget 2005.

Again, I will commend, congratulate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) for an excellent budget. I thank you.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my privilege to be able to put some words on the record in relation to this budget that has come down by the NDP today as well in Manitoba, or that came down last week on March 8.

I have heard a lot of references before this budget came out from the Minister of Finance about how it would be a good-news budget for Manitobans, and how he raised their expectations so much that even the press, as I pointed out when it was over, did not really feel this was that good a budget for Manitoba. They reflected a lot of the average citizens of Manitoba. I am going to just expand a little bit on why I see it the same way as those people in Manitoba.

I would never say that a budget is 100 percent bad. There are some areas in any budget that are worthwhile moving forward with. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the opportunities that arise every year from a budget being put forward are something we have to take very seriously in Manitoba in regard to the future development of our province.

We need to provide that opportunity so that our young people have an opportunity and a legacy to be able to stay and build homes and expand their businesses and work for businesses in this province, and that they would be proud to do so and that they would not be put in a detrimental position compared to their peers in other provinces.

I want to say that I believe in this budget our youth in Manitoba have been disadvantaged. The disadvantage continues to grow. This government had a wonderful opportunity with one of the largest transfer payments and equalization levels that have ever come from a federal government. Maybe they benefit from the fact the federal government is a Liberal government that wants to try and spend its way back into a majority position, but that is even more a reason to make sure that you use sound fiscal responsibility to deal with those circumstances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I go further, I want to also provide my congratulations to a number of people in the province. Certainly, it has been mentioned many times in this House our top-level curlers in Manitoba, with Jennifer Jones's rink going to the world championships, and Mr. Randy Dutiaume's team making the semi-finals, the playoffs, as a rookie team in the Brier is quite a credit to their accomplishments and abilities as well. I would like to pay a special tribute to Jill Officer, who curls out of Brandon, of course curls with Jennifer Jones, but is a Brandon citizen. I would like to congratulate all of them on the success they have had and wish them all the best at the Worlds' coming up.

I would like to reiterate a comment that has been made earlier today too about congratulating the university of Brandon Bobcats for being able to again be seeded in the levels of the top teams in the Canadian university basketball playoffs that will be held this coming weekend. They have been there perennially, and I believe that they will do well again.

I would also like to point out that due to the lack of foresight by this government in the budget for developing education, even though they give lip service to saying that education is the future for our young people in Manitoba, which I certainly believe, the university of Brandon Bobcats, though, are going to be wondering whether they will even have a team to play for next year as opposed to being able to concentrate on continuing the saga and the historic legacy that they have put forward.

When the member from Rossmere speaks about historic circumstances, I would say that he of all people should have been one of the first people to have recognized that the reason we have

history is so we do not make the same mistakes twice, never mind as many times as this government has made them.

So my theme for this budget presentation is that Manitobans deserve more. Of course, we have seen circumstances where we feel that certain levels of our government would provide for funds for other areas, and in this particular case, I am referring to the federal government providing those funds for our provinces, and the area of education is one that I think was very important.

\* (15:10)

Another citizen in my constituency that I would like to make reference to and congratulate again, as well, as I have already done private members' statements for Mr. Irvin Goodon in the Legislature, I would like to congratulate Mr. Goodon on being recognized in the inaugural presentations for Businessperson of the Year, among Métis citizens, as Mr. Goodon was recognized as one of the two accomplished citizens of the Métis nation in Canada to be recognized as winning the Businessperson of the Year. Of course, he had had that accomplishment in Manitoba as well. For the building and development of Irvin Goodon Industries in Boissevain, Manitoba, I congratulate Mr. Goodon again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have made some references to education, and so I want to make it very clear that the government is to be commended for moving in the direction of eliminating education taxes off of farmland. They had an opportunity in this budget with \$359 million, I believe it was, increase in transfer payments from the federal government and then the extra taxes they have received from increasing the taxes on professionals, 7% PST last year on lawyers, accountants and architects. They have increased the taxes to Manitobans in those areas. We are quite embarrassed by this budget that they did not dare raise those taxes again at any level, but they still raised the Pharmacare costs to homeowners and individuals from \$1 to \$5 a month in this budget.

The tax levels that this government has gone to in the previous five budgets that it has brought down has continued to put further hardships on the average Manitoba household in those areas, and so

it is no wonder that they have continued to reduce the support levies and the special levy in those areas. But all I would say is they have taken part of the Progressive Conservative page and tried to deliver it in a manner that they were forced into doing by not only ourselves and a provincial budget platform, or our provincial election platform from 2003 to eliminate education taxes off of residences and farmland, which we still will do in the next election after this government is removed from office. We also want to commend them, or mention as well that we would move toward then, over a period of time, working toward the elimination or removal of the education taxes off of commercial property as well.

This government was forced at the AMM meeting last fall to make a statement that they would eliminate a third of the property taxes off of education and in this budget repeated the statement that they would go with 50 percent. That is good news for Manitoba citizens, but to do it in the form of a rebate is an embarrassment to the citizens that they are trying to help out in those area. Like the CAIS program that tells you to put up a third of your support as a premium that you may not have the money to borrow or the ability to even borrow that money, never mind put up cash, so that you can get support 18 months to two years later from a farm program. This government in its own wisdom decided that the education tax should go back out to farmers in a rebate.

Well, I am sure that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) fought hard and long around the table at the Treasury Board to try and make sure that this was just done by doing a stroke of the pen in the assessment branch to eliminate a third or a half of those taxes which could have been done very readily and the farmers would not have had to pay them. I am sure the member from the Interlake and the other few members that come from rural areas would have acknowledged that would have been probably a better way to do it than banking on the fact that maybe 10 percent of those farmers will not even bother to ask for the rebate. In fact, the government would save those dollars in the coffers. Extra administration costs would be eaten up by any of that, but my point is, if there is even one farmer out there who does not get that rebate or misses the opportunity of doing it, this government should be ashamed of themselves. They should have put this forward in the area of an assessment change in the assessment branch which

would have been much simpler in being able to deliver this fund back to the farm community.

Those dollars left in the farm community, of course, would help with rural development. They would help with a number of opportunities to put more businesses, make the businesses stronger on the farms and put the processing and value-added that we need in our rural communities to keep our youth in the first place in our rural communities and taking off of residences as well in Manitoba would have helped every citizen in this fine province.

I want to just say as well in relation to the BSE crisis how hard that has hit Arthur-Virden and all rural constituencies in Manitoba, and it is making its way into more of the urban areas of this province all the time. The fact that the government was not even ready for the March 7 date to have a resolution to put before this House to get all-party support for, which we were more than glad to provide—in fact, we even provided guidance to how the resolution should be built and written in the end to support our farm communities—is a sign that this the government does not care what happens to the rural communities. I find that a shame. I think it is something that our urban citizens should be very aware of as well. They should be watching very carefully the attitude of this government in how it has taken a budget where the revenues increased 6.8 percent and watch where the spending went when the spending has gone up 6.6 percent and when you get a windfall or an inheritance—let us clarify the example.

If you have either of those, an inheritance or a windfall in your family or in your income locally, I daresay that most citizens in Manitoba would not go out and spend the whole thing, not even once, but more importantly they would not build it into the base costs of their family operation. In other words, when you have a one-time windfall, do you go out and spend the whole thing on a new house knowing that your mortgage payments are going to be perhaps going up successively, in that particular year but you are going to have to pay for it every year thereafter? Not very likely.

I want to say that that is exactly what this government has done in this budget. They have added 6.6% cost to the bottom line of this govern-



ment and future governments. The Progressive Conservative government, when we come into power, are going to have to clean this mess up again, and I think that is what the citizens of Manitoba are starting to look at. Over the weekend, many people came to me and said, "You know, Larry, even with these interest rates, these low interest rates that this government is operating with today, they still have excessive levels of interest built into the government operations."

Their concern to me was what happens if those interest rates were to go up 2 percent, 4 percent, 5 percent, or 6 percent would double those interest rates from where we are at today and this government would be in very serious problems and having to go back to Crown corporations like Manitoba Hydro and others to rob them again and to take more funds from them, causing our hydro rates to go up even further than the 10 percent that they will have risen by the 1st of April here since the government has taken over the second term in the last election. This government has not been able to control its spending in relation to its annual budgeting in this province.

That leaves Manitoba as a have-not province. It had an opportunity to move further ahead. we are still the highest taxed west of New Brunswick and they missed an opportunity as I said with this budget, with the size of it, to eliminate the education taxes off of farmland or residences once and for all and forever with this budget, but they chose not to. At a time when there is severe hardship in rural Manitoba already caused by the BSE issue that has been in place for some 22 months now, this government has come up with, publicly saying that they have about \$116 million that they have spent or made available for the farm community when in fact in this House I chastised them in September of '03 for spending \$100,000 on an advertising campaign where they admitted that they had made \$180 million available to the farmers of Manitoba.

\*(15:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they admitted the other day in this House that they have \$64 million left to spend yet, never mind the fact that out of that \$116, probably \$66 million to \$70 million of it were loans to farmers, but farmers do not need more loans. This puts very little into programming

for the farm community. My point is that with those funds they could have completely built a slaughter plant in Manitoba by now. It could have been in full operation, and we would be killing 250 to 500 cattle a day in this province instead of still standing back and making promises every three to four months. In three or four months, the border would be open again.

The BSE issue is far from over. The judge in Montana that forced the border to be closed by injunction last week is the same judge, I understand, that a further resolution would appear before, later this week, in relation to keeping the Canadian border closed to boxed beef. It is one thing to have no live animals able to move across the border; it is another one to think that senators like Dorgan and others from North Dakota and others that have made statements, the Kennedys, the Clintons, in the United States, who have said that Canadian beef is not safe to eat, out-and-out lies, because they have no scientific evidence to back up those statements. If we had a stronger provincial and a stronger national government, they would be chastising those people publicly for making those statements, and helping our citizens.

It is my understanding that a resolution to stop the flow of boxed beef out of Canada into the United States may come forward at some point to the same judge who ruled that the border should not open last week. If that happens, I have been told by local auctioneers, by local livestock yards, people in my constituency that not only will the farmers that have presently gone out of business over the last 22 months be in further hardship, but at least 40 percent of the farmers on the Prairies which, certainly, I would concur with that number in Manitoba, that if boxed beef is not allowed to be moved across that border, we will immediately lose, or we could over the next period of time lose, as many as 40 percent of the farmers before this government would react enough to maintain them on their operations, in spite of the fact that we have increased packing plant and slaughter facilities by about 20 percent to 25 percent since BSE came in, across Canada as a nation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the seriousness of that situation cannot be emphasized too much in this House, and I want to reiterate to the government today that the budget that they have brought forward, to put \$3 million into more feasibility studies for more slaughter plants in Manitoba, falls

on very deaf ears when they have had 22 months to even build the facility that should have been there and, by their own admission, has the money in their budget to do it. That is why rural citizens have completely given up on this government. The citizens in rural Manitoba do not even bother going to meetings when this government comes to speak anymore, because they know that it is full of rhetoric, that there is false hope, false promises, and while the machinery for the slaughter plant that is proposed for one of the communities in Manitoba is being brought into the province as we speak, none of the dollars that the government has put forward have gone to put the first spade in the ground yet, to begin the building of the new facility.

I want to close by saying that, in regard to issues of transportation and rural development, if this government wonders why it has no support in those rural areas of Manitoba, then they should obviously look internally and make the decision to support some of these people in our rural communities, particularly in communities like Brandon as well, because it is very harshly impacted by the no-plan government. A prime example of that is the questions that I have been raising in the House the last few days over the fact that the government was supposed to have had a vision for transportation that was started work on in the spring of 2002, to be released in the fall of 2003, and here we are in the spring of 2005 and, after repeated questions in the House, the minister still has not made public his 2020 Vision for transportation in this province.

So I just want to say, as well, I do not even know what the right word is to chastise the government for not being able to be responsible in its promises to the citizens of Manitoba, that I think this is exactly why citizens have become very skeptical over this government's actions.

Particularly one on infrastructure, with the \$680-million floodway, that is the largest undertaking of an infrastructure project in this province. We now see that we are into a situation of forced unionization where it is going to cost \$2.83 an hour for every employee to work on that floodway. I just think it is worthwhile putting on the record that this government has forced that action upon the people of Manitoba, and quite agrees with it from the hearings that have come forward between the construction associations and the Floodway

Authority. Manitoba citizens are going to pay for that, all under the guise of not having any floodway interruptions, at a time when I would say when the floodway was built that, because 95 percent of that industry is private, there will be very little likelihood of any kind of work stoppage anyway.

There are two other things that I want to say before I close, and one of them is about how lax this government has been with adult educational opportunities in rural Manitoba. They have removed most of those opportunities for our adult education needs in our local communities, and there is still a great need for it.

I would also like to say that one of the key issues for me in this budget is the fact that regardless of whether you agree that it is \$549 million in new spending, of new income, that this government has, \$359 million of which came from transfer payments, or whether we agree that there was 6.8% new revenue and 6.8% new spending, the bottom line is the debt to Manitobans that is going to have to be paid by our youth, and we are mortgaging our youth on, has gone up by over \$3 billion in the last six budgets. I think that is an absolute shame at a time when our economy has seen growth in Canada from trade agreements and other areas. This government has squandered the opportunity to reduce those deficits any more than they were forced to do by the \$96 million of the balanced budget legislation.

The Conservatives brought balanced budget legislation forward because they were concerned about the operating side of the budget. Crown corporations were always balanced under the Conservative government, so there was a need to only look at the operating side. Now we need to have generally accepted accounting practices in this province because the government is robbing from the Crown corporations to pay off the operating loans.

It is imperative that the Auditor General be listened to because he has come forward and stated that there was a \$604-million deficit by this government last year, and two previous years there were deficits as well. I think it is that kind of mismanagement that continues to have Manitoba as a have-not province.

I will close by saying, as I have said in previous budget documents in this House, that the government has put forward from 1984 to 1988 under the Pawley government, the debt of Manitoba increased from \$1.4 billion to \$5.2 billion. Over that four-year period it almost tripled. From that same year in '88 to 1999, when the NDP came back in, under the 11 years of Conservative government, the debt of Manitoba went from \$5.2 billion to about \$6.1 billion, not even a billion dollars, in times when, under the Premier's own words, the transfer payments from Ottawa were cut back by \$240 million a year, and by the Minister of Health's (Mr. Sale) statement in the House last week that the federal government had cut transfers by \$7 billion to the Province of Manitoba.

I think the point to make is that this Doer government is on an absolutely parallel road to the Pawley debt by allowing the debt of Manitoba to increase on the operating side alone from \$6.1 billion back up over \$8.1 billion in its six short years in government again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, five and a half.

I want to close by saying I think that this budget could have done a lot more for the citizens of Manitoba, that it could have been much more ably applied to giving long-term relief to citizens of Manitoba, that slaughter facilities could have been built in Manitoba already, up and going, and we would be less dependent on the government. So there are many things that we could go on and on about in this budget, but I am going to close by just forewarning this government that they need to make sure that they reduce the debt of Manitoba instead of increasing it.

\* (15:30)

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to provide some comments on the government's recent budget.

Adrift on a sea of gold, Mr. Deputy Speaker; this government is adrift on a sea of gold. There is lots of new money but no new ideas. There is so much new money and so little in the way of a new plan. Manitoba is the last have-not province in western Canada. Manitoba is the only have-not province in western Canada. Yet this budget fails to provide a plan to move Manitoba toward being a

have province. Indeed, the budget fails to even commit to moving Manitoba toward becoming a have province. There was an opportunity in this budget to provide a better business climate in Manitoba in order to improve business investment and business growth in our province. Saskatchewan has become a have province in part because the government there, faced with difficult times in the 1990s, provided a better framework for business investment and economic growth. Yes, Saskatchewan could have done much better than they have, there is no doubt. But they have become a have province, while Manitoba lags behind.

Manitoba lags behind Saskatchewan because the NDP government here has created a poor public policy framework and business investment is much less than it should be. The NDP government could have made major changes, as needed, to decrease reliance on property tax to fund education, but they have only tinkered with change. Manitobans deserve better. The NDP government could have made changes to ensure that our post-secondary education institutions were adequately supported, but they did not. The government could have provided changes so that young people would flock to our province instead of so many young people leaving and moving away. This government had a golden opportunity to overhaul Manitoba's archaic social assistance system and to make fundamental changes to address child poverty. It was yet another opportunity squandered.

In the last few months, we have seen demonstrations at the Legislature calling for just such an overhaul. During the hearings on the task force on Healthy Kids there had been a call for such an overhaul of the social assistance system. Last Friday, with the release of the poverty barometer, once again there were calls for this government to address child poverty. This budget fails to show an understanding that this is an issue in Manitoba. This budget fails to address pressing issues relating to child poverty. As was described eloquently last Friday by presenters of the poverty barometer, evidence shows that poverty is associated with unhealthy diets and less exercise, and that poverty is one of the important causes of poor fitness, of obesity and of increased diabetes in Manitoba children. Yet this budget does not even mention child poverty, let alone address it.

There was an opportunity in this budget to address the major problems in the management of Manitoba's health care system in order to ensure that Manitobans have quick access to quality health care. After five years and a boatload of money, now \$2 billion more a year of spending, this government continues to operate a health care system which provides slow access instead of quick access, and which all too often is not as good a quality as it should be.

Manitobans are waiting two years for hip and knee surgery. That is inexcusable, given the vast sums of money pouring into this government from the federal government and designed to be spent on health care and improved waiting lists. This money was not provided by the federal government to be socked away in a rainy day fund so this government can haul it out to magically give the illusion that its budgets are balanced. Indeed, the budget does not recognize the fact that the NDP have never in their two terms of office been able to balance the health care budget and keep the amounts spent on health care within the amount that was targeted in the budget at the beginning of the year.

This budget does not recognize the poor management in health care which is all too evident to Manitobans. It is as if the NDP are living in a cocoon of their own making which isolates them from the reality of life in our province. The NDP cocoon is spun from the fanciful threads of their media spinners rather than the reality of the lives of ordinary citizens. The budget was evidently put together by individuals living inside this distorted cocoon world rather than the real world of Manitobans.

There was an opportunity to provide for a modernized approach to environmental issues in Manitoba. Was it taken? No. There was an opportunity to have a systematic and comprehensive approach to environmental issues which sets targets and time lines. There was an opportunity to implement change instead of just talking about it. There was an opportunity to act instead of just setting up more committees, more boards and more studies.

Inside the government's cocoon the environment in Manitoba is doing well. Outside in

the real world where Manitobans live, we see the reality of Lake Winnipeg now being in worse shape than when the NDP came to power five and a half years ago.

Outside in the real world where Manitobans live we see the reality of toxic contamination of Kissing Lake extending inexorably day by day, kilometre by kilometre across the lake bed. It is so bad not even invertebrates can survive such toxic contamination, and if even invertebrates cannot live, what does that mean for the fish? What does it mean for people?

A modern approach to environmental issues recognizes that failing to be stewards of the environment carries huge costs and is already costing Manitoba's economy millions of dollars each year. This budget fails to recognize the cost to the Manitoba economy and the loss of revenue because this government is not paying attention to the environment, or perhaps, I should say, is only paying attention to the environment of those living inside the cocoon and not those living in the environment of the real world.

There has been a tremendous loss of personal and provincial income in Manitoba because of this government's failed approach to the environment. Indeed the government is still in an outdated mindset, and the environment and the economy are at odds. The government is still inside a cocoon where they look only at short-term reacting to immediate issues rather than laying the framework for a better Manitoba in both the short and the long run.

This government has an outdated review of environmental review processes. They have failed to move to using federal provincial panels for major projects instead of using a provincial only review. The approach of Manitoba has been rejected by provinces like Alberta who have moved forward to a more modern approach.

One of the problems of the NDP government in their budget is that government is no longer credible when it comes to financial issues. Year after year the government said it is bringing in a balanced budget, and year after year the Auditor General looks at the government's efforts and says your budget is not balanced when normal accounting procedures are used. Now the

government is free to use whatever accounting procedures it may like, but when the government deviates from generally accepted accounting procedures in order to make it appear that it has balanced the books, then it has a major credibility problem.

The government's credibility problem arises from the fact that the government claims a balanced budget while the Auditor General says it is not balanced. When a government deviates from generally accepted accounting procedures in order to say it has balanced the books, it gives the impression that it is cooking the books to make the government look good.

This, of course, brings us back to the government's cocoon. Inside the cocoon the government can say, and indeed believe, it has balanced the books, but outside of the cocoon in the real world, the Auditor General's word carries more weight. Outside of the cocoon, the budget has not been balanced. Away from the orbit of the government's media spinners and the government's cocoon, in the world of the average Manitoban, in the coffee shops and the main streets across Manitoba where ordinary citizens live, the budget is not balanced. The government is sealed off from the cold, hard, snowy reality of the average Manitoban.

\*(15:40)

The budget also lacks credibility when it comes to the handling of the rainy day fund. We are provided by this government with a budget which puts more than \$300 million into the rainy day fund. When we look carefully we see that a large part of the money that is put in the rainy day fund is money provided by the federal government to improve health care and reduce waiting times in Manitoba.

There are some obvious questions here. The government, in its own budget speech, says it is going to provide accounting of how the health dollars are spent. Does this provide an accounting when the dollars go direct to the rainy day fund? Is this what we expected the health care money to be used for, to build up a rainy day fund which the NDP have so vigorously depleted? Many of us thought the rainy day fund was for emergencies, not just for waiting lists. Why was the money transferred from the Liberal federal government to

the Province for health care not put in a health care trust fund with proper accountability in place to ensure the dollars are used properly and wisely for the purposes intended.

The government says it will be accountable, but in five and a half years, it has failed so miserably to be accountable with health care dollars, we do not hold out any hope of real accountability in the way these dollars are spent. It is a sad and sorry state of affairs when Manitobans do not believe what this government says anymore. This government has not been credible when it deals with issues of children and Child and Family Services and Housing. We have seen over the last year problems with Hydra House, with the Aiyawin Corporation, with the handling of Osborne House, with the way that they have spent \$40 million on the Manitoba Developmental Centre in Portage without even having a plan, when most provinces are moving people out into the community and looking after people—out into the community because they have recognized that for the large majority of such people, it is a better way.

During the last several months, since December, I have been a member of the all-party task force looking at fitness, nutrition, and injury prevention in children, and indeed, looking at the broader picture of health issues in children. Our present understanding is that the state of our children's health is very important to the state of the health of our adults. If we do not look at our children's health, we will have adults in Manitoba who are less healthy, and who are a greater cost to our health care system.

What we are seeing at the task force is presenter after presenter talking about the lack of action in the last five years. We are seeing presenter after presenter talking about the increase in obesity, the increase in diabetes in Manitoba children. For five years, while this government has lived inside its cocoon oblivious to the world around it, the extent of provincial poor fitness in our children, the level of obesity in our children, the extent of diabetes in our children and other measures of children's health have gotten worse. For five years, the government has talked about preventing sickness, but has done nothing to improve the level of fitness and reduce the extent of obesity and diabetes.

Yet, year by year, the statistics have gotten worse while members of this government curled up in their cocoon and talked to themselves about how much they were doing. What is clear is that in the real world where real children live, almost all the statistics are going in the wrong direction because this government has been so ineffective. It is amazing that this government could be spending \$2 billion more a year than when it started, but spend it in such a way that so many of the statistics are worse and not better. It is a singularly bizarre approach to government. Indeed, it is pathetic that so much has been spent and so little has been accomplished.

Let us go into another area of children's health looking at the situation of the dental health of our children. When children have poor nutrition, one of the results is early childhood tooth decay and a need for dental surgery. Where children have good nutrition, such surgery is rarely needed. Yet, because this government has not acted, we have an epidemic of children in Manitoba who need dental surgery within the first few years of life.

Clearly, the government cannot blame this problem on the former Tory government because most of these children were not even born when the former Tory government was in office. Today the epidemic is so huge that we have witnessed, in this Chamber from time to time, a debate between the government and the official opposition as to who might be the best at providing more surgeries. But, indeed, the answer here is to provide the nutrition and the approach to parenting that will prevent these terrible teeth in the first place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP government has been all too ready to blame the former government for all its woes. Anything that is not going well, the NDP blame on the former Conservative government, and sometimes they are right, but many times they are failing to take responsibility. This time, clearly, it will not work because these children who were born under their watch have had so many dental problems it has become abundantly clear that this government has failed to address the nutrition, the poverty and the problems which have led to this epidemic of dental problems.

The NDP cannot claim that they were not aware of concerns about the dental health of

Manitoba children. At the beginning of October, at the very time this government was being first sworn into office in the fall of 1999, I raised this issue about the dental health of Manitoba children, the health of Manitoba children who are needing to have dental surgery. I asked what the government was doing, and I said the government would be measured by its success in improving the dental health of children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they may have pretended to be on top of this issue then, but now the truth is revealed. In five and a half years there has not been a whiff of progress. We are seeing record numbers of children needing surgery. The problem has gotten worse and not better. It is five and a half lost years. That is what people will say about the last five and a half years. It has been five and a half lost years when it comes to children's health and children's dental health. It has been five and a half lost years.

Almost two years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in May of 2003, the first case of BSE was discovered in a cow in Canada. The NDP said, "Oh, we need to increase slaughter capacity." Not a bad idea, but in two years we have not seen that new slaughter capacity. The NDP said that we need federally inspected plants. Well, in two years, we have no more federally inspected plants in Manitoba. Lots of talk from this government, but totally ineffective when it comes to getting the job done. The situation has been so bad, as we now know, that the NDP have had to redesign their approach to improving slaughter capacity. They have admitted that they goofed. They made a mistake. They did not do well when they put in the initial approach, and it has to be started all over again. After two years, we are still at square one. The farmers of this province have, once again, been left out in the cold by this inept government.

I have talked earlier in this session about the need to introduce mandatory testing for BSE in all animals over 30 months. Once again, the NDP has done nothing. I have talked from time to time in the last several years about rural economic development but, once again, the NDP has done little or nothing.

A considerable proportion of the new federal money for Manitoba comes as a result of changes in equalization transfers. The federal Liberal

government has been very helpful to Manitoba in providing a lot more money. We would not mind a thank you for the federal government. But, no, that is not the approach this NDP government is taking. They are just going after the federal government day after day. What a way to say thank you. The federal government has been so helpful that they have not only provided a lot more money, they have provided a framework with much more certainty about how the money will come in from year to year, health care funding with an escalator, more certainty in the way that the equalization transfers are made, but the NDP has not used this federal gift well.

We should have seen this budget not only a multiyear approach but a clear accounting of how the equalization dollars are being spent to provide for a reasonable equivalency in the delivery of services compared to other provinces. We should have seen how the NDP are going to provide for reasonable equivalence in taxes with other provinces, and we should have seen a clear plan to take Manitoba into the realms of being a have province, but we have seen none of the needed accountability. Instead we have only seen an NDP government which is staying in its cocoon and making its moves as difficult as possible for Manitobans to discern.

\* (15:50)

I talked last week with Mayor Sam Katz and Councillor Mike Pagtakhan of the City of Winnipeg. The mayor was pleased on Tuesday, but by Thursday he was no longer exactly sure of what he was going to be receiving, and by Friday I gather that the City realized that almost all the things promised were just meeting previous commitments. There was little really new. It was an NDP machine swung into full gear to cover up the fact that they were doing so little. It was once more the NDP media spinners at work building the cocoon bigger and making it more obscure.

While thousands of Manitoba teachers are asking for changes to their pension plan, the government does nothing. While tens of thousands of Manitoba children remain poor, the NDP government does nothing. The budget was a poor budget. It was far less than Manitobans deserve. It was a blueprint for another five years of inaction. We see a government that is adrift. We

see a government with no plan. Budget day could have been a wonderful day, but it was a sad day for Manitoba and for Manitobans and the NDP has stayed in its cocoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster,

*THAT the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words:*

And further regrets that this budget also ignores present and future needs of Manitobans by:

- (r) Failing to provide an effective plan to improve health and prevent sickness; and
- (s) Failing to provide an effective strategy to deal with child poverty; and
- (t) Failing to provide Manitobans with the approach needed to decrease childhood obesity and diabetes; and
- (u) Failing to provide Manitobans with the legal right to timely, quality health care; and
- (v) Failing to do any better than the previous Tory government in improving the dental health of Manitoba children and decreasing the incidence of early childhood tooth decay.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The motion put forth by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), seconded by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), is in order. Do you want it read again?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** *THAT the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words:*

And further regrets that this budget also ignores present and future needs of Manitobans by:

- (r) Failing to provide an effective plan to improve health and prevent sickness; and
- (s) Failing to provide an effective strategy to deal with child poverty; and
- (t) Failing to provide Manitobans with the approach needed to decrease childhood obesity and diabetes; and

(u) Failing to provide Manitobans with the legal right to timely, quality health care; and

(v) Failing to do any better than the previous Tory government in improving the dental health of Manitoba children and decreasing the incidence of early childhood tooth decay.

Continuing debate. This time the topic of the debate will be the amendment of the amendment to the main motion.

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again I want to thank the people of Tuxedo for giving me the honour of representing them in the Manitoba Legislature. I feel privileged to represent such a dynamic community that extends from as far east as River Heights, as far west as Charleswood, as far north as the Assiniboine River and as far south as the train tracks on Wilkes where we are patiently awaiting a Kenaston underpass. And I am glad that that is finally going to go forward at some point although it has taken such an incredibly long time for this to take place.

Constituents in my community are concerned about the future of our province. This government had an opportunity to step up to the plate last week when they introduced this budget and provide hope and opportunity for young people, yet regrettably they chose to mortgage the future of our young people in this province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this hits the heart of why I got involved in politics. I got involved so I could try and make a difference for young people in our communities. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to try and make positive changes for our young people when this NDP government continues to pass budgets like the one introduced last week that erode the very future of their opportunity in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to give you an example. In this budget, this NDP government had the opportunity to change the unfairness in taxation that currently exists for families who choose to have one parent stay at home with their children, but they chose not to. A single-income family continues to be taxed more than a dual-income family who earns the same amount. This NDP tax on families must stop, and I call on this NDP government for the fifth year in a row to make this change, or we will continue to educate

the future of B.C.'s, Ontario's and Alberta's workforce, not something I am prepared to let this government get away with.

There has been a theme to my responses to throne speeches and budgets introduced by this government in the past and, regrettably, the theme continues. No plan, no vision and no hope for the future of young people in our province. I know members opposite have heard me say that time and time again, and it is, again, regrettable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I recently took over the job of Health critic for the province and have learned a great deal about our health care system from various stakeholders in the health care system and from patients. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) and I recently had the opportunity to hold a health care forum in Brandon, something that was wonderful for the community. We had many stakeholders, including a Liberal for the community as well, and it was truly wonderful. I think if perhaps the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) would consider doing something like this himself, he would see that people in the Brandon area are extremely concerned about the health care system and the future of the health care system in our province. Regrettably, the Member for Brandon East refuses to accept that the health care system as it exists in Manitoba is in fact a problem and is in fact a major issue for the people in his own community. I think if he would merely listen to the people in his community, as he should be doing as their elected official, he would see the seriousness of that issue in Brandon.

We heard about the many challenges, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the system is facing, and we also heard some great solutions to these challenges that are being faced, particularly in the Brandon and Westman area. Unfortunately, the government continues to refuse to listen to what people are saying, whether they be in or outside the health care system. They refuse, and continue to refuse, to listen to what the people of Manitoba want.

\* (16:00)

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we on this side of the House are listening to the people of Manitoba, and we are hearing loud and clear that Manitobans



do not believe that the status quo health care system is the answer. There needs to be serious changes to the system. I would suggest that, if the Member for Brandon East takes the situation very seriously, he would listen to some of his constituents, many of whom attended our health care forum in Brandon and expressed serious concerns about the existing health care system in our province, and again, offered some very sound solutions to some of the very serious situations that our health care system is facing.

The Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) again talks about the Brandon hospital. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are, right now, this government is allowing for moms to travel by ambulance to have their babies in Winnipeg because of the severe shortage of pediatricians in the Westman area and in Brandon right now. I would suggest that the member opposite, the Member for Brandon East, take this situation very very seriously, because there are many moms that they are putting on the highway to Winnipeg so that they will have the pediatric care that their children need when they are born. So I would suggest that he listen to the constituents in his own community before he speaks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP had an opportunity to make serious changes to the health care system in this budget, yet they continue to refuse to make these changes because of their unfortunate ideological beliefs that seem to get in the way of looking at all options when it comes to changes that could possibly take place in our health care system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, health spending has increased by some \$1.3 billion-plus now since 1999 under this NDP government, yet we have not seen any real results.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

The only results we are seeing are negative results, Mr. Speaker, unfortunate results of growing wait lists. People are continuing to line the hallways in emergencies. People are on highways now, being sent in our rural communities to other communities so they can get health care, and the lists, the doctor shortages, the nursing shortages. Hospitals are closing in our rural areas. This is not something that I think that the Member for Brandon East and for other members opposite

would be proud to call a legacy, but, unfortunately, I guess it is.

**An Honourable Member:** Which hospital is closing?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Again, they say, "Which hospital?"

Unfortunately, because of the lack of funding for this Taj Mahal that they built—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Because of the lack of funding that the government has given to the Brandon hospital to perform the much-needed surgeries there, people are forced to get on a highway in an ambulance and be sent to Winnipeg. I think that that is unfortunate for people in our rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, waiting lists are growing. Administrative costs have skyrocketed, and the government has yet to introduce any real plan to deal with the increased health care needs of Manitoba's aging population.

Let us look at the wait lists in Brandon. As of December 31, 2004, Brandon surgery wait list was pegged at 1960, Mr. Speaker. Brandon's diagnostic wait list for MRIs has grown from 261 in May of 1004 to 451 in December of 2004. In just six months, the wait list had almost doubled and who knows, even, where it is today, because we are not privy to those numbers.

Mr. Speaker, orthopedic wait lists: November 2003, the combined hip and knee replacement wait list was 1478. In October, some one year later, of 2004, the combined hip and knee replacement wait list was over 2000, at 2081. Some patients are now waiting up to three years in pain with limited mobility for hip and knee replacement surgery. The WRHA wait list currently sits around 2500 people waiting for surgery. This is extremely important and is something of great concern to members on this side of the House. We have heard from hundreds, from several Manitobans who are waiting in pain for hip and knee surgery.

Yes, the government likes to make announcements, but they do not tell these patients when they are actually going to get their surgeries. They make announcement after announcement after announcement, promises, promises, promises, but do not seem to be following through on those promises. They made a promise some six months ago to perform 100 more hip and knee surgeries at Concordia Hospital, yet, we know those have not taken place. We have heard about the hip and knee replacements, the announcement that was made for Boundary Trails Hospital, and we know that none of those have taken place. It is unfortunate that the government comes out with yet another announcement that provides what we believe to be false hope for Manitobans who are waiting in pain for this surgery.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that this government bring transparency and accountability to the health care system in Manitoba. Health care spending in Manitoba has not been transparent. If it was, why did the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority change its reporting practices and remove administration costs as a line item in their 2003-2004 annual report? This government has promised transparency and accountability in the health care system now for years. By removing this specific line item, this NDP government has taken away the public's ability to scrutinize the WRHA's ballooning administration costs. Where is the transparency here? Where is the accountability? I think this is extremely unfortunate. What we are seeing here is the administrative costs skyrocketing in our province while at the same time we are seeing wait lists skyrocket. Members on this side of the House, rather than seeing these administration costs going up and up and up, we would rather see those wait lists going down and down and down. We believe that is where the extra resources should go in this province. It is to reducing our wait lists, not to beefing up administration costs.

Administration costs at the WRHA have increased from \$5.7 million in 1999 to \$16.6 million in 2003, but we do not know what these costs are in 2004, because this government refuses to report these figures to us and give us access to it. Again, when they promise transparency and accountability, they do not deliver on that, and they leave the people out in the cold, not knowing where these administration costs are going. They

leave them out in the cold and on wait lists and so on, and it is, again, unacceptable.

Our rural communities are facing significant challenges in health care. We are facing rural hospital closures. We are facing severe doctor shortages and nursing and technical support staff shortages as well. This NDP government claims their policy is not to close rural hospitals. Unfortunately, it is clear this commitment is quickly evaporating. Rural hospitals represent far more than simply access to medical services. They represent the life blood of a community. This situation is particularly acute in the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority with the announcement by several physicians that they will be relocating.

We need only look at the Riverdale Health Centre closure. The Riverdale Health Centre was closed to acute care and emergency services for seven months beginning in early December 2003. The acute care and emergency services were once again downgraded in October 2004, and, regrettably, they remain closed today. To date, the community has raised over \$450,000 for this purpose, and I only hope the government will agree to step up to the plate and honour their commitment to the people and this community who deserve much better than the empty promises from members opposite.

\*(16:10)

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the Brandon doctor shortages. Brandon has been plagued by doctor shortages over the last number of months, forcing some mothers and children to endure highway medicine as they are transported to Winnipeg for necessary health services. Currently, Brandon is short two pediatricians, one orthopedic surgeon, and two emergency room doctors will be leaving in May.

Mr. Speaker, valuable health care workers are stressed-out and overworked in the current system. This government needs to consider all options when it comes to reducing wait lists in our province. This NDP government needs to remove its socialist dictatorial blinders about the use of private care facilities to deliver medical services to patients in our province.

The public deserves much better, and if this government continues to refuse to look at all ways of reducing wait lists in our province, we will challenge them on this issue each and every day that we sit in this Manitoba Legislature, which, I gather, is not too many days in a year, so we will take it beyond just the days that we sit in this Manitoba Legislature. We will take it each and every day that this government is still in government, and we will challenge them on this issue. We will show the archaic Band-Aid solutions of this NDP government and show how they have failed the people of Manitoba, and we will offer Manitobans the alternatives that they deserve in health care delivery in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I have gone on for a little bit here, and I would like to touch on some other areas of great importance about the unfortunate missed opportunities that I believe this government has in this budget. I would like to look at some of the areas of finance at this time and point out to this government some of the missed opportunities that they have: \$2.8 billion of all revenues come from federal transfers and equalization, in all, 34.2 percent of all provincial revenue. It is up 2 percent from last year. These tax cuts do not take place until January of 2006 and do little when they actually do kick in. Only Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and P.E.I. have a similar basic personal exemption to Manitoba, and we still continue to be the highest taxed province for income taxes west of Québec, and again, I refer back to one of the previous throne speeches introduced by this government some three years ago or so when they announced the Welcome Home to Manitoba plan. Well, welcome home to being the highest province taxed west of Québec, or actually west of New Brunswick, I guess, is what it is now, which is even worse.

Again, unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. Clearly this government is going in the wrong direction. So I think the general theme of what we are seeing, we are seeing a lot of new money come in from the federal government in the way of transfer payments, some \$262 million more this year. They have been able to increase some spending in certain areas. They basically took the \$262 million and spent the money, and I think it is unfortunate to Manitobans because this government missed the opportunity to give much of that back in the way of tax cuts. Instead, they chose to spend it, giving a

little bit in the way of tax cuts but not enough to make a difference to keep young people in our communities over the long term.

Again, typical of this government, a bit of a Band-Aid solution. Keep some people happy here and there and maybe they will stay. But this is not a long-term solution to the problem that we will have, and we continue to have in terms of the fact that we are educating people in our province that are moving to places like B.C., Alberta and Ontario, where they have better opportunities there and do not pay as much in the way of taxes. We continue to be one of the last have-not provinces in Canada, and I do not think that that is something this government should be proud of building a legacy on, but they seem to be.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to touch on a few areas in Education, Justice, Agriculture and Family Services before I have to end this today. In Education, the NDP had more than enough new revenue to finally take the burden of education taxes off of residential property owners and to find a new way of providing sustainable funding for public education. Instead, the taxes remain and they continue to skyrocket. There is no mechanism set in place to prevent the school boards from increasing the taxes that this government cut. That is the unfortunate part about it, because we will see, because of the offloading of the taxation responsibility onto the people in the local communities, those taxes go up. This government knows that those taxes will go up. They have been warned by the school divisions that, because of this government's refusal to see that they have responsibility for the education of people in our province, because of their refusal to accept that responsibility, we know that those taxes will go up. I think it is unfortunate. They know it, we know it, the people of Manitoba know it, yet they refuse to do anything about it. I think that is unfortunate.

Provincial education funding is at an all-time low as well, Mr. Speaker, of less than 56 percent. It is forcing school divisions to raise taxes or cut programs. I think it is time that, we have advocated for years now, that number go in the other direction. This government needs to take responsibility for its areas of jurisdiction. Education falls under its jurisdiction. They need to step up to the plate and be responsible for the education of children in our province.

Mr. Speaker, forced amalgamation has also placed a burden on many school divisions and local taxpayers. What was supposed to have saved \$10 million a year has actually cost amalgamated divisions millions and continues to do so through contract rationalization. We know that that number is probably close to \$17 million to \$20 million in terms of the costs. I think that that is unfortunate.

In Justice, Mr. Speaker, this government announced some 20 new police officers in the city, 20 in rural areas. When will we see these police officers? That is what I want to know, because crime continues to rise in our city and our rural areas. I think it is unfortunate because, time and time again, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) sends out press release, after press release, after press release, promising and promising and promising all these things, but they never actually deliver. They never say when they are going to deliver these things. They actually do not ever deliver in the end. It seems to be a common theme, whether it be in Education, or Justice, or tax cuts, or whatever. They make the announcement and then they do not follow through, so then they remake an announcement and then they do not follow-through again. There is this continued pattern, and I think it is rather unfortunate.

The people of Manitoba was seeing a record number of murders in the city of Winnipeg, last year it was 34. I just think we are on the road to having the record number of murders in a city in Canada again. We continue to be one of the highest auto theft, if not the capital of auto thefts, in North America, which again, welcome home to Manitoba, again a very unfortunate thing.

Mr. Speaker, where was the vision and plan for rural Manitoba? This NDP budget has left rural Manitobans asking if a page was missing from the budget. This NDP government had a chance to offer hope for our rural youth, but instead the budget ignored their needs. The future of the rural Manitoba economy depends on encouraging our youth to stay in rural Manitoba. We need to give our youth a chance, because we are mortgaging their future. There was no mention of a solution for the BSE crisis which is affecting every Manitoban, including in the city of Winnipeg.

The NDP's promise of \$3 million is a far cry from the \$40 million needed for slaughter capacity, as is outlined in our plan. Perhaps the NDP government could look once again at our five-point plan, which they have started to implement components of, but again I think there is a theme about what this government is all about. They have no plan. We are offering plans. They are stealing our plans and it is very interesting, but again there is no plan, no vision, no hope for the future of people in our province. Again, very unfortunate.

\* (16:20)

I want to just touch briefly before I have to end—I have taken enough time, probably more than enough time—on the area of family services. Where is the long-term strategy for child care in this province? There is no long-term strategy. They just got a bunch of money, an announcement from the feds. Where is the strategy on this money and how it is going to be spent and the future of child care in this province? What can Manitobans expect from this money? Where are the options for parents? We support a tax credit for stay-at-home parents so they have options. We support putting more money in the hands of those parents that choose to stay at home so they have options.

Let us look at the Department of Family Services. Essentially, what I can see from this, which is unfortunate, is this really is a department in chaos. There have been so many issues, and maybe many of them had to do with the previous minister of family services and not so much the current Family Services Minister who inherited many of these issues from the previous minister. But things like Hydra House, Aiyawin, the Child Advocate's report, Osborne House, kids in hotels. The list goes on. It is just a long list of things that show the Department of Family Services is in chaos, and has been for quite some time under this current NDP government. Again, I think that there is—I will leave it there.

I want to thank the people of Tuxedo. I am very pleased to represent such a dynamic community. Again, I think the government missed a huge opportunity here to make some very serious changes to some very serious challenges that are faced by our province. Yet the fifth year that I have been here and the fifth budget that I have seen, there is still that theme out there that I see, and really it is no plan, no vision and no hope for

the future of our young people. Something, again, very unfortunate. I think this government missed a huge opportunity to make some serious changes for all Manitobans.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I am very pleased to speak today on the budget, our budget, and I would like to say at the outset that I do not know what planet the previous member has been on, listening to her comments about the budget. Judging from the press coverage that I have seen since the budget was introduced, it has been pretty well all positive.

Judging from the opposition's speeches and the opposition questions in the last few days, in fact, the Liberal Leader himself no more than an hour ago was talking about this budget being "a sea of gold." And I do not see how we can get any better. We started six years ago with a budget. We went to the second budget, the third budget. I thought, things have got to get bad sooner or later, but they just keep getting better.

Find me a government anywhere in this country at any time that has been able to deliver a better budget the sixth year than it did the first year. I would expect these members to be calling for an election if they think the budget is so bad. Typically, that is what an opposition does. An opposition who thinks the government has a bad budget, bad ideas, bad timing, calls for an election. Have I heard anybody over there call for an election? Not a chance because they would all be sitting over here. We will have all the seats. There will be nobody in opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to deal with some issues that did come out of the budget speeches from the members opposite. I notice there is not a lot that they have to criticize in this budget, but I do notice they seem to be talking about the increase in the debt. They want to make a case that, somehow, the debt of the province has increased \$3 billion since 1999. In fact, what I want to tell the members is the total debt of all the public sector entities has increased by \$3.2 billion since 1999 and in recent years the total debt has increased in every province except Alberta. However, Manitoba is one of only a few provinces whose debt-to-GDP ratio has continued to improve in recent years.

So the point is, Mr. Speaker, that the GDP in 1999, does anybody know what it was, anybody over there, you are the experts in the budget here, you want to tell us what the debt is? The GDP, to the honourable members, in 1999 was \$31.9 billion. Now, in six years, the GDP has grown to \$41.7 billion. That is a \$10-billion increase. So, as a percentage of the GDP, we have actually decreased. The debt-to-GDP ratio has improved in Manitoba, because it is reduced from 20.3 percent in 1999 down to 15.8, and it is the only province in the country to do that.

So now let us look at a different aspect. Let us take a different look, let us pretend for a moment that they do not buy that argument, and it is a darn good argument, but let us pretend they do not. Well, let us look at some of the expenditures that have gone into contributing to that \$3 billion that they want to criticize, and let us ask them what they would do with those expenditures.

They want a hospital. They want a road. They want Road 200 paved at a million dollars. You know I drove that road in December. It is only 10 kilometres long that is unpaved. It was a Friday afternoon. There was not a single car on the road for the whole 10 kilometres, and I drove nice and slow. I could have turned around and driven all the way back and probably not have seen another car. There were not any animals either, farm or any kind of animals.

So this is what the members spend their time doing, as if there is no other issue in Morris constituency but paving 10 kilometres of road that nobody drives on. I am sure that the highways department has a priority and if there is enough traffic on the road, they will pave the road. So the members should be trying to get the roads increased in its priority rather than running around getting petitions and bringing them to the House. Now, last year she just said, she wanted to pave the road. This year, she admits that nobody is travelling on the roads so obviously she has to try to get around the issue.

Now the minister tells me that the policy guidelines say that it needs 400 vehicles per day, or more, to get paved, and I did not see one, not one. So you know she has to get a new issue here. How many years has she been bringing in this

petition? It seems to me it is for six years now but, you know, get an issue and hit it a few times and then move on, move on to something else.

Let us say that we did go pave the road for her. Now she is going to turn around next year and the pavement is not even going to be dry and she is going to be saying, "Oh my God, you have increased the provincial debt." Well, of course, we did. We had to pay for this road.

So let us deal with the Finance critic, the newest and latest victim to the post over there. They are working their way through the whole caucus. The Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), I mean, what kind of things have been built in his riding in the last six years that might have contributed a little bit to this extra \$3 billion that we have spent?

Well, Mr. Speaker, let us start with the \$342,000 for a waste water treatment plant in the R.M. of Alexander. Does he want that taken away? Did he not want to build that?

\* (16:30)

What about the half-million dollars for a waste water treatment plant in Tyndall-Garson? Does he not like that? When I send all these things out to his constituents next week and they read them, he is going to have a real problem on his hands trying to explain to them why he does not like their projects.

What about for the \$95,000 for a clean water project in Beausejour? What about the \$1.3 million for a clean water project in Lac du Bonnet? What about the \$99,000 for a clean water project in Whitemouth? What about that \$12.4 million in new schools and school upgrades in Lac du Bonnet constituency? What about the \$6.2 million for the Beausejour Early Years replacement school? The \$1.1 million for the upgrades to the Edward Schreyer School, \$175,000 for a new roof, \$300,000 for capital improvements in Powerview. What does he think? The Easter Bunny built these things? Where does he think the money came from?

Let me just finish with his constituency, because I have a bunch more here on my list. In the health care issue, we spent \$11.3 million in the

Beausejour hospital. We spent money upgrading equipment to the operating rooms at Beausejour hospital so it can perform pediatric dental surgeries closer to home for kids and their families.

These are good things. These are things that he wants done, and he will rise in the House on day one and he will demand these things. On the very next day he wants to know why the debt goes up. Just think about it for a moment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, who else is here and wants to find out about what is happening? In Steinbach, the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), I hear him very clearly every day, I do not have to turn up my hearing aids to hear him. In Steinbach, to the honourable member, we have spent money on the Bethesda Personal Care Home. We put a new CT scanner in Steinbach. Where was that CT scanner for those 11 years, when the Tories were in government? His party, his great fiscal managers, those great Tory managers who were running the province for 11 years. Where was that scanner? But all of a sudden the NDP is in government, and he has a scanner. You do not like the scanner? But that added to the debt. Now he got a new school, the Mitchell School. He got a replacement school in Kleefeld.

Who else is here? The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou), my friend, the member who was criticizing me just talking on a cell phone. It was a chocolate cell phone from Morden's candy. To that member, and the member who wanted to talk about a cottage that he is the one who created the issue with, we put a new CT scanner in Portage la Prairie. He does not like that? He does not think it should be paid for? Who is going to pay for it if we do not pay for it out of taxes? There is an expanded dialysis unit in Portage la Prairie. In Southdale, we have a new school, the Autumn Lake school, and the member wanted to make sure that I pointed that out.

We have a new primary health clinic in Sprague for the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), and on and on and on. I have six pages, but I do not have enough time to deal with them all. So I am going to save some of this. I am going to save some of this for the next speech.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with an issue that probably could become a very big issue for us,

and that is the situation regarding the United States debt. We are worried about the Manitoba situation. We are Manitoba politicians and that is where we live and work, but the fact of the matter is that we have a budget deficit in the United States. The U.S. national debt stood at \$7.7 trillion, that is trillion, which is equal to \$26,000 U.S. for every American citizen. This year, they are supposed to have a \$427 billion debt. Now this is the kind of debt that you get when you have big tax cuts. These are the kinds of tax cuts that the new Tories want.

I am used to the old Tories, the old red Tories, the responsible Tories, the ones that believed in paying off your bills. Do not go into debt. Those are the old Duff Roblin Tories. Those are the kind of pussycat Tories we are used to, and the Liberals and NDP of past years thought they were a little outdated and slow and that we could probably suffer a little bit of debt to get some things we needed today. But then somewhere maybe 10 to 15 years ago we had these neo-cons come on the scene and they kind of took over parts of the Tory Party. These are the really dangerous ones. These are the ones that are running the Stephen Harper ship and Brian Pallister, these kinds of guys. I am not too scared of those old blue ones, but the new neo-cons, they are the scary ones. There are members in this group over here who want to follow that philosophy.

If they had their way, they would be cutting taxes, and they would be cutting taxes drastically. This is what you are going to find if you do that. If you cut your taxes drastically, you are going to develop a system of trickle-down economics and you are going to have huge deficits and you are going to drive your province into a big mess. You know something? If things do not work out in the United States in the next two or three years, good luck. The rollover effect on Canada is going to really affect us because what happens in the United States today is going to affect us a few months later.

I look forward to these members opposite in how they are going to be framing their next campaign platform a couple years from now when they try to get re-elected, as to whether or not they are going to be looking at the tax-cut agenda, because we will be waiting for them. They tried a tax-cut agenda last time. It did not go very well. We will be waiting for them, I am sure they will

not be hiding. They will be in full view. We will have a pretty good look at them as they poke their heads over the ridge.

They do not like the rainy day fund. They do not like it because they see the money in the rainy day fund as a threat, and actually they would like to see the money spent on the farmers' problems. I know we are going to hear calls in the future for, "Well you know, it is raining today, we should be spending that money on cash advances to the farmers." They will find a hundred different ways for us to spend that money in the next little while, but let us just think back to how they dealt with the rainy day fund just six years ago. They took a public telephone company, and they sold it to their friends for half price.

They talk about ethics in business, and the Enron president and all these other guys should be locked up and taken away. I do not know what you are supposed to do about a group that goes out to its buddies, sets up a publicly owned telephone system, values it at half price, \$13 a share, lend the people half of that and then immediately it went up to double in price. Now what do they do with the money? Once they got the money, they put it in a rainy day fund. They should have taken it, as a good Conservative would, and paid off the debt. Did they pay off the debt? Not at all. They spent the money. Now we ended up with no telephone system. It was sold; then the money is gone too. These are the evil geniuses over there who think they know all the economic answers and have an economic plan. The voters took care of that problem. The voters were fooled a couple of times. One of them was because we were kind of hamstrung there in 1988 to 1990, so they got away with a couple of curve balls. Eventually, it caught up to them.

\* (16:40)

That is what we have to show for it, no telephone system publicly owned anymore and the money is all gone. What have we gained? So we are not doing things like that. We have the money put in the rainy day fund. These are the kind of financial issues that these guys do not like. They only wish that they had these problems. Your caucus meetings must be pretty depressing. I do not know whether you are going to have to get some Ouija board-séance people in there to kind of get you through this one. I do not know whether

Harold is going to be able to do it for you, honestly.

**An Honourable Member:** Speak up.

**Mr. Maloway:** Am I competing with the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) for volume here?

You know the pension liability issue is a big issue here. It bears no end of repeating how all those years, NDP governments too—we are not immune from it—but governments since 1962 ignored the pension liabilities that were increasing every year with teachers and public servants. You know, it was this government that came to grips with it and started paying off what is going to be a pay down over 30 years. We have been paying \$75 million at one point, and now it is up from \$96 million to \$110 million this year. All currently hired people are being funded as we go. Why have we not had Tories stand up and tell us what a brilliant idea this is? We could have taken the money just as they did for 11 years and pretend that the problem did not exist. Do the old ostrich, put your head in the sand, pretend there is not a problem. I guess that is what they were doing before the last election. Their leader had his head under the sand like a big ostrich pretending that there was no problem. I can just imagine the panic in the ranks there.

These are some of the fiscal management changes that we made. They have to be really shocked over there. They did not expect this. They did not get these results from their own government, and to get it from an NDP government, this has to be something that is causing them no end of grief about how to deal with a government that actually runs things the way they should.

The banning of union and corporate donations, that must have driven them crazy because it sent them back to oblivion. They have not figured yet that they have to go out door-to-door and raise money from their folks. They are so used to getting those \$5,000 and \$10 donations from their corporation friends, and all of a sudden the money was not coming in. They could not figure it out. I mean, how complicated is it? You cannot collect it. It did not come in. It is not there so you have to go out and get it a different way. Do not sit here and complain about it. What are you going to do in your next campaign? Are you going to promise,

"Oh, well, we are going to bring back union and corporate donations." That is going to be a big seller. That is going to get you lots of votes.

I think my light is blinking a little bit here. I must be getting near my time limit. But, anyway, thank you very much.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** It is a pleasure to rise today to respond to the most recent budget speech. I am disappointed that the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) would—as a relatively new member, I was quite disappointed that he would take the kind of shots he did at the member from Morris who brings forward petitions from her constituents. I know that the minister of highways, who is sitting beside the member from Elmwood, was quite concerned. I give the minister of highways credit, because he realized what the Member for Elmwood was saying, that only 10 kilometres of unpaved road, that he is not concerned about safety; obviously, the Member for Elmwood is not. I am not surprised that the minister of highways was kind of ashamed for his own colleague and kind of the words that he was saying.

I think that is unfortunate that a member, any member, from any side of the House or from any political party would stand up and make the kind of derogatory comments that the Member for Elmwood made about an elected representative, the honourable Member for Morris, who brings forward those concerns that her constituents have brought to her, that her constituents have said, "We think that this is an issue that should be brought to the Legislature. We want attention made of it and we want it brought forward." And the Member for Elmwood stands up and criticizes that kind of a local initiative. Well, perhaps he does not take that kind of initiative in his own riding. Perhaps he does not care to represent the views of the constituents within Elmwood, and I think that that is unfortunate. I think that that is unfortunate, that he does not see the value of that kind of representation.

Certainly, I know he was making comments about the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), and I want to say that I have had the opportunity now for two years to work with the Member for Lac du Bonnet, not just here in the Legislature but also back home in his constituency, and I do not know of another member of his equal who works so hard in his constituency and



communicates with those residents within Lac du Bonnet to ensure that he understands what their concerns are and understands how he can best represent them in the community and in this Legislature. Yet we are left to hear the Member for Elmwood criticize that kind of initiative and criticize the real hard work that the Member for Lac du Bonnet has put in, in representing those constituents. I find that concerning.

I know I heard some of the comments regarding Steinbach and the Bethesda Hospital, and I found it strange that the Member for Elmwood decided to ignore the fact that so much of the funding that goes into Bethesda Hospital is privately raised by the foundation. Of course, he did not want to give any credit to the good people of the Steinbach constituency, and in Grunthal and in Hanover and in Steinbach and in Niverville, who are out there putting their own money into these facilities, because the government is not putting it fully in and, I think, instead of making the kind of comments that the Member for Elmwood made, he should have got up and congratulated those people who work within the Bethesda Foundation, who raised that private capital. Private capital, I know that that is not something that the Member for Elmwood likes. They do not like to talk about private health care, but, you know, we are moving to that system with or without the member's agreement, because if people have to put in private money to get anything done within their hospitals, that is becoming a partially private system. So the Member for Elmwood, of course, was mistaken by not giving good credit to the people who raised the money in the Bethesda Foundation.

Certainly, I heard him speak about the Kleefeld School that was opened in late 1999, and I applaud the effort of the former Filmon government for approving that school, for getting the spade in the ground, for getting that project underway. I know that the members opposite were not able to put a halt to the project in time, because there were already walls going up and things were being done, or perhaps that would have happened, but the good people of Kleefeld got the school that they needed, and they got it because of the Filmon government. So, again, the Member for Elmwood puts incorrect information on the record, and I think it is important that it be corrected.

He did mention the Mitchell Middle School, and I look at the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and, yes, we joined together at the opening of that school and, I think, that that was an important initiative, and I am not beyond saying where a good project has happened. When \$8 million or \$8 billion is spent in a budget, in any budget, there are going to be some good initiatives, and that was one of them. The Mitchell Middle School was one of those good initiatives. There are many more for the Steinbach constituency that need to be done, and if the Member for Elmwood could only find one in six years, I think, that that is a failing record, but on the Mitchell Middle School, I say it is a good project, and there are a few more that need to be done within the area.

I wondered, when the member was speaking about newspaper reports, and I also heard the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) speak about the newspaper reports that he has seen that he thought were so very positive, and I hark back to the day after the budget was introduced and the two major daily newspapers here, in the city of Winnipeg, the *Winnipeg Free Press* and *The Winnipeg Sun*, and both of those editorials struck a common chord. Certainly, I do not believe in collusion in the media, but some might think that there was an element of it, because they both recognized, and maybe this speaks to how blatant it was, that there was a missed opportunity. In fact, I think the headlines in the editorials specifically said, "Missed opportunity from this government."

\* (16:50)

So the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) seem to be reading newspapers that other members do not. Perhaps they are mistaken. They do not realize that franking pieces for the NDP are not actually newspapers. Those are not actually the kinds of unbiased reporting that happens within our community and certainly the *Free Press* and *The Sun* did not see the budget the way these members did. They did not see the budget in the sense that they did.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that in a bipartisan fashion, I behoves me to try to bring some light to the members opposite about why they did not get the political spin that they were hoping for on this

budget, and I am sure it shocked many of the members opposite.

I am sure it shocked the new Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) who, I think, is sitting through his first budget. He probably thought, when he went back into his caucus, all of his senior colleagues said, "Oh, do not worry. Do not worry. We are going to get a great spin off of this. Everybody is going to love this budget, because we are sprinkle a little bit here and sprinkle a little bit there. We will wave our magic wand and try to put out fou-fou dust, pixie dust that is going to baffle everyone."

Then it turns out that people were not fooled, as the Member for Minto was probably led to believe from his own caucus. They were not fooled by what happened with this government, and they saw it for what it was. They saw it for a missed opportunity.

The Premier's (Mr. Doer) communication guru was probably scratching her own head and thinking, "What went wrong? How can you spend so much money and get such bad political spin off of one budget?" I heard the Premier, and it was an interesting comment, he was on the radio and there were some comments being made about virtually every group thought that this budget did not do what they were looking for. The Premier said, in his usual tone, "It must be a good budget because everybody did not like it."

How do you set the bar that way, Mr. Speaker? How can you set the bar so low that you think you have a good budget when everybody does not like it? That is a tough bar not to leap over, if that is how you put your own standard about how successful a budget is in the province. I am concerned that we have a Premier who thinks that the mark of a good budget is that everybody is dissatisfied with it. Certainly, I think that the Premier needs to readjust his own standards, readjust what he thinks is a positive thing.

When we look at the budget, I think that, in trying to offer some advice, if I could, Mr. Speaker, to the members opposite about where this budget fell flat and why it did not get the political spin that they hope to, that they did not get the political bounce as it were, I think perhaps it is indicative of where the New Democrats have

moved in the last number of years. Certainly, they have become the Jack Layton New Democrats of Manitoba. That is an approach that has not worked. It has not worked federally, and it certainly is not working in the province of Manitoba. They have looked at their federal colleagues and they thought that maybe that is not a bad way to go, even though they do so poorly. They have tried to incorporate some of those—*[interjection]*

The Member for Elmwood does not agree. Maybe he is still a Svend Robinson New Democrat, and if he is, that is certainly fine. He has every right to do that, and he has every right to follow that particular lead. I would certainly encourage him to look at something better and something brighter for our own province.

He spent a good deal of time talking about the American situation. I think that it is fair for members of this House to look at what is going on in other jurisdictions, but I think that it is also a little hypocritical for the Member for Elmwood to point his finger south at what is going on with our neighbours in the south on the debt side, when here in Manitoba our debt, as he admits, has gone up \$3 billion.

He tries to wave that away and tried to say, "Yes, it is \$3 billion, but we have gone about doing a project here and a project there, and that accounts for the \$3 billion." I suspect that the member did not add up the costs of those projects and whether or not they costed out to \$3 billion. I am sure that they did not. I am sure that they did not cost out to 5 percent of that increase in our budget, so he needs to do his homework a little bit more before he comes into this House and sanctimoniously points his finger at everyone else.

I had the opportunity during our break from the last session to travel to a number of different areas. I had the opportunity to go to Swan River and to Dauphin and to The Pas. Certainly, I appreciated hearing the concerns of many of the constituents of other members across the way in those communities.

When we were in Ethelbert, actually—the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) lifts her head because she recognizes the town, I think maybe she drove through it one time on the way to another important meeting that she was on, waved

from the window as she kind of went by with the flags flying from her vehicle, but in fact we actually stopped in Ethelbert. We actually stopped in Ethelbert to talk to constituents there and to hear what their concerns were. As we sat in the kitchen of an individual in Ethelbert who said that they were left to wait for two, two and a half years for a hip replacement, I thought: "This is a very, very sad situation, not just because it is happening in Ethelbert, it is happening all over the province." Those are the kind of waiting times that residents are left to suffer through, residents are left to wait, and I asked the question because I thought it was an important question to ask, "Have you spoken to your local representative about this issue?" And the individual said, "Well, yes, I did, but she said that I should put more pressure on the doctor."

Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of a response that is not becoming of a member of this Legislature, that is not becoming of a very, very serious problem within our medical system, and it is the kinds of concerns we heard throughout the area, throughout the province in the north and in the south and in the east and the west, those are the sort of concerns that are happening throughout Manitoba. But the Jack Layton New Democrats across the way, they do not listen. They do not think that these are real concerns. They do not want to hear anymore. They become kind of believers in their own spin, in their own news releases. They go back and they listen to the great spin doctors that they have hired in their area and feel, "Well, it does not really matter what our constituents are saying because our spin doctors say if we put out this message, people will believe us, people will continue to support us and people will vote for us."

Mr. Speaker, I think that the expectations of Manitobans have changed and they have moved, and I do not think that the members opposite fully understand it. They still have that kind of Big Brother mentality; that they should be able to rule over all the different areas and they should have complete control in every area. The Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), and I do not mean to pick on him, but he gives us such good fodder in the House that it is difficult not to go back to the areas, but the Member for Elmwood was the individual who stood in this House not too long ago and said, "Well, we cannot give anybody anymore freedom over their pensions because they

might go out and do something like buy a cottage." Go out and buy a cottage. Oh, heaven forbid that somebody would actually take the money that they worked for for 40 or 50 years and then, in their twilight years, in their golden years, that they would go and do something that they wanted to use it for. But that is the mentality. There is the mentality of the Member for Elmwood, because he would rather say, "You know what? We know best and we will give you out a penny at a time and if you suffer a little bit, then you are suffering for a greater cause."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that that is what the Jack Layton New Democrats across the way have fallen into. They have begun to believe their own spin and are not listening anymore to people in the area. I do not think there is any area that typifies or exemplifies that more than the area of Justice. Members opposite went out campaigning for the federal New Democrats last time when the policy of their leader was to not only legalize marijuana, but to reduce penalties, if any penalties, for grow ops. Well, now, all of a sudden that is going to be something. It is interesting because the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) who daily puts out press releases and announcements that do not really go anywhere, that do not really do anything, says, "We need to get a little bit tougher on this; we need to get a little bit tougher on that," but then when the election comes around, he is out there door-knocking for lower penalties for grow ops.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of mentality that the members opposite do not think that people will pick up on. They do not think that people will understand that that is really where they are coming from; that that is where their ideology lies. But we understand and Manitobans are beginning to understand. They are starting to see that this is a government that likes to put out announcements and likes to have political spin, but in the end, after six years, it is kind of hard to hide from your record. You cannot run and hide because the proof is there.

The Minister of Justice today decides to put out a release and says that this is going to be the cure-all. This is going to be all the solutions for the crime in the city of Winnipeg, the city of Brandon and in rural Manitoba. Where has he been for six years? For six long years he has waited to make some sort of an announcement. He thinks this is a

culmination. We understand what is happening. We know this is just another in a long line of announcements that do not really have any meaning, a long line of announcements, get a headline tomorrow and then it will slowly be faded away into the sunset. People are starting to understand that is not the kind of government they want. That is not the kind of government that produces a long-term vision, a long-term idea of where the economy should go. It is the kind of government that is governed by the spin that comes out of their media relations room and by the staff who write their speeches, and they have kind of become cocooned under the dome here. I think it is disappointing that is the kind of mentality that holds here.

\* (17:00)

The Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) says, "What do you not like about the budget?" Well, I need a bit more time. I suppose I could ask for a leave yet, but I am glad the Member for Elmwood is asking me what I do not like about the budget. I find it interesting that in the last six years, since the New Democrats have taken office, they have never asked my own constituents about the budget, for six years. Prebudget meetings have been held throughout the province. I suspect there have probably been 70 or 80 since the government took office. There has not been one, single, solitary prebudget meeting in the Steinbach constituency, in Hanover, Niverville, or Steinbach.

It got awful quiet on the other side there. I know it is surprising. I know there are some members scratching their head. The Member for La Verendrye, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), has had three prebudget meetings. Well, apparently you can just draw a line at La Verendrye and everything south of that does not matter. You might as well just take it off the map. I am not surprised there is no roadwork that is happening south of that area, but you might as well take it off the map.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) likes to load up the wagon and call all the ministers together and say, "Oh, get in the truck because we are going to Steinbach for our ribbon cutting. We had nothing to do with it. We did not put any money in it, but there is finally a ribbon to cut in the province, so let us head off to Steinbach. We will cut a ribbon

and then we will head back to Winnipeg." Maybe, when they were down there, they should have asked the people of Steinbach what they thought about the economy because it is a successful area. It is one of the small, bright lights in what is otherwise a difficult economy in the province, but do you think they will come and ask them? Do you think they would come and ask industrious people in Kleefeld, in Grunthal, in Steinbach, in Hanover and Niverville, "How do you think the province would do in the budget?" No, they will not come and ask.

The minister nods his head, the minister of highways says, "Yes, yes, we are going to do that." Well, I am holding him to that commitment that next year there will be that meeting in the Steinbach constituency. I will make sure there are people out there to bring their opinion. If he wants to nod his head in agreement, I will be happy to welcome him to the area to finally listen to the views.

The New Democrats across the way decided that, for the sixth year in a row, they were going to ignore the Steinbach constituency, that they did not care to hear what the residents of the Steinbach constituency heard or felt about the budgets, I took the opportunity to send out my own prebudget survey because I knew the government would not. I was happy to have more than 100 responses. I think I am understanding now why they do not come out to my area. Only 38 percent are optimistic about the economy in this province. Only 7 percent believe that this government has an economic plan for the people in the Steinbach constituency. They do not believe they have done enough on personal income taxes. They do not believe they have done enough on payroll taxes.

They believe that high taxes is the No. 1 issue in our area. They believe too much government regulation is the No. 2 issue. Those are all very, very serious issues. Now I understand why the members opposite do not want to come to Steinbach. They do not want to hear that message because it is not the Jack Layton mentality. It is not the Jack Layton message of these New Democrats. I would welcome them next year. I would ask them to come next year. For the sixth year in a row I would extend an invitation and say, "Come and hear what the people of Steinbach, of Hanover and of Niverville have to say about the

budget. Do not bury your head in the sand. Do not be scared to come out and hear our different message." That is what they have decided to do.

The Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) can get up and he can pontificate all he wants about what he thinks is not happening in other areas, but unless he opens his ears and comes out and says, "Yes, we are going to hear you and listen to you," he is a hollow man with hollow speech. Thank you.

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to rise in the House to speak on Budget 2005. I am also very proud to represent the fine constituents of Gimli. The town of Gimli was recently recognized as a gold medalist for one of the most liveable communities in the world, internationally recognized.

**An Honourable Member:** And what did you have to do with that?

**Mr. Bjornson:** Oh, absolutely everything, I assure the member opposite. West St. Paul and St. Andrews are both celebrating 125 year anniversaries, and they continue to grow and prosper.

The village of Dunnottar, which is a very wonderful site along Lake Winnipeg built on the tradition of the railway and the vision of Sir William Whyte, they are doing a lot to forward their history; of course, Winnipeg Beach, which has been reinventing itself over the last five years as a summer destination in Manitoba. I am indeed very proud to stand up in the House representing the fine constituents of Gimli.

I would like to take members opposite on a little journey. Five years ago, if you were to enrol in university with the dream of becoming a teacher, for example, you would have found that your tuition fees were lowered 10 percent. They have been frozen ever since. So in that five-year pursuit of an arts degree, science degree and then a post-secondary degree, Bachelor of Education degree, on top of that, a two-year degree, in that five-year time, tuition was lowered 10 percent, frozen for five years.

In that five-year period the student might be taking a part-time job to pay for that tuition and, lo and behold, we have consistently raised the minimum wage. In that five-year time when that student graduated, what do they come into in the teaching profession? They come into a system that has \$130 million more invested into it. They come into a system that has been reinventing itself with new curriculum and new supports. They come into a system where their chances of getting a job in a school that has had some type of renovation done are pretty darn good. The chances of a student teaching in a brand new school in Manitoba are, I believe, one in thirty when they graduate this year under our watch and the work that we have done in capital projects.

**An Honourable Member:** Are those real teachers?

**Mr. Bjornson:** Those are indeed real teachers. The chance of working in a school that has had a major capital project completed in Manitoba is one in six.

Their chances of working in a school that has had some improvements done through capital program under this government is one to one. If you are using simply the numbers, we have done over 600 projects. What else are students who have chosen a career in education going to see when they get their first job as a teacher? Well, they are seeing adequate, reasonable compensation for the first time in 15 years, Mr. Speaker.

**An Honourable Member:** Thirty-two kids.

**Mr. Bjornson:** We are seeing smaller class sizes than members opposite. If class sizes are growing, Mr. Speaker, that is because we have growth in this province once again.

**An Honourable Member:** You are not building schools.

**Mr. Bjornson:** We are building lots of schools. Our capital plan: \$45 million a year every year for the next three years, and that is a commitment to capital. Members opposite, \$18.6 million, \$18.6 million for the entire public school system. We inherited quite a legacy of neglect as far as infrastructure is concerned. *[interjection]*

I hear the members opposite talking about building new schools. When I listen to the member from Fort Whyte who is talking about needing a high school, I guess high schools can cost a pretty significant amount of money, anywhere from \$12 million to \$15 million to \$17 million. When he gave his budget speech, the member from Fort Whyte, members opposite have been talking about eliminating all property taxes for education, so that is \$732 million. Just eliminate it all. Your golden opportunity, eliminate it all.

The member opposite also suggested that we should eliminate the capital tax. We should eliminate payroll tax. We should be more competitive with Alberta. We should cut out gambling. What does this add up to? Mr. Speaker, \$1.571 billion. Oh, by the way, build me a school. I think the member from Elmwood hit the nail on the head when he said, "Who is going to pay for all these things, the Easter Bunny?" The members opposite do not seem to have a real grasp on the idea of tax cuts and delivering services.

**An Honourable Member:** Santa Claus.

**Mr. Bjornson:** The honourable Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) is suggesting maybe Santa Claus is part of their plan as far as their idea of what is deliverable here in the province of Manitoba. I will tell you what is deliverable, Mr. Speaker. We have had an incredible success rate with our capital plan, a very ambitious one, both in the public school system and in health care. Of course, I hear them talk about empty promises. I heard the member from Tuxedo talk about an empty promise in talking about construction of schools and whatnot.

Again, their record is very clear in capital. They promised the Brandon hospital time after time, but who is the party that delivered the Brandon hospital? It is the members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker—*[interjection]*

\* (17:10)

Let us talk about deliverables. I heard members opposite refer to what we are doing as sprinkling, little sprinklings here and there. Well, \$30 million in education levy being cut is a pretty significant sprinkle, if you ask me. Mr. Speaker, \$20 million cut from the farm taxes, that is a very

significant cut. When you consider our record, every time we have made a promise, we have delivered, and because of that our education system is a very robust education system. Members opposite do not even talk about education; they talk about taxes. They do not talk about the investment in education; they talk about it in terms of costs and taxes. As a teacher, I find that quite offensive.

We have a very robust education system because we are investing in that system. *[interjection]* Yes, I am a taxpayer, and I see the value of what we were getting for our money in our education system. But members opposite just talk about it as costs, costs, costs. You know what? The costs of education have gone up, yes. In fact, the telephone bills have gone up 68 percent in our education system, and we are big consumers of telephone in the education system. But a 68% increase in costs when they privatized the telephone system—68% cost increase. Of course, there are other costs that have increased because we do bus a lot of our students. We have seen the price of oil at record levels. So there are certain things that are driving the costs of the education system.

Certainly, we are making a difference by funding at the rate of economic growth, \$130 million more into the system. This year I had the privilege of bringing forward the second-highest announcement as far as real dollars being reinvested in our education system. By the way, when was the highest announcement? Oh, that would happen to be during our tenure in government as well, the highest announcements in education funding. If I look at the highlights of the announcements, we put in \$6.5 million into special needs education alone in this announcement. Now, how does that compare to members' opposite \$15.2 million in five years? One thing that we announced in our budget was almost half of what they put in the entire system in five years.

This is a government that is committed to education, and Budget 2005 affirms that commitment to education. We fund 100 percent of the employer contribution to pensions, and they said, "Why do you not talk about teacher pensions?" Let us talk about that for a while. Why do we not talk about it? What are you doing for

teacher pensions? I heard a little bit of nattering across the floor earlier today.

First of all, we are funding them, a \$3.2-billion liability. We are funding it, and we have seen our credit rating improve because of our commitment to fund that liability. We are funding all new teacher contributions, 100 percent of the government responsibility of teacher contributions to pensions for new teachers. We have opened up pensions three times, and we have made a lot of really significant changes that are good for the educators in this province. Why? Because we value teachers. It is something that was really lacking in members' opposite 11 years in power, 10 of those years of which I taught in the public school system and never once felt valued as an educator because of the actions of members opposite. We invest in education; we are investing in our future.

Now, members opposite talk about missed opportunities. I hear this over and over again: you missed an opportunity to eliminate the school taxes. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have made our promises, we have kept our promises, and we continue to deliver on those promises. They talk about, "Oh, taxes are going to go up in the schools." Well, I would gladly bring my tax bill and show the members opposite how mine has gone down because my taxes have been impacted by this government cutting the education support levy. My taxes have gone down. I heard my previous critic from Tuxedo say, "Your taxes have gone up 60 percent." I will show her my tax bill; they have gone down significantly. That has to do with our cuts to the education support levy, modest increases at the school board level, and also some initiatives taken by the municipal councils. But the bottom line is my taxes are going down.

**An Honourable Member:** You live in an ice shack.

**Mr. Bjornson:** No, it is not an ice shack. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, we have indeed been making a difference. I keep hearing members opposite talk about taxes going up, but, again, it reminds us time and time again why the members opposite said, "We do not want to teach history as a compulsory subject in school because history makes us accountable." Well, they did not say the "makes us

accountable" part, but that was obviously their motive. They said to the Manitoba history teachers—I happen to be one of them who is quite upset with that lack of vision where, "Oh, history is not important; it does not have to be compulsory." They eliminated history as a compulsory subject. Well, history is very important to Manitobans, and we think it is important that we learn our history. Maybe members opposite should read their history as a party and what they did for education in this province.

They talk about press and spin. Well, I can just imagine the spin doctors of the party opposite when they were saying, "Well, the Education Minister announced we are going to cut education funding by 2.6 percent this year." That is investing in education, Mr. Speaker. "Members opposite are pleased to announce that 800 teachers have left the province since we have been in power." That is really something that they would have to spin. The Filmon Tories announced that over 800 nurses have left the province in the last 10 years, and they want to talk about spending.

The reason we have a lot of announcements is because we make promises. They are good news announcements. Manitoban people know that; Manitoban people hear that. Manitobans are pleased when we step forward and we say we are investing in education, we are investing in health care, we are investing in capital, we are investing in highways. We are investing in the future of this province, and our growth speaks for itself, \$10 billion more since we have been in office.

I also hear members opposite saying that we are the only province that funds education this way. Well, again, they have not done their homework. There are seven out of ten provinces that continue to use property tax levies to support education. Arguably, there are eight. If you were to take into consideration one province where it is not specifically designated for education, where it does go to general revenues, where general revenues are used to fund education, arguably, there are eight provinces that fund education through some property tax levy.

Now, how do we compare? Well, quite favourably, I must say, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we compare quite favourably when you factor in the property

tax credits, which members opposite do not want to talk about, when you factor in our reduction in the ESL, when you factor in our reduction in the apportioning of the farmland, when you factor in our recent announcement of the cut to the farm property taxes for education as a rebate. When you factor that all in, we compare very favourably to both Ontario and oil-rich Alberta, but members opposite do not want to do the math. The math they want to do is cut the taxes, build hospitals, build highways, ignoring all of our plans. Who is going to pay for that?

What we promise to Manitobans and what we deliver to Manitobans time and time again is a balanced budget, sustainable, affordable tax cuts, and investment in the programs that are important to Manitobans. We have done that every year we have been in office, and we are going to continue to do that every year we are in office.

Let us talk about rural Manitoba for a little while, Mr. Speaker. As a rural member, I take exception when I continually hear members opposite say that, "We are the party of rural Manitoba, and you do not have any rural members." Well, last time I checked, the constituency of Gimli, the constituency of Selkirk—

**An Honourable Member:** Where do you live?

**Mr. Bjornson:** I live in Gimli. The constituency of Gimli, the constituency of Selkirk, the constituency of Dauphin, these are all rural areas.

**An Honourable Member:** Interlake.

**Mr. Bjornson:** Interlake, yes, my friend, in Interlake and the North. To members opposite: the North. You remember that part of the province they consistently cut off the top of the map, the area they completely ignored, did not even visit during the last election? That happens to be quite rural. We are a party for rural Manitoba. We are a party for northern Manitoba. We are a party for all of Manitoba.

We do have a very strong record to build on, and we have been investing in rural Manitoba. I know the member from Steinbach acknowledged that, yes, we built a school there, and the member from Elmwood very eloquently outlined all of the things that were going on in a number of different

rural constituencies that do not happen to be our seats. But we are investing in all of Manitoba, and we are investing on need. We govern for all of Manitoba, and this budget is a budget for all of Manitoba.

We do have four main pillars, and members opposite should be voting for this budget because of what these four main pillars mean for Manitoba.

\* (17:20)

Paying down the debt. First pillar. Increasing our debt payment to \$110 million from \$96 million and addressing, as I said before, the pension monster. We are funding that \$3.2-billion liability for the first time in 40 years, Mr. Speaker.

No draw on the rainy day fund. This is all prudent fiscal management, Mr. Speaker.

Strategic investments. Recently announcing more hip and knee surgery, an announcement that we are going to deliver on, Mr. Speaker, as we deliver on every single announcement.

Now, if you were to take a look at some of the comments of members opposite saying, "We are looking for a better and brighter future," well, so are we, Mr. Speaker. We are looking for a better and brighter future. The member from Steinbach talked about how we need a better and brighter future. Budget 2005 speaks to a better and brighter future for Manitobans.

Again, I mentioned the first pillar, paying down the debt, and start talking about the second pillar, strategic investments. Members opposite were talking about how there is no vision for municipalities. We have the second richest tax-sharing, revenue-sharing arrangement in the entire country, and we are saying we are going to increase that by 8 percent. Oh, no, no, that is not having any vision for rural Manitoba, for our municipalities. An 8% increase. I suppose they are going to vote against that.

Mr. Speaker, the tax-sharing agreement would be municipalities on fuel tax. We are talking about additional police officers as well. The announcement today, an unprecedented investment in justice in Manitoba. I hear the member from Fort Whyte talking about real numbers, real numbers. Well, again, I will remind the member



from Fort Whyte we are talking about real police officers, real people. If he wants to talk real numbers as he said in his speech yesterday, everything that he has been saying in this House about tax cuts and, okay, he did say, "Have a plan to phase it out." For some reason, our plan to phase out the ESL is not a plan, but he is saying that we should have a plan to phase out capital and payroll tax. I do not understand the logic there, but you want to talk about real numbers, the member from Fort Whyte and his party, if you add up just what a couple of them have been saying, \$1.571 billion "Oh, and build me a school." We are talking about real numbers, real people, real strategy, real budget, real economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing this at the same time we are cutting taxes. Members opposite just must be scratching their heads over this one. How can you deliver on all these promises and cut the taxes? Because we have been working very hard with the people in Manitoba. We know what their priorities are, and we know what their vision is for this province. That is the vision that we see here in Budget 2005, so delivering all these deliverables, delivering on all the promises that we make and making tax cuts at the same time.

Also, I guess this is the thing that really gets members opposite, is saving for the future, putting in another \$314 million into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Mr. Speaker, the only regret I have today is that I only have a little bit of time to speak about this budget because there are so many good things, so many good things that we could be speaking about here with Budget 2005.

So it is with that, Mr. Speaker, that I was very pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of my constituents in Gimli and suggest to the members opposite that they should look at this budget with open minds, not the political glasses, let us look at it with open minds, ladies and gentlemen, and let us say, "This is a good budget for Manitoba. This budget builds for the future of Manitoba." For that purpose, for that reason, members opposite should be voting for Budget 2005.

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader):** Seeing that the hour is 25 after 5, at this time, Mr. Speaker, and it is difficult to launch into a good speech and to have it cut short, I am wondering, with the indulgence of the House, if there would be agreement to call it 5:30 so that we could begin with a new speech the next day.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it 5:30? *[Agreed]*

When this matter is again before the House, the debate will remain open.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 14, 2005

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