



Third Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 24, 2002

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table the 2000 Annual Report of the Provincial Ombudsman with respect to The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and The Personal Health Information Act.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister charged with the administration of The Communities Economic Development Fund Act): I am pleased to table for the information of the Assembly the balance sheet for the Development Fund as of December 31, 2001.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery. We have with us from Minitonas School 19 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Mel Lausman. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk).

Also in the gallery we have the Fun Seekers, Crestview United Church, 20 visitors under the direction of Mr. Morrice Brand. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Manitoba Hydro Profits–Debt Reduction

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in this year's Budget

the Doer government announced that it was going to raid \$288 million out of Manitoba Hydro profits strictly to finance the Premier's spending addiction; \$150 million of that was used to balance last year's Budget. Last year's books took \$150 million to balance. That \$150 million represents 72 percent of Hydro's profits from last year—72 percent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Premier of Manitoba does not know a lot about business, but let me remind him that any prudent businessman, any prudent businessperson would do the responsible thing. They would use that profit to pay down their debt. That is what a responsible businessperson would do.

Will the Premier acknowledge the error of his ways and will he simply take the \$228 million or \$288 million that he raided from Manitoba Hydro, put it back, and simply pay down the debt?

* (13:35)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, there is a \$96-million debt repayment in the year 2000, without any draw from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, a further \$96 million in the year 2001-2002, without any draw from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. I am a bit surprised that the member opposite is being so critical of the former premier, Premier Filmon, in this House, who put a considerable amount of money from the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System not into debt repayment but into the rainy day fund.

Profits–Customer Rebate

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Mr. Speaker, again we are talking about Hydro debt, again a reminder to the member opposite. In 2000, the Premier tried to raid \$30 million from the MPIC policy rate holders to use for purposes that it clearly was not intended for. His logic was: Well, I am the Premier. I see the money, it is mine. I will spend

it the way I want. Manitoba policyholders of MPIC disagreed, and in fact the Premier did the right thing and he returned the money. We congratulated him when he did that. In fact, what he did was he paid to those ratepayers of MPIC a dividend. He did the right thing.

If the Premier refuses to take the \$288 million that they have raided from Manitoba Hydro profits to pay down the debt of Hydro, will he at least return that amount of money to the ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, these are members of a party that sold the Manitoba Telephone System. The rates have gone up over 65 percent for urban subscribers. It has gone up even higher for people in rural and northern communities. Shame on the rural members that voted for that telephone bill in the past. We have a situation—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: We have a situation where the debt has gone up at Manitoba Hydro considerably for the purchase of Centra Gas. Last year the initiative that was taken by a former NDP government after the Tories mothballed Limestone, to build Limestone—and I was wrong yesterday—it was not 4.3 cents a kilowatt-hour. It is 6 cents Canadian a kilowatt-hour with the export sales, and it was 4.3 cents American, contrary to their predictions of 3 cents a kilowatt-hour in 1986-1987. So we have this considerable revenue.

The revenue means that Centra Gas lost \$10 million last year. The initiative made by the former members, and the initiative taken by the vision of this former government is going to produce \$230 million in export revenue to be invested in health, education, children, debt reduction. That investment will be made to the benefit of all Manitobans, not the privileged few under the Manitoba Telephone sale of 1996.

* (13:40)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, again, make it very clear. The \$150 million of the \$288 million is

going to pay off last year's books. That is what it is going for. It is for his spending habits.

The Premier will know that the Manitoba Society of Seniors and the Consumers' Association consider this raid of Manitoba Hydro profits as a hidden tax. Their position is very clear. It has always been that the profits of Crown corporations should be retained and returned to the users of the utility in rate decreases.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Will the Premier listen to seniors such as we have up in the gallery today? Will the Premier do the right thing and listen to the seniors? Will he return the Hydro profit rates to the Hydro ratepayers?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Hydro ratepayers, where the revenue is coming from, are the U.S. consumers. We are returning the money from the U.S. consumers and U.S. business back to Manitobans. I know that is a novel idea for the member opposite. The \$400 million in revenue that Tories voted against in 1986 and '87 now is produced by export revenues and that is being returned back to the health care system, to the education system, to children, to highways, to our future. At the same time, we are making debt repayment to benefit all Manitobans.

Budget Manitoba Hydro Profits

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), who is also the Minister responsible for Hydro, denied there was any pecuniary benefit for retroactively raiding Hydro.

My question to the minister is: Does he understand that without retroactively raiding Hydro, he and his colleagues in Cabinet would be subject to a 20% penalty under balanced budget legislation?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am answering—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recall the discussion and statement made by former Premier Filmon on the amount of money taken from the sale of the telephone system used to be placed into the so-called rainy day fund in 1996 and '97. In fact, I remember Alice Krueger wrote an article about the law, the balanced budget law and the treatment of that sale of that Crown corporation.

I am shocked that twice today members of this House on the opposite side would be criticizing the former Premier of Manitoba, Premier Gary Filmon, who in fact had initiated some of the same practices that the Minister of Finance followed through prudently. I might point out that in—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: The members opposite, Mr. Speaker, have continually talked about expenditures and revenues. The revenues in the last three years the members opposite were in government, it went up \$574 million; our first three years in office, \$604 million. Your increased revenues were three at 10 percent. Ours were 9.5. Your expenditure increases were \$1 billion or 19 percent. Ours were \$492 million or 7.6 percent.

The fiscal stabilization draw, Mr. Speaker, was \$471 million in your three years in office and we have not taken a cent so far. We have budgeted for \$93 million in this year. This is a fantastic Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), and we are proud of the Budget he brought in on time.

* (13:45)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members that when the Speaker rises the Speaker should be heard in silence and all members should be seated, and also to remind all members that Question Period is 40 minutes and the clock continues running when there is disorder. So if we have order there will be more questions and more answers.

Mr. Tweed: I will try and make this question as simple as possible for the Minister of Finance. Does the Minister of Finance understand that without retroactively raiding Hydro—meaning he woke up on the 22nd and realized he was \$150 million short—he and his colleagues in Cabinet would be subject to a 20% penalty under balanced budget legislation?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): No matter how you slice it, the Budget was going to balance this year, it will balance next year and it will balance the year after that. The heritage that was given to us by the foresight of this Government and its predecessors to build Limestone and to extract those profits from the American market are ones that will benefit your constituents, our constituents and all Manitobans.

Mr. Tweed: It is pretty easy to offer a balanced budget when you can raid Crown corporations at the end of the day. I offer to the Minister of Finance his document, his Third Quarter Report that came out after an interim report that shows he had a deficit.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I am reluctant to get into a point of order. I know the member is in full flight, but he should be reminded that a supplementary question requires no preamble. I think we have had two preambles already. Thank you.

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

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Speaker, I was really trying to clarify whether the minister understood balanced budget legislation and the fact that he would suffer a penalty if he did not present a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a

supplementary question should not require a preamble. At this time I would just like to remind all honourable members.

* * *

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Finance confirm that his second copy of the Third Quarter Report would have shown a deficit if he had not included the \$150 million that he had taken retroactively from Hydro on Budget day?

Mr. Selinger: I always enjoy hypothetical questions, even though they are not allowed under the rules, because it allows me to tell you that the Fiscal Stabilization Fund would have more than covered any requirements. The benefits of Manitoba Hydro have now been available to us because of the foresight of those people on this side of the House that built Limestone, and it was built specifically to provide export of our energy to the United States to displace carbon dioxide and to generate profits which could be used to the benefit of all Manitobans, something you had 12 years to do and did nothing. You put Manitoba in mothballs for 12 years. We are taking it out of mothballs and we are rebuilding this province.

Budget Manitoba Hydro Profits

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, what they are doing is putting this province further in debt.

As a result of the Doer government's demand that Manitoba Hydro retroactively cut a cheque for \$150 million to cover the province's operating deficit for 2002, Manitoba Hydro will have to borrow \$211 million to cover that payment.

* (13:50)

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance why the Doer government is forcing Manitoba Hydro to increase its debt by \$211 million in order to cover a \$150-million operating deficit.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I answered this question from the member from

Fort Whyte yesterday. Manitoba's net income for this year was originally forecast at \$99 million and is now forecast on a net basis, including the loss in Centra Gas to be \$209 million. That is where the extra money will come from.

When it comes to deficits, let us look at the deficits you left us. You left us a deficit in the universities, you left us a deficit in the public schools, you left us a deficit in the hospitals, you left us a deficit in the rural areas for infrastructure and drainage. You left us with deficits, and in the election period you overspent the Budget as well as taking \$185 million out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Those deficits we are going to address while we are in office.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has recently just signed off on Manitoba Hydro's nine-month financial statement. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance: How could he demand that Hydro transfer \$150 million to the Province of Manitoba when their statement as of December 31 indicated that they only had \$14 million worth of cash available? How could he ask them to pay 150?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro, between the period of 1997 and 2001 had profits in excess of their forecast of \$371 million because of the foresight of the people on this side of the House to build the Limestone project, to export energy to the United States and to bring revenues back to Manitoba to build this province, and that is what we are going to do.

Mr. Loewen: Manitoba Hydro has profits. It does not mean it has cash. Does the Minister of Finance really believe—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would once again like to remind all honourable members when the Speaker rises, the Speaker should be heard in silence and all members should be seated. Once again, the clock is running. It is your forty minutes.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Again, I am reluctant to interrupt the

flow of questioning although members seem to enjoy it but, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could draw the member's attention to the rules, to the practices, the procedures of the House. Supplementary questions require no preamble. It does appear the member is getting into a pattern of sentences before his supplementary questions.

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

* * *

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Finance if he really believes that it makes good business sense and in fact is a sound investment practice to strip 72 percent of the profits from Manitoba Hydro in the year 2002, 49 percent of the profits out of Manitoba Hydro in 2003, and 50 percent of the profits out of Manitoba Hydro in 2004. Does he believe that stripping these monies from Manitoba Hydro is called investing in this Crown jewel?

* (13:55)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, what this party believes is that when you make a long-term investment in a natural resource and a Crown corporation to provide benefits to all Manitobans that Manitobans should get the value of those benefits, and that is what we have done in this Budget. We have provided benefits for them in terms of health care. We have maintained the lowest hydro rates in North America. We have balanced the Budget. We have paid down debt, and we have a long-term plan to address the pension liability, which was ignored for 12 years by the members opposite.

Budget Manitoba Hydro Profits

Mr. Harold Gillehammer (Minnedosa): The spokesperson for the Manitoba Society of Seniors has stated today that seniors are fearful of the dangers of raiding Hydro profits, money that historically has gone to Hydro to keep for

the ratepayers. Manitoba seniors understand that you are breaking a public trust. Will you reverse this decision and find your revenue elsewhere? It is available to you in the Stabilization Fund.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I hope the members have taken the time to read the Manitoba Advantage this year, because in there they will see that one of the things that makes us competitive is our low hydro rates. They will also note when they get to the telephone line that they have the second-highest rates in Canada now for Manitoba Telephone System. Every other province has lower rates except the province of British Columbia. Our hydro rates will stay the lowest. The benefits will flow to all Manitobans, and we will not privatize Manitoba Hydro, as you did with the telephone system.

Mr. Gillehammer: I regret the minister does not address the comments that seniors have made today, that they are fearful about the minister raiding the reserves of Hydro to use for general revenue.

I would ask the minister: Will he not take this to the Public Utilities Board? He indicated yesterday that their intention is to go this direction. The board is sitting next week. Will you refer this to the Public Utilities Board?

Mr. Selinger: We believe that elected officials should be responsible for their decisions in front of this House. When the going gets tough, you guys go to the PUB and we go to the Legislature.

Mr. Gillehammer: Never have we seen that kind of disdain and arrogance towards the Public Utilities Board, a board that is put in place to represent the ratepayers and the people of Manitoba. I would ask the minister again to rethink his position, send this to the Public Utilities Board.

Mr. Selinger: It is just remarkable to me when MTS was sold you did not take it to the PUB. You are a hypocrite. We have taken all our decisions into this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): I do not know where to start. I can see who has been in the pub too long.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable minister, we expect more from him than to be using the type of name-calling that he is using in this House. We would ask that he apologize to the honourable member.

Then I have another point of order.

* (14:00)

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

Mr. Selinger: Yes. I will unequivocally withdraw the use of the word "hypocrite."

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I thank the honourable minister and that should take care of that matter.

* * *

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

Point of Order

Mr. Laurendeau: *Beauchesne* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and not provoke debate. If the minister could stop provoking debate, we might be able to get on with Question Period.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all honourable ministers that 417: Answers to questions should be brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate. The honourable Minister of Finance had the floor.

* * *

Mr. Selinger: On the question, Mr. Speaker, we have acted in the interests of Manitobans with the prudent decision to take a transfer from Manitoba Hydro to ensure stability in our health care system, to ensure stability in our public services, to continue to pay down the public debt, to have a long-term plan in place, to

address the pension liability and to ensure that Manitoba Hydro remains in the public sector to serve all Manitobans.

Federal Transfer Payment Overpayment

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, in Sunday's *Winnipeg Free Press* the Finance Minister said: The federal government will take responsibility for the bulk of the transfer funds overpayment stating that, and I quote: "Based on precedents and assurances, it will happen." The federal government is denying any such agreement.

Will the minister explain to this House why he was not truthful with this reporter and, in fact, all Manitobans?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the full explanation for the accounting error can be found in the appendix of the Budget papers on B27. It explains in detail what has happened. It also provides the precedent-setting letter of the former Minister of Finance at the federal level, Mr. Wilson, where a similar situation happened in 1990, and he provided an equalization offset.

We have spoken to the federal Minister of Finance, and we have indicated very clearly in the text in our Budget Address that he has given us his assurances that this problem will be addressed, although the specifics of that have not yet been made available to us.

Mr. Jim Penner: Mr. Speaker, I want to table an article where the minister said, and I quote: in an interview with the *Free Press*, Manitoba Finance Minister said the federal government will take responsibility for the bulk of the transfer funds overpayment.

Considering the federal government has stated there is, and I quote, no deal, no arrangement, no agreement, why did this minister tell the *Winnipeg Free Press* otherwise?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, just the same point of

order as I had to rise on twice earlier. A supplementary question should need no preamble. I think there were a couple of preambles there.

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

* * *

Mr. Jim Penner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Why did this minister, who heard that there would be no deal, no arrangement and no agreement, tell the *Winnipeg Free Press* otherwise, as I have just shown you in the tabled statement?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, in my discussions with the federal Finance Minister and in his discussions not only with me but many members of this community, he has given us his assurances that the error for which the federal government takes the entire responsibility will not result in negative consequences for the province of Manitoba.

The language I used in my Budget Address was very specific, and I quote: "Based on a strong precedent and the assurances of the federal Finance Minister, I am confident that a satisfactory and equitable solution will be found."

Mr. Jim Penner: I would like to ask the honourable minister once more since the quote from the *Free Press* is that there is no deal and no arrangement: Will he admit to knowingly misinforming a member of our press gallery and apologize?

Mr. Selinger: What I will admit to is that the federal government is taking too long to solve this problem in our view. We will be discussing it in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland, in the next couple of days, and the language I referenced on page 19 of the Budget Address is the language that we put on the record. We vetted with the

federal government and let them know we were going to do that.

Regional Health Authorities Amalgamation—Budget

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question is for the Minister of Health, who has indicated that he will be amalgamating the South-Westman and Marquette regional health authorities. There is a large variability in current benchmarks for funding of regional health authorities from less than \$700 per person to the North-Eastman RHA to almost \$1,600 per capita to Parkland RHA, so that funding for the new RHA could be anywhere from \$47 million on one precedent to \$115 million based on the Parkland precedent. Can the minister tell this Chamber what the budget will be for the new RHA?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we will be meeting with the RHAs shortly in order to outline to them the specifics of the increases they will again receive, the third year in a row from the provincial government.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Health Minister. I ask the minister to admit that there are extraordinary differences in per capita allocations of health care dollars from one rural regional health authority to another, and that the operation he is running has little in the way of yardsticks to compare financial or quality from one region to another. Does the minister even know on a comparative basis, for example, the full costs of performing an appendectomy in all the regions?

Mr. Chomiak: I am glad the member is finally starting to realize that what we require in our system is some comparisons of some costs. That is one of the reasons why when we sat down with the federal government we hammered out an agreement that would have standards and reports that would be made by all provinces across all sectors to the federal government. I am glad the Member for River Heights is now onside supporting those kinds of initiatives.

Mr. Gerrard: I am glad the minister admits he does not have the standards in place now.

I would ask my supplementary to the minister: Is the quality of health care the same in a region that is provided less than \$700 per person compared to another region that gets almost \$1,600 per person in funding from the Health Department?

Mr. Chomiak: I do not know if the member understands but there are a variety of factors that go into allocating funding. Recently, I do not know if the member is aware but we are going to population health, quality of care, standard of care. The kinds of situations you are in affect the resources that are provided to that region. Will the member not admit that the woeful resources provided, for example, by the federal government to our Aboriginal brothers and sisters in First Nations' communities is woefully inadequate and it is contributing to the terrible health outcomes and the terrible health standards that are faced by Aboriginal people, and those are the kinds of issues that we have to address with respect to funding formulas?

University of Manitoba Infrastructure Renewal

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister of Advanced Education. For several years under the previous administration, Manitoba schools and universities were vastly underfunded. Due to this neglect, the infrastructure at the University of Manitoba is in need of many repairs. Could the minister please tell this House what impact the Building on Strengths campaign has had in revitalizing the University of Manitoba's campus infrastructure?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education): I do want to thank my colleague for this question. Indeed, as he suggests, Mr. Speaker, this Government is committed to safe state-of-the-art institutions for the students of Manitoba and, indeed, the burden has fallen to this Government to compensate for 12 years of sorry neglect of our post-secondary institutions, I might add, both the operations of those institutions as well as the building.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to a \$50-million provincial funding commitment to the Building

on Strengths campaign we can do just what my colleague has asked of us.

* (14:10)

I might add that we are very proud of the partnership that we have created with a very enthusiastic private sector. Together with the private sector, the University of Winnipeg has been able to raise around \$150 million. This is indeed good news, not only for students, but for all of Manitoba.

Sales Tax Mechanical/Electrical Contracts

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Government announced it will tax mechanical and electrical contracts. As with the Red River community college campus and other such projects, the contracts have already been signed.

The construction community is asking: Is the Government going to grandfather all projects that have been tendered before July 1, 2002?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The officials in the Department of Finance have sent out a letter dated April 22—I will make a copy available to the member opposite—explaining how this sales tax, which was a recommendation from the industry to simplify the application of it, will be applied. I will make that available.

Personal Care Homes Rate Increase

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): We know that the Minister of Health continues to pour more money into the health care system, even though there is no proof that it is making much difference to patient care—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: Bizarre as it seems, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has also told Manitobans to expect less from their health care system.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health if he can guarantee that personal care home rates

will not go up this year to make up for his spending spree?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the largest personal care home increases in the history of the province of Manitoba occurred when members opposite were the government of Manitoba, firstly. Secondly, money from the provincial government to personal care homes was almost frozen and the residents paid more.

I am happy to say that last year, for example, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority provided to personal care homes increases of 8 percent, which was larger I think than the cumulative for the past three years under the previous government, if memory serves me correctly.

Mrs. Driedger: As the minister did not answer the question, I would like to ask him again, because Manitobans are worried and they are wondering. They just want a yes or a no from the minister. Is he going to raise the rates in personal care homes?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I do not think a single prediction members opposite have said about health care in the months leading up to the Budget has come even—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, I do not think a single prediction or attempted prediction has come to fruition. The rates that apply to personal care homes that have been in effect continue to be in effect.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): *Beauchesne* 417, Mr. Speaker, answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and not provoke debate. The answer was very simple. No. We will take his answer as being, yes, he will penalize our seniors.

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

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Not only does the member not have a point of order but he misinterpreted in fact what I said. That is not a point of order. Members might want to demand yes or no answers, but when I said an 8% increase to personal care homes, you notice they did not say anything.

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: You have concluded your comments, the Minister of Health?

Mrs. Driedger: I will ask the minister again then, because he is refusing to answer the question. It is really a yes or a no.

Does the minister have any intention, as they did in Saskatchewan, to raise the fees for rates in personal care homes?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the rates that were established by the previous Conservative government as it relates to personal care homes, they change by regulation on August 1 of every year on a regular rate, have been in effect since the previous Conservative government put it in effect. Those same rates and those same ratios will continue to be in effect.

Regional Health Authorities Deficits

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. On his proposed amalgamation of Marquette and the Southwest region, we know that both regions currently have deficits.

Does he intend to claw back that deficit out of this year's Budget or will he fund it?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, with respect to deficits, I am very pleased that this year we have gotten the deficits down lower I think overall than at anytime since we have been in government and I think at anytime in the last perhaps five or six years.

As I indicated in a previous question, we will be meeting with all of the boards on an individual basis to discuss their budgets specifically with them.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, that answer would indicate that this minister is either unwilling to admit that he is going to claw back or that he is about to reduce the per capita funding to those regions. Will he confirm it?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the member made two contradictory statements and asked me to confirm either of them. As I indicated in my previous response, we are meeting individually with the RHAs, as has been the practice, as was the practice, as remains the practice, to meet with the boards, to meet with the chief financial officers, to review the specifics of the Budget.

As has happened under the last several years of this Government, there will be increases to all of the regions as there is a significant increase across health care despite very difficult circumstances on occasion.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, on a new question. The minister's unwillingness to answer the question puts the fear into those regions that they will have their deficits clawed back out of this year's Budget.

Does the minister intend to claw back the deficit money, yes or no?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we will be funding. We will be meeting with the regional health authorities, and they will be receiving increases in their funding, as they have for the past two years since we formed government.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

World Junior Curling Championship

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, March 31 of this year was a proud moment for a

group of fine Manitoba athletes. On that day Skip David Hamblin threw a perfect draw on his final stone taking Canada to a 3-2 victory over Sweden's Erik Carlsen in the final of the World Junior Curling Championship in Kelowna, B.C.

Hamblin demonstrated his unshakable skill by keeping the house clean, forcing Carlsen to take a late point and then using the last rock advantage to win the fifth consecutive World Junior title for the Canadian men and the twelfth since 1975. This match set the record for most blank ends, with six, and tied the 1987 record for the lowest scoring Junior Men's World Final.

Back in January, Hamblin registered steals in three straight ends to defeat Québec's Martin Crete, 5-4, claiming the Canadian Junior Men's Curling title in Summerside, P.E.I., and earning his team a ticket to the Worlds.

Joining Hamblin on Team Canada were his brother, second, Kevin Hamblin, both natives of Morris; lead, Ross McCannell, from the Dauphin area; and third, Ross Derksen, of Plum Coulee. These young men range in age from 18 to 20, and are all currently attending university. Completing the team were coach Lorne Hamblin, David's father, and alternate Douglas Hamblin, another of David's brothers. This rink, which curls out of the Pembina Curling Club, is just the sixth from Manitoba to win the National Junior Men's title and the first since 1995.

It is my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to rise today to congratulate this team for a job well done. They have demonstrated the true meaning of team work and in doing so have made their hometowns, province and country proud. I wish them continued success and many more victories in the future. Thank you.

*(14:20)

Rural Manitoba Commitment

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the MLA for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) put out a lot of rhetoric on behalf of rural Manitobans.

I rise before this House today to speak about our Government's real commitment to rural Manitoba. This Government believes strongly

that the contribution made by rural Manitoba plays an integral role in the development and prosperity of our province. Only by providing ongoing and comprehensive support and assistance to rural Manitoba can our province truly prosper.

Our Government is protecting rural Manitoba through significant funding increases for flood protection. We have committed \$25 million to flood protection and repair of a damaged water management system caused by substantial funding cuts by the previous government. We have reduced the cost of drinking water tests through a 70% subsidy to counteract the costly privatization of the tests by the previous government.

This Government is sustaining the health of rural Manitobans by increasing funding to rural EMS and ambulances by \$5 million, in addition to supplying 70 new ambulances. By adding medical school spaces cut by the previous government, we have recruited new doctors to rural Manitoba, and for the first time in a decade we have ensured that the RCMP is at its full complement. Protecting the health and safety of rural Manitoba is a priority of this Government.

A prosperous rural economy means a strong provincial economy. In partnership with the private sector, we have created new growth in the rural economy, an example being the 230 jobs at Simplot. We have made rural living more affordable through a \$7-million property tax savings increase for farmers, \$150 property tax reduction, and the equalization of Hydro rates in Manitoba. Our commitment to ethanol development in the province will create new grain markets and feed livestock production.

Mr. Speaker, I will put our rural accomplishments up against his record any day, anywhere in this province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure we all want to hear the member's statement from the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

Joseph Gerald Omichinski

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to honour the life of Joseph Gerald Omichinski who succumbed to cancer on January 8 of this year at the age of 85.

Joseph Omichinski was born in 1916 at Ladywood, Manitoba. He served with the Royal Canadian Air Force from 1940 to 1945. Joe and his wife, Vicki, farmed in the Oakville district for many years until his retirement in 1992.

Joe was a very hard worker, gifted with leadership skills and organizational abilities. He was widely respected for his hard work and dedication to his community. For most of his life, he actively sought to improve the conditions for those living in the rural area, serving in public offices as a councillor for the Portage la Prairie rural municipality for nearly 40 years. In this capacity, he ensured the municipality had well-graded roads, adequate drainage for the farmlands, and was instrumental in the development of the Assiniboine River diversion.

Throughout his political career Joe represented the R.M. on many community boards and committees. He served with the Assiniboine Conservation Watershed Board and for 26 years he was a member of the Portage and District General Hospital board, where he oversaw the construction of the current hospital.

Joe was also a director with the United Grain Growers board of directors for 21 years and he held a seat on the Winnipeg Grain Exchange. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus, the Canadian Legion Branch No. 65 and the Good Shepherd Parish Roman Catholic Church.

Joe always found time for people, for which I am most personally grateful. His dedication to his community, to his fellow man will always be remembered.

I would like to extend my condolences on behalf of all members of this House to Joe's wife, Vicki, their children, Mitchell and Maureen, and their families.

Post-Secondary Education

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): I am pleased to report that again this year our Government has chosen

to freeze university and college tuition fees for the 2002-03 academic year. This is the third straight year that students will enjoy this benefit. Our Government recognizes the value of post-secondary education. We believe that all students deserve an affordable, accessible, and quality education.

Since taking office our Government has made education a top priority. In 2000-01 our Government fulfilled a major election commitment by reducing tuition by 10 percent, the first time that tuition had decreased in more than 30 years. In 2001-02, by freezing tuition for an additional year, the benefit of the reduction was extended to more students.

In controlling tuition fees our Government recognizes that students need help when they are students. We have responded to students by reinstating a provincial bursary program and also by providing an additional \$6 million in debt-free support to students.

As well, in recognizing the importance of investing in our colleges and universities, resources to institutions have increased by over 18 percent in the past two years. This is greater than the total for the previous ten years.

These measures mark our direction for education policy in Manitoba, one of hope and renewal. A tuition freeze does not only make an advanced education more affordable, but it also serves to attract new students to our province's colleges and universities.

We have witnessed significant increases in enrolment at our academic institutions. By reducing the costs of a post-secondary education, students also spend less time preoccupied with part-time work and more of that time in the classroom.

I am pleased that our Government has been able to work more closely with Manitoba students in addressing their needs and concerns and that once again we have maintained tuition levels at 10 percent below.

Harness Racing

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to comment on several items today. First, I would

like to extend congratulations to the Hamblin Rink for their curling success.

Second, I would like to extend condolences to the family of Dave Oster and friends. Dave Oster served for many years as the reeve of West St. Paul and did an incredible job. He will be badly missed.

Third, I would like to comment on the Manitoba standardbred industry. Harness racing in Manitoba has been important for many years, with the Manitoba Great Western Harness Racing Circuit having existed for over 80 years. This is an industry which is important in rural Manitoba, with some 500 Manitobans, with some more than one million dollars being paid in wages and salaries and contributing in many ways to rural Manitoba with race dates already lined up.

The NDP in the Budget earlier this week suddenly brought down an axe and took their funding to absolute zero. It is a devastating, ridiculous blow that the NDP has cast over Manitoba harness racing. It is a sad day that this Budget would move in that direction.

* (14:30)

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS ADJOURNED DEBATE (Third Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resumed 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 Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto, and the debate remains open.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, most of the time when we address a budget or a debate on the Budget, there has been at least some occasion to celebrate. However, in this Budget, it became very clear that the innovative accounting procedures that have been adopted by this Mr. Doer's administration are very similar to the innovative accounting procedures that were done during the Pawley administration

and the Schreyer administration. Very similar tactics are being used.

What is most interesting is, when you look at their revenue streams, it is very evident that their overexpenditures this year alone would have caused them a great deal of grief had it not been for some very astute business-like planning during the previous 12-year period. Those of us that were in Cabinet from 1988 to 1993 will know the huge gut-wrenching decision making that went on to correct some of the mistakes that were made by the Pawley administration in some of the huge overexpenditures that were made while Pawley and his crew were in government. It always reminds me of a statement my deputy minister made to me back in 1988. He said during the Schreyer administration, there were huge revenue stream increases. He said governments scrambled during those three years of huge revenue-stream increases to spend every dollar they could lay their hands on. He said they built castles, and they built buildings. And he said but they paid no attention to who would fix the roof when times came due.

Today, we are in the same sort of a position. It took the Conservative administration 12 long years to fix what the Pawley administration had achieved in four short years of overspending. That is to balance the budget, to put the finances of this province in a condition that all Manitobans could accept and live with and to finally bring this province to a balanced budget. Not only did they bring it to a balanced budget, they left a huge legacy. They left a very significant amount of money in the rainy day fund. They left virtually billions of dollars in the various government agencies such as Crop Insurance, such as Public Insurance Corporation, such as workmen's compensation, such as Manitoba Hydro. Yet the only thing they can talk about is the sale of MTS.

Well, let me put some thoughts on the record. The people of Manitoba received a pretty fair value, I think, on a corporation that was sold for their benefit. I think we need to also recognize that the technology used at the time by communications corporations, be they government or otherwise, in many cases, were antiquated. They were largely based on copper-wire transmissions and not satellite

transmissions, as is the case today. I give to you a case such as the SaskTel. I wonder, in real dollars, how much SaskTel is really worth today. There are rumours around that you could not sell it if they tried.

Manitoba Telephone System would be in a very similar situation today had we retained it as it was, because there were massive changes happening in the communication system. We all knew that. There were massive amounts of capital required to bring that whole communications industry into the modern era. I mean, satellite transmission is a reality in the world of telecommunications. When you go to the Ukraine, as we did, you can take a cell phone all across the Ukraine, and you have perfectly clear transmission because it is all satellite-based transmission. Can we do that in Canada? No. I think we are still significantly behind the times in that regard, but I think we are fast approaching the ability to gain that kind of technology in this province as well, but there are others that cannot. So I say to the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his Cabinet that what they are doing today is robbing the people, the young people of this province of their future ability to gain access to an international marketplace that will be more and more competitive.

Manitoba Hydro was developed for the people of Manitoba. Manitoba Hydro and the dams that were built were built for the people of Manitoba, so they could have access to the cheapest rates of energy, to make industries, businesses, farmers and all individuals competitive from an energy standpoint, and they have done that. Regardless of who built the dams, and I think there is some question about who promoted and who built and those arguments will always be there, but regardless of who built the dams, Manitobans benefited.

It takes another socialist approach, another socialist government's spending spree habits to drive us into an economic abyss again, and it will take another government after these socialists leave, it will take them another half a decade to correct it again. That is the problem that we have in Manitoba. There is a mentality that exists on opposite benches, on government benches today, that they can spend themselves out of difficulty.

Well, Ontario tried that during the short NDP year in Ontario, and look at the kind of chaos that they created in Ontario. British Columbia tried it and look at the huge mess the now-Liberal government in British government is faced with cleaning up. It will take years before they bring that province back into the economic realm of today's society.

I think we need to pay tribute to those people who walked into this Chamber to govern before us. I think Premier Filmon and his administration during the 12-year period did an absolutely fabulous job of very diligently assessing where the problems lay, correcting them and then putting a financial plan in place that would serve this province for a decade to come, very similar to what Finance Minister Wilson did in Ottawa.

I am always amazed when I look at Ottawa and how much criticism was extended to the Mulroney administration with all the programs they put in place such as the GST and others, how much criticism was extended, yet this Liberal administration in Ottawa has not dared yet to change anything in that regard because it works well. It has given them not only a balanced budget but has given them huge surpluses. Those kinds of actions I think are very similar to actions that the previous Filmon administration took before Mr. Doer and his colleagues took over to govern this province. But it is Manitobans who will, in the final analysis, pay the bill. I think many Manitobans are now seeing the fallacy of what they did and how they voted.

I think when we look at the Agriculture budget today—look at the Agriculture budget. I was amazed when I heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province, just a week before the Budget, on radio station CFAM. When the reporter asked him what are your priorities, what are your priorities going to be in this upcoming session and in the budgeting for this province, he said this: Health care, education, family services and agriculture are going to be the pivotal departments in our Government's approach during the Budget.

Well, boy, oh, boy, did the people of rural Manitoba get a shock when they finally saw

what that meant. Not only was agriculture totally ignored, it was nowhere even to be seen on the radar screen of this Budget or this Finance Minister. I think that clearly demonstrates how utterly naive, how utterly naive the people that sit in Cabinet today are of who drives the economy to a large part in the province of Manitoba.

The farm community is a very small group of people in numbers nowadays. When we first came to government in 1988, there were some 25 000 to 27 000 small family farms operating in this province of Manitoba. When we left this government in 1999, there were still 25 000 farmers operating in the province of Manitoba, many of them small family farms. We have never seen, never seen the migration of farmers to the extent that we have seen in the last three years. It is absolutely horrendous when you look at the numbers.

According to Statistics Canada, we have lost 21 percent of our farm labour pool in rural Manitoba. When you take that out of a hundred thousand, that means we have lost 20 000 homes in rural Manitoba. This Government might think that is not much, 21 percent of a labour pool in rural Manitoba.

* (14:40)

I say to this Premier (Mr. Doer), when the MCI issue hit him, they were quick to put \$23 million in place to try and save an industry. We congratulate them for that. We believe that industry is important to the city of Winnipeg and all of Manitoba. We congratulate them for taking every action possible to save that industry. Yet when you lose 21 percent of your labour pool in rural Manitoba, what do you get? What do you get from this Doer administration, this NDP government, this socialist approach to saving small family farms?

Well, let me tell you. Let me read to you from the Budget itself. Let us look at the amount of money that was put in the agricultural disaster programming line. A year ago that line said there was \$25.4 million in that line. This is to save the small family farm from disaster. Today there is \$21.15 million in that line, a reduction of \$4.3 million. That simply says to all the young people

who are looking at entering agriculture: do not. That is what that says. It says to all the small family farms in rural Manitoba you can leave now, we are closing the doors on you.

Then we have talked about the expansion of the potato industry. How often have I heard the Premier or the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) laud the effects of the potato industry in this province. We are going to expand it and build it. We are diversifying. Yet when I look under the irrigation budget today that the potato industry is so dependent on because the industry will not expand unless they are guaranteed that the potatoes grown in this province are irrigated, what do I see? A reduction of half a million dollars in the irrigation budget, a reduction. That is what you call being one of the front four line departments in this Government's approach to economic governing.

Let me say this to you. If you take away the small family farm, you do this. It is a very simple thing to do. You cut their incomes and you cut their incomes and you cut their incomes and finally there is not enough money on that farm to support a family. So what happens? The manager of that small family farm only has one option, and that is to phone an auctioneer and say, we are selling. We have to sell our assets in order to satisfy the bank, or the bank is foreclosing on us.

What happens then when that farmer, that small family farm, that young family farm, as is the case almost every day of the week in this province of Manitoba today, that small, young family farm with their children move to town? What happens in those towns? What happens in those towns? Well, the hospital has already disappeared, as is the case in Emerson. The hospital is closed. The schools are declining because of the depopulation in the rural area. The businesses are closing.

So where does this young family go? They were going to go to their home town and maybe there was a job there, but the job had disappeared. The wife could not work at the hospital anymore, because the nursing positions were gone. The doctor had left, so there is nothing to go to work for. So what do they do? They go one step farther, and finally the only

place left to go is the city, or so we thought, but not in my part of the world.

Do you know where the young farmers are going after they had the auction sale? They are going to Alberta. You can go and ask young Mr. Schultz where he went to find a job. He went to Alberta. The four young families that moved out of my own district, my own area, my community, they have all gone to Alberta. Why did they go? Because the Alberta government has put in place an economic plan that will maintain not only the family farm but the jobs in Alberta. They care. They still care in Alberta about those 20 percent that we let go. They still care about them.

That is why when you look at the statistics of Manitoba you will see a large migration out of the province. Oh, we have had some recruitment go on of people from other countries to encourage them to come here, but what are they coming to? Many of the immigrant farmers that we had encouraged a few years back to come to Manitoba are saying now that maybe we made a mistake. As a matter of fact, one of them has already sold and has gone back.

So what are these people coming for? What kind of a place are they coming to? That is what they are telling me. When they come to visit they said what did we get ourselves into, and I say I really am sorry, sir, I really am sorry that you have to face a socialist government which you fought in Europe for years to get rid of. You have to face a socialist government in this province and that is your future. They really, really, really are worried about their future, as well.

I spent a bit of time in the Beausejour area, Lac du Bonnet constituency, during the by-election. We heard on a number of occasions where the Premier of this province had come into the Beausejour area, Lac du Bonnet area, and had lambasted the previous government for doing away with the drainage budget, getting rid of the drainage budget.

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Jack Penner: I know Mr. Schellenberg there says yes. Yes, he said, they did away with

the drainage budget. Well, let me put some numbers on the record for you, Mr. Schellenberg, or for the Member for Rossmere. Let me put some numbers on the record for you. I will go back 20 years on drainage budgets, on water resource budgets, okay.

From 1973 to 1977, in 1973 the budget was \$5.9 million under Edward Schreyer. In 1977, under Sterling Lyon, it was \$11.969 million, the first year of Lyon. In 1981, under Howard Pawley, it dropped to \$10 million. By 1987-88, of the last year of Mr. Pawley, it was down to \$8.8 million. The first year of the Filmon administration was \$9.6 million. The last year of the Filmon administration was \$9.9 million. Now tell me where we got rid of the drainage budget. How can the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province go out on an election campaign trail and say to the people in Lac du Bonnet, which was an absolute untruth, that the previous government totally devastated the natural resource budget as far as drainage and water maintenance was concerned? It was an absolute lie.

Then last year this Government paraded in front of the general public and said we now have added a million dollars to the drainage budget—a million drainage budget. You know what in fact happens? If the members opposite will try and look at the real numbers, they will find that none of that million dollars was spent; it was lapsed. That is the sad part about this.

I think, if we really get into the highways budget, we will find that there is significant lapsing of provincial dollars in the highways budget. Take a look at it. *[interjection]* Steve, you know what I am talking about. *[interjection]* I think you know what I am talking about. We will go through this Budget line by line. We will go through last year's, and we will compare that with the 1998-99 Budget. Then we will see the real truth.

* (14:50)

This leads me to one more issue that I think the people of Manitoba really need to assess. That is, in 1999-2000 election year, the Filmon administration came along and said there would be increased revenues of a billion dollars over

the next four years. I remember all too well how the NDP laughed at that statement and kidded and cajoled the people of Manitoba into believing that this was an absolute nonsense. Well, it only took a little bit better than a year and half, and the NDP administration found out that it was not going to happen in four years, that it was going to happen in two years. Their revenues were increasing by a billion dollars. What did they do with that billion dollars? What has this administration done with the billion-dollars worth of the people's money? Have they built a large health care legacy?

Well, I say to you do what we have done this last summer and this last spring. Do what we did. We have spent most of last winter and this summer so far at Health Sciences Centre because we had a little granddaughter that has had eight operations. The last operation was an emergency operation, and she had to wait a whole month to get into emergency operation, a whole month. Go talk to the doctors and the nurses in that facility. We got to know some of them very, very well. They will confide in you. They will confide in you a horrific story, a horrific story of incompetent administration, as far as direction from government is concerned.

Do you members of the NDP government know that you have closed two wings at Children's Hospital? Do you know that? They are closed. The lights are out. Do you know why? Because of how you direct the funding, how you have put the funding in place. Do you know that? Go look some time. Go talk to the those people, and you will be astounded. Do you know that you closed a whole large area of the cancer facility at Health Sciences Centre? Do you know that? Do you know the huge numbers of beds you have closed during the last two years in the province of Manitoba?

Do you know that you have closed the Emerson Hospital? Do you know that? Shame on you. The only way a person out of Emerson now can get, if that person has a heart attack, is to spend almost an hour by ambulance to the nearest hospital. How would the people of the city of Winnipeg—most of you are from the city of Winnipeg—how would you accept the fact that your nearest point of contact after a heart attack would be an hour away? Would you accept that?

Well, that is what you are doing to rural Manitoba.

I am really saddened by what you people have done to rural Manitoba. You are ripping the life blood, the veins out of rural Manitoba, and you do not know it. Look at your Budget, and your Premier has the audacity to appear on public radio and say agriculture is going to be in fourth place as a priority department. What do you do? You cut the guts out of it by ripping the essence of disaster support, four million bucks out of disaster assistance. How could you? Talk to the cattle producers of this province. Talk to the Keystone Agriculture Producers.

As a matter of fact, I will read to you what their news release said, and I think, again, the shame of what you have done to the people of Manitoba, the people of rural Manitoba, is cause for tremendous concern. It says Agriculture has been put on the back burner in the 2002 Budget. It says the Budget will have little benefit or impact for the farmers of Manitoba. It says the majority of the agriculture-related spending announced today is not new. Most of it re-announces monies that were already committed by Government.

You tried, even in your last breath of the Budget, to deceive the people of Manitoba into thinking that you were actually doing something for agriculture. At the same time, you drove the knife into the heart of rural Manitoba. This will never be forgotten by rural Manitoba. Never. I think the investments in rural Manitoba would pay dividends larger than you can imagine.

You know, just to the south of where I live, the state of North Dakota, the state of Minnesota, the state of Montana, the state of South Dakota, and Illinois and Iowa, will be the benefactors of \$73.5 billion that is being added to the U.S. farm program. That is the competition that our farmers face.

We have built a very significant livestock industry in the province of Manitoba, a very significant livestock industry. What does this NDP government do with it? They appointed a commission that has supposedly travelled the province and asked the people of Manitoba: What should we do to encourage and enhance

the ability of the production of livestock in this province? There were 40-some-odd recommendations. What actions has this Government taken in regard to those recommendations? The municipalities are in a quandary. They do not know what to do. They have no idea where to turn because the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has turned her back on them. The Minister of Municipal Affairs or Government Affairs has turned their back on them. The Premier has turned his back on them. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has turned his back on them. They are left on their own.

We had hoped that this Government would recognize that the 16.7 percent of reduction in spending on disaster assistance would be at least maintained, not reduced by 16.5 percent. Above all that, this Minister of Agriculture, under the pretences of saving farmers money by lowering their crop insurance premiums 70 cents an acre, which would not even buy two litres of fuel—*[interjection]*

No, I do not support that, not in the least. I think that is one of the most underhanded actions a government has ever undertaken, this 70-cents-an-acre reduction in crop insurance premium. Do you know what that did, Mr. Speaker? It took \$53 million out of the hands of farmers. This was farmers' money. This was not the Government's money to take. The Crop Insurance Corporation was set up to provide insurance at low-cost premiums to the farmers of Manitoba, so that they could at least try and recover, in a disaster situation, in a total crop-loss situation, or parts of crop loss, some of their expenditures, some of their costs.

* (15:00)

Yet this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) had the audacity under the false pretences of lowering premium rates to rip \$53 million out of Crop Insurance. Is that not true, Madam Minister? Did you not take \$53 million? She is not responding, and the reason she is not responding is because she is—and the courts would pronounce her guilty—guilty of robbing the farmers of Manitoba of \$53 million of their money that had been paid into the fund by previous governments, and they ripped it up.

Now, the people of Manitoba were confronted with the fact that the Government was going to dip their hands into the public auto insurance fund by \$30 million while the people in the city of Winnipeg and surrounding areas, when they heard of it, created quite an uproar, and these guys backpedalled very quickly. They put that canoe in reverse and backed out of there very quickly.

The interesting thing, Mr. Speaker, is that the public insurance fund has some political baggage attached to it because this Government, this socialist NDP government knew that if they touched that and created a ruckus, they could, in fact, lose the next election, as they did once previously when they tinkered with auto insurance. However, they also knew that there were less than 20 000 farmers left in the province who did not make a tinker's difference to their winning or losing elections, so they blatantly walked in and pulled \$53 million out of that fund, and who reacted? Nobody reacted, except those young farm families that were trying to make a living in agriculture. This drove another knife into their back.

All the young people who you are seeing now who are putting their land up for sale and putting their assets up for sale, their homes and their tractors, are doing it because they think maybe they still can get enough out of it to pay the banker the bill, because this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has totally, totally abandoned them, and they feel abandoned. We have never before in the history of this province, when agriculture has seen an economic downturn such as they have seen because the Americans are subsidizing by another \$73.5 billion their farm groups, this minister during that same period of time is ripping another \$5 million out of the Agriculture budget. Irrigation, farm support disaster aid \$4 million. How could she? How could she sit there? How can she go back to farmers these days, to a farm meeting and face them?

An Honourable Member: Very easily.

Mr. Jack Penner: She said very easily, and I believe that. I think it will be that easy for her because never have they had any sympathy, even though before they were elected they told

farmers that the family farm was the heart of this province. This was the heart of this province and yet we have seen the decline from 25 000 farmers to less than 20 000 farmers in this province according to statistics, and she says it still is. They are gone. They are finished. They are leaving. They are going to Alberta where they can make a living.

An Honourable Member: Alberta farmers are coming to Manitoba.

Mr. Jack Penner: She says the Alberta farmers are coming here. Yes, they are. You are right. The Alberta farmers are coming here. They are renting pasture because their cows are dying of drought, but they are still maintaining their home base in Alberta.

Are they selling their farms in Alberta? Not at all, Mr. Speaker, not on your life. They are going to stay there, but they are transporting their cattle out here so they will have water and they will have grass. There is lots of it around in Manitoba, because all our young farmers have gone over there and are setting up shop over there. They are working in the oilfields. They are working in industries.

Over here, this province, as I said before, has \$23 million to spend on saving a bus plant. What are we doing with agriculture? We are not spending a plugged nickel on agriculture to save the 20 percent of the job losses that we have seen in agriculture in the last three years. That is the sad part.

What does that lead to? It leads to school closures. We have seen that, a reduction in population. You do not need schools, do you, if you have no pupils, if you have no children. The merger of the school divisions will that save a lot of money? Not on your life will it save money. It will cost every division a huge amount of money. Oh, there is one division that is going to have a reduction in mill rate. It is the new Boundary School Division. It is going to have a reduction in mill rate. Do you know why? Because this Government bribed them with a \$50-a-head premium on the merger. That is what I call that, a \$50-a-head premium. They promised them \$50 a child in government support if they merged. I think that is a blatant

abuse of government power, nothing short of that. If the assessment in that area would not have risen by the amount it did, they would have had to raise the mill rate. Yet they reduced the mill rate.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): Mr. Speaker, the member across the House from Emerson is putting information on the record that is totally incorrect in regard to amalgamation. He is saying that there are school divisions that are amalgamating that are being bribed with \$50 per student. I would just like to say that is not correct.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would to remind members that a point of order is to be used to let the Speaker know if there is a breach of the rules or a departure from procedure of the House, but not to be used for debating. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Jack Penner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly agree with your ruling.

I would suggest to the honourable members opposite, to the government members, that this is very similar to the betrayal of Judas. He got 30 pieces of silver. You are offering 50 pieces of silver. I think to sell out your children's heritage based on \$50 a head is absolutely deplorable, and I will keep saying that whenever. It will be a very short period of time whereby we will see the increased costs incurred in those school divisions.

I would like to close on one point, Mr. Speaker. We cut the agriculture budget very dramatically in key areas where it was needed, yet we have no difficulty in giving mosquitoes a million dollars. I mean farmers will never forget that they were relegated to a lower state than mosquitoes in this province. I think that is clearly an indication of the mentality of this Government. I think the mentality of this

Government that we can use monies to provide disaster relief, I would call it, for mosquitoes and not try and save the farm community any difficulties is absolutely disastrous. This Government will truly inherit the wrath of the people of rural Manitoba in how they have dealt with them in health care and education and indeed how they have dealt with them in trying to demonstrate to them that they have a will to save the family farm when there was none at all. I think this Budget clearly demonstrates that. Thank you.

*(15:10)

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): First of all, the Member for Wellington cordially welcomes the newly elected Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

This Member for Wellington in this 2002 debate will speak about money, because money and a budget have an almost inexplicable link. The Budget involves the raising and the spending of money for health, for education, for children's programs, for tax repayment and for the abatement of taxes.

Of money we can say three general statements. Money is the one social invention of human civilization which can bring out either desirable or undesirable effects on human beings collectively or individually. Second, while it is desirable to value people's spiritual and material needs above money, it is not desirable to value money above people's spiritual and material needs, because to value money above people's need is to act against human reason and to act against ethical morality. Third, those human beings who choose to act against human reason and against ethical morality can also be expected to ignore, to subvert or to violate statutory, constitutional and moral rules and will prosecute public and private institutions, organizations and groups under the pernicious principle that the end justifies the means.

What is money? How are we to define money? Money is something which is generally accepted as a medium of exchange, a measure of value and a store of value which can be used to pay any debt. Usually historically there are many items we cannot consider as money but have

been used as money, for example, cattle, playing cards, cigarettes, pieces of metals like gold and silver, precious stones most common coins and paper money.

The British North America Act of 1867 which created this country in Section 91 provided the following matters relating to money: public debt and property, the raising of money by any mode or system of taxation, the borrowing of money on public credit, currency and coinage, banking, incorporation of banks, issue of paper money, bills of exchange, promissory notes, interest and legal tender.

The Bank of Canada Act in section 18(i) states that the Bank of Canada may make loans or advances for periods not exceeding six months to the Government of Canada or the Government of any province on the pledge, hypothecation or movable hypothec without delivery of readily marketable securities issued or guaranteed by Canada or any province.

Private control of public money, this is quite curious. Whoever controls money in any society will in all probability also control the economy of that society, and whosoever controls the economy of a society in all probability will also control the political system of that society. That is precisely the reason why Article 1, Section 8, paragraphs 2 and 5 of the Constitution of the United States provided that Congress shall have the power to borrow money on the faith and credit of the United States to regulate the value thereof, the power to coin money, to value foreign coins, and to fix standard weights and measures.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The United States Congress, like the Parliament of Canada, like the Legislature of any province, is intended by constitutional design to be the sole and exclusive authority to control money supply. Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of the American presidential system of government, expressed the risk to the people when in his *Writings*, 1861, page 685, he stated: If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation and then by deflation, the banks and

the corporations that will grow up around the banks will deprive the people of all their property until their children wake up homeless on the continent their Fathers conquered.

Expressing a similar point of view, the Canadian Prime Minister William Mackenzie King in 1935 stated: Once a nation parts with the control of currency and credit, it matters not who makes the nation's laws. Usury, once in control, will wreck any nation. Until the control of the issue of currency and credit is restored to government and recognized as its most sacred responsibility, all talk of the sovereignty of Parliament and of democracy is idle and futile.

What does money look like on its face? If anyone holds out a U.S. dollar bill of any denomination, it says Federal Reserve Note on its face which means it is issued by a private bank in the name of the United States government. The Federal Reserve Board Act was voted on on December 23, 1913, two days before Christmas when only three members of the Senate were present, two of whom knew very little about banking or the banking legislation they were enacting, and by a procedural vote called an unanimous consent voice vote of the Senate, that law passed.

After the passage of that law, the United States Senator Charles Lindbergh Sr. observed: The financial system has been turned over to the Federal Reserve Board. That Board administers the finance system by authority of a purely profiteering group.

While the Bank of Canada has only the Government of Canada as the only shareholder because it bought out the 12 000 shareholders in 1938, the Government of Canada chooses to use the Bank of Canada as a source of financing its programs only 5 percent of the time, let us say in 1996, preferring instead to borrow money from the big five commercial banks and paying interest; not simple but compounding interest very year to the Canadian commercial banks.

No wonder, according to the 1993 Report of the Auditor General of Canada, from Confederation in 1867 to the fiscal year 1991-1992, the Canadian federal government's net debt was approximately \$423 billion. To

service this debt, the Government of Canada has borrowed another \$386 billion. Every year that passes by, the Government of Canada gives to the bankers an average of \$40 billion to pay for the interest on the total government debt to the commercial banks. That is curious. Commercial banks are creatures of the Government of Canada and yet it pays interest to them because it refuses to use the central bank as the source of financing.

Money as silver and gold. Here is a question for the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns). Which of the following activities gives the most pleasure to any person and why? Is it eating? No, because he who eats gets filled up and eventually stops eating. Is it having sex? No, because anyone having sex gets tired and has to stop having sex. If it is not eating or having sex, what activity perhaps gives to every natural person continuing pleasure, almost? It is the making of money because the more money one makes, the more money that person wants.

Strictly speaking, money is a mere fictional representation of material value. Money takes many forms, performs many functions. Money is a means for facilitating legitimate uses. It is also a means for wrongful abuses. Money is a species of property with many promises, powers and perils. Money can be a servant that can bring beautiful, bountiful blessings, or money can be a false god that can plague humans with vices and contemptible curses.

* (15:20)

What would be an example of this vicious kind of abuse of taxpayers' money? The present Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, was looking into the legal propriety of the Government of Canada paying to a big firm called Group-action Marketing Inc. some \$1.5 million to produce three reports, which are strangely but remarkably similar in content to one and other. One report of February 1999 was even missing where the Government had paid \$550,000 for it. When found, that February 1999 report was found to be essentially the same as the second report in October 1999, which cost another \$575,000.

Greg Weston, the columnist, analyzed a third report, earlier one, 1997. It consisted of 134

pages, lots of spacing and big type, the total number of 134 pages. The feds bought its own information in the first 90 pages which listed the places, dates and telephone contact numbers of festivals, fairs and other events the federal government had already been sponsoring in the province of Québec. If the Government of Canada was charged another \$500,000 for the remaining 44 pages of that report, Greg Weston calculated it would amount to \$11,000 cost per page, \$550 per line of text and \$75 per word. If this is not fraud, what does the Government call it asks the Progressive Conservative Leader in the House of Commons.

Among merchants, ancient and modern money mostly takes the form of silver and gold, particularly gold bullion. This was the basis of what had been the most stable international monetary system, the gold standard system of exchange, among nations from 1879 to 1934, except for the World War first years. Any nation can be a participant in international gold standards when it satisfies three conditions: Defines monetary unit in terms of certain quantity of gold; it maintains a fixed relationship between a stack of gold and its domestic money supply; and it allows gold to be freely exported and imported.

The free flow of gold between the nations has resulted in an exchange rate that is fixed. A fixed exchange rate automatically corrects the balance of payments and deficits and surpluses. Therefore, by reducing uncertainty and risk in the exchange rate, the gold standard system of exchange had stimulated international trade.

What are some of the things that money can bring? If a person is reasonably ambitious, such person will naturally seek power, political and social power over others. Money, no doubt, can bring power more easily to the power seeker if he happens to have lots of money. A person may be said to have power over another to the extent that such a person can get the other to do what the other person would not otherwise do, or prevent that other person from doing what he or she would otherwise do. Money brings power because money gives ability to reward a person for complying with the desired behaviour. When money talks with great delight, lawyers plead and soldiers fight.

Another thing that money can do—

An Honourable Member: What do lawyers do?

Mr. Santos: They plead.

Another thing that money can bring is respect. There are those who say that money makes the man. As William Somerville puts it: "Let all the learned say what they can,/ 'Tis ready money makes the man;/ Commands respect where'er we go,/ And gives a grace to all we do."

In our increasingly materialistic world, money often defines who we are. Our status, our success is generally measured against the amount of money that we have. For example, receiving 3.1 percent of base salary, deputy ministers in Ottawa in charge of federal departments now earn up to \$317,000 a year. Heads of federal corporations receiving 5.39% increase of the base salary earns up to \$487,000 per annum.

Here is a thought-provoking question. Should politically accountable elected representatives appointed to Cabinet to make decisions and to whom these appointed deputy ministers and chief executive officers of Crown corporations are accountable, should they receive at least a salary level equal to or at least higher than the appointed administrative people? As Adam Smith stated in the book *The Wealth of Nations*, we say of a rich man, he is worth a great deal, and of a poor man, we say he is worth very little.

Perhaps the most frequently encountered obsession of humankind is the desire to make money, as if making money is the ultimate purpose of life. As economist Paul Erdman noted: The entire essence of America is the hope to first make money, then make more money with more money, then make lots of money with lots of money.

In an interview in 1905, John D. Rockefeller stated: God gave me my money. I believe the power to make money is a gift from God, to be developed and to be used to the best ability for the good of mankind. Having been endowed with the gift I possess, I believe it is my duty to

make money and still make more money, and to use the money to make good for my fellow man according to the dictates of my conscience.

Indeed the impulse to accumulate and to hoard money fit neatly with the idea of hard work and Protestant ethics which hold that strength is a virtue and prosperity is a sure sign of God's blessing. The more money we have the more we want because of the prevailing belief that money is the best foundation in the world for our material well-being. In addition to social power and respect that goes along with it, the brokers will tell us, oh, money will give you financial independence, financial freedom. Where lack of money means trouble and misery, loads of money means freedom from financial worry, abundance of food and luxury, a life of privilege and leisure.

There is one important principle though that we have to remember all the time if we are to fully enjoy all the good things that money can bring: *L'argent est un bon serviteur, mais un méchant maître*; Money is a good servant, but a wicked master.

Undesirable effects of money. When money becomes our master, it usually plagues us with undesirable dispositions or compulsions that basically erode our presumably good human nature.

It is written: *Nul ne peut servir deux maîtres, car ou il haïra l'un et aimera l'autre, ou il s'attachera à l'un et méprisera l'autre. Vous ne pouvez servir Dieu et l'argent.*

Translation

No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

English

One does not have to wonder anymore why the Lord, Jesus Christ, drove the money lenders from the temple. More likely they were engaging in usury there. Usury is originally the practice of charging any interest whatsoever on loaning or lending money. This is the original meaning.

Now it has been sadly changed. Usury now means charging interest greater than what the statutory law allows, thus permitting those greedy people to legitimately satisfy their greed.

Greed is the inordinate wanting more and more. The love of money grows all the more as money itself grows. Such human tendency is neither healthy or desirable.

It is also written: Pour l'amour de l'argent, c'est la racine de tous les maux. Pour s'y être livrés, certains se sont égarés loin de la foi et se sont transpercés l'âme de tourments multiples.

Translation

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

English

Greed is selfishness wrapped in covetousness. Greed blinds sensitivity and common sense. Greed is related to false human pride in the sense that one feels having lots of things, having lots of money, may be a way of saying to others nothing bothers me anymore. I do not need anybody. I do not need anything.

Trying to find inner peace and human fulfillment in a never-ending chase for tangible and material things, we run into multiple miseries, and we need to take some advice from elsewhere like from this oriental person, Taoist philosopher, named Lao Tzu. He advised us to do four things: to appear in plainness; to hold unto simplicity; to restrain selfishness; and to curtail human desires. Selfishness is the exclusive concern for oneself, seeking only one's own advantage and pleasure without any regard for others. Such an attitude makes the heart rigidly hard. We become isolated from others, deprived of human tenderness, of warm friendship and sensitive love.

* (15:30)

If it is human instinct to accumulate the fruits of our labour, constantly motivated by the desire to acquire more than we need, then we

may want to redirect our acquisitiveness toward more enduring intangible values like kindness, goodwill, respect and love.

Again it is written: Ne vous amassez pas de trésors sur la terre, où la mite et le ver consomment et où les voleurs perforent et cambriolent; mais amassez-vous des trésors dans le ciel, où point de mites ni de vers ne consomment, et où point de voleurs ne perforent ni cambriolent. Car où est ton trésor, là aussi sera ton coeur.

Translation

Lay not up for yourself treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourself treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through or steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

English

Deceit due to covetousness. Covetousness is the extreme expression of malevolent acquisitiveness that often leads to deceit. Deceit is deliberate falsehood. Deceit is willful telling of a lie, the bearing of false witness against our fellow human beings, prohibited by the Ninth Commandment of God given to Moses: Tu ne porteras pas de témoignage mensonger contre ton prochain; Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

According to the Greek philosopher, a false proposition is one which asserts the nonexistence of things that are or that which asserts the existence of things which are not. One who asserts a falsity is a liar. If a cretin says all cretins are liars, is the cretin telling the truth or is he telling a lie?

In brief, a substantively false statement is one where there is no correspondence or agreement between what was stated and the reality of the existence or nonexistence of things. If a person who makes such a statement is not aware of such lack of agreement between the assertion and the reality, such a person is in error, but if he knows such lack of agreement then such a person is a deceiver and a liar.

Legally speaking, deceit is committed when any of the following situations happen: Where the statement as a fact of that which is not true and made by one who does not believe the statement to be true; second, the assertion as a fact of that which is not true by one who had no reasonable ground for believing the assertion to be true; third, the suppression of a fact by one who is bound to disclose the fact or who gives information of other facts likely to mislead for want of communication of the fact; fourth, a promise made without any intention of performing the promise.

Morally speaking, deceit includes any form of falsehood like the pretension, flattery, hypocrisy, false confidence, false witnessing. For example, if a person speaks cordially to a neighbour but harbours malice in his heart towards the neighbour, such a person is both a hypocrite and a deceiver. If a flatterer blesses with his word but in his heart curses, we should not believe the flatterer, because a lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

If such untruthful lips are unsuited to an ignorant fool, how much worse are lying lips to an elected political ruler. Therefore we are enjoined not to tell a lie, not to deceive one another. A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapour and a deadly snare. A man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes the crooked path sooner or later will be found out.

Rien n'est voilé qui ne sera pas dévoilé et rien n'est secret qui ne sera pas connu; There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed and nothing hid that shall not be known.

Le coeur est compliqué plus que tout et trompeusement pervers. Qui peut le connaître? Moi, Yahwe, je scrute le coeur. Je sonde les reins, pour rendre à chacun d'après sa conduite, selon le fruit de ses oeuvres. Ainsi, celui qui se fait des richesses injustes, au milieu de ses jours il doit les quitter et en fin de compte, il n'est qu'un sot.

Translation

The heart is complicated above all things, deceitfully perverse. I, Yahweh, the Lord, search

the heart. I try the reins, to give to every man, according to his ways, and according to the fruits of his doings. Therefore, he that getteth riches unjustly, not by right, shall leave such riches in the middle of his days and at the end shall be a fool.

English

Political corruption. When greed learns how to make use of the ways of deceit in order to have unjust personal gain at the expense of public duty then we have political and corporate corruption. Corruption is the vicious and fraudulent intent to evade the prohibition of the law or the dictates of righteous conscience in order to gain or to give some pecuniary or other advantage inconsistent with official duty or the rights of others.

In the same way that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, money corrupts and abundant money corrupts abundantly.

The editor of *Maclean's* magazine, February 2002, recalled that when the biographer Brian McKenna asked the long-time mayor of Montréal his opinion about Lord Acton's dictum, Jean Drapeau replied: *Celui-là est vrai, mais n'est pas vrai absolument*; That is true, but not absolutely true.

So far known, Jean Drapeau never used his power for his material gain. Until Drapeau's death in 1999, he lived in the same bungalow he bought 50 years previously in a working-class district.

If power corrupts, how does corruption take place? Obviously by the instrumentality and use of money. Money is the ineluctable means to power. George Sullivan, in the book *Campaigns and Elections*, quoted an observer of the American electoral process who said: Money is the mother's milk of politics. The baby needs milk to grow. The politician needs money to win an election campaign.

Almost a century ago President Theodore Roosevelt, in an annual message to congress, envisioned a system of public financing of federal elections. In 1974, this dream was

realized, and the presidential campaign election fund was created, where federal income taxpayers can voluntarily earmark \$1 of taxes payable towards the fund. To qualify for the money, both the presidential candidates in 1988, Michael Dukakis of the Democrats, George Bush Sr. of the Republicans, ran on a public promise to forgo all private fundraising and to abide by spending limits. However, both of them did not abide by their words. They took advantage of the loophole in the law, and although limits had been set how much one corporation or union can contribute to a candidate, such institutions were able to donate large sums of money indirectly through the so-called political action committee, an issue-oriented non-partisan group with no spending limit under the first amendment freedom of speech, supposedly not controlled by a political party but in reality a thinly disguised partisan group raising soft money for political candidates of choice. If this is not deception facilitating political corruption, I do not know what corruption is.

In the year 2001, the Senate, because of the Enron scandal, passed the McCain-Feingold bill which banned national political parties from receiving soft money from companies, unions and advocacy groups. Soft monies are contributions made to candidates to be used for party buildup and for voter registration drives which are not subject to campaign limits. Then the Enron corporate scandal came in March 17 this year in fact, 2002. The lower House passed the Shays-Meehan bill, the counterpart to the McCain-Feingold Senate bill, which also outlawed unlimited donations to national political parties, sharply limits contribution to state and local party organizations, banned soft money from corporations, unions and advocacy groups, and restricts broadcast ads by advocacy groups before elections. Soft money is just for election drives to get the voters out. Hard money is a political donation to a political party.

* (15:40)

Money neither good nor bad. Money in itself is neither good nor bad. It is us humans who make money dirty and grimy. We send money to places where it not should go. We tarnish money with wrongful intent in transactions we conduct

with others. For example, we may borrow money with animus furandi; that is, no intent to repay, stealing. Therefore it is not money per se that is to be condemned but the behaviour of people who misuse and abuse the money that passes by their hands.

An example of such abuse: There were six executives of Barclays Bank, the largest bank in the United Kingdom. They had dinner in London's Petrus restaurant. Do you know how much the bill cost—\$62,679 for six people. What an abuse.

Money bewitches and beguiles people. There are people who believe that money will do everything for them. These are the same people who most likely will do anything for money. We ought to be able to separate illusion from reality about the role of money in human life. Money may buy us the form of many things but not the substance. Money brings us food to eat but not the needed appetite to enjoy the food that we eat. Money may bring us acquaintances, but it may not bring us true friends. Money may bring us servants, but it will not bring us faithfulness. Money may bring us days of temporary joy but never lasting happiness.

People often devise the most ingenious ways to get money and also the most mysterious ways to get rid of money. If money is a commodity which can be bought and sold in the exchange market, perhaps this is the only commodity that to be enjoyed has to be gotten rid of. By itself, money will not feed us. We cannot eat money. By itself, money will not clothe us. We cannot wear it. By itself, money will not accommodate us like a bed or a house unless we are willing to spend it. Money imparts value to us only if we are willing to part with it. Of course, a miser may find enjoyment in repeatedly counting his money. Eventually, the miser gets tired, being captivated by his money because, by itself, money eventually becomes the cause of his ruin, the ruin of many as well.

Money may sometimes make the man or woman. Yet money often unmakes the man or the woman who makes the money. In the bottomless sea of the quest for money, too often such a bottomless sea drowns the integrity, the honour, the conscience of many. While money

may bring respect, honours, admirers, conquests and realms, it also may sack cities, drive husbands from home, seduce virgin innocence and breeds the hateful habit of dishonesty. Money may fortify and dignify noble people, but it may also destroy the character of initially good yet corruptible people.

If money is neither good nor bad but is only a means to some end, should the means justify the end? Some people say yes; some people say no. If money is used to gain power, what kind of power do we want? Is it the material coercive power or the spiritual power?

Ne le sais-tu pas? Ne l'as-tu pas appris? Yahwe est le Dieu éternel. Il a créé le confins de la terre. Il ne se fatigue ni ne se lasse et son entendement est insondable. Il rend la force à celui qui est fatigué. Il reconforte celui qui est faible.

Translation

Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is He weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

English

But is there anything at all that is better than money, better than fine gold, sweeter than honey?

La loi de Yahwe est parfaite, reconfort pour l'âme. Le témoignage de Yahwe est véridique, sagesse pour le simple. Les préceptes de Yahwe sont droits, joie pour le cœur. Le commandement de Yahwe est limpide, lumière des yeux. La crainte de Yahwe est pure et immuable à jamais. Les jugements de Yahwe sont vérité, équitables toujours, désirables plus que l'or, que l'or le plus fin. Ses paroles sont douces plus que le miel qui coule des rayons. Aussi ton serviteur s'en pénètre; pour qui les observe est grand profit . . . Agrée les paroles de ma bouche et le murmure de mon cœur sans trêve devant toi, Yahwe, mon rocher, mon rédempteur.

Translation

The law of the Lord Yahweh is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey in the honeycomb. Moreover, by them thy servant is forewarned, and in keeping them there is great reward . . . Let the words of my mouth, the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my fortress, my rock, my redeemer.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

English

That is all, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make some comments about the Budget delivered earlier this week.

Let me begin with a perspective on Manitoba. Last year was one of modest growth for our province, at 1.6 percent, and this can compare to national growth of 1.5 percent. We may have done very slightly better, but it is certainly nothing to crow about. Let us put the perspective also on a comparison of how Manitoba has been doing compared to the rest of Canada.

Forty years ago Manitoba's gross domestic product was about 4.6 percent of Canada's gross domestic product. Thirty years ago Manitoba's gross domestic product had fallen to 4 percent of Canada's gross domestic product. Twenty years ago Manitoba, continuing to lose ground, had its gross domestic product fall to 3.7 percent of Canada's gross domestic product. Ten years ago Manitoba's gross domestic product had fallen again to 3.5 percent of Canada's gross domestic product. This year the budget documents tabled earlier this week show that Manitoba's gross domestic product, at about 3.2 percent of Canada's gross domestic product, has fallen again over the last decade. In essence Manitoba

has progressively lost ground compared to the rest of Canada in the last forty years.

Last fall on CBC's program "Questionnaire," both the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and I were on a program which looked at what should be in the provincial budget when, of course, it was delivered earlier this week. I pointed out at the time that Manitoba's GDP had fallen in comparison to the rest of Canada over the last several decades. The Minister of Finance immediately spoke up and said in reference to my statement, and here I quote the Minister of Finance: He is wrong. Relative to the wealthy provinces, we have closed the gap in the last 20 to 30 years.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to understand this point clearly. The Finance Minister accused me of providing to Manitobans incorrect information in relation to the performance of Manitoba compared to the rest of Canada. Well, in fact, the figures, as I have quoted them, show clearly it was the Finance Minister who was wrong then. Indeed it is shocking that the NDP Finance Minister of this province would know so little of the economic history of Manitoba that he would try to perpetrate such erroneous information on public radio. It is quite sad to think that the financial affairs of the present NDP administration are being run by someone who has such an upside-down view of the reality of affairs today in Manitoba.

* (15:50)

Mr. Speaker, I begin with these comments because it provides an important context for the Budget presented earlier this week and because it provides an important context for my own comments on the Budget. Let there be no mistake in understanding this. Manitoba's gross domestic product in proportion to Canada's gross domestic product has fallen steadily and progressively over a 40-year period. I say it is time to change the downward movement of Manitoba compared to the rest of Canada.

The Budget presented earlier this week just does not cut it. It does not do the job that Manitobans need to have done for Manitoba and for the people of Manitoba.

Let us examine why the Budget does not do the job that Manitobans need. Let me begin by looking at the expenditure side of the equation and ask the question: How well did the NDP do in meeting their budget targets? I will begin by looking at the largest single budget item, the budget for health care expenditures.

In last year's Budget, the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) estimated his expenditures in health care for the fiscal year 2001-2002, that is, the year just completed, at \$2,587,328,000. In the Budget delivered earlier this week, we see that the Minister of Health now estimates that he has actually spent in this year \$2,685,918,000. The difference between the budget projections of a year ago and the actual amount spent is \$99 million. This overexpenditure of \$99 million represents a huge cost overrun. Clearly and without question the financing occurring within health care in Manitoba under the supervision of the present Minister of Health is being very poorly operated. The Minister of Health missed his target by \$99 million. The Minister of Health spent \$99 million more than was in his Budget last year. That is an extraordinary level of overexpenditure.

Interestingly, we learned that the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, one of the largest spenders in health care, came in on budget. If true, this means that the \$99-million cost overrun occurred on the rest of the Budget of about \$1.5 billion, or roughly a 7% overexpenditure on this part of the Health budget, which does not include the WRHA. What a huge overexpenditure.

I and many other Manitobans wonder how and why the Government could have overspent the health care budget to the tune of \$99 million. Does the minister have a fascination with the number 99, Wayne Gretzky or something like that? I doubt the explanation is so easy. The truth is the minister seems to not adequately know what is being spent by his department and is not doing the sort of planning that will allow for excellent health care to be delivered to people in Manitoba on budget. I think maybe it is important for us to sit back for a moment and ask how much money we should be spending on health care in Manitoba.

One of the often used comparisons in looking at health care expenditures is the

comparison of health care expenditure to gross domestic product. Now, total health care expenditures in Manitoba for the 2001 year, whereas reported by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, was \$4.174 billion. That includes both public and private sector expenditures. Our GDP in Manitoba at market prices for 2001 as reported in the budget documents was \$34.914 billion.

Health expenditures in Manitoba represent 12 percent of our gross domestic product. That is an interesting number because it is considerably above the national average of about 9 percent of gross domestic product spent on health care in Canada. Indeed, interestingly enough, in Manitoba we are spending almost as much in proportion to gross domestic product on health care as is the United States, which spends 13 percent of GDP on health care. By comparison, Manitoba clearly is a very high spender on health care.

Let us go and look not just at all expenditures but at public sector health care expenditures in Manitoba for the 2001 year just completed with the same CIHI data set. The total of public health care expenditures, that is provincial plus federal dollars, is \$2,724 per person in Manitoba. This is clearly higher than all other provinces. The closest to Manitoba was British Columbia at \$2,632 per person, a hundred dollars a person less spent on health care than in Manitoba.

Given Manitoba's population, it translates into almost a hundred and twenty million more dollars on health care, spent in public dollars in Manitoba on health care, than we would have spent if our per capita spending were similar to that in British Columbia.

However, if one now compares Manitoba to the average of all other provinces, what we find is the following, that the average of all other provinces is \$2,396 per capita, quite a bit less than British Columbia, and \$335 per person less than Manitoba. Adjusted this means that if public dollars were used in Manitoba in health care in a similar proportion to all other provinces on a per capita basis, we would in Manitoba have spent almost \$400 million less in Manitoba on health care, quite an excess expenditure on

health care compared to what other provinces are spending on a per capita basis.

Now, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) may no doubt raise concerns about my use of all public dollars, both federal and provincial, in making these comparisons. They will no doubt argue that maybe only provincial dollars should be included, although in Question Period today the Minister of Health was arguing very strongly for the inclusion of federal dollars. He was making the point that we need to take account of federal dollars, and so his argument clearly by his own protestations is defeated.

The approach of using only provincial dollars is clearly not a very tenable one. Does one say to First Nations people, supported largely by the federal government, that they should not be counted as Manitobans, along with the federal dollars? It does not make any sense. I suggest to members of this Legislature that we must include Aboriginal people as citizens of Manitoba and that the dollars spent on them for health care must be included in overall health care spending for the province. Let us be fair. When one includes, as one must, Aboriginal people as Manitoba citizens, we must also include the federal health expenditures in calculating public sector health care costs. To do otherwise would be a clear misrepresentation of the facts of health care spending in Manitoba.

Last fall, the NDP government in their Throne Speech argued that Manitoba was no longer the highest spender on health care in Canada among Canadian provinces. It was said that Manitoba is now in the middle of the pack. The NDP position was based on a failure to consider all public sector expenditures, very selective use of the facts and on an analysis which used an age- and sex-adjusted approach. We really cannot use only provincial expenditures in making these comparisons. The age- and sex-adjusted approach has some defensibility, but, clearly, given the overall spending of the public sector in health care in Manitoba, we would still, even with age and sex adjusted, come out much higher than the other provinces.

* (16:00)

It is quite clear then that in a comparison with other jurisdictions that Manitoba does not seem to be suffering in health care because too little is being spent. The problem with the NDP approach is not how much, but it is how the money is being spent, because too much of the money is not being well spent and spent wisely. That is the reason we are seeing huge budgetary overruns in health care, the \$99-million overrun in the 2001 budget year, which follows a \$76-million overrun in the 2000 fiscal year.

Such huge overruns bring into question the Government's credibility in its health care spending Estimates for the present fiscal year. We are told that the Government will spend \$2.77 billion on health care this year, but what will the number be at the end of the year? Is it going to be \$2.8 billion, \$2.9 billion, \$3 billion? Hard to say. This fact makes many nervous in believing the Government's projected spending this fiscal year. Quite frankly, given their track record of the last two years, the Government is not very credible in this respect.

Let me now take one more look at the issue of what governments and regional health authorities should be spending per person to provide high-quality health care in their regions. Earlier today in Question Period I asked what the budget will be for the new health authority created by the amalgamation of South-Westman and Marquette Regional Health Authority.

Is the appropriate budget for the new regional health authority the \$640 per person? That is from the most recent annual report of Manitoba Health, given to North-Eastman Health Association Inc. This amount would provide a budget for the new regional health authority of \$47 million. Is the appropriate budget the \$1,020 per person provided to the Central Region Health Authority? If so, this would provide a budget for the new regional health authority of \$74 million instead of the \$47 million. Is the appropriate budget the \$1,221 per capita provided to South-Westman Regional Health Authority currently? If so this would provide a budget for the new health authority of \$88 million. Is the appropriate budget the \$1,594 per person provided to the Parkland Region? If so this would provide a budget of \$115 million to the new regional health authority.

I asked the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), but I did not receive a very clear answer. He just said: We are going to spend more and more and more money and that will solve it. That is hardly a reasonable way to figure out how much you need to spend in order to have good quality health for people in a region. The extraordinary difference between \$115 million on one model and \$47 million on another model for the new regional health authority's budget raises some rather difficult questions for the minister.

The whole exercise of asking these questions raises a rather fundamental issue. How much does it cost to provide high-quality health care? It is a question which needs to be asked and which needs to be answered, because there are clearly some big disparities now. I asked the minister: Is the quality of health care for people who are being supported at \$640 per person for their health care needs equal to the quality of health care provided to people in another region who are being supported at \$1,600 per person for their health care needs? There was no answer.

These huge differences suggest some obvious questions. Are some Manitobans being shafted? Are some Manitobans being given Cadillac care while others suffer? Clearly the Minister of Health needs to provide better answers than he has to date. He was not even able to answer whether the full cost of providing an appendectomy in different regions was the same or different. How can there be good accountability until the minister can start to answer some of these questions? Manitoba clearly needs better accountability than the present Government and the present Minister of Health are providing.

Interestingly enough, in a report by Senators Kirby and LeBreton, they indicate this problem, the lack of yardsticks to compare performance on any basis, financial or otherwise, from one region to another. Sadly, it seems that this is true in Manitoba. The minister indicated he has not yet established a standard. He is still trying to put something in place. I ask: Is this the way to operate a health care system in a quality fashion, in a cost-effective fashion?

I have some suggestions for the minister and for the Government. The minister should read a

book called *To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health Care System*. The book describes two large studies in the United States which show that between 44 000 and 98 000 Americans die each year because of medical errors. The cost of such errors is estimated to be between \$17 billion and \$29 billion per year in the U.S. There is no reason to believe that medical errors occur in Manitoba with any less frequency than they do in the U.S. If so, then an estimated 180 to 400 Manitobans may be dying each year as a result of medical errors. The cost of these errors is between \$70 million and \$120 million for Manitoba each year. Here is a clear way to save about a hundred million dollars on health care and improving health care at the same time by getting rid of the errors that are happening within the system.

Let me provide another suggestion. There is a recent report on mental health standards, the mental health services provided in Winnipeg under the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. I will quote from this report. It was done by a high-quality group of individuals taking an independent look at what is happening in Winnipeg. The report says there seems to be a non-system for delivery of mental health services in Winnipeg, with a remarkable lack of integration between hospital and community services. Here is an area where improvement in quality can make a dramatic difference. Also, by improving the integration of hospital and community services, I am quite sure that we will need less hospital expensive care and provide better care in the community so that people do not in fact have to be hospitalized in this very critical area of mental health.

The report goes on to say that Winnipeg must pay attention to the use of medication so that it is safe, efficient, effective, and promotes the best quality of life, indicating that as things are being done at the moment there is a significant risk for the organization as well as, let it be said, to the patients with mental health problems in Manitoba.

Once again, here is an area where a focused effort, for example, in improving the care with those who first present with psychosis that we can say long term on health care costs as well as quite clearly improving the quality of care, such

individuals, if treated very well, initially when they present can go on to do very, very well, but if treated in a haphazard manner, as is sometimes occurring in Manitoba, then can have lifelong problems and be major burdens to the health care system as well as having very poor quality of health and life. So here are two suggestions to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). There are many, many others that I could point out, but I have limited time in my speech, and I want to go on and talk about some other areas of the Budget, which I believe need some significant comment.

* (16:10)

Let us look at the Budget. I have already pointed out that there is a drastic deficit in health care budgeting and accountability. Clearly, there are major areas of other government spending where much better management is needed. Chris Lorenc, the president of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, has pointed out that the administrative costs in the Department of Transportation, comparing Manitoba and Saskatchewan, are much, much higher here. The bloated bureaucracy that the NDP have set up and are operating in highways and transportation is not serving this province well and is costing us a whole lot more than other comparable provinces. It is time we changed. It is time that the NDP government recognizes that there needs to be major change. To their credit there have been some changes in Transportation with a provision of a longer-term budget than heretofore under the Conservatives, but there needs to be much more and much better progress.

Why do we need to make sure that we can move to a much better system of government, a high performance government, rather than the low-quality and low-performance government we are getting from the NDP? Well, clearly because there are some critical areas where we need to have a focussed effort and a real effort to make sure that we can improve the quality of life for Manitobans and indeed improve the productivity, both from a social perspective and economic perspective and the lifestyle for people in Manitoba.

One of the important areas that I would discuss is child care. The Government of

Manitoba has for their time in opposition, the NDP when they were in opposition and the NDP while they are in government, spoken about what they want to do with a province-wide universal system of child care. They went out and did a lot of consultation. There were thousands of Manitobans who provided contributions. We did—let us give some credit in this Budget—have a statement that the NDP are going to look at delivering a province-wide child care plan, but if you look at the allocation in the Budget, there really is only a marginal or token increment and many, including myself, really question whether the NDP can be sincere in their efforts this year of having major changes in their approach to child care.

In areas like drainage, a very important area for agricultural producers in Manitoba, I was out visiting near Beausejour, almost a year and a half ago, and there was an area near Beausejour where the provincial drain is eating into the side of a road and the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) had been out there, I think a year and a half ago, and promised that he was going to do something. Well, there has been nothing done and this is a dangerous situation. Clearly it is the responsibility of this minister to make sure that provincial drains are functioning well and not causing dangerous situations for people. Yet the minister has sat idly by and done nothing.

This year in the Budget there is a token increment to spending on drainage. But the credibility of the NDP government is somewhat in question, given their performance last year, and the propensity is to spend a lot more money in administrative costs than actually building or digging or cleaning out drainage ditches or improving the drainage for people at the front line. Competitive taxes for people in Manitoba: There was an opportunity in this Budget for the Government to bring in rates for personal income tax and for business taxes which are competitive with the other provinces. Although we may not be too bad at the lower end of the income scale or the smaller size of corporations, as one goes to the medium-income earners and the higher-income earners and as one looks at the larger-sized companies, we are not competitive. It is time in this global society in which we live that we are competitive all the

way up and down the scale of size of personal incomes and of businesses.

It is hard to get and keep corporate headquarters here if we are not competitive. It is hard to keep young people here who are getting post-secondary education and want the medium and higher paying jobs if we are not competitive. It is time to change.

There is only a token reference to the Kyoto report in the Budget. There is no real reference to the work on livestock stewardship. Education and research and development receive a mention that are areas, when one looks at provincial research and development, where we, in fact, could do significantly better. The NDP government has talked about people with disabilities, but, in reality, there is not a great deal in this Budget that would attend to this area.

When we look at that \$99 million of over-expenditure in health care, it becomes quite apparent that if there had been better accountability, better budgeting, better management by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), that there would have been essentially a hundred million dollars that could have gone in a focussed effort into areas like child care or drainage or a competitive tax framework.

What a wasted opportunity because the Minister of Health failed to do his job. He failed miserably in being able to have cost accounting in a way that would bring his department in on budget. Shame on the Minister of Health for his poor efforts in this regard. Shame on the Government for their poor efforts. We have cutbacks for people who are working in the harness racing industry, a cutback of \$491,000 to zero, and this is the kind of thing that this Government is doing, attacking and destroying an industry in the name of trying to provide dollars for the overspending propensity of the Minister of Health.

Let us look at what the Government has done in the area of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and Manitoba Hydro. They have done some short-term thinking rather than long-term planning. Nowhere is this more evident than in their use of Manitoba Hydro funds. This is essentially an end-run around the balanced budget legislation. It is quite clear that while the balanced budget legislation indicates and shows

clearly that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) cannot run a deficit without suffering some financial cutbacks to his own income and to the other members of Cabinet, that it is possible under the balanced budget legislation for the Crown corporations to borrow funds in order to bail out the Government.

This is quite clear in Manitoba's financial statistics. We see that when the NDP government came to power, the Manitoba Hydro's debt was \$5.8 billion. After one year of NDP government, it was \$6 billion. The forecast at the end of this year is that Manitoba Hydro's debt will have grown to \$6.26 billion, an increase of more than \$200 million in debt to Manitoba Hydro. Indeed, without the \$150-million grab by the Minister of Finance, the debt would only have had to have risen by some \$50 million. Of course, that would have been almost no rise in debt if the NDP had not increased the water tax, as well, last year. So I think that Manitobans should know that this NDP government, instead of building the debt of the province, is building the debt of Manitoba Hydro. What an end run, a circuitous way of solving short-term problems.

The NDP have not a lot of credibility in managing health care, in managing finances. They are more like football players making end runs about obstacles in their way instead of addressing the real issues. There is a lack of accountability in the health care budget. There is a lack of investment in really critical areas, like child care, that the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) could have had major initiatives if he had not been, and his Government, overspending in health care. There is not a competitive tax base—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (16:20)

Point of Order

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I know my honourable colleague, who voted against health care for Canadians and child care for Canadians

when he cut the CHST, would not want the record to show that a 30% increase in child care in three years is not a very substantial achievement. It is a very substantial achievement. A 30% increase in child care is a very substantial achievement.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River Heights, on the same point of order. *[interjection]* Okay.

Before ruling on the point of order, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the purpose of points of orders. A point of order is to be used to draw to the Speaker's attention any departure from the rules or practices of the House or to raise concerns about unparliamentary language. A point of order should not be used to ask a question, to dispute the accuracy of facts, to clarify remarks which have been misquoted or misunderstood, to move a motion or to raise a point of order on a point of order.

I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

The honourable Family Services Minister, on the point of order, did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the Speaker for his ruling and wish to point out, although there has been some more progress in child care under this Government than the previous one, that the promise in this Budget of a major initiative in terms of a province-wide child care system is a bit vacuous given the budget numbers and the budget change from last year and that there was an opportunity for the Government to do more if they had not been so far over budget on their health care spending as one example.

I think that, Mr. Speaker, as I bring my remarks here to a close, there was an opportunity to do some major, positive things for Manitoba. There was a failure in this Government to take advantage of that opportunity. There was a failure of this Government to modernize the government system in Manitoba. There was a failure of this Government to be accountable in

many areas of health care spending, and I, for one, feel that this Budget does not merit the sort of positive reaction that one would have thought it might. It deserves a negative reaction because indeed it does not do what we need to do in this province, in Manitoba, for the future.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services):

Mr. Speaker, I want to say it is a great pleasure to be able to speak once again on a Budget Address. I want to particularly say that I take great satisfaction in speaking on this Budget Address, because I think it is important to put in context here that this Budget is being brought in at a time in which our Government and all governments are being faced with significant challenges. I think it is important that we get a bit of a reality check following some of the rhetoric we have seen from members of the Opposition, because if they were to care to look at Saskatchewan or Alberta or—I do not even want to mention British Columbia right now—our western counterparts. If they were to look at all the other provinces that have brought in budgets and perhaps look to Ontario where the new premier will shortly be bringing in a budget, they will see that we have been faced with very difficult times and some difficult choices. But you know, that is what government is all about.

I have had the great luxury of being in opposition and government, elected to government, then in opposition, then in government again, and I can say to members opposite that I appreciate the role of an opposition. It is important. It is an honourable important part of the parliamentary system, the fact that on a day in, day out basis, any government, including this Government, faces scrutiny from members opposite and through them members of the public, but I must say that I do believe, just in following the reactions of the members opposite the last few days, that they need a bit of a reality check here. More than a bit of a reality check.

I see the Leader of the Opposition. I want to suggest to members opposite that whoever is doing photo ops for the Leader of the Opposition, I am sure is probably laid off by Stockwell Day because there were a lot of similarities. The only thing missing was the

wetsuit, but I could tell no helmet. I want to say as Minister of Transportation, I want to caution the Leader of the Opposition for riding that motor scooter without a helmet. I must say I hope he would set an example for all Manitobans in wearing a helmet, but I looked at the predictions that the member made.

You know it is interesting. Was there one accurate prediction there? I mean, not even close. I know he predicted gas taxes going up, taxes going up generally. He took his wallet out; he put a lock on his wallet. It was classic photo op politics, but if you look at it, even a matter of days before the Budget, the Leader of the Opposition had not got the faintest idea that I think he should have had and really put down a good analysis of some of the choices facing Manitoba.

Well, if it was bad enough in his predictions before the Budget, let us look at the predictions and the statements made after the Budget. Let us just look at, sort of, where we are at. Let us start with the fact that our Government, like all governments, has faced challenges on the revenue side. I would point to members opposite to look at the Budget, because they will see a significant drop, not in retail sales tax revenues. Consumer spending has been very buoyant reflecting the optimism of Manitobans about the economy. They will see something of a drop in personal income tax, but that is partly because of the tax relief that we have provided to Manitobans.

The most significant drop is in the corporate income tax side and reflects the fact that we do have an economic slowdown, not just here in Manitoba, but we do across Canada and across North America, indeed the world. That is something that is quite logical. So the province of Manitoba's own revenue, year over year, taking last year through to this year and projecting ahead, has been one in which you will see in our own source revenue that we are down on that side. We are down on corporate income tax.

I say to members opposite it is fine to get up from the luxury of opposition. It is fine to do the photo op and talk about a tax reduction, but we have done that. We have done it in a

measured way, but I do not think they will see any jurisdiction across Canada right now cutting taxes. In fact, you know, we can talk about the base of taxes back and forth, but even their political cousins in Alberta, what did they do? They increased medicare premiums. We do not have them, so we do not increase them. They increased medicare premiums., a direct tax levy on Albertans. Now, they may say, well, Alberta, Alberta, Alberta. We will not even get into British Columbia for a moment, because I want to deal with that in a few moments, but other jurisdictions. You know, it is funny, the prediction about gas taxes. I suppose we could have proceeded and raised the gas tax. We have a relatively competitive gas tax, the second lowest in the country, but the price of oil has gone up significantly. Three Conservative governments in the Maritimes increased gas taxes between one cent and 2.3 cents a litre. That is what is happening elsewhere in the country, not tax reductions, but tax increases.

I say to members opposite: To come in when we have seen the kind of financial situation we have seen and get up and make those kinds of statements is nonsensical.

* (16:30)

I note the interesting mixed messages even in terms of their response to the Budget, because it is not just on the tax side. The members opposite do not have I think an economic approach that is consistent with reality. You know, I have heard different things over the last number of years from members opposite. You know, they never miss an opportunity as an opposition to call for more expenditures here and more expenditures there and put up a huge series of rhetorical statements yesterday on the elimination of the province paying the prize money in terms of harness racing.

I appreciate members opposite wanting to raise their concern about an issue back and forth, but I say to members opposite that you cannot get up at the beginning of Question Period and criticize the Government for spending too much money and then at the end of the Question Period call for tax cuts, which come out of the bottom line again, or talk about reinstating some of the reductions that we have had to put in place

because of economic realities out there. You just cannot have it both ways. Well, I suppose in opposition, you can, theoretically, but, you know, you cannot have it in terms of the public, because one of the key challenges you have when you are in opposition, and I can say this from some experience, is you have got to be at the point where you can persuade the public that you are of an ability to form a government and make those kinds of decisions before you get any kind of political recovery. So I say to members opposite, there is a great deal of inconsistency in your approach.

My reason for wanting to speak on this Budget goes to another reason as well, because what is I think one of the defining differences in this Budget is one of the defining differences of Manitoba politics for the last 32 to 33 years.

Now, I think people know what I am getting at. It is called Manitoba Hydro. It is called MTS.

I want to start with a quick question. I like using this question actually, because it is a good way of showing who has got vision and who does not have vision when it comes to economic development in this province. I ask people that I run into—I did last night at a constituency meeting in Riel. It was a very good meeting. I asked them a trick question. I mean, this is not a trap here, but name me one Hydro dam that the Conservatives have developed in the last 33 years in Manitoba. The answer is none, not one. You know, I can tell you the only thing that they had, and I can take you back to '69 to '77, the initiatives taken by the Schreyer government. In '77 the Wassum [*phonetic*] construction activity related to Hydro under the Lyon government, it is when they ripped out the preparatory work that had been done for Limestone. They mothballed it. They shut it down. Okay?

When in government in the '80s, what did the NDP do? As part of that Government, I am very proud of the fact that we developed Limestone. And you know what? The Liberal leader called it lemonstone, but do you know what the position of the Conservatives was at the time? Well, first of all, they said there would never be any profit from export sales from Limestone. But do you know what? The then-

critic, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), suggested that we buy power from the United States. Now, I still have the clipping. It has got an honoured place in my files.

But this was the Tory logic. Okay? We had a sale to the United States. We had a sale that built in its whole cost structure an ability for us to make significant revenues from exports. But what did the Tories say? They said: Do not build Limestone, buy power from the United States. Can you imagine if we had followed that approach?

You know, let us put on the record that the Tories have no vision. They demonstrated it in government afterwards. We basically had another sale to Ontario. Ontario wanted to either cancel or delay the agreement. What did they do? They took the cancellation. They ended up in court with Ontario Hydro, and then they basically cancelled Conawapa. They just could not, even in government, bring themselves to take that vision that we had of building Limestone and extend it by further construction.

I went through some of the quotes from the debate in 1986, and I want to put you back in that time period because this is really important, I think, to understand when we come forward with this Budget. The Conservatives said what? When we brought in a bill that would have established basically a trust fund, a heritage fund if you want, that would have taken revenue from hydro export sales and diverted it towards both economic development opportunities, money for development of the province similar to what Alberta has with its oil, and the remaining amount to stay with Manitoba Hydro to keep rates down, to keep them low, to make sure hydro was affordable, now what did they say? Well, first of all, they said there would be no profits. I remember Jim Downey's comments; I read them. Clayton Manness—you remember the brain trusts of the Conservatives in the 1980s. They said there would not be any money in the system. The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) scoffed at it. They scoffed at the rates. They scoffed at the cost per kilowatt-hour that was quoted. They said there would be 3 cents, never be above that, never be above 3 cents per kilowatt-hour.

I just ask members opposite to look now and look back on the 16 years since that debate and recognize they were wrong about the predictions in terms of the prices. They were wrong about the predictions in terms of revenue. Fundamentally, they were wrong about the vision for Manitoba Hydro, because if they had been in government, we would not have seen what we have seen today. Now, the irony of this is much of the benefit to the province was accrued when the Tories came into power because, if you take Manitoba Hydro—and I want to put this on record, particularly for the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), who seems to have had some difficulty recently in interpretation of financial statements and understanding soundness. I always get a kick out of people lecturing other people about the need for business expertise who obviously do not know how to read a set of books.

Read Manitoba Hydro's debt equity position as it stands today. Read it as it stands today; check over the last decade. Because of export sales what has happened to retained earnings with Manitoba Hydro? Retained earnings, what is it? It is profit that is reinvested back into the company. Check out the statements in terms of projected export sales and actual export sales the last number of years. What you will find is that over the last decade, because of Limestone and the foresight of the NDP, we have been able to have it all different ways. We have been able to have the lowest rates in North America, one of the lowest sets of rates in the world. We have been able to pay down the debt equity ratio. We have been able to make, because of the significant profits—and I come forward to now when we are in a position of some difficulties, we are now able to access in this particular case what really—if Manitoba Hydro paid direct taxes, which it does not as a Crown corporation, what it will be paying into, we are able to do this to meet the needs of the last period of time and going ahead the next number of years.

In fact, what an irony that we are able to take profits from a publicly owned corporation to backfill the decline in revenue from the private sector while we are going through these economic difficulties. That is what has happened.

Now that is one version of the vision. This is the NDP vision. It is called public ownership of a public utility, getting the profits and reinvesting them for Manitobans. I want to take you to the Tory vision. I want to remind you about MTS, and I want to remind you about what they did when they were in office and the difference that they followed through, because, Mr. Speaker, let us put on the record here what happened with MTS. They had no mandate to sell it. They sold it off. They took the money; they dumped it into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. You know how long it took them to spend every last cent of the money that they got from the sale of MTS, something that Manitobans had built up for more than 90 years? In three years they dumped it in and they spent it, not in a difficult economic time. They were in a difficult political time for them, so they blew it out. They spent every last cent of MTS in three years.

Now, just think about this a moment, because you could look at the year in which they deposited the \$260 million into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund from the sale of MTS. You can look at the \$280 million plus we are looking at now in the draw from Manitoba Hydro because of our budget circumstances. But two big differences at the end of the day. When we have had fiscal need, which we have now, we have been able to look to Manitoba Hydro and without affecting the rates, by only accessing money, not even all of the profits from export sales, we are able to make sure we can maintain services and, quite frankly, keep the taxes down because unlike, say, Alberta, we have not raised taxes, Alberta with its medicare premium.

* (16:40)

I say to members opposite: What do they have left from MTS? After three years, we still own the company. Now, I realize that there are no stock options for the privileged few, no stock options that are going to be available, and I say to members opposite that there perhaps will not be the same benefit from the sale of the shares to some of the stock brokerage community, but you know what? We are now going to be in a position of accessing funds from Manitoba Hydro and maintaining low rates, and the company will still be owned by Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Well, it is interesting, the member opposite talks about seniors. They did not care a darn about seniors when they sold off MTS, when the Manitoba Society of Seniors was dead set against the sale. I would say they have no credibility standing up in this House any day talking about seniors, because my message to the seniors of Manitoba is, what we are doing with Manitoba Hydro is exactly what I think most seniors would want us to do, and that is to use export sales, profits from that, to put money into where? Into health care, into education for our kids and into our future, into all the kinds of services that we need.

You know, the bottom line is other jurisdictions, almost universally, do very much the same thing. Even in British Columbia, if you look at it, \$350 million a year comes out of British Columbia Hydro. Québec is a very good example. This only makes sense. It only makes sense. When you look at the situation of Manitoba Hydro in the last number of years, with the dramatic increase in the re-investment of retained earnings and the dramatic approval of our debt equity ratio, we have the ultimate situation here. We own it. We have the lowest rates. We have significantly improved the debt equity ratio. In fact, the major borrowing in the last number of years at Manitoba Hydro has been through the purchase of Centra Gas initiated by the previous government.

But I say to members opposite at MTS all we have left now is the 65% increase in rates and the hangover and the stock options. I say to members opposite, you know, talk about not getting the lesson. They still have not got the lesson. When they stand up in this House, and about the only complaint they can come up with, really, with this Budget, the main focus is that we are accessing profit from export sales and putting it towards supporting public services in the province.

An Honourable Member: Taking American dollars and investing in Manitoba.

Mr. Ashton: Exactly. American dollars. You know, we are getting those American dollars back. I thought the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) would be joyous about this, just imagining those American dollars coming in at the \$1.58 exchange rate.

I say to members opposite that that is the difference between us and them, because back in the 1970s under Schreyer, the 1980s under Pawley, and now under the Doer administration, we have shown a vision for hydro and economic development, and it is making a real difference to us today. The Tory vision on hydro is, well, no hydro development. I would say it is probably no Hydro, period. If they owned developed dams they would sell them off. I mean, just look at Ontario with the messed up privatization that is happening in that province.

I say to members opposite, if they have not understood yet, one of the reasons they were rejected in 1999 in the election was because of what they did to MTS, and the people did not trust them anymore with Hydro. I always relay this and I have mentioned this to people before, but I knew there was a problem for the Conservatives in the election. It was going well for us when—actually Gary Filmon campaigned in Thompson.

It was interesting, by the way, that he promised to take Hydro and take a dividend out of Manitoba Hydro for public purposes. He promised that in Thompson. I guess that was a different PC Party in those days. That was a different Member for Gimli, Member for Turtle Mountain, Member for Lakeside. Also, he went and knocked on doors, and he had a good entourage with him. I do not knock on doors with an entourage. I do not need a bodyguard in Thompson, but he was going around.

I ran into somebody about two days later, and they said to me. I knocked on their door. They live in Riverside. It was actually the last poll in Thompson that, until the last election, still voted Tory. So I knew I was maybe in for a few challenges. This guy called me in and he said, you know what, Steve, you know me, and I have known him for years. He said I always used to campaign for the Tories, and I said yes. I thought I was going to get a sort of, you know, Steve, whatever, but I cannot vote for you. I am a Tory. Even in Thompson, you occasionally get that.

You know what he said to me. He said I ran into the Premier campaigning the other day, and I said okay. I thought he was going to give a

great testimonial about Gary Filmon. He said I ran into him on the street, and I went up to him. I said, if you get elected, you are going to sell off Manitoba Hydro just like you did with MTS. Do you know what Gary Filmon said? Gary Filmon said we have no plans to sell off Manitoba Hydro. This former Conservative who voted NDP in the last election told me, do you know what I told Gary Filmon? I said that is exactly what you said about MTS. Now I know it is part of what you would do.

The members opposite, you know, I get a kick out of their billion-dollar promise, and now they are backtracking to try and recreate this billion dollars. The only way they would have had a billion dollars to spend was to sell Manitoba Hydro, the only way, to sell it. I say to members opposite—*[interjection]* Well, you know, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), I am glad I have his attention here. I am sure he going to stand in his place and apologize profusely in 1986 for the error of his ways, not having the vision to see that the NDP, over the last 32 years, had a vision for Manitoba Hydro that is now coming back and paying us out in spades in terms of what we are seeing.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk about Tories and their lack of vision and our vision as expressed in this Budget, I want to talk about rural Manitoba for a moment, because I find it interesting, the last couple of days we had a major announcement on the highway side. We are going to have further announcements tomorrow. Stay tuned. I say to members opposite, you know, I appreciate them raising concerns about the harness industry. It is never easy when you are in government. I mean, you could argue those things back and forth, but where are the questions on highways?

I will tell you where they are. We have now brought in a five-year plan, \$600-million, minimum commitment. I say minimum because we need a lot more money, I say this to the Liberal Leader, from the federal government to reinvest back on our roads. But what we have done, and you will be seeing over the next number of days, and I say to members opposite you will see being the direct result, because we are going to develop a long-term plan for this province. Starting actually in about 45 minutes,

we are announcing a whole series of new projects that are coming because this NDP government has basically done something the Tories never did. We have a long-term commitment. We are saying to the federal government in fact this year with the federal monies in the system, we are passing that on in terms of our construction program. We are adding more provincial money. We are showing a commitment. That is a real commitment to rural Manitoba. That is what rural Manitobans really want.

I say to members opposite that is the kind of debate we should see. If you have a different idea, a different way, that is fine. If you want to get up and maybe come up with your latest version on Manitoba Hydro, we would be glad to hear it. I would like to know what the Conservative position is, what it really is, what the vision is. You want to come up with suggestions. When you say we are spending too much money, I mean I love it. At the beginning of Question Period, we get attacked for spending too much money. At the end of Question Period, we are being asked to reinstate something that was taken out of the Budget. We are asked to spend more money here, there. You know, you cannot have it that way. You cannot deal with it.

I notice and I want to say this because I really think that in reality they do, notwithstanding they had a lousy fiscal record in the 1990s in terms of actual expenditures, and this year is the lowest budget-to-budget expenditure increase in five years. That includes the last years of the Tory government when they spent like crazy—\$330 million the last fiscal year over budget. I say to members opposite, you know, you want to look at where we are at now fiscally. When I hear your Health critic saying that we are not spending money wisely enough, or the Liberal Leader talking about this here and questioning the increase over last year's Budget, knowing full well where it came from—physicians' billings. Now what are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to not have tried to keep the specialists in Manitoba that we did? Which doctors did they want us to cut off from being able to bill? Which patients would have been denied services? I want to look at some of the other things we have done, the investments we have put into the health care system. Which ones

of those investments did they disagree with? Now with the nurses' settlement, you know, I am proud that we as a government have been able to negotiate an agreement with the nurses that, yes, will cost us significantly as a provincial government, but it is going to keep nurses in Manitoba. It is going to provide direct patient care, and we did it, by the way, with a collective agreement that did not have a strike. We showed, unlike other provinces, that we could sit down and work with nurses, unlike the previous government.

* (16:50)

There is another model. I left this to the end of my comments because this is really, I think, the real alternate vision, and it is called British Columbia. I want to piece together the common threads. I get a little bit concerned that maybe the Liberal leader has been spending too much time with that other Liberal leader Gordon Campbell because I hear much the same sorts of arguments: this idea that we can improve health care by cutting. That is what is happening. Has anybody looked at the announcements the last couple of—what a contrast. How about public services generally? What are they taking out of the British Columbia budget. You know the 11 000 civil servants laid off, the drastic cuts to health, to education, to human services. You look at what they are doing in terms of court services, let alone the highway system, which will not have much left of it with the cuts that have taken place.

I want to put this on the table. They did put up tax decreases, significant ones. That is why, when you hear the rhetoric, you have to read between the lines. What is interesting is between 60 percent and 70 percent of the budget that they are dealing with, the deficit in the budget, you know where it comes from? The tax cuts, self-created. So, if you are proposing drastic tax cuts like you see in British Columbia, and I say this to Manitobans, you can do it. What you do is, the first thing, you have to run a deficit, because British Columbia is running a huge deficit, by the way. I will predict that you want to watch Ontario. And they are doing that because they have accelerated whatever deficit they may have inherited. Now 60 percent to 70 percent is because of the tax cuts. And, if that is their

vision, I said, then they do not understand Manitobans.

At the end of the day, we all have our political visions, and I am proud of the vision of this party. When you are in Government, I can tell you one thing, they expect us to be able to implement that vision in a responsible way, in a way that is sustainable, and in a way that I think meets the needs of all Manitobans. I put forward in this Budget, yes, we are not like British Columbia. We have not got huge tax cuts, and we have not got huge cuts in services and a huge deficit. But what we have done is provided modest tax relief and further relief on property taxes, which is very significant. We have the most significant long-term commitment to improved infrastructure, starting with our highways program of \$600 million over five years. That is very significant. That is on top of what we are doing with universities, with our school system. I saw in my own constituency this year the largest increase probably in a couple of decades in terms of public school funding. We are doing the same thing across this province in all of the areas of infrastructure they neglected for the last number of years. At the same time, yes, when we were in a time of need we turned to Manitoba Hydro, and thank goodness for the foresight of the Schreyer and Paulley governments.

I say to members opposite, if they want to compare their record of 11 years and they want to compare their record in particular in the management of our public assets and of our key driver economic development, which I believe is Manitoba Hydro, I say to members opposite that I am proud that we as a party had the foresight to put in place the circumstances that today allow us to access through Manitoba Hydro those export sales to maintain public services. That is why I believe, and I say this in completing my comments here, going back to 1969 we have built a solid reputation in this province. Unlike perhaps some governments which have come and gone, we have proven that we are in for the long term. The vision we expressed in 1969, the vision we expressed in 1981 is the same one that we express today. We can provide Manitobans with good government, but we also base it on a clear vision and, to quote J. S. Woodsworth, and I see it in this Budget in every decision that is

made because we have put the needs of people first, when he said, and I quote: What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all. That is the underlying basis of this Budget. It is a budget, not only efficient, it is a budget of real political principle. It is a New Democratic Party budget and I say to members opposite I will compare our vision, a public investment and looking to the future, any day, with their vision of destruction of public assets, of sell-off of public assets and private greed. The public good versus the private greed, that is what this debate comes down to.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to participate in a budget speech and I do try, at least at the outset, to look at some positive elements of the Budget that I can find myself supportive of. I am reminded in doing so, in this instance, of a colleague. He and I both got elected at the same time, in 1966, and he was at that time a prominent member of the New Democrats, one Sidney Green. You have to remember the time. It was in the early '70s when there was a decided swinging to the left in governments across Canada. Pierre Elliott Trudeau had been elected in '68. Manitoba had elected its first-time-ever New Democrats, soon to be followed by British Columbia and, of course, Saskatchewan had New Democratic governments since some time before—1944, I believe. I can recall this discussion with Mr. Green about just where the future lay and he said this to me: You know, Harry, one thing I take comfort in—because he was a pragmatic democrat, among other things he knew that there would be Conservative governments, right-of-centre governments following his left-of-centre governments—but he said: You know, Harry, we take three steps to the left and then when you Conservatives get in you will try and regress that by taking two steps back, but the left will have gained a step and over time society will move progressively to the left.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am reminded by this Budget what a difference two decades makes, because now, all of a sudden, I find my socialist friends talking about and maintaining and at least giving lip service to the concept of balanced budget, which they fought vociferously here when that piece of legislation was passed. They even talk, as the Minister of Industry (Ms.

Mihychuk) did yesterday in her contribution to the budget speech, about the importance of smaller governments. That is why they are rationalizing the fact that so many departments, other than the social service ones, have in fact shrunk in size in this Budget, and they are talking, his socialist left-wing governments, about the virtue in smaller governments. Is that not the rhetoric of the right? So, in that sense, I take some solace in this Budget, that at least the left, because of the difference of two decades, because of the difference of the political atmosphere in the country, have taken, at least tentatively, a step to the right in their forming of this, at least on paper and at least in lip service in terms of their adherence to the concept of a balanced budget.

I do want to comment on several items that are more directly involved with my area of responsibility: conservation and agriculture. But, following the speech from the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton), it is just about enough to convince me that I had better stay around for a while because, if you want to put history on the record, then let it not be revisionist history that is so popular with members of the left, because, Mr. Speaker, it was my privilege, this whole issue of hydro development in the North, to be there when it started. It started in the 1966 campaign under a Conservative government, under Duff Roblin, who pronounced—and it was a major part of his election platform—the use of northern waters, particularly the Nelson, for the development and benefit of all Manitobans far into the future.

He had by that time, his Government had already built the first northern dam at Grand Rapids, Cedar Lake, which the Opposition at that time, I do not recall, at that time it was the CCF, but at that time I know the Liberals opposed it very strongly.

Duff and the Conservatives knew that the future was particularly on the great river, the Nelson. Manitoba Hydro—I am giving you a history lesson now—then spent upwards of \$3 million in extensive hydrological reports as to the best way to utilize our northern waters, which included the Churchill and the Nelson. They came to the conclusion, it was not the government of the day, this was the best

hydrological engineering consulting advice of the day, paid for, dearly paid for, as I say, by some \$3 million, that recommended that in order to maximize the opportunities of northern production of power we should divert substantial waters from the Churchill into the Nelson via South Indian Lake.

* (17:00)

Then, and here is the history lesson, that became a major environmental issue. I call it the dawning of environmental concerns in Manitoba. Under Ed Schreyer, the New Democrats campaigned against that diversion. Without that diversion there would be no Limestone. There would be no Long Spruce. There would be no development on the Nelson River. That is the full history lesson of 1969, and the start of power in the North.

Now, okay, then we proceed. That was their position. [*interjection*] You fought an election campaign against the development of the Nelson River. The New Democratic Party of Manitoba fought an election campaign against the development of power on the Nelson River. That is the record. I was there. I fought it. I was there. Then the story gets even more bizarre. Then Ed Schreyer, whom I have a lot of respect for, and who is a pragmatic socialist, actually a bit more of a Liberal, I believe, but he saw, once exposed to the data, once exposed to the information that Hydro gave him, that the Conservative plan to flood South Indian Lake was the correct plan and had to be proceeded with, except he had a political dilemma. He had promised his constituents that he would not flood South Indian Lake, at least not to the same level. So he did what is usually the worst of all things, compromised. He made Lake Winnipeg into a Hydro reservoir. He flooded four more communities that would not have been flooded out: Cross Lake, Norway House and a few others, the Nelson—anyway, the original concept, and Hydro said, if you are going to do environmental damage, do it in one place and one place only, South Indian Lake.

He compromised and used Lake Winnipeg as a Hydro reservoir which created all kinds of different ones and cost Manitoba Hydro an additional half a billion dollars. Now that is not

Harry Enns saying it. That is a judicial inquiry carried out by Chief Justice Trites, a two-year inquiry that estimated the additional costs for that compromise were a half a billion dollars added to Hydro's debt. This is history. This is all history.

Now at the mouth, they had to put an eight-kilometre causeway or channel at the end of Lake Winnipeg to flow that water into Lake Winnipeg, which caused the flooding of additional communities: Cross Lake. They wanted to retrieve some economic benefit from that so they did what no other utility in North America did. They went to Russia to find—this is really unique—the only place where you will find horizontal turbines. Because the water drop at Jenpeg is only about eight feet or something like that, I think if we collectively all went to the bathroom together at the same time, we could generate as much power. It is one of the most inefficient stations in the Hydro system, producing about 185 megawatts of power. First of all, the Russian equipment did not work. It took three years for them to install it. It did not mesh with the North American technology, but this was all very avant-garde, you know, to be dealing with the Russians and to be walking away from our own General Electric- or Westinghouse-produced products. It cost Hydro a half a billion dollars, flooded out four more communities, causing all kinds of damage, which I do not have to tell my Aboriginal colleagues in this House, whether it is the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) or it is Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson).

To add insult to injury—this is hard to believe—having wreaked that environmental damage that all of us acknowledge happened with that flooding, the New Democratic Party government, under Schreyer, refused to sign the Northern Flood Agreement that would provide some compensation for the flooded-out communities. They refused to sign that which would flow some monies for compensation for fishing loss and other losses. It took Sterling Lyon's Conservative government to sign that agreement. That is very hard to believe—I mean this is the party that has been faithfully supported by the First Nations community, by the North—that they would treat their people in such a manner.

You refused to sign the Northern Flood Agreement. It was Sterling Lyon that signed that agreement. It was Jim Downey that walked up there and negotiated \$40-million, \$55-million settlement agreements to help to compensate for the losses. That is the historical record of what we are talking about.

Now, Mr. Speaker, bringing it up to date, for the record, the Conservative Party in '84, '85, '86, was never against the construction of Limestone, not for a moment. We envisioned it in 1966. We took the necessary steps to make it possible. You did not. You voted against the diversion. Without the diversion, Limestone would never have been built.

An Honourable Member: That is not right, Harry.

Mr. Enns: That is right. Without that additional 45 000 cubic feet of water coming through a diversion from the Churchill River, it would not have been economically possible to build those billion-dollar dams on the Nelson River. That is a fact. *[interjection]*

Well, the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) wants to argue with me, but at least let me put this proposition to him: that Ed Schreyer and the New Democrats, having campaigned vigorously against the flooding of South Indian Lake, do you think he would have gone back on that promise and flooded South Indian Lake if it was not absolutely necessary? If it was not absolutely necessary, do you think Ed Schreyer would have broken that election promise in 1969, when he fought against the diversion? Do you think that he, two years later, would have broken that promise and flooded South Indian Lake unless it was absolutely necessary? It was absolutely necessary, not because politicians said so, but because well-paid hydraulic Hydro engineers said this is the way it has to be done. Of course, that is what happened, and then the process could continue.

Mr. Speaker, the issue and position of the Conservative caucus and opposition took in '85 and '86 with respect to Limestone was solely a question of finance. The agreement that the Government and Manitoba Hydro had struck with Northern States Power, based in

Minneapolis, was for 40 percent of the plant's capacity. When senior management officials in Hydro told us, and they ratcheted the figures, they said that is going to make it very tough for that plant to carry its own weight, that we should delay this for a year or two. Just delay it for a year or two for those numbers to change, for our own requirements to take up more of the hydro and to in fact generate more export sales. That was the sole position that we took with respect to Limestone. I am happy that several things happened—that the energy crisis has heightened, that energy costs have risen, that the Canadian dollar is where it is at and that 3 cents per kilowatt-hour that the Americans paid is now 6 cents or 7 cents or 8 cents Canadian, and that is a boon to us. I am happy for all of us, and I think all of us should recognize that there is not a question about who has a vision for northern power development, but leave that be. They want to distort the record. I will make it my mission in life to dog them and to correct them whenever I can. The simple fact of the matter is a New Democratic Party did not have the vision to look at the North. A New Democratic Party voted against the diversion of the Churchill River waters. Without that diversion, we would not be talking, we would not have this Budget today, we would not be enjoying the sales today. That is as simple as it is.

* (17:10)

Now the honourable members do want to bring up MTS all the time in this comparison, but we, of course, understand what this is all about. I am going to scare my colleagues and say, you know, there is a possibility that Manitoba Hydro could be sold. You know when that day is? When I can flip on my switch and from a satellite heat my home or do something like that if I can get energy. That is not so far-fetched because that is what has happened to the telecommunication industry. I was minister of telephones back in 1977, and it was just at that time MTS was a sole monopoly and was trying desperately to hold on to that monopoly against the vanguard of new technology. But can you imagine? I mean, at that time it was against the law for anybody to have a telecommunications instrument that did not come from MTS. You could not hook anything onto your telephone that was not MTS property and, of course, all

this was done to break down the whole new telecommunications system practically because satellites were changing things.

Most importantly, what we were finding out in Manitoba is that our major users, commercial users, Great-West Life across the mall, Richardson Greenshields, they were not using MTS. They were going through Minneapolis to do their heavy duty business transactions, the amount of traffic. That is exactly what is happening in Saskatchewan. Very few commercial businesses use Saskatchewan Telephone. Saskatchewan Telephone is a basket case. Saskatchewan Telephone wanted to join—there was a phone call from Premier Romanow at the time that MTS was being sold: Wait a little while and let us put the package together, Saskatchewan and Manitoba together as a prairie telco. Romanow was not prepared to do it because he was facing an election.

The point is, let us be honest about this. If you want to preach the story about the terrible decision with respect to MTS, it is your Government, you have a comfortable majority, change it. *[interjection]* Well, change it. Those are easy answers. The truth of the matter is that the telecommunications are so interwoven with the Internet via all kinds of providers, Sprint and you name it. You can pull signals off the copper wire that is in the ground today. It will be salvaged over the next couple of decades. Very few of us, we will not be putting copper wire anywhere. Those were the reasons, the compelling reasons for the sale of MTS, and you are, and recently Manitobans should be, so fortunate that that decision was made and we at least recouped a sizable amount of the capital investment that the people of Manitoba had in MTS, and it served Manitoba well. Well, the reason why we have so much good reason for being nervous about how these people handle money is another reminder that I have to too, and it is a shocking one. Howard Pawley was the 19th premier of this province, 18th or 19th, I believe the 19th premier of this province. In his six short years, he borrowed more money than all 18 premiers, all 18 administrations previously. Put your mind around that, and we had some heavy spenders.

Duff Roblin was a heavy spender. He built a \$100-million floodway that still serves us. Ed

Schreyer was no shrinking violet when it came to spending money. We went through two wars and a Depression. Over that period of time up until 1981 when Howard Pawley took government, the provincial debt was some \$2.6 billion. When he left, it was over \$6 billion, not just more than all those premiers together, not just more than double what they did, more than double all 18 premiers together. That is why we are nervous about when these people casually dip \$200 million from a Crown corporation. They have no respect. They have no respect for indebtedness.

As one socialist put it to me, she says, well, it really does not matter. We are just borrowing it off ourselves. Well, that is a pretty good answer, except that somewhere along the line we are paying interest to somebody. I am not so sure at all. We will find out if six months from now, or a year from now, or two years from now Hydro bonds are downgraded by a point or two, just what that costs all of us. I am not that sure, I am not privy to the books, whether that premature investment of a billion-plus dollars on Limestone and only selling 40 percent of the power covered the carrying costs of that capital construction.

You have to remember the big cost in Hydro is not building the dam, not operating it. Those of us who have had the privilege of visiting these beautiful giant factories of energy in the North—what is always amazing, you walk through that billion-dollar structure and you see maybe 15-20 people working. It is not the operating costs that are costing. What is costing is the money we are paying, the interest money on raising the billion dollars to put the dam in place. A half a point, a quarter of a point can mean \$50 million, \$60 million, \$100 million. They are amortized over 64 years. Do you know what a half a point or a point of interest on \$800 million or \$500 million over 50 years is? That is a heck of a lot of money. That does not bother any of these guys. That is only debt.

Then all of a sudden you will find yourselves after some years of management, like the province of British Columbia, that richest and most beautiful province that we have in this country, that up until the New Democrats got hold of it, was a have province. It contributed to

our welfare and to the Atlantic provinces' welfare. Eight years, nine years of New Democratic government brought that province, that rich province, to a have-not province. That is where your policies are taking us, and that is why we are concerned, Mr. Speaker, and that is why we have a right to be concerned. Whether or not we can get this message across as effectively as we ought to, that is a challenge we face and we take very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, if it were not that history was there for us to look and to learn from, you know, four years under Bob Rae took the biggest, most powerful province of this country, Ontario, that represents 45 percent of the economic well-being of this entire country. They took only four years to bring that rich province to its knees. Did you honestly think that Mike Harris has such an overriding pleasant personality that he just vaulted from third place to the messiah of Ontario because everybody all of a sudden liked the golf pro from North Bay, Ontario? No, not at all. That is not the case. Ontario thought a little faster than British Columbians. My hope, Mr. Speaker, is Manitobans will think at least as fast as the Ontarians. Thank you.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in support of the Budget that was presented here earlier this week. I want to begin, though, by welcoming the newest member to the Manitoba Legislature, the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik). I hope that the new Member for Lac du Bonnet enjoys his political career. I hope he enjoys it as much as it seems the rest of us do here in the Manitoba Legislature, so welcome.

I am one rural Manitoban who is really tired of hearing all the hot air come across from members across who claim to be supportive and claim to represent rural Manitoba. If we in rural Manitoba had to simply depend on the rhetoric of the folks across the way here, rural Manitoba—

* (17:20)

An Honourable Member: We would be warm for days.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, we would not have a lot of snow on the ground; it would all be melted from

all that hot air. The other thing is, we would not be very prosperous, we would not be very successful, if we had to depend on what the members opposite have offered up to rural Manitoba in terms of all the rhetoric that I hear, even if you look at their time in government, a lot more talk, really, than action when it comes to rural Manitoba. Now, as members of the loyal Opposition, what do we see, Mr. Speaker? Do we see any kind of connection with rural Manitoba as to what is important? I do not think so. We see more rhetoric. We see more words. We see more complaining. We see members who, on the one hand, say we should cut the things that are important to rural Manitobans and at the same time say we are spending way too much money in rural Manitoba. They cannot have it both ways. That is irresponsible. That is just politics. Rural Manitobans deserve a lot more than what they are getting from members across the way.

I want to say that this Government, this side of the House, is determined to continue to support rural Manitoba. We are determined, despite the catcalls from across the way, despite the hot air and the rhetoric from across the way, we are determined to continue working for the best interests of rural Manitobans. Not just rural Manitobans because it was not just rural Manitoba that was left out of the Government throughout the nineties. It was the North, and it was most of the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to go over a few of the things that this Budget builds upon, because that is really what this Budget does. This is our third one. I think it builds on some very good work that has taken place since the 1999 election. It builds on the commitments and the action that we have taken in the first two budgets of this Government. It builds on the successes that we have enjoyed, that all Manitobans have enjoyed in the last two and a half years.

I want to begin with just a few of the very successful, I think, and very popular measures that we have taken over the course of the last two and a half years and also that are contained in this Budget that we are debating here this week and into next. There is an issue that is very important to rural Manitobans, and I am assuming that members across have been talking

to their constituents and have heard that the drainage is actually something that is important to Manitobans. I see the member from Portage getting quite excited, so I am assuming that there have been some people talk to him about this issue. I know rural Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. I have been one all my life, and I know we do not hide our desires. We do not hide the dreams that we have. We are very open in saying what it is that we need in rural Manitoba. Drainage is one of the ones that is close to the top of the list. I am sure that the new Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) heard all about it in the by-election that we just went through here not so long ago.

An Honourable Member: All they do is talk about it. They do not do anything about it.

Mr. Struthers: The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) says all we do is talk about it. Let us look back to the 1990s to see how much drainage money was actually spent. Let us compare the Tory talk with the Tory action. Well, they talked a lot about drainage. I can remember going to meetings at that time of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities, now the combined Association of Manitoba Municipalities, and I can remember one Tory minister after the other in the bear pit expressing how important drainage is, how important it is to get that water off the farmers' lands, how valuable that would be for economic diversification and economic growth, how we are going to stem the tide of people moving out of certain parts of rural Manitoba in the 1990s.

That is the talk, Mr. Speaker. What was the action? Was there actually money put into drainage by the members across the way when they had every opportunity to do it in the eleven and a half years of their reign of terror in this province? What did they do? What did they do about it? I hear nothing because there was nothing done about it. There was nothing done about drainage.

When we came along in 1999, we took a look at the provincial budget that showed no commitment to drainage in this province. None. What we have done is we have taken the first steps to do that. We have taken the first steps to do that in this province. Last year and again this

year, in this Budget, \$10.1 million. Maybe the members across the way might think that is not enough money, but you know what, that is about \$10.1 million more than they ever spent on it.

So where do they have any room to talk? Where do they have any room to speak on this? They have no room to speak on this. Our Budget that was introduced here on Monday indicates that it is up \$1.7 million from our commitment last year. The Member for Portage says: Yes, that is right, that is the Budget. You bet that is the Budget. That is where you put your money where your mouth is and that is what we are doing on drainage and that is what we are doing on other issues that are important to rural Manitobans.

It is not news releases that came out that the Tories used to put out all the time and then not put any money in the Budget for. That is how things get done around here. That is how things are done in the finances of a provincial government. You say you are going to do it. You put it in the Budget and the work gets done. That is what we are doing for rural Manitoba. That is what the Tories never did do for rural Manitoba.

I would be very surprised if in question periods over the next little while that the Tories ever get up on a highways question. I do not think they will do it, because you know why? You know why they will not do it? Because we have done a lot more to highways and transportation. We are back-filling what was cut out of highways and transportation budgets here throughout the 1990s. We said we would increase highways. We put it in our Budget and the work is being done. That is how it is supposed to go around here. One hundred and twenty million dollars in this Budget. I dare the Member for Portage to go back through his budgets over the 1990s and see when the last time \$120 million was put in.

Did the Conservative government ever have any kind of success in getting the Feds to the table to talk about what their contribution could be? Mr. Speaker, 1996 was the last year that the Feds put any money into it. The people across the way failed in '97 and '98 and their part of '99 to get any kind of money out of the federal government. Now we did. We, I think, had some

room yet to go, because I want the feds to be paying their fair share of this, and our commitment is to keep working for it, but, you know what, we can show results. The former government could not do that.

Now is that an important issue to rural Manitobans? You bet it is. Do you know what the proof is? The proof is that they did actually ask one question on Highways, and it was the new guy from Lac du Bonnet who did it. I give him a lot of credit for bringing that up. He stood up for Highway 304. I believe it was 304. Now, I can understand, that the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), it is to his credit that he brought it forward and talked in Question Period with the minister of this particular highway. I wonder why it was not done over the last 10 years.

Do you suppose that road just kind of fell apart overnight? What, last week or the week before? *[interjection]* Last year? Just last year all of a sudden bang and that highway is gone. I do not think so. I think it was neglected by the Government all through the nineties, a government that kept ratcheting down the support for highways and transportation in this province. I think that if there was any kind of commitment to the highways and transportation of this province, which is an absolutely essential question to be dealt with from rural Manitobans—we need to be able to get our product to market. We need to be able to have an infrastructure that we can count on, that is reliable.

The federal government and CN and CP in their infinite wisdom are removing themselves from the transportation system in our province. They are leaving rail lines abandoned. The Crow rate is lost to farmers, \$720 million a year.

* (17:30)

Mr. Speaker, this is an enormous task that this Government has taken on and our minister has been serious in his approach to this huge problem. He is turning a challenge into an opportunity because this really, really is important, really is an infrastructure challenge that we need to meet.

The other one issue that I hear a lot about is water. Take a look at the work that is being done

in terms of providing clean water with very healthy and abundant fish, if that is what the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) wants to get into, if he wants to compare. Maybe the Member for Turtle Mountain does want to compare the action that we have taken in terms of the fishing issue in this province to the lack of action that his Government did when they were in power. We could get into that as well.

I started out talking about drinking water in rural Manitoba. Take a look at the infrastructure projects that have been okayed in this province. Take a look at the commitment of this Government to providing safe drinking water to Manitobans. Take a look at the vision we have shown. Whenever we talk about vision, earlier the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was talking about vision in terms of Hydro and Crown corporations and how much more common-sensed our approach is as compared to the former government, but look at how visionary our approach to ethanol is. Where was the previous government with this? Such a great opportunity potentially for farmers in our area, for diversification, to add value to what we as producers do, to create jobs for Manitobans. What did they do? Again, nothing. We are taking those steps. These are all valid and good reasons for members of the Opposition to actually consider voting in favour of this Budget.

I just want to take a minute or two to talk about the Bridging Generations Initiative that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has put forward. Members opposite who consult with their rural constituents understand that agriculture is the basis of our economy, especially in a constituency like mine or Portage la Prairie or many of the areas that are represented by members across the way. It is not just our basis. It is the largest industry in this province. It is an important part of our economic sector.

The biggest consideration, the biggest worry that I receive from my constituents who are producers is they are worried about that day when it comes when they have to try to transfer their family farm to the next generation. It is a huge issue. Are we going to end up in a situation in this province where very few farmers end up buying up a whole lot of the land, forcing

perfectly good farmers into other occupations or out of rural Manitoba and taking jobs in our cities or, as the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) was pointing out earlier, leaving and going to work in the oilfields in Alberta or who knows where else?

We have to be serious about providing some incentive to ensure that that transfer takes place and that there is not a huge consolidation of farmland into the hands of a few. That is what Bridging Generations is all about, and it does provide an incentive for a retiring farmer to retire with some type of dignity, instead of being faced with the prospect of selling his land cheaply and then scrambling for the rest of his days to make a living or to live. We want them to retire in some kind of comfort. It also makes it easier then for a younger farmer entering the world of farming. That is what Bridging Generations does. I do not understand why members opposite balk at such a plan.

We have improved crop insurance coverage. We have done what the previous government undone and are providing some excess moisture insurance. It would have come in handy for farmers in the southwest of the province who found themselves up to their knees, and maybe higher, in water when they were used to farming in drought conditions. But the former government was not there for those farmers. It had removed that tool. We have gone back. We have done the right thing. Our minister understands the hopes and desires of farmers, and we have provided that for them.

We have made some improvements to the education support levy. We have reduced it by 10 percent, absolutely historic. Where were the Conservatives when they had the chance to do that? Again, they talked about it. I remember them talking about it. Did they do anything about it? Not a chance. We provided cuts in personal income taxes. We provided cuts to corporate taxes. Last year was the first cut to corporate taxes since World War II. How many Tory governments were in in that period of time who could have done it, but they never did?

An Honourable Member: Far too many.

Mr. Struthers: Many. We are providing something as basic as a sales tax exemption for

manure slurry tanks and lagoon liners. It is good. It helps. It helps in an agricultural industry, and it helps environmentally. That is a good thing, Mr. Speaker. Are they going to vote against it?

We have improved the Rural Economic Development Initiative program. We have increased support for it. We have provided for an expansion of college seats here in Manitoba. We have shown support for nutraceuticals and the Centre for Nutraceuticals. These are all progressive steps in the area of agriculture. I think I heard someone earlier today from the Opposition saying that we have not even mentioned agriculture in our Budget. I wonder if they have read the Budget if they say things like that.

Certainly, one of the most important areas that we have dealt with for a long time in this province is health care. Many times I think the measuring stick of a compassionate society is how we treat our sick and how we treat our elderly and how we provide for young children in society. I really do think it is a measuring stick. Yet we have the spectacle of members opposite squawking about us spending too much money: a 7% increase in health. Oh, no, Mr. Speaker, a 7% increase. They do not like us spending money in health, but do you know what is funny? I am the legislative assistant to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). I think every second Tory I meet in the hallway, they ask me: Are you going to support this; are you going to support that? Are you going to support my project back home here in Turtle Mountain? Are you going to support this personal care home? Are you going to support that hospital? Are you going to sign a deal with the nurses? Are you going to sign a deal with the doctors? Are you going to sign a deal with the support staff? You did not give enough to them. You did not give enough to that other group. More, more, more, and then they come into the Legislature, and what do they say? Oh, you are spending too much money.

You cannot have it both ways. You just cannot do that. It is not an honest approach by the members in opposition.

* (17:40)

Mr. Speaker, I want to key in on one particular opportunity I think that we have. I

want to talk a little bit about our plan to make better use of rural and northern surgical facilities. This is the last thing that I want to talk about just a little bit here this afternoon, okay? There are a number of advantages of using rural facilities for surgical use. Number one, for my constituents living in Dauphin and Roblin and Grandview and Gilbert Plains and Rorketon and Ochre River and Valley River and San Clara, it is good because now they do not have to spend as much time waiting. Even though we have brought down so many of these waiting lists, even though we have made huge improvements over what the previous government had attempted, this will help even more. They will make better use of some of the smaller hospitals that are perfectly fine to do this kind of work in and around the city, for example. Why should we not be doing this? Even if it costs us a little bit of money to do this, it is money well spent, and it saves us money in the long run.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think with just those few words, I want to reiterate my frustration with the kind of rhetoric, kind of hot air, the kind of blarney that I hear from across the way when they feign support for what rural Manitobans really do think. It is not fair to rural Manitobans to talk and not act. It is not fair to any Manitobans to do that, but, being a rural Manitoban, I get particularly galled by politicians who talk a good game and then refuse to take action. When they had an opportunity, when they had their time in government to take action, I believe they failed the people of Manitoba, but this Government is stepping in where the other government feared to go. We are stepping in. We are providing for infrastructure in rural Manitoba. We are providing for health care in rural Manitoba. We are making improvements to education in rural Manitoba. We are making innovative and dynamic changes in agriculture.

Speaking of innovation, I want to talk just for minute about a project called telehealth, telemedicine. We have to be making as much use of the distance education technology that we can. Dauphin is one of the communities that is a beneficiary of this program, along with a whole number of other communities in rural and northern Manitoba, a very good program that we are very happy to be putting forward \$1.5 million towards which I suppose the Opposition does not want us to be spending money on, but

we are doing it nonetheless because it will save money.

It will save on logistical hassles that many of my constituents have to go through. When you drive in from your farm north of Grandview, Manitoba, to Winnipeg, when you have a procedure that needs to be done and you have to make three trips into the city to get it accomplished and there are all kinds of problems from the weather to mechanical difficulties to staying overnight in hotels to being bumped from one appointment to the next, it becomes very frustrating and adds sometimes to your health problems. So this is a program that is going to be good for our health system and a real benefit for people living any distance from Winnipeg, any distance from Brandon. So that is just one very positive, very good example of where we are making a commitment. We are including it in this Budget and we are coming through for people in Manitoba.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate from other members of the House and just want to say that I am very pleased to stand in support of the Budget presented here on Monday. Thank you very much.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker, is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? *[Agreed]*

* * *

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

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 24, 2002

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